



**FOSTERING PEACEFUL AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS
BY ENHANCING THE CONFIDENCE OF POLITICAL
PARTIES AND VOTERS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS
(*RENFORCEMENT DE LA CONFIANCE DES PARTIS
POLITIQUES ET DE L'ÉLECTORAT – RECOPPEL*)**

**PROGRAM EVALUATION
By Lex Paulson**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 28, 2013, two and a half years after Alpha Condé's swearing-in as Guinea's first democratically elected president, the country held its first competitive multiparty legislative polls. These elections, which should have been held within six months of Condé's inauguration in December 2010, are a significant milestone in Guinea's transition to democracy.

In this context of persistent partisan tensions and protracted political negotiations, on February 21, 2013, the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) began implementing a UNDP-funded program to enhance prospects for peaceful and inclusive legislative elections in Guinea.¹ The specific objectives of the program are to:

- strengthen the capacity of Guinean political parties to gather, analyze and act upon election-day information in a timely and effective manner; and to
- enhance the strategic planning capabilities of Guinean political coalitions within a multiparty setting.
- enhance the capacity of women candidates to compete in the 2013 legislative elections.

To serve these objectives, NDI planned and implemented the following as the primary interventions of the RECOPPEL program:

(1) Creation of election observation tools. NDI designed a series of key pollwatching tools for use by Guinea's political parties, including documents to capture critical election-day information, as well as resources to identify and assist pollwatchers in their duties at the polls.

(2) Designation of party focal points for ongoing dialogue. Each political party participating in RECOPPEL was asked to designate a primary point of contact to receive critical information, share concerns, and update NDI concerning political developments of relevance.

(3) Strategic planning workshops with party leaders. On March 27 and 28, NDI hosted 42 representatives from 33 political parties for a workshop focused on presenting and collaboratively refining the election observation tools of the RECOPPEL program. On July 17, 18, and 22, NDI welcomed 96 representatives from 29 parties for an exercise in electoral mapping and a discussion of strategies for coalition-building.

¹ The RECOPPEL program is jointly funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Peace Building Fund (PBF), the European Union (EU), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

(4) **Training of master trainers.** From August 16 to 20, NDI trained 101 master trainers, selected by their parties, on electoral law and party poll-watching concepts; these master trainers then led step-down training sessions for pollwatcher supervisors in Conakry and in the country's seven regional capitals.

(5) **Training of pollwatcher supervisors.** On September 20 and 21, master trainers, accompanied by NDI staff, trained 191 individuals from 24 parties in the seven regional capitals to become pollwatcher supervisors, who would then be responsible for training party pollwatchers and overseeing them at the polling stations on election day. Master trainers in Conakry trained an additional 103 pollwatcher supervisors.

(6) **Training of database managers.** On September 20 and 22, NDI trained 29 individuals representing 14 parties on database development and communications protocols. Working with these database managers, NDI created electronic database files for their political parties, disaggregated by region and prefecture, comprising names and phone numbers of all trained pollwatchers in order to facilitate the rapid reporting of pollwatching results.

(7) **Training of party delegates.** From September 21 to 26, NDI organized a total of 250 step-down pollwatcher training sessions in Conakry in and the seven regional capitals. A total of 12,530 pollwatchers attended these sessions; 7,893 attending the 159 training sessions in Guinea's seven regions and 4,637 attending the 91 training sessions in Conakry.

Two additional interventions were planned but not implemented. Under the original program design, NDI intended to facilitate the creation of (8) **two shared communication centers** for the *Mouvance présidentielle*² and opposition parties³ to centralize the intake of pollwatching data on Election Day. Under this rubric, these two political groupings would also jointly organize and hold one or several (9) **cross-coalition press conferences** prior to and following Election Day to inform the public on issues and results reported by party delegates to the shared communications centers.

In mid-September, both the ruling party coalition and the opposition coalition informed NDI that they were no longer willing to adhere to the multiparty approach envisioned above. Specifically, leaders from parties playing coordinating roles within these coalitions had failed to reach consensus with other members of their coalition concerning a mutually binding strategy to coordinate and share election-related data. Absent such a consensus, party leaders and NDI agreed that an NDI-

² Parties currently associated with the *Mouvance présidentielle* include the RPG/Arc-en-Ciel (50 seats), UDG (3 seats), UPR, PTS, GUD, GRUP, PNR, UGDD, and NGR (1 seat each).

³ Parties currently associated with the opposition include the UFDG (35 seats), UFR (10 seats), PEDN, UPG (2 seats each), UFC, NFD, PGRP, RDIG, and GPT (1 seat each).

assisted shared center of communications would be unworkable, and that parties would instead deploy pollwatchers and collect election-day information on an individual basis.

Evaluation Context & Methodology

To conduct its evaluation of the RECOPPEL program, NDI selected the following team of independent experts : Professor **Lex Paulson** (Maître de Conference, Sciences Po – Paris; fmr. elections specialist, Democratic National Committee); Professor **Augustin Gnimassou** (University of Conakry); Dr. **Souleymane Dieng** (Member, Commission de Suivi du Code de Bonne Conduite des Partis Politiques); Mr. **Adrien Tossa Montcho** (National Coordinator, Same Rights for All, *Memes Droits pour Tous* - MDT); Professor **Ahmed Therna Sanoh** (Chair of Political Sciences, University of Sonfonia); Mr. **Cheick Diawara** (Spokesman, Commission de Suivi du Code de Bonne Conduite des Partis Politiques); Prof. **Sékou Camara** (Member, Commission de Suivi du Code de Bonne Conduite des Partis Politiques); and Mr. **Lansana Massandouno** (Webmaster, Consortium for the Domestic Observation of Elections in Guinea, *Consortium pour l'Observation Domestique des Elections en Guinee* – CODE)

This evaluation sought to answer three critical questions: (1) How **effective** were RECOPPEL's interventions?, (2) What **impact** did these interventions have on RECOPPEL's Guinean partners and on the election process as a whole?, and (3) How **viable** is this program model for future elections in Guinea?

To answer these three questions, from January 10th to February 6th, 2014, the evaluation team conducted its research in the following manner:

(a) **Review of key documents** pertaining to the RECOPPEL program, including primary program tools and training materials (e.g., the party pollwatcher guide and critical incident form used on Election Day), internal RECOPPEL reports and memoranda, analysis of the 2013 Guinean elections by non-RECOPPEL observers, and supplementary NDI materials concerning party observation of elections.

(b) **Individual, in-person interviews with key international stakeholders**, including representatives of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), European Union (EU), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

(c) **Individual, in-person interviews with key Guinean stakeholders**, including political party leaders, election administrators, and key civil society observers.

(d) **Written interviews** facilitated in-person by the evaluation team in Conakry and each of Guinea's seven regions, using interview guides tailored for each of six types of RECOPPEL stakeholders.

The preliminary results of the evaluation were presented and discussed at a national conference in Conakry, on February 25 and 26, 2014. This event was attended by hundred participants, including leaders of political parties participating in the program, representatives of the Ministries of Justice and of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, members of the National Assembly, representatives of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), representatives of international organizations , members of the diplomatic body, heads of civil society organizations (CSOs) and national and international experts in political parties and governance.

During the conference, the evaluation team presented the main results of their work. The conclusions and recommendations were then discussed by the participants in working groups, each responsible for developing comments on one of the four main phases of the program:

- Recruitment,
- Training,
- Deployment, and
- Communications.

The conclusions and recommendations of the working groups were presented and discussed in a plenary session and the evaluation team has incorporated them into the final version of this report.

Evaluation Results

Upon analyzing the project documentation and the 409 interviews conducted by the evaluation team, the following answers emerged to the evaluation's three critical questions.

(1) Was RECOPPEL an effective program?

High quality of trainings and tools. Participants almost unanimously agreed that RECOPPEL offered them an extremely high quality of pollwatching tools and trainings. Of the 211 pollwatchers interviewed, 80 percent approved of the conditions of their training session, 93 percent expressed high opinions of their trainers, and 97 percent judged that the observation tools prepared by RECOPPEL were “well-adapted to the Guinean context.” “The best training I ever received from an NGO,” declared a pollwatcher from Mamou.

Maintaining impartiality and creating atmosphere of trust and common purpose. In an atmosphere of grave distrust between Guinea's political leaders, members from all sides agreed that RECOPPEL offered a critical forum for discussion and peaceful exchange. In the words of a pollwatching supervisor from Conakry, “The RECOPPEL program proved its neutrality and credibility throughout this electoral process, which in turn permitted political leaders to promote dialogue, reconciliation and mutual understanding.”

Areas of improvement. The collection and reporting of data gathered by party observer teams was impacted significantly by the decision by party leaders to abandon the plan for two shared communications centers to centralize election-day information for *Mouvance* and opposition parties respectively. One party liaison called this “the worst decision taken in the course of the program.” Criticisms were also heard that RECOPPEL had focused its activities too much on Conakry, and had neglected to give special attention to geographic areas of special sensitivity to the quality of elections. Finally, many participants suggested that future programs could be more effective by broadening the scope of trainings to include the revision of voter lists, distribution of voter cards, and transportation of procès-verbaux.

(2) What impact did RECOPPEL have on the elections of 2013?

Engaging parties directly to safeguard the quality of elections. The RECOPPEL program delivered high-quality trainings and tools to 12,530 Guinean pollwatchers, 191 pollwatching supervisors, 101 master trainers, and offered ongoing technical assistance to 25 party liaisons. The director of Search for Common Ground, who coordinated impartial media coverage of the 2013 elections, declared that where irregularities were reported on Election Day, it was critical that her reporters were able to inform the public via radio that party representatives were present in those neighborhoods and registering the facts. A RECOPPEL pollwatcher proudly stated that RECOPPEL “allowed us to put in place a National Assembly worthy of the name, and to do so transparently.” Parties are already capitalizing on this increased capacity, one liaison declaring they would now “capitalize on all the material benefits (supports and tools), as well as immaterial ones (trainings, skills, and experiences) we gained from NDI and apply them to future elections.”

Elevating human capacity. The impact of RECOPPEL was felt not only at the institutional level of the parties but, for the thousands of individuals it engaged, at the personal level as well. A supervisor from Conakry noted, “the RECOPPEL program made me a better trainer, not only for politics but for my community, working on behalf of women and for the development of my country.” A RECOPPEL party liaison went further, concluding that the program “permitted our pollwatchers to dare to learn and defend the law. What if we continued to empower pollwatchers and gave them trainings lasting two or three days? We would be a model of democracy for the region and – why not? – the world.”

Paving the way to greater cross-party cooperation. RECOPPEL did not eliminate the atmosphere of distrust that has characterized political life in Guinea. What it offered, however, was a platform – and according to some, the only platform – to give political leaders the opportunity to collaborate and build confidence in one another. As one party liaison declared, “the RECOPPEL program contributed enormously to the establishment of brotherhood and confidence, first between party liaisons, then between political parties. Every discussion we attended allowed us to speak openly and frankly to each other – this is a benefit worth preserving.” In his individual interview, former prime minister and current UFR leader Sidya Touré

was emphatic: “We badly need this framework for cross-party dialogue to remain in place.”

(3) Does RECOPPEL present a viable model for the future?

Winning the confidence and approval of Guinea’s political parties. With very few exceptions, political parties of every size and description voiced their strong approval of the decision to participate in RECOPPEL, both prior to and following the completion of the program. A pollwatcher from Conakry exhorted NDI “to stay beside us in Guinea as we make our way on the path to democracy, since we have many steps yet to take.” Following his experience in RECOPPEL, a pollwatcher supervisor expressed his optimism that “this program contributed to a spirit of dialogue and consultation, to find a solution and face up to the problems we saw in other elections. I’m persuaded that with RECOPPEL, Guinea can look forward to more free and transparent elections.”

Desire for continuous training opportunities. Through RECOPPEL, party leaders were able to identify areas of party operations, especially internal communications and membership development, where ongoing assistance will be crucial to improve observation activities in future elections. Moreover, thanks to the “step-down” approach offered by RECOPPEL, party members themselves will be able to play a greater and greater role in this training process, shifting the focus from international partners over time. A pollwatching supervisor from Kankan added, “don’t wait until the elections to intervene; instead, multiply your trainings and supports to assure a healthy democracy.”

Broader focus and greater engagement of election administrators. Apart from the communications difficulties mentioned above, the weakest link in RECOPPEL was the participation of Guinea’s election administrators. Evaluation interviews reveal that CENI failed to contribute meaningfully to the training process, with consequences that were noted widely on election day. As a pollwatching supervisor from Conakry concluded, “for better elections we must – we *must* – train hand-in-hand with the CENI, the CECI and everyone involved in planning the elections.” Many RECOPPEL participants argued that this coordination must extend beyond observation at polling places to include monitoring of revisions to voter lists, placement of polling places, distribution of voter cards, and transportation of sensitive election materials, if the quality of future elections is to improve.

Recommendations

For political parties in Guinea:

→ **1. Create a consensus plan for cross-party communications.** Such a plan will only be possible after a painstaking and thorough review, individually and collectively, of the consequences of adopting a fragmented communications strategy

in 2013. Targeted consultations and dialogue between parties will be crucial to meet this objective.

→ **2. Exert greater control over the recruitment process.** Many RECOPPEL participants claimed that parties failed to control the number of party members taking part in trainings, and that many of these were selected in defiance of RECOPPEL criteria. Improve internal communications structures to ensure that recruitment is planned early, controlled centrally, and that lists of names are provided to trainers well in advance.

→ **3. Integrate standard data-management procedures at all levels of the party.** A common complaint among RECOPPEL participants was that lists of names and contact information were not centralized in a common database, and that critical election-day information could frequently only be relayed through informal contacts and recorded by hand. Parties should devise strategies to improve the flow of data and assure their local offices are trained and equipped to do so.

For election administrators:

→ **1. Partner with political parties to increase oversight capacity in geographic areas of special concern.** Several RECOPPEL stakeholders pointed to the region of Guinée Forestière as an example of a region where such reports of irregularities were highest in 2010 and 2013, and where party capacity to prevent fraud was low. Data from domestic and international observers can assist in building a targeted plan for collaboration.

→ **2. Invite participation by party observers earlier in the electoral process.** Trainings should be facilitated by the CENI, political leaders, and international partners to sensitize party observers on the preparation of voter lists, placement of polling places, distribution of voter cards, and transportation of sensitive election materials, especially in the geographic areas mentioned above.

→ **3. Ensure that poll workers are fully informed of the rights and duties of party observers.** While many RECOPPEL pollwatchers had praise for the spirit and diligence of the administrators at their polling place, many others indicated gaps where poll-workers seemed ill-informed as to the role of party representatives, or in some cases, outright hostile. A climate of collaboration and collegiality is critical for the fairness and transparency of future elections.

For future election support programs:

→ **1. Broaden the scope of training sessions to include monitoring activities before and after Election Day.** Both party leaders and international partners highlighted the need for in-depth training sessions on the early stages of election administration mentioned above. Several observers argued that irregularities before and after Election Day may have had a far greater impact than irregularities

which occurred during the voting itself. Parties must be given the ability to observe these stages if their confidence in the elections is to be won.

→ **2. Clarify the roles played by each program participant, and ensure that all stakeholders are fully informed of these roles.** Though RECOPPEL had internal materials outlining the roles played by pollwatchers, supervisors, party liaisons, and others, party leaders and international partners expressed frustration that these roles had not been clarified to them. A dossier of this kind should include at a minimum the criteria for recruitment pertaining to each role and a timeline indicating the phases of their participation in RECOPPEL and their responsibilities at each phase.

→ **3. Emphasize timeliness and “soft skills” among training teams.** The consensus among pollwatchers was that most trainers understood the substance of the RECOPPEL program well, but that many of these needed work on their presentation skills and interaction with trainees. Also, RECOPPEL trainings and meetings too often began late, sapping the motivation of participants; efforts should be redoubled to ensure timely and professional trainings.

→ **4. Need for a national coverage of all polling stations.** One of the major concerns raised by political leaders, different trainers, as well as delegates from civil society relates to a future program of electoral support. They hope that future programs systematically cover 100 per cent of polling stations across the country. They believe that this will truly enhance transparency so as to avoid that areas not covered give rise to fraud of any kind.

I. INTRODUCTION

On September 28th, 2013, citizens of Guinea went to the polls to elect 114 members of their National Assembly, a first in the nation's 57-year history. After five decades of one-party authoritarian rule, Guineans were given a choice among candidates of twenty-two parties, and over five million men and women, an estimated 64 percent of eligible voters, cast ballots.⁴ Three months later, on January 14, 2014, legislators from 18 parties took their places in the new parliament, including 60 from President Alpha Condé's *Mouvance présidentielle* and 54 from parties in opposition.

By themselves, these events should justify cautious optimism on the part of those who wish to see a stable, multiparty democracy take root in Guinea. The success of these elections is more remarkable still given the climate of grave distrust and dysfunction that has marked Guinea's transition to democracy following the death of President Lansana Conté in 2008, the short rule of Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, and the election of President Alpha Condé in 2010. Nevertheless, the successes of the 2013 electoral process were not accidental, nor were they absolute.

Given Guinea's recent political history, the planning and administration of free and credible elections in 2013 was not expected by many observers to be an untroubled process. Unfortunately, these expectations proved to be well-founded: from the choice of an election date to the siting and equipping of polling places to the certification of final results, almost every element of the elections process was touched by controversy and frustration.

Indispensable to the credibility of the parliamentary elections, to widespread citizen participation, and to the broad acceptance of election results, was the active participation of Guinea's political parties in surveillance of the election process. For this reason, NDI was chosen as the implementing partner for a capacity-building program entitled "Fostering Peaceful and Credible Elections by Enhancing the Confidence of Political Parties and Voters in the Electoral Process," known by its French acronym, RECOPPEL⁵. This program was intended to offer technical and training support to Guinea's political parties in collaboration with civil society observers and election administrators to safeguard the quality of the 2013 elections. Through a range of interventions at the national and local levels, RECOPPEL served to keep Guinea's main political actors at the table throughout a difficult election season, and train thousands of party representatives to keep watch personally over the voting process on Election Day.

The process that led to these legislative elections left many of its participants unsatisfied, even those who played the greatest roles in shaping it. Nevertheless, this election marks a hard-won victory on the part of Guinea's political leaders,

⁴ Full 2013 election results available at http://www.ceniguinee.org/legislatives2013_resprov_doc_01.pdf.

⁵ "Le Renforcement de Confiance des Partis Politique et d'Electorat."

party members, civil society actors, and international partners to provide the citizens of Guinea with a credible and peaceful opportunity to make their voices heard. The RECOPPEL program was designed to serve as a critical support and guarantor of the 2013 election process; this report will evaluate whether and how RECOPPEL delivered on its promises, where it fell short, and how to strengthen it for the future.

II. PROGRAM CONTEXT

Persistent political and ethnic tensions impeded the organization of Guinea's first-ever democratic legislative polls for the two and a half years following Alpha Condé's December 2010 swearing-in as president. These polls, which were supposed to be held within six months of Condé's December 2010 inauguration,⁶ were the next milestone in Guinea's transition to democracy following more than 50 years of autocratic rule.

The election date was repeatedly postponed however, and an atmosphere of political uncertainty remained in place throughout 2012 and early 2013, punctuated by street protests and sporadic violence. Parliamentary elections were considered critical in light of the fact that the Guinean constitution grants the National Assembly with critical oversight functions over the executive branch of government, which has dominated all political decision-making in Guinea's 57 years as an independent nation. Though a specially appointed National Transitional Council had assumed legislative duties during the transition, a fairly elected and popularly supported legislative branch remains a critical element in Guinea's transition to stable and peaceful democracy.

Despite attempts at multiparty dialogue facilitated by international partners, pervasive mistrust and mutual suspicion continued to hamper healthy communication among three main political groups expected to field candidates for the Assemblée : President Condé's Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée (RPG/Arc-en-Ciel) and its allies; the Union des Forces Démocratique de Guinée (UFDG), led by 2010 presidential runner-up Cellou Dalein Diallo, and the centrist Alliance pour la Démocratie et Progrés (ADP). Major disagreements remained on the revision of Guinea's voter lists, the creation and distribution of polling places, the timing of major election procedures, the rights of Guineans living abroad to participate, and a number of related issues.

The deadlock over the timing and administration of elections continued until an accord mediated by UN Secretary General Special Representative Said Djinnit and signed by Guinean political leaders on July 3 established the date of September 24

⁶ Signed on January 15, 2010, the Ouagadougou Accords paved the way for Guinea's democratic transition by appointing an interim president of the republic, who in turn appointed a civilian prime minister to lead the transition government. The Accords provided for legislative elections to take place within six months.

for the election of deputies to the National Assembly.⁷ The agreement stipulated that South African operator Waymark⁸ would be used for the revision of the 2013 voters list, as desired by the ruling coalition, and allowed Guineans abroad to vote, a concession to the opposition. Guinea's CENI had 84 days to prepare for the elections.

After threats by the opposition shortly before the planned September 24 polls to resume nationwide protests unless certain electoral grievances were addressed, notably the creation of additional polling stations in areas perceived to be opposition strongholds, this date underwent a final revision, and the long-awaited elections took place on September 28, 2013.

It was in February 2013, with elections nominally on the horizon but an election date still unconfirmed, that the RECOPPEL program was formally launched. At this time, NDI and its Guinean partners came to the conclusion that despite the continued uncertainty in the election calendar, preparations should begin as early as possible to ensure that enough time remained to strengthen parties' technical capacities and train sufficient numbers of pollwatchers to achieve a meaningful outcome.

The objective of RECOPPEL was "to enhance, if warranted, the confidence of Guinean political party leaders and the general public in the country's legislative electoral process, and hence promote peaceful elections." NDI pledged to work with Guinean parties of every affiliation and size to provide them with the technical and logistical assistance necessary to more systematically and effectively monitor the legislative elections.

To serve this overall objective, a series of tools and training sessions were designed by the RECOPPEL team to:

- strengthen the capacity of Guinean political parties to gather, analyze, and act upon election-day information, and,
- enhance the strategic planning capabilities of Guinean political coalitions within a multi-party setting.
- enhance the capacity of women candidates to compete in the 2013 legislative elections.

⁷ Of the 114 deputies to be elected, one-third (38) were to be elected via a plurality vote system in single-member districts and the remaining two-thirds (76) via a closed-list proportional representation system.

⁸ Waymark is the software system purchased by the government for the revision of the electoral list. Its use is contested by the opposition, who accuse the government of selecting the company in an opaque manner to replace the Sagem software that was used for the 2010 presidential election. According to electoral law, the Guinean diaspora is permitted to vote in national elections; however, the government until recently contended that because a portion of the legislative seats are allocated on the basis of local constituencies, legislative elections did not meet this criteria. The functioning of the CENI has been a recurring issue over the past two years, with opposition parties claiming that the CENI president acts unilaterally and without consulting opposition CENI members. At the start of the dialogue, the elections were scheduled for June 30. The opposition contested this date since it was decided unilaterally and not approved by the CENI plenary as per CENI procedures.

These interventions included the following:

(1) Creation of election observation tools for party pollwatchers. In consultation with key Guinean stakeholders and international partners, NDI designed a series of key pollwatching tools for use by political parties,⁹ including a Pollwatcher Observation Form, Supervisor Summary Form, Critical Incident Form, Polling Place Results Form, and a Party Pollwatcher Guide explaining the rights and responsibilities of party delegates, including the proper use of the abovementioned documents. These tools, together with RECOPPEL t-shirts, laissez-passers issued by the CENI, phone cards, flashlights, folders, and pens, comprised the pollwatching kits distributed to each delegate to assist their work on Election Day.

(2) Designation of party focal points for ongoing dialogue. Each party participating in RECOPPEL was asked to designate a primary point of contact to receive critical information, share concerns, and update NDI concerning political developments of relevance.

(3) Strategic planning workshops with party leaders. On March 27 and 28, NDI hosted 42 representatives from 33 political parties for a workshop focused on presenting and collaboratively refining the election observation tools of the RECOPPEL program. On July 17, 18, and 22, NDI welcomed 96 representatives from 29 parties for an exercise in electoral mapping and a discussion of strategies for coalition-building.

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(6) Training of database managers. On September 20 and 22, NDI trained 29 individuals representing 14 parties on database development and communications protocols. Working with these database managers, NDI created electronic database files for their political parties, disaggregated by region and prefecture, comprising

⁹ Political parties participating in various stages of the RECOPPEL program included : GRUP, UNED, ADC-Boc, UPG, GUD, UPR, PDG-RDA, UFDG, UFR, PUP, FRONDEG, PTS, NGR, RGUD, PGRP, RPG/Arc-en-ciel, RDIG, UGDD, UFD, PEDN, RGP, PGDP, GECL, AFIA, PPG, PUSG, UDG, UNR, and PNR.

names and phone numbers of all trained pollwatchers in order to facilitate the rapid reporting of pollwatching results.

(7) **Training of party delegates.** From September 21 to 26, NDI organized a total of 250 step-down pollwatcher trainings in Conakry and the seven regional capitals. A total of 12,530 pollwatchers attended these trainings; 7,893 attending the 159 trainings in Guinea's seven regions and 4,637 attending the 91 trainings in Conakry.

Two additional interventions were planned but not implemented. Under the original program design for RECOPPEL, NDI intended to facilitate the creation of (8) **two shared communication centers** for the *mouvance présidentielle* and opposition parties to centralize the intake of pollwatching data on Election Day. Under this rubric, these two political groupings would also jointly organize and hold one or several (9) **cross-coalition press conferences** prior to and following Election Day to inform the public on issues and results reported by party delegates to the shared communications centers.

In mid-September, both the ruling party coalition and the opposition coalition informed NDI that they were no longer willing to adhere to the multiparty approach envisioned above. Specifically, leaders from parties playing coordinating roles within these coalitions had failed to reach consensus with other members of their coalition concerning a mutually binding strategy to coordinate and share election-related data. Absent such a consensus, party leaders and NDI agreed that an NDI-assisted shared center of communications would be unworkable, and that parties would instead deploy pollwatchers and collect election-day information on an individual basis. As such, though NDI provided necessary software and technical support to the nine parties that indicated they would have individual data centers on Election Day, parties did not develop intra-coalition communication chains and held individual press conferences to substantiate their claims about the quality of the electoral process.

The final deployment of pollwatchers and supervisors was thus managed directly by the parties, with limited technical guidance from the NDI team. Though NDI played no official supervisory role on Election Day, NDI representatives visited the offices of four main political parties (RPG, UFDG, PEDN, and UFR) to observe their operations. NDI was able to confirm that each of these parties had an active call center that was receiving information throughout the day from party pollwatchers across the country.

III. EVALUATION CRITERIA & METHODOLOGY

This evaluation sought to answer three critical questions: (1) How **effective** were RECOPPEL's interventions?, (2) What **impact** did these interventions have on RECOPPEL's Guinean partners and on the election process as a whole?, and (3) How

viable is this program model for future elections in Guinea? These three themes – effectiveness, impact, and viability – served as the evaluation’s point of departure.

To conduct its evaluation of the RECOPPEL program, NDI selected the following team of independent experts : Professor **Lex Paulson** (Maître de Conference, Sciences Po – Paris; fmr. elections specialist, Democratic National Committee); Professor **Augustin Gnimassou** (University of Conakry); Dr. **Souleymane Dieng** (Member, Commission de Suivi du Code de Bonne Conduite des Partis Politiques); Mr. **Adrien Tossa Montcho** (National Coordinator, Same Rights for All, *Memes Droits pour Tous* - MDT); Professor **Ahmed Therna Sanoh** (Chair of Political Sciences, University of Sonfonia); Mr. **Cheick Diawara** (Spokesman, Commission de Suivi du Code de Bonne Conduite des Partis Politiques); Prof. **Sékou Camara** (Member, Commission de Suivi du Code de Bonne Conduite des Partis Politiques); and Mr. **Lansana Massandouno** (Webmaster, Consortium for the Domestic Observation of Elections in Guinea, *Consortium pour l’Observation Domestique des Elections en Guinee* – CODE)

Between January 10th and February 6th, 2014, NDI’s evaluation team conducted the main data-gathering activities to evaluate the successes and identify areas of improvement within the RECOPPEL program.

The evaluation team conducted its research in the following manner:

(a) **Review of key documents** pertaining to the RECOPPEL program, including primary program tools and training materials (e.g., the party pollwatcher guide and critical incident form used on election day), internal RECOPPEL reports and memoranda, analysis of the 2013 Guinean elections by non-RECOPPEL observers, and supplementary NDI materials concerning party observation of elections. A full bibliography of reviewed documents is included as **Appendix A** ;

(b) **Individual, in-person interviews with key international stakeholders**, including representatives of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), European Union (EU), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

(c) **Individual, in-person interviews with key Guinean stakeholders**, including leaders of Guinea’s three most successful parties in 2013, the RPG/Arc-en-Ciel, UFDG, and UFR; representatives of the Independent National Electoral Commission (*Commission Electorale Nationale Independante* - CENI), the public body which administered the elections; and key civil society actors including the Consortium for the Domestic Observation of Elections in Guinea (*Consortium pour l’Observation Domestique des Elections en Guinée* - CODE), and Search for Common Ground, which led the consortium of Guinean journalists covering the elections; and

(d) **Written interviews** facilitated in-person by the evaluation team in Conakry and each of Guinea's seven regions, using interview guides tailored for each of six types of RECOPPEL stakeholders:

- (i) Party liaisons (*points focaux des partis nationaux*);
- (ii) Master trainers (*maître formateurs des partis*);
- (iii) Pollwatching supervisors (*formateur/superviseurs de parti*);
- (iv) Pollwatchers (*délégués de parti*);
- (v) Local party officials (*fédéraux de parti*); and
- (vi) Database managers (*gestionnaires des bases de donnée*).

In all, the evaluation team successfully completed **409 interviews**: 211 pollwatchers, 105 pollwatching supervisors, 47 local party officials, 21 national party liaisons, 10 master trainers, and 7 database managers. An additional eight interviews account for those conducted with national party leaders, international partners, and the CENI.

Further details on the nature and location of these interviews are given below, and interview guides are included as **Appendix B**.

Interview Methodology

With the input of international partners, NDI-Guinea staff, and the NDI elections team in Washington, the evaluation team prepared an interview guide for each of the six main types of RECOPPEL participants listed above. Interview sessions were conducted between January 14 and February 5 in Conakry, Kindia, Boké, Labé, Faranah, Mamou, Kankan, and Nzérékoré. All party focal points and database managers were invited to participate in interview sessions in Conakry; for the remaining categories, interview subjects were selected with guidance from NDI-Guinea staff to provide



Trainers in Conakry fill out the interview questionnaire

adequate representation of parties in opposition, smaller parties, women, youth, and participants from rural areas. Group sizes ranged from a group of six regional

party officials in Nzérékoré to 74 pollwatchers in Conakry, with the average session including 15 to 30 interview subjects.

Where needed, evaluation team members assisted participants in registering their answers to interview questions. Otherwise, interview subjects were introduced to the goals and methods of the evaluations, walked through the interview questions as a group, and then given several hours to write their responses with evaluation team members offering clarifications when asked. Follow-up interviews were conducted by phone to ensure that adequate numbers of women, youth, opposition and smaller parties, and rural participants were included from each of Guinea's seven regions.

The main objective of these interviews was to solicit the views of RECOPPEL participants at every level of the program as to the effectiveness, impact, and viability of the supports offered to them. Synthesizing these views into a full picture of the RECOPPEL program required an awareness of **the diversity of participants** interacting with the RECOPPEL team. This diversity of perspectives was reflected not only in the roles each participant played in RECOPPEL, as mentioned above, but in time¹⁰ and in location as well.

Equally important was the solicitation of opinions on the part of those most likely to be under-represented in Guinea's political process, including women, young people, smaller parties, and participants from rural areas. Special attention, therefore, was given to selecting interview subjects from these groups in at least as great a proportion as their participation in RECOPPEL; for example, women comprised 19 percent of the pollwatchers trained at Mamou (108 out of 565), and subsequently 26% of those interviewed for this evaluation (6 out of 23).

The interview guides were developed to solicit **both quantitative and qualitative responses**. For example, formateur/superviseurs were asked to rate the quality of their trainers on a "Excellent / Très Bien / Satisfaisant / Pas Satisfaisant" scale, with space provided to explain their answer; conversely, they were presented with open-ended questions concerning their opinion of the impact of the RECOPPEL program on the political climate in Guinea, and suggestions for improving the program moving forward.

The balance between qualitative and quantitative questions was shifted toward a more qualitative approach for interview subjects, such as the national party focal points, whose depth of engagement with RECOPPEL and fluency in written French was expected to be greater, given the experience of NDI's team. While the balance between qualitative and quantitative questions was set differently for each category, all interview subjects were given opportunities to provide feedback in their own

¹⁰ For example, the majority of master trainers "left" the active supervision of the program after their training in late August, several weeks before the party pollwatchers "entered" it.

words as to their overall impressions of and recommendations for the RECOPPEL program.

The following table summarizes the written interviews conducted by the evaluation team:

REGION	TYPE	Trained	Women	Interviewed	Women
Conakry	Supervisors	103	15	40	4
	Pollwatchers	4637	556	74	21
Boké	Supervisors	27	6	12	1
	Pollwatchers	1174	128	23	3
Kindia	Supervisors	27	2	9	1
	Pollwatchers	1358	251	18	4
Mamou	Supervisors	22	1	8	0
	Pollwatchers	565	108	23	6
Labé	Supervisors	28	5	6	2
	Pollwatchers	795	230	39	7
Kankan	Supervisors	20	2	8	2
	Pollwatchers	1383	127	7	2
Faranah	Supervisors	32	30	9	1
	Pollwatchers	999	213	8	1
Nzérékoré	Supervisors	35	5	13	5
	Pollwatchers	1619	228	19	2
TOTAL	Supervisors	294	66	105	16
	Pollwatchers	12,530	1841	211	48

In addition, the evaluation team conducted written interviews with 21 party liaisons (*points focaux de parti*), 47 local party officers (*fédéraux de parti*), 10 master trainers (*maître formateurs*), and 7 party database managers (*gestionnaires des bases de donnée*).



Data analysis

Data Analysis

Once acquired, all information was assessed according to the three principal lenses outlined above: what does the information reveal about the **effectiveness**, the **impact**, and the **viability** of the RECOPPEL program?

A word is warranted here about how each of these three terms is treated within the special context of this evaluation and of Guinea's recent political history. A RECOPPEL intervention is deemed **effective** if it delivered on the expectations of all stakeholders to the intervention. In this sense, the perspectives of each type of stakeholder must be considered alongside one another to arrive at a complete estimation.

For example, if the participants of a delegate training claim to have been very pleased and well-informed by the training, but an international partner points out that those participants were misinformed as to a key provision of electoral law, the training cannot be deemed an effective one; conversely, if the participants of the training were perfectly well-informed, but left unhappy with NDI because they expected to be paid more for their attendance, the training can also not be deemed effective. Effectiveness thus requires a holistic view of the expectations and retrospective impressions of all stakeholders.

Under ideal empirical conditions, the **impact** of RECOPPEL on the capacity of Guinea's political parties would be assessed starting from a baseline established along a range of qualitative and quantitative parameters prior to the RECOPPEL program. For example, if a party had 5,000 trained and active members prior to RECOPPEL, and 10,000 afterwards, this would be a strong indicator of RECOPPEL's impact on that party. Given the practical impediments to gathering such data in Guinea, and the unique challenges of operating within a new and fragile democratic culture, our standards for measuring impact must be adjusted according to the realities of the situation.

For practical purposes, this means assessing impact where possible from the qualitative baseline offered in reports pertaining to the 2010 elections, and principally from the subjective reflections offered by participants in the RECOPPEL program in 2013. The fact that a pollwatcher or party leader concludes that RECOPPEL helped create a peaceful and credible election process, even if not fully substantiated by quantitative data, bears great significance.

Finally, the **viability** of RECOPPEL is measured here through two principal indicators: resources and motivation. If a given intervention has already been

shown to be effective and impactful, it is viable to the extent that resources exist to continue it, and stakeholders are motivated to use those resources. Here as well, the subjective impressions of stakeholders – international partners as well as Guineans – are key in determining whether the record of RECOPPEL in 2013 will yield a RECOPPEL *bis*.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

A. Relations with Guinean Political Parties

Interviews with RECOPPEL liaisons from twenty-one parties revealed a high level of satisfaction with the choice to participate in RECOPPEL. The following represents a sample of the parties' global appreciations of the successes and challenges encountered by RECOPPEL; the liaisons' detailed feedbacks on key elements of the program are provided in subsequent sections.

Initial participation & expectations. Nearly all parties reported that the initial choice to participate in RECOPPEL had caused little controversy within their party. An opposition-party liaison noted, "our party decided willingly to take part in the RECOPPEL program. There were no differences of opinion on this point, our only concern was over the credibility



A working group at the national conference in Conakry

of the elections themselves."

Their expectations for the likelihood of peaceful and credible elections, likewise, were guardedly optimistic. A *Mouvance*-party liaison observed, "we had great expectations that legislative elections would successfully bring our [democratic] transition to a conclusion." An opposition-party liaison agreed that the primary

goal for his party was "to prepare all actors to accept the final [election] results." A *Mouvance* liaison concurred, emphasizing that "the challenge was to create confidence among political leaders, to create a framework for dialogue to ease tensions, erase the fear or temptation to commit fraud."

Inter-party relations. An immediate challenge for the RECOPPEL program was to create an environment where meaningful collaboration between parties was possible. Party liaisons report having brought an open attitude to the program; as one opposition-party liaison declared, "we sought out collaboration between political adversaries, not enemies, in this contest." Nevertheless, evidence remained of strained relationships and, in places, grave distrust. One opposition-party liaison

noted that though his party had tried working in coalitions previously, “certain leaders didn’t abide by their agreements.” Smaller members of the *Mouvance* and opposition reported feeling treated like adversaries instead of partners, while larger parties complained of smaller parties taking credit for the larger parties’ efforts. Another liaison put it simply: “We suffered some low blows.”

Nevertheless, many parties gave credit to RECOPPEL for offering an opportunity for parties to build trust and work toward a common goal. As one opposition-party liaison put it, “the fact that NDI brings together all parties (opposition and *Mouvance*) in one place that alone allows members of these parties to seek a kind of friendship and common purpose.” A liaison from the *Mouvance* agreed: “The meetings hosted by NDI are always great in that they allow us to get to know each other beyond our political affiliations. They definitely contribute to lowering the climate of tension before the elections.”

Approximately half the party liaisons reported having more frequent informal contacts between parties during the RECOPPEL program. The liaison from UNED concluded that based on his party’s experience in RECOPPEL, they now favored “the pursuit of efforts to gather together as coalitions (*Mouvance* and opposition), and create a permanent steering committee within each to allow a democratic culture to take hold.” Despite these quite positive notes, these interviews made it equally clear that active lobbying and continued patience are still necessary to expand this spirit of cross-party collaboration for future elections.

Effectiveness: 3/5. There is a broad consensus that NDI was successful in building and maintaining a broad coalition of stakeholders across the Guinean political spectrum and the international partners present in Guinea. However, interviews with program partners reveal significant gaps in managing expectations and in communicating decisions about how NDI targeted its resources.

Impact: 4/5. Without exception, every party leader and liaison interviewed said that NDI had made significant, even historic, contributions to the political climate in Guinea. The only area of improvement would have been to give parties greater tools to monitor election administration at earlier stages of the process, and to prioritize regions where irregularities were more likely to occur.

Viability: 5/5. RECOPPEL’s key partners are emphatic and unanimous: they want RECOPPEL or something like it to continue. Where relationships with key partners need strengthening, the partners clearly want them strengthened, not abandoned. Even individuals with significant criticisms of RECOPPEL’s performance in 2013 insisted that RECOPPEL be improved and extended for future elections.

B. Trainings

RECRUITMENT

Recommendations from the national conference confirming the report's findings on the recruiting of delegates:

- The level of education of the delegates receiving the training has to be improved for future elections; parties must pay more attention to the selection of militants to train.
- The parties must submit their lists of activists to the team training on time, well before the beginning of training.

Master-trainers. The great majority of parties claim to have selected their master trainers in strict accordance with the criteria elaborated by NDI. Evidence is strong that the trainers selected met the criteria relating to educational attainment; evidence is mixed, however, that these trainers met the criteria relating to their fidelity to their parties of origin. Concerns remain especially high following the confusion over the role of master trainers, explored in greater depth below.

Pollwatching supervisors & pollwatchers. Most parties claimed to have recruited their pollwatchers and supervisors in conformance with the criteria elaborated by NDI, which focused on reliability, honesty, party fidelity, and educational attainment.

An opposition-party liaison noted that whereas “most master trainers, supervisors, and pollwatchers were recruited according to the criteria elaborated by NDI,” that in the case of pollwatchers, “we didn’t have the time or the means we needed, so much of the work was done at the local level (and hard to trace).” A *Mouvance* liaison observed that the recruitment of master trainers and supervisors had been easier to complete according to NDI criteria, but that “some pollwatchers were chosen based on party loyalty only.”

Additional recommendations made at the national conference on recruiting delegates:

- The parties must establish a written examination of their own militants before their selection as a delegate to assess their intellectual skills.
- NDI must announce a strict deadline for parties to submit their lists of participants; if the deadline is not met, the party activists will not be accepted in the classroom.
- In this regard NDI should develop a checklist held by the members of the training team at the entrance of the room, to refuse non-qualified

participants.

- Well-respected but illiterate party representatives should be paired with younger students who can fill out the forms on their behalf, and who don't need to have pre-existing ties to the specific community they serve in on Election Day.

Several parties referred to the difficulty of finding qualified pollwatchers in parts of Guinea's interior regions – “The illiteracy rate is very high in the interior of the country” noted an opposition-party liaison – and others made note of the fact that while young people were the easiest to recruit, they required more time and resources to train. On this point, an opposition liaison concluded, “the majority of master trainers and supervisors were young college graduates, therefore having less experience, but we were determined to rise to the challenge.” Despite these difficulties, no party liaison recommended that NDI lower its standards for recruitment.

Quality of pollwatchers recruited. Pollwatcher supervisors had significant criticisms concerning the quality of delegates recruited by the parties, with 53 percent saying their qualifications were merely “satisfactory,” with only 7 percent considering them “excellent.” Many supervisors noted that parties had not exerted sufficient controls over the recruitment process, providing names of trainees at the last minute (and sometimes not at all), and allowing greater



A delegate in Kindia share his opinion

numbers of trainees to show up than expected.

Supervisors believed that many of these latter categories were motivated more by the per diems offered than by loyalty to their party or desire to participate in the democratic process. A supervisor from Conakry emphasized the need to “make the people at headquarters follow the rules in how we choose our people.”

Nevertheless, 75 percent of supervisors reported that trainees had shown “excellent” or “very good” attention throughout the training (against only 2 percent saying their trainees had been “unsatisfactory” in this regard). A supervisor from Conakry, for

example, who had declared “unsatisfactory” the quality of pollwatchers recruited, noted that “the majority showed great interest in the training, posed relevant questions, and gave their full attention.” Moreover, when asked for their evaluation of the likely capacity of these trainees to perform their duties, 86 percent of supervisors gave a confidence level of 8 out of 10 or better.

Disagreement with the evaluation report on recruitment:

- Some party officials have said that the final decision on the recruitment criteria should be made by the parties and not by NDI.
- However, the parties wish NDI to develop a new training dedicated to the preparation of appropriate recruitment criteria.



Delegates in Mamou

ORGANIZATION & LOGISTICS

Overall. Of the 211 pollwatchers interviewed, 169 (80 percent) were entirely favorable about the conditions at their training session. “The best training I ever received from an NGO,” declared a pollwatcher from Mamou. “The organization of the training went very well,” agreed a pollwatcher from Conakry, “everything promised to us was delivered and the place was nice as well.”

Of the 42 who registered negative opinions, the most commonly cited criticisms were that sessions began late (19, 11 of whom were from Conakry), the agenda seemed overfull (7), the room was too small for the attendees (4), and copies of the agenda were not provided (4, all from Nzérékoré). Feedback from the 105 supervisors was very similar; 67 percent gave a mark of “excellent” or “very good” to the conditions of their training by master trainers, with only a single respondent calling them “unsatisfactory.” Lateness by session organizers was the top target of criticism here as well.

More time for trainings. When asked how they would improve the training process, the top recommendation of pollwatcher supervisors was to increase the time allotted for trainings from a single day to two or more days. Several suggested adding simulation exercises to allow pollwatchers to practice their responses to

different types of election-day incidents. A pollwatcher from Conakry concluded, “The site was chosen well, but the starting and finishing times weren’t respected and given that the day was already going to be pretty full, one day alone really wasn’t enough for a successful training.”

Number of pollwatchers trained. Of the supervisors interviewed, 11 percent reported training more than 200 pollwatchers, 46 percent trained between 100 and 200, 24 percent trained between 50 and 100, and 19 percent trained fewer than 50. Many of these reported receiving a higher-than-expected number of participants, for the reasons stated above. A supervisor from Conakry declared, “Our numbers went up because the room was taken over by people without certification letters from their parties, and we didn’t have good participant lists – this was all because of the *per diems*.” A colleague from Conakry was even blunter: “some parties just sent pollwatchers any which way.” Several noted as well that CENI’s alterations of the elections calendar had negatively impacted their training schedule.

Engagement with the CENI. A weak aspect of RECOPPEL trainings, regretted by several pollwatching supervisors, was the lack of engagement with election administrators prior to Election Day. Very few supervisors or pollwatchers reported that CENI representatives had played a meaningful role at their trainings. This absence carried a double impact: party leaders decried a lack of transparency in the preparation of elections, while both pollwatchers and their supervisors noted that polling place administrators seemed less than fully informed as to the roles and responsibilities of the observation teams. As a pollwatching supervisor from Conakry concluded, “for better elections we must – we *must* – train hand-in-hand with the CENI, the CECI and everyone involved in planning the elections.”

What was the most important thing you learned in your RECOPPEL training?
“As a pollwatcher representing my party at a polling place, my duty was to keep up a spirit of courtesy, of vigilance, and of common respect, while noting any irregularities that took place.” – Pollwatcher, Boké

Inclusion of party representatives. Several party liaisons underscored the necessity of including party representatives in the planning and presentation of training sessions. Citing the example of a boisterous training at Lycée Kipé in Conakry, one liaison declared that NDI should “never again go in front of pollwatchers while leaving party liaisons aside.” Several supervisors emphasized the importance of building skills and relationships among trainers prior to the trainings themselves; one supervisor from Conakry requested that future programs “educate and train party members well in advance. A better internal organization of parties is needed, as well as stronger trust between trainers and NDI because if this trust is there, we can reach the goals we set.”

TRAINERS & TOOLS

Additional recommendations made at the national conference on training delegates:

- Encourage gender parity in the selection of master trainers, trainers and delegates.
- Ensure if possible some training in national languages for some delegates.

Quality of trainers. Pollwatchers were overwhelmingly complimentary of their trainers, with 196 (93 percent) registering a positive impression overall. The few criticisms centered upon the pedagogical approach of the trainers rather than their substantive knowledge, with several participants complimenting the trainers on their intelligence but noting that the tone and quality of interaction with participants could have been better. A pollwatcher from Conakry noted, for example, that his trainer “explains and expresses himself well; a weak point, though, as that he doesn’t give others enough chance to speak.” Supervisors voiced similar concerns about the pedagogical skills of the master trainers, with 81 percent marking them as “excellent” or “very good” nevertheless.

Recommendations from the national conference confirming the report’s findings on the training of delegates:

- Increase the number of training days to 2-3 days and complete all training of delegates no later than five days before Election Day.
- Ensure that the training rooms can accommodate more participants than expected.
- Develop an assessment tool in order to ensure a good level of interaction between trainers and participants.

A party liaison who pronounced himself “very satisfied” with the impact of the RECOPPEL program on his party observed nevertheless that the trainings he attended had been too heavy on one-way communication and proposed that future trainings allow more time for exchanges between trainers and participants.

Several supervisors additionally cautioned master trainers not to introduce partisan messages into the training. As a supervisor in Conakry put it, “the master trainers were high-level but certain ones prejudiced the training because we could easily tell which party they were in.”



RECOPPEL delegates with their tools

Quality of tools. The very high quality of RECOPPEL’s election tools was a nearly unanimous verdict on the part of supervisors and pollwatchers. Of 211 pollwatchers interviewed, 204 (97 percent) thought the tools were “well-adapted to the Guinean context.” Likewise, 93 of 105 supervisors (88 percent) rated the tools “excellent” or “very good,” and following Election Day, 98 percent reported that they had been well-adapted to realities on the ground. The few criticisms in this area related to the length of the Observation Form and the complexity of the Critical Incident Form. Typical was a pollwatcher from Conakry who commented, “the tools were well-adapted to Guinea but took some time to understand.” As a result of the high quality of these tools, 87 percent of supervisors reported feeling confident at the end of their training that they were fully prepared for any election-day contingencies.

A broader scope of trainings. Several parties suggested that future programs broaden the content of pollwatcher trainings to include observation activities before and after Election Day. For example, one party liaison requested new trainings “on the handling of election materials, so we can reduce fraud there,” as well as “ongoing trainings like these, not just during the election period.”

Disagreement with the evaluation report on training logistics:

- The party representatives criticized NDI for not providing the dates and training agendas to the party HQ on time. They advised NDI to organize more frequent consultations with the parties’ focal points to finalize the timing of training.

Likewise, a supervisor from Mamou requested that “in the future, I would like NDI to add [trainings on] vote-counting and on the proper handling of official results.” A supervisor from Conakry suggested that future programs adopt a broader set of educational methods, “to spread information using videos (short films) on good governance, and also theatre, music, and poetry as well.”

Effectiveness: 4/5. RECOPPEL trainees were near-unanimous in their praise of NDI's trainings, and especially of the high quality of training materials. Problems with recruitment lowered the standard of participants in some areas, however, and some trainers had room for improvement in the "soft skills" necessary to motivate trainees and create an environment of mutual learning and respect.

Impact: 4/5. Parties report that RECOPPEL trainings have presented them with an enormous opportunity, namely a long list of trained and experienced pollwatchers that could become active party members and leaders. As of yet, not enough concrete planning has taken place for parties to capitalize on this opportunity.

Viability: 4/5. Almost all participants in RECOPPEL trainings are eager for more. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the supply of high-quality trainers is in place to meet this growing demand, especially in "zones sensibles" where this training is most needed.

C. Deployment

PREPARATION

Terms of Reference. An area of concern for supervisors was that the terms of reference for their engagement, provided following their training by master trainers and certification by RECOPPEL, were not adequately clear. Only 58 percent of respondents said that their terms of reference had been "very clear," with 30 percent saying they had been "satisfactory," and 11 percent saying they had been "not at all clear." "Not at all clear," declared a supervisor from Conakry, "because I left just like that, without knowing who I was going to train." A colleague from Conakry agreed, claiming, "Neither the number of pollwatchers to train nor the details on financial compensation were defined." Overall, supervisors identified the communications structure and financial arrangements as the two areas which remained the least clear to them following their engagement by RECOPPEL.

Communications. Several parties mentioned suffering from a lack of resources to ensure communication by telephone and the transportation of observation-related materials and party personnel. As explored in greater detail below, the decision to abandon a multiparty communications structure also led to widespread frustration; unfortunately, a significant number of RECOPPEL participants blamed NDI rather than their own party leaders for the inconveniences associated with this decision. One liaison commented that his pollwatchers were "frustrated when they found out they were no longer a part of NDI's operation but only [reporting to] their own parties." A second liaison characterized the problem as a failure of RECOPPEL without blaming NDI specifically, noting that his pollwatchers were "managed apart

from RECOPPEL, given that our reporting structure and communications center weren't functional."

Additional recommendations made at the national conference on the deployment of delegates:

- Only train a quantity of master trainers that can be supported throughout the program. Put a better system of communication in place between NDI and MFs. Some representatives noted that a number of master trainers were not used by their party.
- Create a committee within each party responsible for adapting the work plan according to possible changes by INEC.
- To minimize the problem of absenteeism, give each party delegate an identification code to clarify and verify their geographical distribution.
- Provide observation teams, especially the ones monitoring polling stations in rural areas, with alternative means to share their information on Election Day (e.g. cars, motorcycles, cell phones).

List management. Of the twenty-one parties interviewed, only six specified that they used Excel or other software to manage their lists of master trainers, supervisors, and pollwatchers. Several parties described sending contacts to and from their headquarters via SMS, and a few were left to keep lists by hand, as one party liaison noted, "Given our lack of material and logistical resources." About half of all parties declined to specify how they had managed their lists. One opposition-party liaison cited a lack of adequate time to incorporate new data-management procedures: "We couldn't apply this model because the people who were trained didn't have time to put the plan into action, so we had to do everything by hand."

Recommendations from the national conference confirming the report's findings on the deployment of delegates:

- Regarding the geographical coverage of polling stations, some representatives stated that "as individual parties, we now know that we can't cover all 13,000 polling stations individually; we need to achieve this together next time."
- The focal points need to be more implicated in the distribution of equipment (monitoring kits, etc.). On the eve of the poll, share regularly with them the number of kits provided, sent, and received. Develop a timetable between parties and NDI to ensure proper receipt of the material.

Role of master trainers. Several parties reported confusion on the role of master trainers in the RECOPPEL program. Regardless of whether they had been misinformed or merely misunderstood the program as described to them, a number of party liaisons expected that all master trainers were to be deployed under the active supervision of RECOPPEL. One opposition-party liaison wondered why NDI

had trained its master trainers and then “refused to use them.” After characterizing its master trainers as a squandered resource, another liaison recommended that future RECOPPEL programs “take charge not only of training master trainers but deploying them on the ground as well.” According to another party, recruitment criteria had also been changed after the fact: “the two master trainers of our party weren’t used during the training of supervisors. NDI told us that our master trainers and supervisors we had selected weren’t chosen to be trainers. This requirement hadn’t been brought to our attention before we chose our candidates.”

Distribution of materials. Asked if they had received the number of pollwatcher kits they expected, 73 percent of supervisors replied that they had, and 27 percent that they had not. Several party liaisons also reported their frustration that their pollwatchers had not received the materials promised to them. This had added to the pre-election stress of one opposition party, for example, who recounted that “the mood was grim because many of our supervisors were still waiting for NDI to distribute their kits in time,” concluding that “our pollwatchers and supervisors, frankly, felt betrayed.” Another liaison put it with equal bluntness: “Our 38 pollwatchers didn’t receive the kits they needed from the program.” Pollwatcher supervisors and party liaisons believed this failure to be clearly on the part of NDI; whether this was due to miscommunication or a breakdown in logistics, displeasure among some parties was clearly registered on this point.

Changing CENI calendar. The interviews revealed that the uncertainty around the election calendar and CENI’s administration of key procedures created widespread frustration among political parties, and grave doubts that the elections would yield a credible result. According to one opposition party, “CENI’s changing calendar had a negative impact on these elections. Parties were always kept in uncertainty, putting the brakes on preparations required for our activities under RECOPPEL.” Another liaison indicated a direct financial impact on his party: “This shifting CENI calendar had a profound impact in that the delayed deployment of pollwatching teams cost us money.” A third liaison complained that the CENI’s last-minute decision to augment the number of polling places had “disoriented” his pollwatchers, but that “thanks to the help provided by NDI to the parties our pollwatchers made it to the polls.”

Disagreement with the evaluation report on deployment:

- If possible reduce the length of the monitoring tools distribution; consult in advance with focal points on how to best match the capabilities of the monitoring teams.

These dysfunctions led to a serious crisis of confidence among many parties on the eve of the elections: “On the eve of elections,” declared one opposition-party liaison, “my confidence had deteriorated because the [new] polling places were difficult to find and the distribution of voter cards hadn’t even finished.”

Nevertheless, several parties emphasized that the RECOPPEL program had helped restore the confidence sapped by the CENI's poor performance. One opposition-party liaison noted, "My level of confidence in the credibility of the elections went up, knowing that RECOPPEL had put in place the right measures to guard against fraud." A colleague from another party agreed: "My confidence was greater knowing the kind of impressive measures [RECOPPEL had] put in place." A supervisor from Conakry advised, "To whatever extent it can, I would like to see NDI adjust its calendar so that it doesn't depend on the institution responsible for organizing elections in our country."

Party contributions to peaceful political climate. It should be noted as well that parties undertook, both independently and with the encouragement of NDI, a wide range of activities designed to promote a peaceful and transparent election, with maximum citizen participation. For example, one party of the *Mouvance* organized their pollwatchers to go door-to-door in their communities with "tolerance as the key word." Another party did likewise, explaining to voters "the real value of holding these legislative elections." A third party organized a telephone campaign, while a fourth contributed to a peaceful political climate "by sensitizing our party members and pollwatchers to understand and respect the proper election rules."

Some parties noticed that these efforts were not only in the interests of the country as a whole, but also in their own political interest as well. One opposition-party liaison emphasized the importance of "spreading awareness of the need to avoid any incident that could invalidate poll results, especially in our strongholds."

ELECTION DAY

Access to polling places. A positive sign for RECOPPEL was that very few parties reported having their pollwatchers prevented from entering polling sites on Election Day. Of the pollwatching supervisors interviewed, a full 84 percent said that their pollwatchers had been fully welcomed by election administrators. Of the remaining 16 percent, slightly less than half (7 percent) reported pollwatchers being physically barred from a polling site, and only 2 percent were unable to gain access for their pollwatchers after intervening personally. This minority view was encapsulated by a supervisor from Kankan, who asserted that "our pollwatchers were intimidated, threatened – that is to say, not welcomed at all."

["Thanks to RECOPPEL, Guineans have renewed a spirit of dialogue and have dared to vote without fear in their hearts. They understand now that voting is a right and a duty for all." - Pollwatching supervisor, Labé](#)

Striking a different tone, one supervisor in Kindia observed, "in some polling places our pollwatchers weren't received well at first by local poll workers, who hadn't been informed before the day itself." A fellow-supervisor in the region, however, noted a spirit of collegiality in the face of shortfalls felt on both sides: "[The poll

workers] were really happy to see us and kept offering us food and drink. It was really hard, seeing the lack of resources and irregularities they had to put up with.” A supervisor in Conakry concluded, “The welcome was good overall, only a few slip-ups in polling places that had been set up at the last minute. So it turned out some of our pollwatchers were better prepared than the people running the polls!”

Reporting of election anomalies. Among the 288 RECOPPEL pollwatchers and supervisors interviewed, the following represents the range and relative frequency of the election anomalies observed: Polls opening late (17 percent of respondents), lack of necessary materials such as indelible ink, ballot envelopes, or working flashlights for vote-counting (also 17 percent), absent or insufficiently trained poll workers (7 percent), a delayed or irregular vote count (5 percent), votes counted from voters ineligible due to age or having voted repeatedly (4 percent), partisan attempts to influence the operation of the polling place (3 percent), and eligible voters prevented from casting ballots (2 percent). Nearly half of respondents (49 percent) reported encountering no election irregularities whatsoever.

Absenteeism among pollwatchers. Approximately one-half of party liaisons interviewed reported a significant problem with absenteeism by members of their observation teams on Election Day. Besides creating gaps in the reporting structure set in place by these parties, the problem of absenteeism created risks for the quality of elections as a whole. For example, one party noted that in the commune of Matam, the number of absentees “was significant,” and that these gaps “opened the way to fraud.”

Regarding the reasons for absenteeism, most parties pointed to a single culprit: money. One party of the *Mouvance* reported that among their pollwatchers, “certain ones demanded payments above those offered by NDI to its pollwatchers.” Another party liaison agreed, noting that among their pollwatchers, “there were latecomers and no-shows for financial reasons.” A third party liaison also put blame on “lack of adequate resources, this is why we had to go to such lengths to replace [some pollwatchers].”

Some parties took special measures to ensure that substitutes were ready. One liaison reported that each of their pollwatchers was required to designate “a substitute in case of illness or other problem,” though it was unclear whether this substitute would have been adequately trained. Overall, only five of 105 supervisors commenting on this question reported having gaps in their teams that they were unable to fill. In some cases, the problem of absenteeism even gave parties motivation to collaborate. One party reported that “We had more pollwatchers and supervisors absent than we expected, so we had to rely on the results obtained by friendly parties.” Finally, some parties were optimistic that continued efforts to sensitize their supporters would create greater numbers willing to “work without asking for payment, that is to say, as volunteers.”

Lack of contact information. Out of the 21 party liaisons interviewed, twelve (57 percent) reported not having sufficient lists of contacts to reach the government and civil society offices capable of resolving various election-day concerns (including but not limited to national and regional contacts for the CENI, CEPI, CECI, CESPI, MATD, FOSSPEL). 53 percent of pollwatcher supervisors expressed similar concerns that they did not have all the contact information required to resolve the range of issues they confronted

Performance of pollwatching tools. A major success of the RECOPPEL program was the essentially unanimous praise given for the performance of the pollwatching tools it created and distributed. A pollwatcher from Faranah declared, “Frankly these tools really helped me, since I was in a village without electricity. What’s more, it’s the first time we’ve done this in Guinea (forms for results and incidents).” A Conakry pollwatcher agreed : “thanks to these observation tools you have better proofs to show than if you just relied on word of mouth.” A national party liaison concluded that “the tools were a great help to parties in centralizing the election results. We’d love to see NDI multiply and distribute them to all the headquarters to help with elections to come.” A second liaison also complimented the high quality of the tools, noting only that “we have to raise the level of our pollwatchers to make better use of them.” A minor but potentially useful suggestion for a new category in the Critical Incident Form was offered by a supervisor from Mamou: “I would suggest adding a category for natural disruptions, for example if the roof of the polling place is damaged in a storm.”

“It was about creating a dialogue between everyone working the polls, making them understand that even if we are there on behalf of a party, if everything unfolds in a spirit of understanding, it is Guinea that will have achieved democracy.” –Pollwatching supervisor, Kankan

Vote Count. Among all election-day concerns, RECOPPEL participants put their greatest emphasis on the process by which votes were counted after polls were closed. One liaison in particular pointed to the vote count as a primary locus of potential fraud, claiming that “after the count, just as the official results were supposed to be transported, there was a substitution of results while the administrators looked the other way.” Such claims highlight the compelling and transportation of election materials as a significant cause for concern.

Overall pollwatcher performance. Party leaders were split on how well their pollwatching teams had performed on Election Day. Some were unequivocally positive, including a liaison who reported that “our pollwatchers loved accomplishing their mission. The party is counting on bringing them into the fold to help organize more training sessions, new party committees, and giving them more precise roles to play.”



Training workshop for the master-trainers in Conakry

Another party liaison was more circumspect: “Certain pollwatchers got the job done. Our party is conducting a review to retain those who performed well, offering further training to those who are available and motivated but less competent, and leaving aside those who showed they weren’t really supporters.” While praising the quality of its teams overall, a *Mouvance* liaison underscored how some pollwatchers had

gamed the system, decrying those who turned out to be “double-trainees and absentees.”

LOOKING AHEAD

From RECOPPEL tools to party-building tools. Encouragingly, many parties have already taken active steps to capitalize on their participation in RECOPPEL with an eye toward comprehensive party-building. In addition to the review of individual pollwatchers mentioned just above, one party reported that they were planning how best to “prepare and launch an information center to gather data from the grassroots.” Another party declared their intent to “capitalize on all the material benefits (supports and tools), as well as immaterial ones (trainings, skills, and experiences) we gained from NDI and apply them to future elections.” A third party reported that they are planning a series of party roundtables and debates to keep RECOPPEL pollwatchers active in the party. A fourth agreed that these efforts were critical, but also highlighted the need to improve their membership database and internal communications to keep their RECOPPEL pollwatchers engaged in the party.

A need for continuous training. Parties expressed strong opinions that NDI continue its work to help train party members at the leadership level and in the grassroots. A pollwatching supervisor from Kankan requested of NDI, “don’t wait until the elections to intervene; instead, multiply your trainings and supports to assure a healthy democracy.” A party liaison from the opposition emphasized the need for “trainings on the monitoring of sensitive election materials to reduce any

fraud...[and] ongoing trainings like those RECOPPEL gave us, not only during the election period.” A supervisor from Kindia concurred : “We shouldn’t have to wait for election day to train, but should have ongoing trainings to improve behaviors and educate the public.”

Many parties pointed to an especially urgent need for trainings outside the capital; “I request that NDI,” noted a typical response, “expand its activities in the interior of country.” Several party liaisons argued that their role should be extended for future activities, including one liaison who requested, “NDI should maintain this cross-party framework of party liaisons in order to share ideas on its programs in Guinea.” Finally, several party members praised NDI’s commitment to evaluating the impact of its interventions; a supervisor in Conakry encouraged NDI to remain “present by our side, organizing more evaluations like this one.”

“In my opinion we should be re-appointed for the election of 2015 because we have the experience, the competence, and proved that we could do the job.” – Pollwatcher, Nzérékoré

Personal growth. The positive impact of RECOPPEL was described not only in terms of its benefits to parties as a whole, but as a transformational experience for its individual participants as well. One party liaison stated proudly that “my participation in RECOPPEL has greatly strengthened my political skills, allowing me to understand how an election process unfolds.” Several party liaisons noted that RECOPPEL had raised their level of engagement within their own party, including



The national conference in Conakry, February 25-26

one who noted, “My participation was the driver of my designation by the party president as member of the campaign leadership team, responsible for following up on all observation activities across the country.” Declared a supervisor from Boké, “Above all I would like to thank RECOPPEL for having given me this training that will help me so much in my political work. May God bless its founder?”

Perhaps the most eloquent summation was given by the liaison who stated that RECOPPEL had “permitted our pollwatchers to dare to learn and defend the law.

What if we continued to empower pollwatchers and gave them trainings lasting two or three days? We would be a model of democracy for the region and – why not? – the world.” It would seem that RECOPPEL has not only empowered Guinea’s political parties to act smarter, but to dream bigger as well.

Effectiveness: 4/5. A majority of supervisors and pollwatchers reported being very well prepared in the area of substantive knowledge and material equipment, thanks to RECOPPEL. Communications and financial compensation remained the greatest sources of confusion and frustration among pollwatching teams.

Impact: 4/5. This indicator was likely the most difficult of the entire evaluation, in that it relies on a counterfactual: how would the elections have unfolded without RECOPPEL? Program participants and allies such as Search for Common Ground claim to have seen the impact in the calm and peaceful atmosphere that reined in the majority of polling places where they were present; but the lack of more robust information (such as polling on voters’ own perceptions) renders this indicator little more than an educated guess. One area of unquestioned impact is on the level of experience gained by party members, a significant achievement for smaller parties especially.

Viability: 4/5. The most optimistic set of evaluation responses were all to questions about RECOPPEL’s future. It is clear that parties are already thinking actively about how to leverage their deployment experiences in this election for future elections, including the retention of RECOPPEL pollwatchers as active party members; but with time and resources short and a new election season fast approaching, much of that concrete planning has apparently yet to begin.

D. Communications

The decision to abandon multiparty communications. RECOPPEL was designed to enhance the capacity of parties to gather, analyze, and report key election data to the public. Multiparty communication centers, one each for parties of the *Mouvance* and opposition, would have served this goal by centralizing reports from diffuse regions of the country and allowing party coalitions to deliver a united verdict on key issues and results. RECOPPEL trainings and tools were designed to deliver results based on this specific multiparty model.

Additional recommendations from the national conference on communications:

- Pay more attention in selecting the focal point of each party in order to improve the exchange of new ideas.

- Each party level (local, regional, and national) should be integrated to enlarge the database lists of activists and observation teams.
- Civil society groups, including academic and religious institutions should be increasingly included in the extension program. So should the media, in order to get wider outreach

The decision on the part of party leaders, with only two weeks remaining before Election Day, to abandon this approach and create their own communications centers carried enormous consequences for the effectiveness and impact of the RECOPPEL program in 2013. First, the decision caused an immediate shift in the reporting structure within parties, leading to great confusion on the part of supervisors and pollwatchers as to whom they were meant to report, when, and how. This confusion over the revised communications structure was not limited to its grassroots team members; a party liaison reported that even at the level of national RECOPPEL liaisons, “we didn’t understand why our collaboration with NDI had been interrupted.

This widespread confusion led in turn to significant gaps in the ability of pollwatchers to report data on Election Day. One party liaison registered his frustration that “the collection and management of data was poorly handled because the communication centers we expected weren’t put into place.” A pollwatching supervisor in Nzérékoré regretted that “this decision of the parties wasn’t helpful because we don’t have the resources to set up our own communications. Sometimes telephones were turned off. I would have rather the information pass through NDI.”

The liaison from one of the best-organized and best-resourced parties in the country admitted that its center of communication “was not well-organized; this had major impact on the gathering and management of election information.” Smaller parties concurred as well, noting that this revised strategy “did not successfully get the data from the pollwatchers to the communications center.”

Recommendations from the national conference on communications:

- The participants of the seminar confirmed that dropping the joint communication system led to serious dysfunctions.
- A large number of participants underlined the need for a greater collaboration and building multiparty communication strategies.

Notwithstanding these open admissions of dysfunction in their election-day communications, a surprising fact emerged from the interviews with party liaisons. Even with hindsight, *a plurality of respondents still supported the decision to go it alone*: ten liaisons, versus eight who considered the decision a mistake, and three whose opinions were mixed.

One respondent in the “go it alone” camp argued, “It was really a good decision because having our own center allowed us to control our own observations...For future elections we should follow suit, while correcting the weak points.” A second liaison voiced his mistrust of sharing data with other parties: “As for other parties, I notice a lack of human resources.” A supervisor from Nzérékoré concurred: “I agree with the decision of the parties to each manage their own communications centers in order to avoid false problems and unreliable information.”



A participant at the national conference giving her opinion

Two parties even asserted that their participation with NDI made their communications structures less effective: one reported that “certain pollwatchers refused to relay critical information because they said NDI hadn’t given them adequate credit on their phones.” Another asserted that pollwatchers trained by NDI performed worse in their reporting functions than those trained by the party directly.

Disagreement with the evaluation report on communications:

- None

Nevertheless, several parties characterized the decision to part ways as an enormous mistake. One *Mouvance*-party liaison called the decision “a real point of instability for the project, because no party was able really to prepare its own center of communications as a result.” An opposition-party liaison characterized the decision as a discouraging expression of bad faith, noting, “This decision taken during the final phase of the program makes me wonder where the idea came from to destabilize so seriously the RECOPPEL program; in sum, it kept us from being able to gather and centralize the information coming from the field.”

One opposition-party liaison went still further, insisting this was “the worst decision taken in the course of the program. The [revised] system complicated everything and kept data from being put to use...For future elections, we need to return to the

original plan so we can properly tabulate results from our pollwatchers and compare them to those announced by the CENI.”

As is clear from the above, opinions about the wisdom of this decision remain as divided as the communications structure it yielded. It remains to be seen whether the improvements in cross-party relations indicated elsewhere in the evaluation will cause parties to adopt a more collaborative attitude with regard to the observation of future elections.

Effectiveness: 2/5. Regardless of its justification, and regardless of whether NDI could have prevented it, no massive, last-minute shift in strategy is a positive sign for the effectiveness of RECOPPEL’s interventions. Communications was undoubtedly RECOPPEL’s weakest link.

Impact: 3/5. The greatly reduced effectiveness of the reporting structure reduced RECOPPEL impact on party capacity to gather and report election information to the public. Nevertheless, it offered an object lesson on the risks and benefits of cross-party collaboration, a lesson which is perhaps learned better from experience than advice.

Viability: 4/5. Though consensus is still missing on the type of communications structure parties will be comfortable with in future elections, most parties expressed a desire for more training in database management and internal communications, rather than less. Several parties have already indicated that they are taking steps to transform their RECOPPEL data into a broader party-building tool, an optimistic sign for future endeavors.

V. RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon analyzing the project documentation and the 409 interviews conducted by the evaluation team, the following answers emerged to the evaluation’s three critical questions.

(1) Was RECOPPEL an effective program?

High quality of trainings and tools. Participants almost unanimously agreed that RECOPPEL offered them an extremely high quality of pollwatching tools and trainings. Of the 211 pollwatchers interviewed, 80 percent approved of the conditions of their training session, 93 percent expressed high opinions of their trainers, and 97 percent judged that the observation tools prepared by RECOPPEL were “well-adapted to the Guinean context.” “The best training I ever received from an NGO,” declared a pollwatcher from Mamou.

Maintaining impartiality and creating atmosphere of trust and common purpose. In an atmosphere of grave distrust between Guinea’s political leaders, members from all sides agreed that RECOPPEL offered a critical forum for discussion and peaceful exchange. In the words of a pollwatching supervisor from Conakry, “The RECOPPEL program proved its neutrality and credibility throughout this electoral process, which in turn permitted political leaders to promote dialogue, reconciliation and mutual understanding.”

Areas of improvement. The collection and reporting of data gathered by party observer teams was impacted significantly by the decision by party leaders to abandon the plan for two shared communications centers to centralize election-day information for *Mouvance* and opposition parties respectively. One party liaison called this “the worst decision taken in the course of the program.” Criticisms were also heard that RECOPPEL had focused its activities too much on Conakry, and had neglected to give special attention to geographic areas of special sensitivity to the quality of elections. Finally, many participants suggested that future programs could be more effective by broadening the scope of trainings to include the revision of voter lists, distribution of voter cards, and transportation of procès-verbaux.

(2) What impact did RECOPPEL have on the elections of 2013?

Engaging parties directly to safeguard the quality of elections. The RECOPPEL program delivered high-quality trainings and tools to 12,530 Guinean pollwatchers, 191 pollwatching supervisors, 101 master trainers, and offered ongoing technical assistance to 25 party liaisons. The director of Search for Common Ground, who coordinated impartial media coverage of the 2013 elections, declared that where irregularities were reported on Election Day, it was critical that her reporters were able to inform the public via radio that party representatives were present in those neighborhoods and registering the facts. A RECOPPEL pollwatcher proudly stated that RECOPPEL “allowed us to put in place a National Assembly worthy of the name, and to do so transparently.” Parties are already capitalizing on this increased capacity, one liaison declaring they would now “capitalize on all the material benefits (supports and tools), as well as immaterial ones (trainings, skills, and experiences) we gained from NDI and apply them to future elections.”

Elevating human capacity. The impact of RECOPPEL was felt not only at the institutional level of the parties but, for the thousands of individuals it engaged, at the personal level as well. A supervisor from Conakry noted, “The RECOPPEL program made me a better trainer, not only for politics but for my community, working on behalf of women and for the development of my country.” A RECOPPEL party liaison went further, concluding that the program “permitted our pollwatchers to dare to learn and defend the law. What if we continued to empower pollwatchers and gave them trainings lasting two or three days? We would be a model of democracy for the region and – why not? – the world.”

Paving the way to greater cross-party cooperation. RECOPPEL did not eliminate the atmosphere of distrust that has characterized political life in Guinea. What it offered, however, was a platform – and according to some, the only platform – to give political leaders the opportunity to collaborate and build confidence in one another. As one party liaison declared, “the RECOPPEL program contributed enormously to the establishment of brotherhood and confidence, first between party liaisons, then between political parties. Every discussion we attended allowed us to speak openly and frankly to each other – this is a benefit worth preserving.” In his individual interview, former prime minister and current UFR leader Sidya Touré was emphatic: “We badly need this framework for cross-party dialogue to remain in place.”

(3) Does RECOPPEL present a viable model for the future?

Winning the confidence and approval of Guinea’s political parties. With very few exceptions, political parties of every size and description voiced their strong approval of the decision to participate in RECOPPEL, both prior to and following the completion of the program. A pollwatcher from Conakry exhorted NDI “to stay beside us in Guinea as we make our way on the path to democracy, since we have many steps yet to take.” Following his experience in RECOPPEL, a pollwatcher supervisor expressed his optimism that “this program contributed to a spirit of dialogue and consultation, to find a solution and face up to the problems we saw in other elections. I’m persuaded that with RECOPPEL, Guinea can look forward to more free and transparent elections.”

Desire for continuous training opportunities. Through RECOPPEL, party leaders were able to identify areas of party operations, especially internal communications and membership development, where ongoing assistance will be crucial to improve observation activities in future elections. Moreover, thanks to the “step-down” approach offered by RECOPPEL, party members themselves will be able to play a greater and greater role in this training process, shifting the focus from international partners over time. A pollwatching supervisor from Kankan added, “don’t wait until the elections to intervene; instead, multiply your trainings and supports to assure a healthy democracy.”

Broader focus and greater engagement of election administrators. Apart from the communications difficulties mentioned above, the weakest link in RECOPPEL was the participation of Guinea's election administrators. Evaluation interviews reveal that CENI failed to contribute meaningfully to the training process, with consequences that were noted widely on Election Day. As a pollwatching supervisor from Conakry concluded, "For better elections we must – we *must* – train hand-in-hand with the CENI, the CECI and everyone involved in planning the elections." Many RECOPPEL participants argued that this coordination must extend beyond observation at polling places to include monitoring of revisions to voter lists, placement of polling places, distribution of voter cards, and transportation of sensitive election materials, if the quality of future elections is to improve.

Recommendations

A. For political parties in Guinea:

→ **1. Create a consensus plan for cross-party communications.** Such a plan will only be possible after a painstaking and thorough review, individually and



The national conference in Conakry, February 25-26

collectively, of the consequences of adopting a fragmented communications strategy in 2013. Targeted consultations and dialogue between parties will be crucial to meet this objective.

→ **2. Exert greater control over the recruitment process.** Many RECOPPEL participants claimed that

parties failed to control the number of party members taking part in trainings, and that many of these were selected in defiance of RECOPPEL criteria. Improve internal communications structures to ensure that recruitment is planned early, controlled centrally, and that lists of names are provided to trainers well in advance.

→ **3. Integrate standard data-management procedures at all levels of the party.** A common complaint among RECOPPEL participants was that lists of names and contact information were not centralized in a common database, and that critical election-day information could frequently only be relayed through informal contacts

and recorded by hand. Parties should devise strategies to improve the flow of data and assure their local offices are trained and equipped to do so.

→ **4. Ensure that adequate supplies of pollwatcher kits are ordered and distributed.** Despite NDI ordering 14,000 kits, a number in excess of the number of trained pollwatchers, more than one-quarter of supervisors reported not receiving the number of kits they needed for Election Day. Parties should work with international partners to clarify the responsibilities and logistics of distribution, and future programs should give greater attention to this issue in their financial and logistical planning.

B. For election administrators:

→ **1. Partner with political parties to increase oversight capacity in geographic areas of special concern.** Several RECOPPEL stakeholders pointed to the region of Guinée Forestière as an example of a region where such reports of irregularities were highest in 2010 and 2013, and where party capacity to prevent fraud was low. Data from domestic and international observers can assist in building a targeted plan for collaboration.

→ **2. Invite participation by party observers earlier in the electoral process.** Trainings should be facilitated by the CENI, political leaders, and international partners to sensitize party observers on the preparation of voter lists, placement of polling places, distribution of voter cards, and transportation of sensitive election materials, especially in the geographic areas mentioned above.

→ **3. Ensure that poll workers are fully informed of the rights and duties of party observers.** While many RECOPPEL pollwatchers had praise for the spirit and diligence of the administrators at their polling place, many others indicated gaps where poll-workers seemed ill-informed as to the role of party representatives, or in some cases, outright hostile. A climate of collaboration and collegiality is critical for the fairness and transparency of future elections.

C. For future election support programs:

→ **1. Broaden the scope of training sessions to include monitoring activities before and after Election Day.** Both party leaders and international partners highlighted the need for in-depth training sessions on the early stages of election administration mentioned above. Several observers argued that irregularities before and after Election Day may have had a far greater impact than irregularities which occurred during the voting itself. Parties must be given the ability to observe these stages if their confidence in the elections is to be won.

→ **2. Clarify the roles played by each program participant, and ensure that all stakeholders are fully informed of these roles.** Though RECOPPEL had internal materials outlining the roles played by pollwatchers, supervisors, party liaisons, and

others, party leaders and international partners expressed frustration that these roles had not been clarified to them. A dossier of this kind should include at a minimum the criteria for recruitment pertaining to each role and a timeline indicating the phases of their participation in RECOPPEL and their responsibilities at each phase.

→ **3. Decide upon and communicate clear goals on geographic coverage.** Several RECOPPEL participants claimed that the objective communicated to them was that the program would train sufficient pollwatchers to cover every polling place in Guinea. For these participants, RECOPPEL had failed to deliver on one of its most critical goals. Such misapprehension should be addressed by restating the specific program goals at regular intervals to all key stakeholders, as well as engaging in timely consultations should these program goals require revision.

→ **4. Need for a national coverage of all polling stations.** One of the major concerns raised by political leaders, different trainers, as well as delegates from civil society relates to a future program of electoral support. They hope that future programs systematically cover 100 per cent of polling stations across the country. They believe that this will truly enhance transparency so as to avoid that areas not covered give rise to fraud of any kind.

→ **5. More time for trainings.** When asked how they would improve the training process, the top recommendation of pollwatcher supervisors was to increase the time allotted for trainings from a single day to two or more days. Several suggested adding simulation exercises to allow pollwatchers to practice their responses to different types of election-day incidents.

→ **6. Emphasize timeliness and “soft skills” among training teams.** The consensus among pollwatchers was that most trainers understood the substance of the RECOPPEL program well, but that many of these needed work on their presentation skills and interaction with trainees. Also, RECOPPEL trainings and meetings too often began late, sapping the motivation of participants; efforts should be redoubled to ensure timely and professional trainings.

→ **7. Clearer Terms of Reference.** An area of concern for supervisors was that the terms of reference for their engagement, provided following their training by master trainers and certification by RECOPPEL, were not adequately clear. Only 58 percent of respondents said that their terms of reference had been “very clear,” with 30 percent saying they had been “satisfactory,” and 11 percent saying they had been “not at all clear.” Supervisors identified the communications structure and financial arrangements as the two areas which remained the least clear to them following their engagement by RECOPPEL.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Guinean people have proven by their actions, turning up to vote by the millions in 2010 and 2013 that they want Guinea's democratic transition to succeed. Success of Guinea's democracy, in turn, requires an elections process that wins the confidence of all segments of Guinean society. Political parties will and should disagree strongly about whose vision for the future will yield better results on Election Day, but there should be no disagreement on the credibility and justice of those results once the polling has ended.

Despite their many disagreements with one another, and their many frustrations with the elections of 2013, the Guinean stakeholders of RECOPPEL agree on one thing: support for Guinea's political and electoral processes should continue.

"The RECOPPEL program," in the words of a *Mouvance* party liaison, "fundamentally contributed to the peaceful dialogue which restored confidence between political leaders and the head of state, on one side, and between political leaders and the electorate, on the other." A colleague from the opposition confirmed his belief that "NDI must continue to accompany political parties through the elections process for the 2015 elections."

The hundreds of voices heard throughout this evaluation testify to the successes of this historic program: the design and delivery of world-class monitoring tools, the unquestioned integrity and impartiality offered by NDI, and the resulting benefits to the confidence of all sides in the quality of the elections.

These voices have revealed areas which require improvement as well. Trust needs to be rebuilt with key stakeholders who felt excluded from important decisions, or whose expectations were higher than what NDI was able to deliver. Geographic areas of special concern were not given the attention and resources they merited given the legacy of previous elections. The issue of financial compensation for program participants remains a daunting and thorny problem, one not likely to disappear anytime soon.

For all this, RECOPPEL has helped Guineans take control of their own history. And as it was for the great leaders of democracies past, so it is for Guinea's citizens of today: those who learn best from history are the ones who will do most to shape it.