

**Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC)
Campaign and Media Monitoring
2023 General Elections**

ECC ELECTION DAY
MID-DAY STATEMENT – OCTOBER 10, 2023

“Liberians have turnout to vote and at midday the process was peaceful while the delivery of voting material was delayed in some localized zones, leading to the late opening of polling places.”

Introduction

This midday update is based on reports that the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) has received from **1,159 out of the 1,200 (96%)** Stationary Observers deployed to their polling places nationwide as of 2:00 pm on October 10, 2023.

This report focuses on the set-up and opening of polling places. Percentages reported reflect percentages of polling places observed by the ECC observers who are proportionately distributed across electoral districts of the country as a whole, and do provide credible data on national trends. At this time, the ECC has received 96% of reports from its 1200 Stationary Observers.

Arrival at Polling Places

- 📍 98% of ECC observers were permitted to access and observe at their polling places. ECC observers were however not allowed in certain locations to use their phones as a result of the NEC’s directive that no phones are allowed in the polling place. The ECC observers primarily use their phones to submit observation reports to the ECC Data Center.
- 📍 By 6:00am, 93% of all ECC Observers were at their assigned polling places and in 94% of those places, found the NEC polling officials to be present.
- 📍 Queues of voters outside the voting precinct at 6:00 am were reported in 93% of observed locations.

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Opening

📍 ECC observers reported that voting generally commenced on time (before 8:15 am) in 94% of the observed polling places, 4% of polling places opened with a slight delay between 8:15 and 10 am; however, 2% of polling places were still not open at 10 am. Opening delays and disturbances were mainly caused by logistical challenges and late delivery of voting materials.

Polling Place Set-Up

The late delivery of material necessary for voting was observed in a few instances mostly in Grand Bassa, Sinoe and Rivercess counties leading to a relatively late opening of polling places. However, the majority of polling places observed had the required sensitive voting materials, including the FRR, ballot papers, indelible ink to curtail multiple voting and the accounting forms. Nonetheless, ECC observers reported the absence of the tactile ballot guide for visually impaired voters who would turn out to vote in 11% of observed polling places.

- 📍 In 67% of observed polling places, five or more NEC staff were present during set-up. Around 48% of the polling staff were women at observed polling places. ECC commends the NEC for giving women the opportunity to serve.
- 📍 ECC observers also reported that, in 37% of observed polling places, voters need to use stairs to access the polling area, which potentially poses a challenge to persons with disabilities or the elderly.
- 📍 In 98% of polling places where ECC observers are located, observers saw security personnel in the area. This is encouraging coverage by the joint security given that the provision of security is the sole responsibility of internal security agencies.
- 📍 The ECC observed the presence of party and candidate representatives in most of the polling places covered.







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Critical Incidents



The ECC Data Center is also collecting critical incident reports from all 1592 observers that are continually being processed. Generally, ECC notes that despite the peaceful conduct of voting, the process has been characterized by a few challenges.

There were reports of isolated tension at polling places due to challenges in the proper management of queues resulting from overcrowding in some precincts.

-  In Sinoe electoral district 02, a center did not open as of 9 am. According to the ECC observer, the truck transporting the materials was stuck on the way. NEC officials attempted to fix the problem by transferring the materials to motorbikes, but the ballot papers ended up getting wet. The ballots for the precinct were damaged, but other sensitive materials were at the time available. Later, 200 ballots were brought in by NEC officials to start the process but party agents objected to the use of the 200 ballots and recommended that the situation be handled properly.
-  Also in Sinoe, observers reported that ballot boxes arrived by 11:30 in Nyafuel Town affecting many voting centers in that location. The ECC observers could not ascertain the center codes because they were at the time not labeled by the NEC.
-  Grand Bassa Electoral District 04: a precinct experienced delayed opening due to the late arrival of voting materials. When the ECC observer contacted the NEC's Magistrate, he could not provide clear reasons for the delayed opening. However, voters waiting in the queue remained calm.
-  In the same district in Grand Bassa County, at the Sam Town Palava Hut with code 09026 in polling places 1 & 2, ballot boxes were reported covered with plastics due to the lack of a proper cover.
-  In Montserrado Electoral District 02, at the St. Francis School with code 30227. the ECC observer present reported the absence of security personnel and the lack of proper queue control; voters were reported forcing their way into the polling place resulting in tension.
-  Similarly, in electoral district 04 Montserrado county, a polling place two of NEC staff two of NEC staff were not present at the opening resulting in delayed votin

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Critical Incidents



- ⚠️ At another center in Rivercess electoral district 01, a center experienced delayed opening due to the absence of NEC staff who were stuck across a flooded bridge, thereby blocking access to the location.

The ECC continues to monitor the process and will have more information in future updates.

Recommendations

The ECC presents the following interim recommendations to improve the process:

- ✅ ECC urges the National Elections Commission (NEC) to take quick action to ensure that voting materials get delivered to all polling places.
- ✅ The commission is also urged to provide clarity on procedures for polling places that experienced delayed openings.
- ✅ The ECC calls on the Joint Security Apparatus to remain vigilant in addressing any tension that may arise at voting precincts, thereby preventing its escalation.
- ✅ Political parties' agents and observers are encouraged to remain deployed throughout the day until the results are counted and posted.
- ✅ All Liberian voters and citizens should continue to remain peaceful as the voting progresses.

Observation Methodology

The ECC has deployed 1592 trained and accredited observers, including 1200 polling place observers, 300 mobile observers, 73 electoral district supervisors and 19 county coordinators covering all 73 electoral districts of the country. Of these, 1200 are proportionately deployed based on the national distribution of polling places within each electoral district. This means that the proportion of polling stations observed by the stationary observers in each district and county closely matches the overall percentage of polling places in each district and county. For example, 34% of the total polling stations are in Montserrado where the ECC is deploying 410 stationary observers constituting 34% of all ECC observers deployed.

This proportional deployment enables the ECC to comment on the process nationally, drawing on data points from every district of the country.



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About ECC

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The Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) is Liberia's largest domestic election observation network with diverse competencies, experiences, and expertise in democracy, elections, and governance established since 2010. ECC's members include the Center for Democratic Governance (CDG); Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP); Center for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (CECPAP); Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD); Naymote Partners for Democratic Development (NAYMOTE-PADD); West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), and the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WON-GOSOL). The ECC election observation effort is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Irish-Aid. "The contents of this update are the responsibility of the ECC and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government or the Government of Ireland."

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