

MOUNTAGA SYLLA

Mr. Sylla is senior international development and governance program leader with 20 years of experience across Francophone Africa, specializing in election operations, technical assistance to electoral management bodies (EMBs), civil society strengthening, civic and voter education, electoral reforms, electoral dispute resolution, and program and financial management. He is a certified and accredited trainer, including for Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) and for the African Union. He has held senior country program leadership positions with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Niger, and Burkina Faso. A Guinean national, Mr. Sylla first joined IFES in 2002 as a junior staff member and rose to his most recent position as IFES Country Representative and technical lead for the USAID/Guinea-funded *Building Electoral and Accountability Capacities Orderly standard and Democratic Governance* (BEACON-DG) until late 2021. Mountaga has facilitated BIDGE trainings, strategic planning, and logistics training; developed training manuals; designed civic and over education campaigns; trained trainers; assisted administrative and financial departments to finalize electoral budgets; supported the production and deployment of electoral materials; and led the development of communications plans for EMBs in Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, the DRC, the Central African Republic, Niger, and Burkina Faso. A dynamic leader, Mr. Sylla has strong collaboration skills and a successful track record supporting civil society to create sustainable, nonpartisan networks for advocacy, electoral reform and dispute resolution.

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

Acting Country Director for Burkina Faso and Country Representative/Elections Systems Advisor (Key Personnel) for Niger at International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
July 2022 – Present. Niamey, Niger and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Mr. Sylla currently serves as the USAID-approved Elections Systems Advisor/IFES Country Representative on the CEPPS *Niger Electoral Support Activity*. He has organized BRIDGE training sessions for the Niger's Independent National Election Commission (CENI)'s 30 staff members, leading the CENI to achieve—for the first time—self-sufficiency on BRIDGE training with two of its staff certified as Accrediting Facilitators while six more reached the full Workshop Facilitators status. He is also assisting the Niger's EMB to finalize and adopt its strategic plan, gender action plan, and logistics/archiving strategy.

Simultaneously, Mr. Sylla serves as Acting Country Director for IFES in Burkina Faso where he oversees the implementation of two USAID-funded CEPPS programs: *Promoting Peaceful, Transparent, Democratic and Inclusive Elections* and the *Fostering Safe and Credible Elections in Burkina Faso Through Effective Security Planning* rapid response activity. He has built strong relationships with the Burkina Faso's CENI and Ministry for Territorial Administration, Decentralization, and Security during the ongoing transitional period to advance inclusive electoral reforms and prepare the CENI to manage transitional elections through the development and adoption of operational and communication plans and inclusion strategies. In the context of growing insecurity in the Sahel, Mr. Sylla is leading the organization of the first-ever regional EMB seminar on electoral security to be held in Ouagadougou with the participation of EMB officials from Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, DRC, Central African Republic, and Togo for experience-sharing and electoral security strategy development.

Interim Country Representative/ Elections Advisor for DRC at IFES
November 2021 – July 2022. Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. Sylla served as the country and technical lead for the implementation of the *USAID/DRC-Funded Electoral Integrity Activity (DEIA)*, liaising with the Independent National Election Commission (CENI), other local electoral stakeholders, implementing partners, and the international community. He consulted regularly with CENI leadership to determine needs and design appropriate assistance. Mr. Sylla coordinated IFES' assistance to the CENI that led to the drafting and adoption of the CENI's first-ever strategic and operational plan. This 2022–2026 plan includes several action plans on gender and inclusion, stakeholder dialogue/engagement, rebranding for greater credibility, and sustainable resource mobilization and management among other key pillars. He also assisted the CENI to draft and adopt its gender action plan, led CENI logistics trainings, co-drafted CENI's diaspora/out-of-country approach, and conducted a preliminary analysis of CENI's procurement and financial management practices. Mr. Sylla developed the technical framework for the relaunch of the CENI-electoral stakeholder consultation forums (known in French as *cadres de concertation*) that had been defunct since 2016 and designed mechanisms for greater inclusion in the consultation forums and the DRC's broader electoral process. Finally, he advised and provided technical leadership to elections-focused civil society organizations (CSOs) to establish the Initiative for Electoral Reforms, Success, and Sustainability (iREVE) to strengthen and streamline civil society coordination and collaboration on electoral reform advocacy and civic education ahead of the 2023 elections.

Country Representative/Senior Elections Specialist at IFES

September 2020 – October 2021. Conakry, Guinea

Mr. Sylla served as IFES' technical lead for the BEACON-DG project, supporting research and liaising with the CENI, local stakeholders, partners, and the international community. He led capacity building initiatives on electoral dispute resolution for the civil society and judicial and electoral management entities—all of whom demonstrated improved capacity on the topic. Mr. Sylla oversaw the design and commissioning of an operational call center within the Constitutional Court to collect real-time information for the monitoring of the regularity of operations to inform the prevention and management of disputes for the October 2020 presidential election. Finally, he spearheaded the creation a civil society coalition specializing in the prevention and resolution of electoral conflicts—the Synergy of Civil Society Organizations for the Prevention of Electoral Conflicts and their Resolution (SYNCERE). SYNCERE carried out trainings, advocacy and communication activities related to the prevention and resolution of electoral conflicts. The coalition produced a Citizen Manifesto for National Dialogue and presented it to the Prime Minister of Guinea to contribute to resolution of the post-electoral conflicts.

Director of Management, Compliance, and Internal Control at the National Petroleum Board (*Office National des Pétroles, ONAP*)

November 2018 – August 2020. Conakry, Guinea

Mr. Sylla ensured administrative and financial management and control. He participated in the identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects within ONAP. He oversaw the design, senior leadership's validation, and implementation of ONAP's 2019 fiscal year budget. Mr. Sylla also developed, for senior leadership's approval, a framework for developing partnerships other oil groups and participated in several technical assessment missions.

Deputy Country Director at Family Health International (FHI 360)

August 2017 – September 2018. Conakry, Guinea

Mr. Sylla oversaw grant management for local organizations; oversaw the development and dissemination strategy of a call for applications, which resulted in nearly 100 CSO proposals by organizations; led proposal evaluation process and capacity assessments for the short-listed organizations. He also contributed to the improvement of FHI 360's accounting, financial and fiscal procedures and oversaw compliance with FHI 360 and USAID regulations. Finally, he contributed to the security strategy within the office and coordinated staff simulation sessions on security with FHI360 and IFES/Guinea.

Senior Elections Consultant at African Union

March 2017. Bangui, Central African Republic

Mr. Sylla led BRIDGE training of trainer sessions in electoral administration and electoral cycle to strengthen the capacity of the election commission and the Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Central African Republic (CAR) in electoral administration.

Electoral Expert at the Independent National Election Commission (CENI)

January 2017. Conakry, Guinea

Mr. Sylla led the implementation of CENI branches in Senegal and trained voter registration agents across Guinea. He also supervised the voter registration process in Guinea.

Director of Operations, Guinea at IFES

December 2015 – December 2016. Conakry, Guinea

Mr. Sylla led the training of local partners in administrative and financial management and coordinated on training on results-based management. He updated and improved financial procedures and monitored their implementation. Mr. Sylla supervised the preparation of bi-monthly financial reports within the deadlines, cash management and local grant contracts. He also oversaw office operations, negotiated staff and consultant contracts, maintained employee files, and supervised the special events coordinator.

Administrative and Financial Director at IFES

2006-2015. Conakry, Guinea

Mr. Sylla participated in the development of programmatic strategies for IFES in Guinea, development of project proposals, and identification of new funding opportunities. He led the 2008 study tour of Guinean election commissioners to five African countries; drafted training plans for CENI's provincial branches in 2011; trained trainers for polling agents for the 2010 presidential elections and 2013 legislative elections; facilitated BRIDGE training in Conakry for electoral stakeholders in 2012; and coordinated USAID-funded civic and voter education campaigns. He established financial systems and contributed to improved administrative and financial procedures, implemented human resources management system and a staff capacity building plan. He successfully led IFES' responses to USAID's 2011 and 2015 programmatic and financial audits as well as the 2013 UNDP/EU program evaluation and audit.

EDUCATION / CERTIFICATIONS

MBA in Project Administration, Institut Supérieur de Management (ISM), Dakar, Sénégal

BS in Economics and Finance, University of Conakry, Guinea

Certified BRIDGE trainer and Accredited African Union trainer

LANGUAGES

Native fluency in French, Soussou, Mandingo, and Fully; intermediate proficiency in English