

Report No 2 - PHASE 2 BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION(BVR) PROCESS TO
THE LIBERIAN 2023 ELECTIONS

EISA-International Election Observation Mission (EISA-IEOM)

21 April 2023 – 11 May 2023



EISA

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Background

To further its commitment to promoting democratic development and credible electoral processes in Liberia, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) observed Phase 2 of the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) exercise from 21 April to 11 May 2023 on an independent and nonpartisan basis as part of its International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) to Liberia's 2023 elections. EISA has already released a report covering Phase 1 of the BVR process, which took place between March 20 and April 11.

This report highlights key observations made by EISA Long-Term Observers (LTOs) during their deployment to observe the second phase of BVR proceedings in six of the nine counties. EISA LTOs arrived in Monrovia on 24 April 2023 and participated in a three-day briefing and orientation from 25-27 April 2023 focused on equipping observers with knowledge of the pre-election context ahead of their deployment. EISA's observer team conducted its work from 29 April – 11 May 2023. EISA LTOs worked relentlessly and visited a total of 157 voter registration centers of which 96 were in rural areas. The electoral district observed were Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, and River Cess. The remaining three counties, Maryland, Grand Kru, and River Gee could not be accessed within the BVR Phase 2 window due to difficult road conditions limiting access for the LTO teams.

In the counties observed, LTOs reported a generally calm and peaceful environment with no confirmed incidents of violence or conflict reported. The voter registration process was characterised by observations on pre-campaigning, voter trucking at the county level, the accessibility of voter registration centers, the widespread practice of potential voters that are opting to register in areas they do not reside in and cases of underage persons attempting to register. The political environment was reported as generally conducive to the conduct of voter registration in all the counties.

Analysis of the demographics shows that more women and youth have registered as voters and their turnout is encouraging. Party agents were present in 54% of the voter registration visited, and citizen observers were present in only 4 of the 107 voter registration centers visited.

EISA teams also met with electoral authorities at the national, county, and district levels, including with members of different National Elections Commission (NEC) departments. EISA met with traditional leaders, journalists, civil society organizations, citizen observers, youth, and women groups to gather insights and reflections on the BVR. This report builds on EISA's recent assessment report of the BVR phase 1. EISA will continue to observe the remaining components of the voter registration exercise including the exhibition, complaints, and appeals process as well as party primaries, candidate nomination, campaigning, election day, and post-election.

EISA notes that the voter registration process in its entirety is ongoing, and there are still important steps to be completed which include then ongoing deduplication, exhibition, objections and appeals¹.

¹ Deduplication refers to the process of identifying and eliminating duplicate voter records in the voter register to ensure that there is no multiple registration by the same person. Exhibition refers to the process of displaying the voter register to the public so that they can verify their details and identify any errors or inaccuracies. Objections refer to the process of challenging the inclusion of certain voters in the register, either on the grounds that they are not eligible to vote or that they are registered multiple times. Appeals refer to the process of resolving any disputes or challenges to the voter register that are brought before a competent authority.

Overall, EISA wishes to highlight the importance of ensuring that the voter registration process is concluded in a transparent and credible manner, with appropriate checks and balances to prevent fraud, errors, or other irregularities. The completion of the deduplication process, exhibition, objections, and appeals is critical to ensuring that the voter register is accurate and up to date.

Methodology

The EISA-IEOM to Liberia is independent from NEC and political parties and strives to perform its functions without favour in a neutral and objective manner. The observation methodology for Phase 2 of the BVR was focused on both direct and indirect observation at randomly selected registration centers in six out of the nine counties, stakeholder consultation, and desk review. A pre-approved checklist was used to collect data to inform the analysis and formulation of conclusions and recommendations. EISA IEOMs relies on its online data management system *Popola* to collect, analyse and store information gathered from the field. EISA's assessment of the integrity of the BVR process was based on evaluating NEC's procedures and adherence to the Liberian Constitution, Election Laws, and regional and international norms and standards.

Legal and Constitutional framework: Eligibility and voter trucking

As per Article 77 (b) of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia, any citizen of Liberia who is 18 years or older has the right to register as a voter and participate in public elections. However, individuals who have been judicially declared incompetent or of unsound mind, as stated in Section 3.1 of The New Elections Law 2014: Section 5.1 Voters Registration Regulations 2022, are exempted from this right. According to Section 5.2 of the Voters Registration Regulations 2022, individuals are required to register at a designated voter registration center in the area where they "**ordinarily reside**". However, the definition of "**ordinarily resides**" is not clearly defined in the statute.

There appears to be a conflict between the concept of ordinary residence, as outlined in Section 5.2 of the Voters Registration Regulations 2022, and Article 80 (c) of the Liberian Constitution. According to Article 80 (c), every Liberian citizen has the right to register and vote in their constituency, either in person or by absentee ballot. However, the Legislature still needs to establish regulations regarding residency requirements for registration. Therefore, every individual can be allowed the right to register based on their residence. Additionally, the Constitution serves as Liberia's supreme and fundamental law, rendering any laws, treaties, statutes, decrees, customs, or regulations that contradict the Constitution null and void, as outlined in Article 2 of the 1986 Constitution.

Based on the supremacy of the Constitution as provided for in Article 2 of the 1986 Constitution, Section 3.1 of The New Elections Law 2014: Section 5.2 of the Voters Registration Regulations 2022 contradict Article 80 (c) of the Liberian Constitution.

Despite legal gaps and unavailable guidelines regarding eligibility to register in a specific locality, many people are registering in areas where they do not actually reside. This has resulted in politicians

“transporting individuals” from one point to another solely to register to vote in those areas. However, voter trucking is illegal and violates the legal principle of free and fair elections.

According to Section 10.1 (a) of the New Elections Law of 2014, trucking of voters is illegal, and it is malfeasance, punishable by a fine or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months or both. However, the law does not specify what actions constitute the trucking of voters. Additionally, the National Elections Commission has yet to define what constitutes trucking of voters. Despite this, many people continue to travel in large groups from one location to another for voter registration, thus disenfranchising residents of those respective districts from electing a representative of their choice.

EISA has noted inconsistencies and gaps within the existing legislative framework as it pertains to the issue of voter eligibility and voter trucking as an offense. EISA encourages the Liberian legislature, NEC and Ministry of Justice to review the existing legislation to clarify and enhance the legal requirements for eligibility, the practical application of these requirements, and means to identify and deter future incidences of voter trucking in Liberia.

The Conduct of BVR Phase II

The second phase of voter registration has been peaceful and calm with no official complaints and disruptions lodged. Overall, NEC officials worked in line with the NEC’s stipulated procedures for voter registration.

In terms of the conduct of the exercise, the NEC had well-equipped personnel, with each voter registration center having three polling officials. One in every three-polling staff was a young female and this was a continued trend observed from phase 1 of the BVR process. In terms of the distribution of responsibilities, each center had 3 NEC staff members: a clerk, a registrar, and a technician. The NEC staff were further supported by security officials and an immigration officer. In this regard, LTOs reported that the role of immigration officers in determining the nationality of potential registrants could be a source of contention. The use of a national identity document is not compulsory, rather there is a heavy reliance on birth certificates, vaccination cards, oral testimonies, and other subjective means such as language, ethnicity, and appearance to determine eligibility of voters. EISA LTOs reported that immigration officials were called to verify the citizenship of registrants in 59% of the centers observed.

Citizens also had to answer certain questions on county/district unique features such as clinics nearby or language to prove that they are from the area. This also has loopholes as ethnic communities that live between borders can speak the common languages and therefore pass as Liberian citizens. As an example, EISA LTOs in Lofa observed that it was considerably difficult for NEC officials to determine the nationality of people that are from the Kissi ethnic group which is found in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.

In terms of the overall security of the process, there were no security officials in 52% of the centers visited and observers noted that in most cases security officials were responsible for more than one station within a district. In addition, measures to keep the BVR equipment safe overnight were not sufficient, especially in rural areas, with some officials reporting that they were taking the materials to their places of residence daily upon closing the station. The NEC did clarify that to counter fraud and tampering, the BVR machines

required all three officials to open the machines and that the system recorded the time of each registration made. In this way, any attempts to register people outside of the official registering hours could be tracked.

In terms of citizen experiences, EISA LTOs noted that on average more women and young people turned out to register and that the average registration process took less than 3 minutes. In addition, the elderly, pregnant women, lactating mothers, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were prioritised. All centers were located where they were supposed to be in accordance with the list of voter registration centers issued by the NEC.

Key Observations

Pre-campaigning

EISA has observed that the NEC has taken direct measures to address the issue of pre-campaigning. At the invitation of the NEC Chairperson, LTOs attended an Inter-Party Consultative Committee (IPCC) meeting, held at the NEC Headquarters on 26 April 2023. The NEC issued a stern warning to political parties engaging in pre-campaigning along with mechanisms for enforcement, inclusive of fines of not less than US \$1,000 and not more than US \$5,000. In terms of provision 14.3 the 2023 general elections guidelines, pre-campaigning refers to any campaign activities that occur ahead of the stipulated campaign period as declared by the NEC. In accordance with the electoral calendar, campaigns are scheduled to run from 5 August 2023 to 8 October 2023. Nonetheless, EISA observers spotted several billboards in residential locations, specifically in Nimba, Bong, and Grand Gedeh.



Figure 1 Picture 1- Banners of the alleged pre-election campaign which was captured in Bong County.

The main issue noted by LTOs is that it is difficult to define what qualifies as pre-campaigning considering that political parties morph their campaign messages with their voter education messages. In this regard, the regulations have a shortcoming in the sense that they do not delve into the type of content or features that define pre-campaigning and only narrow pre-campaigning down to the timeline. EISA has since observed that in response to the criticism raised by political parties on their laxity in apprehending those engaging in pre-campaigning, the NEC has given political parties up until 15 May 2023 to

remove all pre-campaign posters and other promotional materials. Cases of pre-campaigning were especially high in Bong, Nimba, and River Cess, as political parties seized the opportunity to mobilise voters to register as a means of introducing political candidates, especially for Senatorial elections.

Voter Trucking

Voter trucking is an issue of concern in all the counties observed. EISA LTOs reported on the difficulty of identifying incidents of voter trucking, compounded by loopholes in the legal framework.

Legally, the Constitution guarantees the right of every Liberian citizen to register and vote. The election law also provides the freedom to allow every Liberian citizen “to vote only in the precinct of the electoral district for which he/she registered.” The NEC voter registration regulation also provides that “A person must register at the voter registration center established for the locality where he or she ordinarily resides.” These provisions have opened a window for diverse interpretations. In Nimba County, it was observed that all eligible applicants were registered regardless of their place of residence. In 78% of the voter registration centers visited people who did not reside within the vicinity of the center were allowed to register.

The socio-economic argument relates to the manipulation of citizens based on their economic vulnerability. Political parties were seen as the main instigators of voter trucking, as they allegedly offered remuneration and transport to go and register in their preferred strategic interest to maximise their advantage. In Grand Gedeh, it was reported to EISA LTOs that a fee of US\$ 10 was given to those that agreed to be transported to Zwedru for registration. Based on other interlocutors consulted it appears that the average cost of trucking a registrant was between US\$ 10-20.

The practice of voter trucking also becomes difficult to prove, with transporting vehicles strategically dropping potential registrants further from the voter registration centers to avoid direct observation by NEC officials and observers. The prevalence of people walking towards voter registration centers in large groups was highlighted by LTOs observed in Lofa, River Cess, and Grand Gedeh. As stakeholders consulted noted that those engaging in voter trucking were becoming smarter and dropping registrants a few kms away from the center to avoid suspicions. This places a burden on NEC as they must ascertain what constitutes voter trucking as this must be directly observed and proven. There was general dissatisfaction with the NEC’s response to allegations of voter trucking as political party agents shared the common sentiment that the NEC should be more involved in confirming allegations instead of placing the burden of proof on the complainants and the Liberia National Police (LNP).

The prevalence of voter trucking also alludes to the dissatisfaction of voters with the services received from public representatives. Voters are therefore choosing to register in their places of origin where they believe they will be able to hold representations accountable in the post-election period. These citizens believe it is their right to vote in their places of origin to maximise the impact of their vote. Their strong attachment to their places of origin is also fueled by ethnic, cultural and socio-economic ties. This issue was raised by party agents and civil society organisations in Sinoe, Lofa, Bong, Grand Gedeh, Nimba and River Cess.

The issue of voter trucking is a long-standing issue in Liberia. In counties that share borders, the electoral process needs to consider the power of ethnic ties that can bypass the criteria for voter eligibility. As an example, Lofa and Nimba counties share the border with Guinea and Sierra Leone respectively and as a result, experience more cases of persons that are non-Liberian citizens attempting to register. As an example, LTOs observed an influx of foreigners attempting to register at the Yeala BVR center, noting that this was consistent with the long queues observed at BVR centers located in border communities. Upon inquiring, EISA LTOs found that Sierra Leone had also faced attempts by Liberian citizens attempting to

register to vote in its general elections scheduled for 24 June 2023. It may be worthwhile for immigration officials to consider regional collaboration in tackling the issue of foreign voters.

Accessibility of the voter registration centers

EISA observers noted with concern the significant distances to voter registration centers across counties, especially at the district level. In River Cess County, District 1, villages like Sand Beach and Nimba Junction were not provided with VRCs. Applicants from these villages had to travel for 10 km and 18 km respectively to the nearest registration center at Neezuin Town to register. Administrative district staffers mostly noted that distance was a barrier to registration as voters must travel for more than 10 km to access a BVR center. This was also noted and observed in Konobo District.

EISA LTOs reported that based on their experience thus far, it may be more challenging for the locals to reach voter registration centers in some areas, and of more concern to local registrants was the possibility that the centers being used would be the polling stations and no further additions would be made. The NEC confirmed that the BVR centers would serve as polling stations on Election Day. Due to poor road infrastructure, LTOs were not able to observe the voter registration exercise in River Gee, Grand Kru, and Maryland. Poor road infrastructure also affects the ease of travel for those working in administering voter registration. Immigration officials in Grand Gedeh reported that they had to resort to the use of motorbikes for spot checks as cars had limitations in being able to access some areas.

The performance of voter registration machines

EISA observers were satisfied with the conduct of NEC officials at voter registration centers. NEC officials demonstrated good knowledge of the voter registration procedures and handled the BVR equipment in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the biometric data that was being collected. The machines functioned well in 95 % of the voter registration centers visited. There were cases reported of insufficient cartridges and cleaning materials for equipment in Nimba and Grand Gedeh. The depletion of cartridges was widespread in Nimba, where 90% of the stations visited reported that they could not print voters' cards as a result. The effects were observed through lower turnout as citizens were reluctant to register if they would not receive their cards instantly, with many opting to wait until the cartridge arrives or to try other centers that had functioning printers. As a positive, the system did enable staff to register voters and back up the application so that once the cartridge was replaced, cards could be printed.

In following up, observers met with the NEC magistrate for lower Nimba together with a Laxton Group field supervisor technician, who confirmed that there had been a delay in the shipment of equipment materials and that they would be able to replenish centers adequately from 4 May 2023. The EISA LTOs learned that each voter registration center had been provided with an average of two cartridges since the start of BVR and that based on voter registration turnout, the cartridge took an average of two to three days to deplete. The EISA team also noted as good practice that there was a technician employed as part of the election staff to deal with equipment issues at each center. Technicians at voter registration centers were further supported by the electoral supervisors at the district level. The overall feedback from observers is that BVR equipment has functioned well even in remote areas.

Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming

Women

EISA LTOs noted that women participated actively as registrants, party agents, and NEC temporary staff. For instance, at the BVR centers 1 in 3 registration officials were young females, preliminary data at BVR centers suggest that there will be more female registrants as opposed to men. Pregnant women and lactating mothers were given priority access in BVR centers. The CVE content and messaging targeted women and encouraged women to turn up and register, especially in rural areas. The CVE outreach strategies included places frequented by women such as markets, water points, churches, and health centers. Towards the end of the BVR phase 2 process, EISA observed that on 11 May 2023, political parties and the National Elections Commission (NEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which signals political parties' commitment to nominating women in a minimum of 30% of their candidate listings in the upcoming 2023 General Elections.

Youth participation

EISA LTOs reported on the prevalence of young people who were attempting to register across counties. This was encouraging as many of the youth would be first-time voters, born in 2005. EISA LTOs deployed in Lofa were able to find some possible reasons from NEC officials and young people as to why there was a big turnout of young people. Some of the reasons given were that young people found the appearance of the voter's card appealing and 'cool' especially as many did not have national ID cards as yet and that a political aspirant had put in the work in terms of mobilising young people to register. The issue of under-age voting was also cited as a concern by NEC staff, noting that a lot of youth who looked younger than 18 were attempting to register. LTOs in Lofa, reported on a developing case of alleged under-age registration in Foya district, whereby a father was arrested for allegedly conspiring with the media and a political candidate to publish fake news that his son was underage². EISA LTOs were, however, concerned that the provision that those turning 18 after the 11th of May 2023, would not be able to register, will disenfranchise youth that would have met the legal age requirement to vote on the 10th of October 2023. EISA LTOs also noted that young people are the main targets of voter trucking and remain vulnerable to the manipulation tactics of candidates.

Persons Living with Disabilities

EISA LTOs reported that 20 of the 157 BVR centers were located upstairs and difficult to access for with Disabilities (PWDs).

In addition, PWDs living in rural communities were most likely to be limited by long travel distances to BVR centers. This issue was highlighted at a Civic and Voter Education (CVE) cell coordination meeting in Lofa, noting that some BVR centers required people to travel for 4-6 hours to register. EISA LTOs in Sinoe, noted the positive inclusion of the National Union of Disabled (NOUD) to conduct CVE targeted at PWDs,

² The case ruling is scheduled for 17 May 2023 at the Foya Magistrate court.

women, and youth. EISA LTOs also noted as best practice that NEC officials were aware that PWDs were given priority access at the BVR centers.



Figure 2: Two registration centers in Grand Gedeh County located at LOIC Youth Building and Zwedru Multilateral High School where access for persons with disabilities is limited due to stairs.

Media

EISA LTOs noted that at the county level, political ownership of media houses is prevalent. This adds complexity to the mandate of media to provide an equal playing field for all aspiring candidates to relay their messages during elections. In cases where community-based radio stations are owned by politicians, there is a risk of biased reporting that can mislead citizens and lead to conflict. EISA LTOs are currently conducting a mapping exercise of media outlets in respective counties and will provide an analysis of the media landscape in the coming weeks. In terms of the performance of the media during the BVR process, EISA LTOs reported that community-based radio stations were the most active in terms of relaying information about the BVR process, focusing on the importance of registering to vote. Media practitioners consulted noted that the lack of commercial advertising as a barrier to the growth of quality coverage and reporting. Another key challenge raised was that the ability to provide real-time coverage of developing stories on-site was constrained by poor road conditions.

Political party and candidate agents

EISA observers reported that the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) with 58% representation and Unity Party (UP) with 81% representation were dominant in terms of fielding party agents at the BVR centers visited. In terms of inter-party relations, observers reported no incidents or clashes between political parties and noted that party agents did not interfere with the process and had not lodged any official complaints. LTO's were also informed of various allegations regarding the role of political aspirants that were allegedly trucking voters to improve their winning chances. These allegations, if left unmanaged have the potential of simmering inter-party tensions.

Civil Society Observers

EISA acknowledges the positive contribution made by citizen observer groups and CSOs in promoting democratic principles and holding public officials and institutions accountable in Liberia's electoral and political processes. However, during the observation of 107 voter registration centers during Phase 2, it was noted that only four centers had citizen observers present, mainly from LEON and ECC, which is lower than what was observed during the Phase 1.

Civic education

EISA LTOs reported that the NEC in Upper Lofa implemented Civic and Voter Education (CVE) activities through the cell system. Community-based organizations in each district have been assigned to undertake CVE in their respective communities. Three grassroots organizations have been responsible for CVE in Upper Lofa, and they have employed outreach strategies such as radio talk shows, open market outreach, community meetings, interactions with women's groups, and outreach to junior schools. The CVE coordinators have noted progress in citizen awareness of the BVR process due to the neutrality of the CVE and its message.

However, challenges remain, including the trend among first-time registrants who want incentives, long distances between BVR centers and villages, , inadequate grants for CVE outreach and lack of equipment. Similar CVE activities took place in Sinoe County, but socio-economic conditions could affect citizen turnout for registration.

Key Issues noted during Phase 2

EISA teams on the ground during Phase 2 directly observed specific challenges relating to the registration process. These included:

Lack of contractual clarity, Late Contract Signing, and Disparities in payment for meal allowances: Most centers observed that NEC officials had not signed contracts. In response to reports from other observer groups, EISA observers enquired from NEC staff at registration centers about their NEC contracts, and whether food allowances and part-payments had been received by staff at the centers at the time of observation. In 17 of the 107 stations visited, NEC temporary staff had not seen or signed their contracts and were all working based on the trust that the NEC would pay them for work done after the conclusion of Phase 2. The engagement by NEC of its temporary staff without a contract was a practice observed from phase 1 of BVR proceedings. According to the NEC, contracting and food allowance payments were being given priority and a verification process was ongoing to verify the temporary staff details before they can be paid. EISA notes that this is an administrative matter that is largely within the NEC's control to manage, and EISA encourages the NEC to improve on this aspect of election management for the remaining electoral processes.

Infrastructure: Infrastructure is crucial when it comes to technology, particularly in terms of internet access and power supply. However, remote areas such as River Cess lack the necessary infrastructure and have limited or no access to networks that can provide real-time updates on the total number of

registered applicants. In addition, the Long-Term Observers (LTOs) noted that the NEC extended the voter registration hours by two hours, allowing registration to continue until 7 pm instead of the usual 5 pm on May 10 and 11, 2023. However, some of the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) centers did not adhere to this instruction as news of the extension did not reach all officials, possibly due to the lack of adequate telecommunication infrastructure. As a result, the extended hours were not uniformly applied in all cases. In places where voter registration hours were extended, lighting was inadequate and made the registration process slower.

The lack of an adequate civil registry: The reality that most citizens do not have national IDs makes the identity verification process highly subjective. In most of the rural BVR centers, LTOs observed that NEC and immigration officials resorted to oral testimonies, language, names, and accents to verify nationality and age. The lack of IDs, lack of population census data, and clarification on the boundary delimitation process also compound the problems of voter trucking and underage voting.

Poor infrastructure of rural voter registration centers: Observations made indicate that voter registration centers in rural areas are more vulnerable than those in urban areas due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and resources, which presents serious security risks. Many of these centers are located in open halls without visible policing, and security officials are often not present as they are assigned to multiple stations within districts.

Inadequate security measures: The overall security of the process was compromised as most of the stations observed did not have security officials stationed at the BVR centers. BVR centers located in rural areas were even more vulnerable considering the distance between centers and poor network coverage.

Conclusion:

Based on observations made, EISA is of the view that Phase 2 of the BVR process has proceeded well. Voter registration procedures have been largely followed by NEC officials and citizens. EISA LTOs will continue to monitor the voter registration exercise in its entirety including data deduplication, and exhibition of the preliminary voter's roll, and thereafter prioritise stakeholder consultations to follow up on key issues as noted in this report. EISA commends the NEC for conducting the 2023 BVR in accordance with its published timeframes. EISA urges all registered citizens to verify their registration details when the exhibition process is open to the public. EISA appreciates the NEC for enabling civil society organizations, political parties, media, and international observers to observe the BVR process. EISA urges all stakeholders, including political parties, citizens, the media, and civil society, to show restraint, tolerance, and respect for election regulations and codes of conduct as the electoral process progresses in preparation for the October 2023 election.

Recommendations

To NEC:

1. NEC should ensure effective public awareness and voter education campaigns to enlighten the public on the provisional voters' roll exhibition and its significance.
2. Provide legal and procedural clarity on voter trucking: It is crucial to seek further clarification from the appropriate authorities on what actions constitute voter trucking since the law does not specify. NEC should offer a clear definition to ensure individuals are aware of what constitutes voter trucking and its consequences.
3. Raise awareness on electoral laws: To ensure free and fair elections, many people may need to be educated on the laws surrounding voter registration and trucking. Conducting public awareness campaigns and workshops can help in raising awareness among the public on the importance of adhering to electoral laws.
4. Strengthen penalties for voter trucking: To discourage individuals from engaging in illegal activities such as voter trucking, there may be a need to increase the penalties for such offenses. Increasing the fines and imprisonment time for those caught can serve as a stronger deterrent and emphasize the severity of the offense.
5. Address all complaints related to pre-campaigning and ensure all political parties engaging in pre-campaigning are given the appropriate censure and fines.

To Government:

6. The legislature should consider the passage of legislation that will enable eligible citizens, including those who turn eighteen between the time of registration and election day an opportunity to register and vote. This would be in line with international good practice and democratic principles.

To Immigration Officials:

7. Consider an integrated regional approach in addressing the long-standing issue of foreign registration and foreign voting during elections.

To political parties:

8. To ensure their representatives and agents are well trained to follow through the remaining biometric voter registration processes.
9. To avoid mobilising voters along ethnic, tribalism lines, use of divisive language, pre-campaigning and voter trucking throughout the electoral process.

Civil Society Organisations

10. Collaborate with the NEC to enhance civic and voter education initiatives, with particular emphasis on marginalized communities, women, youth, persons with disabilities, and rural populations.
11. Support the drive to boost women's political participation, particularly as leaders within political parties and in public administration.

Media

12. Strive to ensure balanced and accurate election coverage. Avoid providing a forum for hate speech, defamation, and incitement to violence and discrimination.
13. Endeavour to provide equal coverage for all political parties to relay their message, especially as the country heads to the candidate nomination stage.

Youth

14. To act responsibly and safeguard their right to freely participate in the electoral process and resist all forms of manipulation.

//END//

About EISA: The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) is a continental not-for-profit organization located in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire with field offices in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Madagascar, Niger, Liberia Chad, and Sudan. EISA has continental and sub-regional programs in the field of elections and democracy throughout Africa. EISA strives for excellence in the promotion of credible elections, citizen participation, and the strengthening of political institutions for sustainable democracy in Africa.

About USAID Support to EISA-IEOM to Liberia: The USAID-funded EISA International Election Observation Mission (EISA-IEOM) Activity seeks to enhance the integrity of the 2023 Liberia Presidential and Legislative elections through the deployment of an independent international election observer mission (EOM) to monitor, assess and report on all phases of the electoral process in accordance with international and regional benchmarks. The IEOM is implemented in close coordination with and the financial support of USAID/Liberia and will complement the efforts of other electoral stakeholders. EISA-IEOM has deployed international LTOs across Liberia to observe BVR Phase 2 of the registration and will compile a Phase 2 and comprehensive BVR report at the conclusion of the inspection process.

Please find the LTOs Arrival Statement: <https://eisa.org/pdf/lib2023ltoarrival.pdf>

EISA-IEOM BVR Phase 1 Report: <https://eisa.org/pdf/lib2023eisabvr.pdf>

For all resources, including EISA statements and reports from the 2017 Liberia Elections <https://eisa.org/epp-liberia.php>