CROSS-PARTY COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND MANAGEMENT BODIES REVIEW

REPORT
JULY 2024

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The above represents a partial list of materials that were used by committee members either independently or collectively in completing their work. These reference materials were provided to H.E. Brig. (ret.) Julius Maada Bio at the time of presentation of this report. The documents are available to the general public at the linked websites. The Committee does not endorse the content of any of these documents or attest to their veracity. The All Peoples Congress Analysis of the 2023 Election Results is presented by the APC committee members to substantiate their recommendations.

The Committee has included them as an illustrative example of reference materials available to Committee members that may be useful to the general public in understanding the information and recommendations contained in this report.

List of Abbreviations

ECSL	Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
IESPC	Integrated Election Security Planning Committee
IPCB	Independent Police Complaints Board
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
NEC	National Election Commission
NEW	National Elections Watch
ONS	Office for National Security
PPLC	Political Parties Liaison Committee
PPRC	Political Parties Regulation Commission
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SL Police	Sierra Leone Police
SSL	Statistics Sierra Leone

Terminology note

Within this report, the term 'Electoral Commission' is used to refer to the electoral management body established by the 1991 Constitution, which has had different names in its different formation.

Constitution refers to the 1991 Constitution, as amended

Public Elections Act refers to the 2022 Act unless stated

Political Parties Act refers to the 2022 Act unless stated

This report is respectively submitted to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Parties to the Agreement for National Unity - Government of Sierra Leone, APC, and International Partners

Chief Negotiator, David Moinina Sengeh

Chief Negotiator, Samura M W Kamara

The Committee

Committee Terms of Reference

EXTRACT FROM TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) FOR THE CROSS-PARTY COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND MANAGEMENT BODIES REVIEW
2023

6 February 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

The June 24 2023 multi-tier elections which declared H.E President Julius Maada Bio as winner ended in a controversy with the APC rejecting the announced results; a three-day mediated dialogue between the Government of Sierra Leone and the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party (hereinafter referred to as the PARTIES), was held to address the political impasse; the mediation was facilitated by the African Union, ECOWAS, Commonwealth, and The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC). One outcome of the mediation agreement (Resolution 3) was the constitution of a Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review (The Committee).

The Terms of Reference of the Committee were developed under the joint leadership of the committee within 30 days of the commencement date of 19th December 2023. The duration of the Committee will be six (6) months from the date of its commencement.

The recommendations from the Committee shall be actionable and implementable;

The Committee is being established to examine the electoral systems, structures, and processes of the 2023 multi-tier electoral cycle. The Committee will be informed by previous elections with a view to highlighting and addressing the contentious issues of elections and results management including the collation, verification, authentication and publishing of electoral data consistent with international best practice to enhance the credibility of all future elections in Sierra Leone that guarantees elections to be free, fair and credible. No such comprehensive analysis has been undertaken to evaluate the electoral architecture in Sierra Leone within the context of its functional capacity to deliver credible elections that can foster faster and smoother political transitions, reducing the cost of elections to stability and, development. This exercise will rely primarily on the recommendations of Election Observer Missions spanning 2007 to 2023. Additionally, it will assess the institutional capacity of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and other entities that are part of the election's architecture in Sierra Leone. Using a combination of desk review and primary data collection methodologies such as key informant interviews, the Review Committee will prepare a report on key recommendations to improve the performance of EMBs and the peripheral institutions that support the delivery of elections. The examination will primarily address the erosion of institutional capacity of key institutions that make-up

Sierra Leone's electoral system with a view to bolstering their independence and credibility through institutional and legal reforms. This technical assessment which will be contextualized within Sierra Leone's broader political economy dynamics will result in the development of a legal and institutional reform roadmap to strengthen the capacity and the independence of the entities responsible for delivering elections. The reform roadmap will seek to enhance the simplicity, transparency, and modernization of Sierra Leone's electoral system to consistently deliver free, fair, and peaceful elections.

2. CONTEXT

On 27th June 2023, His Excellency, the President, Brigadier (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio was declared winner of Sierra Leone's presidential race, by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), securing 56.1% of the popular vote. Thirteen candidates contested in the presidential election and fourteen parties put up over 870 candidates for parliamentary seats, and 2,784 candidates in 22 local councils across the country. The 24th June 2023 elections re-introduced the District Block Proportional Representation system (DBPR) with a threshold of 11.9% for a political party or independent candidate to gain a parliamentary seat. Additionally, the recently adopted Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act promoted the political participation of women in elected offices, political parties were required to have 30% women nominated for elected seats which is roughly about every 1 in 3 seats in Parliament designated for women.

While the lead up to and the election day were widely considered peaceful, but with reported cases of fracases between political party supporters and security forces, the period between voting and the announcement of election results on the other hand was marred with escalating tensions. Moreover, consistently weak communications by the ECSL and operational challenges such as the (alleged) poor quality of the voter identification cards, limited voter education, concerns about the timeliness of the publication of the national register of voters, and late delivery of ballot boxes in certain polling centers significantly undermined the "good faith" extended to ECSL and by extension, the credibility of the elections process. These concerns were further amplified by statements made by some Partners and Election Observer Missions calling into question the integrity and credibility of results before they were announced by ECSL. Additionally, immediately after ECSL results were announced, the National Elections Watch (a coalition of civil society organizations) published its own parallel results using the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) that showed that no candidate met the threshold of 55%. These factors have created a post-election environment that is marred with mistrust resulting in heightening tensions between the ruling party and the opposition. This has also put into focus the ECSL and how the election was conducted.

It is evident that ECSL, a de jure independent entity charged with the responsibility to undertake the 2023 election process has struggled with communication and operational challenges during the election process resulting in an erosion of public trust. As a result of these weaknesses, following the announcement of the election results, the re-elected Bio administration was called upon by development partners to respond to concerns about the transparency and credibility of the process. However, the Bio administration has remained steadfast that it would not interfere at any point in the process to maintain in law and in practice the independence of ECSL. The governing party itself was a participant in the election conducted by an independent institution that declared a winner, and there are established due processes to challenge the results. In a burgeoning democracy such as Sierra Leone, the integrity and independence of institutions, especially those that confer legitimacy to the political leadership of a country must be preserved. As such, significant steps have been taken over the years to establish the independence of ECSL as a necessary and sufficient condition to grow Sierra Leone's democracy especially in a post-conflict context.

Key markers of the independence of ECSL include the appointment of its leadership requiring the approval of the Sierra Leone Parliament in consultation with other Political parties. ECSL's activities are also governed by a strong legal framework including the 1991 Constitution (as amended as to 2008); 2012 Public Elections Act (as amended 2022); 2022 Political Parties Regulation Act; 2022 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act; 2022 Local Government Act; and the other regulations and procedures. There is also a 2020-2024 Electoral Cycle ECSL Strategic Plan. Essentially, given that its authority has emanated from a multi-partisan Parliament, the ECSL in principle should have strong credibility and legitimacy to conduct national and sub-national elections. However, each election cycle presents its own set of challenges as seen during these elections.

An assessment of Election Observer Mission findings, example, the *Carter Center's Sierra Leone 2023 National Elections and the European Union Election Observer Mission Reports* outlined some of the following challenges that undermined public trust in ECSL during the 2023 election cycle resulting in statements of concerns from some Partners on the process. While this list is not exhaustive, identified below are the key concerns presented:

Pre-Election

i. Introduction of the DBPR less than six months before the elections with limited consultation amongst political parties and other relevant stakeholders
ii. Restrictively high DBPR threshold of 11.9%, reducing the space for smaller parties to participate in political life
iii. Lack of acceptance of the voter register by political parties

iv. The process of determining boundary delimitations using the "contested" 2022 census

v. Only 4 out of all parliamentary lists had women as the first candidate which indicates some unwillingness to fully embrace the GEWE Act

vi. Lack of clear communication by ECSL in the lead up to the elections eroded public confidence

vii. Unbalanced coverage by media houses of the candidates during the campaign period, most the coverage was focused on Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All Peoples Congress (APC)

Election Day

i. Lack of transparency in the tabulation of polling results

ii. Observation of ballot boxes with broken seals and inappropriately opened ballot boxes

iii. Polling stations opened later than planned

Other

i. Electoral redress mechanisms are often slow

Similar observations were made by other Observer Missions in their reports. However, the preliminary statement from the African Union Observation Mission noted that "the elections were conducted in a generally peaceful, transparent, and credible manner, up to the counting on polling day, despite reported incidents of violence particularly during the pre-election period" (African Union, 2023). While concerns have been raised by external parties, no legal filings contesting the election results were made in the Courts of Sierra Leone by any political party or private citizen within the stipulated period as provided for in the laws, which is a minimum standard to prompt investigations into an election process. However, the Committee notes records of cases filed in the Supreme Court against the ECSL. Additionally, there are lingering concerns raised by the international community and some civil society organizations on alleged election "irregularities" that are yet to be substantiated.

3. Establishment of the Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review

In His Excellency, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio's statement for the Opening of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, he announced the establishment of a National Electoral Systems Review Committee (NESRC) to be chaired by the Honorable Vice President. He indicated that the objective of the Committee is two-fold:

i. review the prevailing legal framework related to institutional and operational arrangements to deliver elections, and

ii. propose key reforms for institutionalizing the recommendations to enhance the operations of the entire electoral architecture in Sierra Leone. However, the said Committee, as proposed by H.E the President, was never established.

The post-election phase of the June 24th multi-tier elections was characterized by the declaration of non-participation in Governance and in particular the 'refusal' by elected representatives of the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party to present themselves, subscribe to oath and take up their positions and roles in the House of Parliament and Local councils. This situation was viewed with concern by His Excellency the President who despite directing the establishment of the NESRC also sought ways of ensuring that the 'political impasse- through the non-participation in Governance by the APC be addressed for amicable resolution.

The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) an entity established by an Act of Parliament in 2021 and whose mandate can be traced in part to the Lome Peace Agreement that ended Sierra Leone's 10+ years of civil war, initiated actions to settle the 'political impasse' of APC non-participation in governance. After a number of institutional efforts could not yield much progress and on the suggestion of the APC, 'Third Parties' were subsequently identified and invited to support a mediated dialogue.

The ICPNC succeeded in getting the endorsement of the United Nations, Commonwealth, the African Union, and the ECOWAS, to support a mediated dialogue. In the Bintumani Hotel in Freetown from the 16th October – 18th October 2023 the three organizations through their envoys undertook a mediated settlement and on Wednesday 18th October, 2023 the 'National unity Agreement'' was signed between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) party. In Resolution (03) of the 'Agreement for National Unity', it was agreed thus *'' Constitution of a Cross party Committee on Electoral systems and Management Bodies Review with a three-way Leadership.'*

On the 1st November, 2023 a meeting was convened at the National headquarters of the All Peoples Congress (APC) party between representatives of the GoSL (led by the Chief Negotiator, Dr David Moinina Sengeh, Chief Minister) and the APC (led by Dr Samura M.W. Kamara, National Leader). The details of the 'Agreement for National Unity' were discussed and a matrix of actions agreed by the 'Parties'. As part of the deliberations, it was agreed that each party shall nominate seven (07) Persons for the consideration of His Excellency the President in constituting the Cross-party committee. The GoSL and APC nominated members and His Excellency the President endorsed and approved the APC list (as submitted in its entirety) alongside the GoSLs nominated representatives. The United Nations Resident Coordinated (UNRC) was also endorsed as the third Co-chair. In the spirit of inclusivity and participation, representation from CSOs and critical State institutions were included as part of the expanded committee as observers.

To this end the Committee shall:

A. Review and examine the electoral systems of the 2023 multi-tier electoral cycle;

a) The First-Past-the-Post Single-Member Constituency

b) Proportional Representation (PR) System (District Block);

B. Review and examine the Structures and processes of the 2023 multi-tier elections and other electoral cycles consistent with the law and international best practice.

C. Review and examine the evolution of electoral cycles and previous elections to highlight and address the contentious issues in elections.

i. Elections management

ii. Legal framework and an assessment of reforms that came out of the assessment of previous elections that were implemented during the 2023 elections cycle

iii. Functional review of the key Elections Management Bodies (EMBs) that deliver elections

iv. Electoral redress mechanisms (within the EMBs, Security Sector and the Judiciary)

v. The role of political parties

vi. Media landscape with a focus on social media

vii. Security landscape

By assessing the aforementioned factors, the Review Committee will develop an electoral systems reform roadmap for the implementation of its recommendations. The reform roadmap will seek to enhance transparent, free, fair, peaceful and credible elections in Sierra Leone consistent with international best practices. Elections are the foundation of a strong democratic polity as the process of voting allows individuals to exercise their civil liberty to choose representation. In this vein, the confidence of citizens in the capacity of the institutions (EMBs) to deliver credible elections that reflects the will of the people is critical to creating a peaceful and stable environment where democracies can flourish.

4. Mandate of the Committee

In the fulfilment of its mandate, the Committee shall take the following actions:

i. If during the course of its examination, the Committee determines that certain persons, groups or institutions bear responsibility for undermining democratic elections in Sierra Leone, including the 2023, 2018, 2012 and 2007 electoral cycles, the Committee shall recommend appropriate action to the President.

ii. Request access to all relevant documents, records, and information necessary for the conduct of its examination.

iii. Invite and speak to experts, government officials, EMBs, political party representatives and any other individuals deemed necessary for the examination.

iv. Request resources, technical expertise, or assistance from relevant national or international organizations and development partners to support its work.

v. Recommend necessary actions and reforms thereafter, improvements or amendments to electoral laws, procedures, and regulations to ensure free, fair transparent, and credible electoral process in future elections in the country.

5. Scope of the Terms of Reference

The Scope of the Terms of Reference as provided for by the agreement as thus:

"… This body will examine the electoral systems, structures and processes of the 2023 multi-tier electoral cycle. The Committee will also be informed by previous elections with a view to highlighting and addressing the contentious issues of elections and results management including the collation, verification, authentication and publishing of electoral data consistent with international best practice to enhance the credibility of all future elections in Sierra Leone that guarantees elections to be free, fair, and credible". These have been organized within the factors below:

i. a) Elections Result Management

- Review the processes involved in printing the Provisional and Final Voter Register.
- Assess the procedures for shipment, tallying, and announcement of results at regional and national levels.
- Examining procedures for the transmission of results from Polling Centers to Districts.
- Examine the procedures for the transmission of results from regional tally centers to the national tally center, including staff involvement, verification, and authorization.
- Examine the results announced by ECSL/NEC for the June 2023, 2018, 2012 and 2007 elections.

b) Examine the procedure for the certification and publication of results in the June 2023 multi-tier and previous elections in Sierra Leone including 2018, 2012 and 2007 consistent with the law.

ii. Review Electoral Laws and Regulations:

- Examine the efficacy of the Public Elections Act 2022 and other relevant laws and regulations that relate to the conduct of elections
- Examine the processes and procedures for data migration in elections management
- Examine stakeholder involvement in the review of the PEA 2022 and other electoral laws

iii. Elections Management Bodies (EMBs)

- Examine the role and conduct of Elections Management Bodies and related institutions as it relates to the 2023 multi-tier and previous elections, and adherence to the law and international best practise. These include: Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Office of National Security (ONS), Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), Statistics Sierra Leone, the Judiciary, National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA).

iv. Examine the Institutional, Staff Capacity, and Infrastructure of the ECSL

v. Examine Elections Observation Mission (EOM) recommendations in their final reports

vi. Review Elections Financing, Accountability, and Transparency for political parties and EMBs:

vii. Voter Registration Process:

- Examine the voter registration process to ensure accuracy, inclusivity, and compliance with electoral laws.
- Operational plan and timeline for Voter Registration
- Criteria for allocation of Voter Registration Centres
- Conduct of Voter Registration, Exhibition, Card Distribution, Inquiry, Inclusions, Voter Transfers and Corrections
- De-Duplication exercise details
- Compliance with Voter Registration publication timeline
- Voter ID Cards printing and distribution
- Assess methodology of mapping Voter Registration Centres

viii. Conduct of Elections and Referenda:

- Announcement of election dates and timelines
- Assess the nomination processes and the development of an online application system for candidate nomination, accreditation of political party agents/observers, and its impact.
- Examine the fairness and transparency of the campaigning process, assessing media coverage and its impact on public opinion.
- Polling day activities and tallying procedures
- Evaluate the execution of election day procedures, focusing on the conduct of polling officials, security measures, established protocols, etc.

ix. Electoral Education, Communication, and Outreach:

- Strategy and funding sources for education and outreach
- Impact of education and outreach on the electoral process

x. Review and examine the evolution of electoral cycles and previous elections to highlight and address the contentious issues in elections.

Membership of the Committee

The Committee was co-chaired by the representative of the Government of Sierra Leone, Dr Emmanuel Gaima, the representative of APC Dr Kaifala Marah and the UN Resident Coordinator Ms Seraphine Wakana, representing Sierra Leone's development partners, and comprised seven members representing the Government of Sierra Leone and seven representing the APC party.

Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL)	All Peoples Congress (APC)
Co-Chair Dr Emmanuel Gaima	Co-Chair Dr Kaifala Marah
Hon Dr Fatmata Hassan	Dr Richard Konteh
Mdm Isatu J Kabbah	Hon Amb Dr Alimamy Philip Koroma
Hon Helen Kuyembeh	Mr Boniface Sidikie Kamara
Hon Umaru Napoleon Koroma	Mr David Fornah
Hon Alpha Sesay	Mdm Bernadette Kargbo
Hon Justice Jon Kamanda	Mr Prince Tholley

The Committee established an Ad-Hoc Secretariat, with a Head of Secretariat to facilitate the work of the Committee, including coordinating its meetings.

Methodology and Approach

Consistent with its Terms of Reference, the Committee's overall methodology and approach comprised five broad phases:

Phase 1: Desk Reviews

The Committee undertook desk reviews and examination of Election Observer Mission (EOM) Reports, including the recommendations of all EOMs since 2007, relevant laws, policies and regulations; publications of the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone and other bodies, international electoral standards and principles and other relevant information.

Phase 2: Data Collection

The Committee, with support from the Secretariat collected primary data with a specific focus on Election Management Bodies, supporting public institutions, the security sector and other entities that constitute the elections framework. This took the form of documents requested and submitted and direct research by Committee members and staff. The Committee sought, inter alia, to gain a deeper understanding of the legal and regulatory framework, human and other resource constraints and root causes of challenges experienced.

The Committee held direct engagement with electoral management bodies and supporting public institutions, as well as selected CSOs and former officials to both follow up documents submitted to the Committee and seek views and suggestions on electoral matters. All these engagements were held in Freetown.

27 May	28 May	29 May	Thu 30 May	Date
Security Institutions*	ECSL	NCRA	Statistics SL	Judiciary
CSO/NGO panel	Former NEC Chairman Conteh	PPRC		

* ONS, Sierra Leone Police, RSLAF, IPCB, Ministry of Defence

Phase 3: Public Engagements

The Committee undertook a series of nationwide public engagements to increase the inclusion of key national stakeholders in the elections' examination process and to collect suggestions for enhancing the credible conduct of elections in Sierra Leone. To this end, the public engagements were held between 15 to 19 April in five (5) regions (North, South, East, Northwest, Western Rural/Urban) of Sierra Leone attended by 730 participants from political parties (at district/regional levels), local authorities, traditional and religious leaders, paramount chiefs, CSOs, CBOs and media groups.[1] Received suggestions from the participants, where possible, were taken into consideration by the Committee during the finalisation of the recommendations.

Phase 4: Production of Final Report and Reform Roadmap

The Committee prepared its Final Report outlining its findings, conclusions and recommendations. The Committee addressed institutional and legal shortcomings within the current electoral system, in the context of regional and international good practice. The Committee made recommendations on necessary actions and reforms, including amendments to electoral laws, procedures and regulations to ensure free, fair, transparent and credible electoral process in future elections.

The Report will eventually be accompanied by a Timed Reform Roadmap that identifies key reform activities to be implemented with timelines. Such a Timed Roadmap could not be completed prior to the submission of the report. It will be developed and presented by the Chief Negotiators within two weeks.

Phase 5: Submission of Report

The Committee will submit a report of its findings and recommendations to H.E. the President of Sierra Leone on July 1, 2024.

Committee Delivery Framework

To increase organisational efficiency and to carry out the electoral review and examination process in a timely manner, the Committee adopted a Delivery Framework according to which it established three (3) thematic teams (hereinafter "Sub-Committee"), notably, Legal Reform, Elections Management and Institutional Reform. Each Sub-Committee was composed of four (4) members appointed by the Government (2) and the APC party (2) representatives with the international electoral experts assigned to each Sub-Committee in an advisory capacity to support the implementation of the Sub-Committees' functions.

Membership of the Sub-Committees

Electoral Management	Institutional Reform	Legal Reform
Dr Richard Konteh (APC) David Fornah (APC) Umaru Napoleon Koroma (GoSL) Isatu Jabbie-Kabbah (GoSL)	Hon Amb Dr Alimamy Philip Koroma (APC) Ibrahim Prince Tholley (APC) Hon Helen Kuyembeh (GoSL) Hon Dr Fatmata Hassan (GoSL)	Boniface Kamara Esq. (APC) Bernadette Kargbo (APC) Hon Alpha Sesay Esq. (GoSL) Hon. Justice Jon Kamanda (GoSL)

In compliance with the Delivery Framework and following the identification of relevant sources of information, international electoral standards and observer recommendations, the Sub-Committees carried out the examination of the electoral systems, structures and processes of the 2007, 2012, 2018 and 2023 electoral cycles based on the information received from the state organisations in writing and at interview and proposed findings-based recommendations for improving the conduct of future elections in Sierra Leone. Due to time constraints, the Committee was not able to complete an electoral reform

[1] North (Port Loko) - 119 participants, South (Kenema) - 148 participants, East (Bo) - 166 participants, NorthWest (Makeni) - 192 participants, Western Rural - 47 participants, Western Urban - 58 participants.

roadmap prior to the presentation of this report. Such a timed electoral reform roadmap will be developed, endorsed, and presented by the Chief Negotiators within two weeks to identify further steps for the implementation of the Committee recommendations.

Committee Rules of Proceedings

As prescribed by the Rules of Proceedings, the Committee held the regular plenary sessions twice a week to oversee the implementation of the Committee's mandate in respect to the examination of the electoral systems, structures and processes, in coordination with development partners managed the recruitment of technical staff (experts), endorsed the recommendations, and addressed the contentious issues stemming from the deliberations of the Sub-Committees. Every plenary session of the Committee was held with the quorum prescribed by the Committee's Rules of Proceedings.

Committee Communications Framework

During the period of electoral examination, the Secretariat of the Committee managed internal and external communication with the members of the Committee, technical staff, key national stakeholders, and the general public. To promote public awareness about the electoral examination process, the Committee in partnership with the Ministry of Information and Communication of Sierra Leone held a joint press conference (6 February 2024, New Brookfields Hotel) attended by over 100 participants from media and civil society groups, traditional and religious leaders, political parties, state institutions and development partners. The Secretariat has also managed the corporate email account of the Committee (cpcessierraleone@gmail.com) which gave an excellent opportunity to external stakeholders to share their suggestions in respect to the electoral examination and legislative reform process. The Secretariat disbanded on June 30, 2024.

Acknowledgement of support from development partners

The Committee was supported with funding from the development partners in Sierra Leone (Canada, Iceland, Ireland, Germany, the UK, the US, the EU, and UNDP) to cover technical experts and the logistics of the committee. Development partners, as is their normal practice, have not provided any funds in any form to the Committee's members.

This section of the report presents the Committee's findings and recommendations grouped under the three themes of Electoral Management, Institutional Reform and Legal Reform.

Findings and Recommendations: Electoral Management

Electoral Commission[2]

The 1991 Constitution provides for an independent electoral commission, alongside an independent political parties regulation commission. Following the end of the civil war in 2002, reforms were undertaken to improve the functioning of the electoral commission and as a basis for improving trust in the organisation. Trust in the independence of the electoral commission is an inescapable ingredient for acceptance of electoral results by the voting public and electoral stakeholders.

Electoral Commission transparency

> *Ultimately, the EMB is the custodian and guarantor of the integrity and legitimacy of the democratic process, and in this regard it is responsible for protecting the political rights of citizens. It can enhance its profile and confidence among stakeholders by approaching its management of the electoral process in a transparent and service-oriented way.*[3]

While the Constitution establishes an independent electoral commission with operational independence and security of tenure, in line with international electoral standards and good practice, to gain and maintain the confidence of the electorate and key stakeholders the electoral commission must not only act independently but be seen to do so. This requires a commitment to transparency at every stage of their work. It is not sufficient to provide only information as required by law; an electoral commission must provide all information except when precluded by law, such as to protect personal information or to safeguard commercially sensitive data when the national legal framework so requires.

A key element in the operation of a transparent electoral commission is a commitment to full and effective consultation. Consultation must occur during the development of regulations, policies, manuals, tools and electoral forms; it is not sufficient to merely share already formalised or adopted documents.

FINDINGS

- Review the Public Election Act 2022 to include provision for the publication of ECSL decisions and regulations and all other elections related documents on its website and social media platforms.
- PEA to mandate that ECSL publish a decision-making policy, a calendar of Commission meetings, their minutes and a separate register of Commission decisions.
- Publication to be on website and a hard copy to be available for inspection at every ECSL office.
- ECSL to cease the use of 'classified' for documents. A new information/document management policy should be developed that protects information privacy and commercially sensitive materials while starting from the principle that all Commission documents should be public.
- Failure to comply with the decision-making policy to be a form of misconduct in public office.
- Section 171 of the Public Elections Act gives power to make Regulations under the Act. It is recommended to make regulations to govern:
- Timely publication of their decisions
- The setting of timelines for all matters that are time-bound.
- Format of publication of their decisions.

[2] As noted above, the name 'electoral commission' is used in this report and refers to all electoral commissions established under the 1991 Constitution, regardless of the name used at the time or in the future

[3] Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), *Independence of Electoral Management Bodies*, page 1

Recommendation 1: The Electoral Commission must consult on a consultation policy, must promulgate and publish this policy within three months of the submission of this report. The consultation policy is to apply to all commission policies, regulations and guidance.

The policy should provide for designation of 'Electoral Commission stakeholders' who form a standing consultation list.

The consultation policy must fit with the new regulation making process.

The Electoral Commission must report on compliance with the Consultation Policy in its Section 32(12) reports to President and Parliament.

The legal framework for elections in Sierra Leone gives a great deal of latitude to the Electoral Commission to establish the detailed rules of the electoral process. The Commission has broad powers to make regulations in this regard and to provide guidance to their permanent and temporary staff. It can be concluded that Parliament has provided these powers to the Commission to allow them to adopt policies and procedures to fit emerging circumstances in Sierra Leone's development. Parliament is not likely to have agreed to such broad regulation making powers to be exercised in such a manner that provides less legal certainty and precision than the primary legislation. It therefore behoves the Commission to exercise its regulation-making and policy-setting powers in an open and consultative manner, aiming again to act with the greatest possible transparency, not the least.

The Electoral Commission informed the Committee that their policy decisions are reflected in the guidance and manuals provided to their staff, whether permanent or temporary. This should be reflected by the practice of every guidance or manual being made the subject of a Commission Regulation, providing clarity to staff that the guidance is a lawful direction they must follow.

Recommendation 2: The Electoral Commission to make a policy on exercise of regulation-making powers within six months. The Electoral Commission to consult Electoral Commission stakeholders on draft policy before making and ensure that the regulation-making policy fits with the consultation policy recommended above.

The Electoral Commission to publish any regulation made on website within 48 hours, in the Gazette and make available a hard copy for inspection at every Electoral Commission office.

The Electoral Commission to report on regulation-making in Section 32(12) report to the President and Parliament.

All Electoral Commission manuals and guidance to be the subject of a formal Electoral Commission decision or regulation.

Transparency has been a guiding principle in the last two strategic plans (2015-2019 and 2020-2024) of the Electoral Commission. Despite this, during the period under review there has been a perceived decrease in openness and information sharing by the Electoral Commission, and this has been noted by various observer groups and other stakeholders. Successive Commissions appear to have published less and less information on the electoral process, including Commission-made regulations, policies, manuals and results data, despite the advent of web publishing and social media making it easier and less costly to share

information than at any time since independence. Electoral observation reports over the period have noted various data requests that were refused, despite not relating to legally protected information.

During the 2023 cycle, there were repeated requests from registered political parties and accredited observers for access to key electoral data, including voter registration and electoral results data, that were refused by the Electoral Commission, despite there being no legal barrier to the provision of this information. Some stakeholders have told us that information that was published on the Electoral Commission website and social media channels at times during the cycle has been subsequently removed, hindering future analysis and possibly raising questions as to the veracity of the initially available information.

FINDINGS

- ECSL decision making is opaque with little public/stakeholder access to documents, demonstrating both poor transparency and poor governance.
- No information available on delegations of authority within the Commission or from Commission to staff.
- Commission considers some internal manuals to be 'classified' with no legislative basis for such a decision made available.
- There is currently no legal obligation to publish ESCL decisions, regulations and procedures in a timely manner.

Recommendation 3: The Electoral Commission to cease the use of 'classifying' documents. A new information/document management policy should be developed that starts from the principle that all Commission documents should be public unless to protect information privacy and commercially sensitive issues.

An electoral commission expends substantial amounts of public funds across the electoral cycle. As a public body, the Electoral Commission is of course subject to Sierra Leone requirements for the expenditure, report and audit of their accounts.

The Committee was not able to find copies of any published annual accounts or audit reports on either the Electoral Commission or the Audit Service Sierra Leone website. The Electoral Commission should proactively share its annual accounts, audit reports and audit responses with the public, and with major stakeholders.

Recommendation 4: Electoral Commission should ensure that it complies with the provisions of the Audit Services Act.

The Electoral Commission should also make available its annual audited accounts to registered political parties.

Electoral Commission internal organisation

In the early days of the Commission following its post-war reformation, it was not surprising that electoral commissioners themselves took on direct operational tasks, as is common in any start-up organisation. However, having developed as a permanent body with a nation-wide presence and a fully staffed secretariat, it is now timely for the commission to be re-assessed and re-designed to meet the needs of a modern electoral process, with commissioners taking only the role of providing strategic direction and

provision of oversight while leaving the implementation and coordination of electoral operations to the staff of the secretariat.

Recommendation 5: The Electoral Commission Secretariat must be responsible for the electoral operations. Electoral Commissioners should only be engaged in the development of regulatory policies and refrain from interfering in the work of the Secretariat staff.

Over the electoral cycles under review the Commission has displayed commitments to good practice in public management with the development of periodic strategic plans. However, these plans have become overly detailed and task prescriptive rather than forming guidance to the Commission and its staff. There has also developed a confusion between organisational documents – which is what the strategic plan and its implementation documents should be – and electoral operational documents, which are crucial for stakeholders and supporting organisations. The Committee found that the seeming focus on the strategic plan has been to the detriment of the development and publication of accessible electoral operational plans.

Working to an Executive Secretary, the Electoral Commission currently has 15 functional directorates. The Committee was told at our engagement with the current Commissioners that this structure was formed to provide internal staff promotion opportunities; such decisions are more regularly taken on the basis of functional or operational needs. This does marry, however, with the focus also shown to us by the Commission of retaining staff within the organisation rather than searching for the best fit according to qualifications and experience. Such an approach might win approval from within the staff cadre but is also capable of fostering organisational inertia and a resistance to innovation. This retention effect may have fuelled perceptions reported to us that the commission staff does not reflect the ethnic and regional diversity of the country.

FINDINGS

- For permanent staff, ECSL do not share adequate information on potential roles and opportunities. We have concluded that ECSL staff (both headquarters and in the district offices) do not reflect the ethnic and regional diversity of the country. This has led to a further perception of partisanship.

The Commission should be the subject of an urgent institutional and functional review with full access to internal commission policies and documents. The review should be capable of:

- developing potential organisational structures that assign to Electoral Commissioners a strategic role of policy setting and oversight with implementation by the staff of the secretariat;
- providing a basis for new organisational guiding documents, where the strategic plan is forward looking and at the strategic level and is supported by appropriately detailed implementation and electoral operational plans;
- incorporating the whole staff of the Commission secretariat, including those in district offices, in all areas of the Commission's work using modern concepts of cross-functional teams and project management;
- setting out arrangements for electoral operational planning and oversight.

In line with our recommendation that the Electoral Commission shift the implementation focus from commissioners to the secretariat staff it is crucial that there be further efforts made to ensure that the permanent staff of the Commission are fully equipped and capable of performing their tasks.

Recommendation 6: There must be an urgent external functional review of the Commission (in line with current GoSL effort), including benchmarking against international good practice. The findings of the review to be published and discussed at PPLC and with other critical national stakeholders.

The review is to be conducted by an independent team that comprises both GoSL public sector management expertise and electoral expertise with Parliamentary oversight. The review should be concluded within six months after the submission of this report.

Following the review the Commission must:

- Develop a sound organisational and staff development policy for permanent staff based on the functional review findings that includes a skills matrix for all permanent roles; and
- Develop a new permanent staff recruitment policy that takes into consideration regional diversity and establishes that all staffing decisions are to be based on functional needs and to be merit based.

The Commission should also aim to forge a strategic partnership with accredited tertiary institutions to provide foundation training for electoral matters.

Electoral operational planning

As a permanent electoral management body, the Electoral Commission has the entire five-year cycle to plan and prepare for a general election. Of course, when Sierra Leone used a single member constituency voting system for Parliament and local councils, by-elections were also required to be run on occasion.

The Committee has elsewhere recommended that general election dates be fixed in law (see recommendation 34). This will provide the Electoral Commission with an excellent operational and financial planning framework for all tasks to be performed over the electoral cycle. If the fixed date recommendation is not implemented, the Electoral Commission will still enjoy a quite high level of certainty as to a time window for the next general elections, given that both the President and Parliament serve fixed terms.

It is good practice to publish as early as possible key dates and tasks that will take place in an electoral cycle. In some countries, electoral commissions publish such a document as soon as the last election is complete. In Sierra Leone, commissions have varied in their practice as to when to publish a calendar, but it has been most often around the time of the fixing of the election date.

FINDINGS

- Operational challenges and insufficient logistical planning negatively affected the conduct of the 2023 election day operation. As reported by the observer groups, logistical challenges were associated with the late delivery of polling materials causing delays in the start of the polls in many polling stations across the country. "The longest delays were reported in Kono and Western Urban Freetown, where at some polling stations voting started as late as five hours after the scheduled opening"[4] and ECSL was not able to deliver promptly electoral materials to the polling stations. This points to the weak logistical and operational structures of the Electoral Commission and lack of planning.

[4] Sierra Leone 2023 – EU EOM Final Report on General Elections June 2023 - https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-sierra-leone-2023/sierra-leone-2023-final-report-general-elections-june-2023_en?s=410315

- It should be the responsibility of states to establish a competent election management body with the primary task to organize credible, transparent and inclusive elections where all voters will be given an opportunity to participate in elections without constraints and delays.

Recommendation 7: Electoral Commission to publish a full electoral cycle calendar within twelve months of the declaration of a presidential election result. An update should be published every six months. Electoral Commission to publish this calendar on the website, in the Gazette and have a hard copy available at every Electoral Commission office.

A key item in the electoral cycle calendar is the development and release of electoral operational plans. In the cycles under review these plans have varied in the level of detail included, time of their approval by the Commission, and availability to stakeholders and the public. In line with the proposal to streamline the strategic plan into an organisational document, the Commission should enhance the emphasis given to operational plans and ensure they are sufficiently detailed to provide both internal staff guidance and external stakeholder assurance. They must be produced and published in a timely manner.

Recommendation 8: Electoral Commission to adopt regulations specifying the format of electoral operational plans, including timelines for their adoption and publication in relation to any given electoral event (voter registration or election).

Publication dates for electoral operational plans to be included in the electoral cycle calendar.

For most Sierra Leoneans, their only contact with any electoral commission will be with the thousands of temporary staff recruited for work at elections or during voter registration. Our stakeholder engagements collected many comments revealing a perception that these temporary staff are either not suited to their roles, or do not receive adequate guidance, training and support from the electoral commission, or do not receive this in a timely manner.

In line with revisions of the permanent staffing structures, the Electoral Commission should also conduct a 'blank sheet' review of their temporary staffing structure, to support an open and transparent recruitment effort for temporary staff roles. Building on the requirements of the Public Elections Act, the review should enable the commission to then develop a new training and capacity programme for temporary staff. This training needs to focus on the practical skills that the staff must demonstrate in their roles; this is essential in regard to polling staff, who perform their tasks on one day in locations remote from direct supervision.

The electoral commission must produce a large amount of formal, written guidance for use by both permanent and temporary staff during electoral operations. This material is often produced late and is not provided in an accessible and easy to follow format. As will be noted elsewhere in this report, this guidance provides the essential instructions to ensure that the temporary staff perform their task correctly and complete all essential electoral paperwork accurately. If they are not capable of this, there is a danger of voters being disenfranchised. Experience in other countries has shown that clear and comprehensive manuals need to be accompanied by hands-on, practical training that includes simulations and test exercises rather than extensive 'chalk and talk' sessions.

Recommendation 9: Electoral Commission to publish a calendar of when and how they will review their suite of procedural guidance, including allowing for a period of consultation on the procedural guidance documents, with Electoral Commission stakeholders. This calendar should be mapped against the full electoral cycle calendar.

Procedural guidance documents to be made by regulation so that there is a penalty under the Public Elections Act for failure to comply. Procedural guidance documents to also clearly state the source of the instructions therein (Constitution, statute and/or Commission regulation).

Electoral Commission to publish documentation of planned training cascades in year three of the electoral cycle.

Recommendation 10: Electoral Commission to develop and consult upon a new temporary staff recruitment policy that includes (a) job descriptions for all temporary staff roles (b) qualifications/experience matrix mapped to all temporary staff roles (c) recruitment and testing methodologies.

Electoral Commission to show regard to national spread and diversity in recruiting temporary staff as well as ensuring relevant local knowledge in the relevant District.

Electoral Commission to open dialogues with other state institutions to investigate opportunities to collaborate on temporary staff recruitment.

Electoral Commission to ensure timely and transparent selection of polling staff and conduct of polling staff training programme close to polls to ensure polling staff retain the knowledge acquired.

The training courses must be based on cascade and interactive training methodology.

Electoral Commission to train polling staff using training polling/counting materials and mock ballot papers and operational forms for simulation exercises.

Electoral Operations

Voter Information and Education

The provision of voter information and education is a core function of an electoral management body. This is reflected in Sections 7(1)(e) and (g) of the Public Elections Act.

During the cycles under review, successive Electoral Commissions have shown a commitment to the provision of voter information. At the same time, successive reports from electoral observers suggest that there needs to be more such information provided – in different languages, formats, and through different channels and at earlier points in the electoral process. There is also a continuing theme of resource constraints on the provision of voter information and education and sometimes a suggestion that voter information and education is an added 'extra' when it is a core electoral operational task.

The current Electoral Commission did submit some strategies for voter information and an internal assessment report. The Committee finds that these were not suitable for purpose, lacked rigour and can be improved in the future, especially following the internal organisational review recommended (see recommendation 6). The Commission's own evaluation unit should take the lead on assessment of voter information and education efforts, not the functional staff themselves.

Over the electoral cycles under review, Commissions have at various times engaged other organisations to deliver voter information and education messages. The Committee appreciates the effort of these other Sierra Leonean organisations and hopes that the Commission can institutionalise these efforts more for the future, while retaining responsibilities for the production of voter information messages and materials.

FINDINGS

- Insufficient information provided to the public on the electoral system, apportionment of seats for Parliamentary elections under the PR electoral, electoral operations and events.
- While ECSL does provide some voter information, it is not timely or comprehensive.
- The quantity of voter information has declined over the elections under review.
- An independent assessment of voter information in 2023 should be performed, as internal reports claim success without evidence.

Recommendation 11: There should be an independent assessment of voter information provided in 2023.

The Electoral Commission to develop, consult and finalise a new electoral cycle voter information strategy in the first year of each electoral cycle (for the 2028 cycle, this will be informed by the assessment above) that uses practical and cost-effective methods for the development and dissemination of voter information and education.

Electoral Commission to devote more resources to the provision of voter information as per Public Elections Act Section 7(1)(e) and (g) and improve the capacity of its staff at headquarters and district levels to perform these functions.

Electoral Commission to increase the use of local languages in their voter information and education efforts and encourage other organisations to do the same.

Recommendation 12: Electoral Commission voter information and education campaigns to be included in the electoral cycle calendar and details to be included in electoral operational plans as per recommendation 8.

Electoral Commission voter information efforts to start no later than six months before (a) the commencement of the voter registration period and (b) polling day respectively.

Electoral Commission to establish a permanent mechanism for voters to check if they are registered and their place of voting, possibly via a search engine on the website as well as a mobile app and SMS messaging processes.

Electoral Commission voter information to specify the identification documents required to vote at polling stations.

Recommendation 13: Electoral Commission to work with the Ministry of Education to include the governance and electoral topics in the school/university curriculums

There should be a national effort to provide sufficient resources to CSOs, CBOs, Paramount Chiefs, local stakeholders, and media to conduct effective civic and voter information and education to ensure informed participation of voters in elections.

Voter Registration

Over the electoral cycles under review, the voter registration process has evolved significantly from a paper-based process to one that now benefits from modern biometric technology. The introduction of the national civil register after 2016 has also provided opportunities for Sierra Leone to streamline its registration of the population for a variety of purposes, including elections.

In the two elections since the establishment of the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) – 2018 and 2023 – there have been concerns over clarity on the tasks attributed respectively to the NCRA and to the Electoral Commission, where responsibility and resources should be, and what are the processes to be undertaken. The role of NCRA is discussed in the Public Institutions section below.

The Committee anticipates a voter registration process where responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the voter register remains the responsibility of the Electoral Commission, and the NCRA civil registry database is only one data source into the voters' register.

Recommendation 14: That the Electoral Commission undertake the following voter registration process under current legal provisions:

1. Electoral Commission to receive a voting age population database from NCRA for the purpose of updating a voter register;
2. Electoral Commission to conduct a national voter registration fieldwork exercise following receipt of the data from NCRA. This will also allow voters to verify their names on the provisional list of voters.
3. Electoral Commission to conduct a deduplication process in Sierra Leone in a transparent manner following their field work process.

Electoral Commission must ensure that the list of locations of the registration centres are published and communicated with political parties and other stakeholders two months before the start of voter registration fieldwork. Prior to this, the Electoral Commission must have reviewed the locations of registration centres, taking into account both distance from the population and the number of expected voters, with full engagement of stakeholders in the review process.

Recommendation 15: The Government should consider further subsidising the acquisition of national ID cards so that the Electoral Commission does not need resources to issue separate voter identification documents.

Recommendation 16: Electoral Commission review the proposed locations of registration centres every cycle, taking into account both distance from the population and the number of expected voters, with full engagement of stakeholders in the review process.

Nomination process

In 2023 the Parliament was elected using a District Block Proportional Representation system that required the submission of political party candidate lists rather than individual candidacies. In moving to this system, which provides for the filling of casual vacancies by reference to submitted candidate lists rather than a by-election, the Commission also required that nomination fees be collected for all candidates on the lists, not only for the number of seats to be elected. This practice should be discontinued while the PR system is in use.

Recommendation 17: Candidate nomination fees to only be collected to a maximum of the number of seats to be elected, regardless of the number of candidates submitted on the list.

Holding three levels of elections at the same time means that thousands of nomination documents must be submitted for Electoral Commission processing, and initially gathered and collated by political parties. To streamline this process, the Commission has developed a software to enable the collection of the essential data required to both assess the eligibility of potential candidates and to collect the information to appear on the ballot paper, including photographs. While appreciated by candidates and parties as a useful innovation in 2023, problems were encountered that can be avoided in the future by improved planning and longer implementation timelines.

FINDINGS

- The entire nomination process was implemented with challenges. Political parties could not fully comply with the nomination process requirements due to the complexity of the nomination software.
- Late and inadequate training of political parties on the use of the nomination application.
- The information about nomination fee for substitute candidates was not communicated to the political parties in a timely manner.

Recommendation 18: Electoral Commission to continue to offer a nominations software solution under the following conditions:

1. Commission to hold consultations with political parties on the development of any planned nomination software eight months before the start of a candidate nomination process and to include plans for stress and access testing in their design process.
2. Commission to ensure the nomination software is designed and finalised six months before the start of a candidate nomination process. Training for registered political parties to start immediately on finalisation of the software and to continue until two months to the start of the nominations period.
3. No modifications to the nomination system should be allowed 2 months before the start of a nomination process. Any update identified as essential to system operation should be advised to PPLC to enable discussion of any waiver to this timeline.

The Commission to discuss with registered political parties the amount of time to be allocated to the political parties for uploading relevant data.

Role of party agents in electoral process

Agents are appointed by candidates and political parties to follow various parts of the electoral process and perform vital accountability and transparency functions; they are accredited by the Electoral Commission on the nomination of candidates and parties to have full access to premises being used for electoral operations.

In order to perform these roles effectively, and therefore to build trust in the electoral process, they need full and timely access to information and to be adequately trained. There is therefore a shared responsibility between the Electoral Commission and political parties to ensure this is capable of being done.

Recommendation 19: Electoral Commission to process accreditation of party agents at least two weeks before the event.

Electoral Commission procedures and manuals to be fully provided to all registered political parties in hard and soft formats and the expected date of release to be included in electoral cycle calendar.

Electoral Commission to produce additional customisable materials for political party use (powerpoints etc) in the delivery of their training.

Findings and Recommendations: Institutional Reform

Public Institutions

Role of Parliament

Parliament has myriad roles to play in relation to elections. While individual Members of Parliament rely on electoral processes to gain their seats, Parliament of course also sets the rules of the elections through primary legislation and, if necessary, Constitutional amendment. Parliament also has a role in the setting of electoral boundaries and the receipt of the Electoral Commission's annual report alongside the President. In pursuance of their oversight of public expenditures they may also receive audit reports on electoral management bodies.

Parliament's role can be enhanced by the designation of a specific committee to have oversight of electoral matters.

Recommendation 20: Create a dedicated oversight committee in Parliament comprising representatives from all political parties represented in Parliament as a Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to review an electoral cycle, inquire into electoral preparedness, and guide legislative reform. The Committee is to be chaired by an MP from an opposition party.

Parliament to have an annual debate on the Electoral Commission's annual report submitted under section 32(12) of the Constitution.

Political Parties Regulation Commission

The 1991 Constitution established the Political Parties Registration Commission as a second electoral management body for Sierra Leone. The functions of this commission are largely covered by the Political Parties Act, a new version of which in 2022 changed the organisation's name to Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC).

The focus of the PPRC on political parties is unique and there is no similar body on the continent. Even in Sierra Leone, there is some confusion on the exact demarcation of the responsibilities of the PPRC and the Electoral Commission, which of course can lead to forum shopping and a loss of confidence. Stakeholders told us that there was a lack of understanding and faith in the mediation efforts of PPRC.

PPRC supplied a raft of documents to the Committee, and a meeting with the former Chair and senior officials was held. The Committee finds that PPRC has quite extensive legal powers in relation to the registration and regulation of parties, not all of which it is exercising. In line with the recommendations relating to the Electoral Commission (see recommendations 1 and 41), the PPRC should improve its communication and consultation processes.

FINDINGS

- A 2023 PPRC decision to limit rallies and parades for security reasons was not accepted as having been the subject of adequate consultation with all political parties.

- Need to respect freedom of assembly.

Recommendation 21: PPRC should make available its annual audited accounts to registered political parties.

That PPRC must consult on a consultation policy, must promulgate and publish this policy within three months of the submission of this report.

The policy should stipulate that all registered political parties, some CSOs and development partners be included on a standing PPRC consultation list.

PPRC to develop and consult (in line with the consultation policy) upon a new permanent staff recruitment policy that takes into consideration regional diversity.

PPRC to develop and consult upon a new temporary staff recruitment policy that includes (a) job descriptions for all temporary staff roles (b) qualifications/experience matrix mapped to all temporary staff roles (c) recruitment and testing methodologies.

PPRC to show regard to national spread and diversity in recruiting temporary staff as well as assuring relevant local knowledge in the relevant District or Region.

PPRC to open dialogues with other state institutions to investigate opportunities to collaborate on temporary staff recruitment.

National Civil Registration Authority

Established by law in 2016, the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) is a statutory body that reports to the Minister of Internal Affairs. It was established as part of Sierra Leone's acceptance of a growing African trend to establish stand-alone national population registers, incorporating the post-colonial model of Births, Deaths and Marriages registration and a reliable national identity database and documents.

In 2018 many observers found there to be confusion in the separate roles of the NCRA and the Electoral Commission in the matter of voter registration, confusion exacerbated by delays in NCRA being equipped to conduct registration fieldwork. Even by 2023, NCRA was not capacitated to undertake a national fieldwork exercise, and so, this was done again in conjunction with the Electoral Commission.

Recommendation 22: NCRA to be resourced to provide an inclusive and comprehensive civil register. NCRA to extend the data collection process to include all data fields relevant for the electoral process. NCRA operation should be further decentralised beyond the district level operation.

The Committee has made separate recommendations for how the Electoral Commission should organise their voter registration tasks (see recommendation 14).

Electoral Security

International electoral standards emphasise that each State is responsible for ensuring every electoral process is delivered in an environment that allows for peaceful participation by all citizens – not just as voters but also as candidates, party supporters and electoral staff. It is also important that electoral security arrangements can support all political rights at play in an election – beyond the right to a secret

ballot, rights such as freedom of association, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly must be paramount in the planning and delivery of electoral security arrangements.

Planning for Electoral Security

Coordination and delivery of security for elections has of course evolved considerably over the electoral cycles under review, especially in light of postwar security sector reform and the withdrawal of United Nations mandates – and support - in this area. The most detailed information provided to the Committee is for the 2018 and 2023 electoral cycles, so these are the focus of the Committee's comments.

There is a well elaborated process for planning and delivering electoral security that emanates from the National Security Council through the National Security Coordinator, who in this regard is the primary advisor to the Head of State on state security but also is tasked with the convening of a planning structure as well as overseeing and reporting on implementation of electoral security through the Office of National Security (ONS). Various documents were provided to the Committee in this regard and the security sector agencies had a dedicated engagement with the Committee to provide further detail.

The ONS convenes an Integrated Electoral Security Planning Committee (IESPC) well in advance of the conduct of the election. The IESPC brings together the security agencies, Electoral Commission, Political Parties Regulation Commission, and civil society, along with other relevant public institutions; for instance the Human Rights Commission and the Independent Police Complaints Boards are members. In 2018 and 2023 development partners also participated, reflecting their ongoing support to the security sector. This group represents good practice in its timings, approach, and membership. In the security sector engagement with the Committee, there was a clear assumption that the IESPC will be retained for future elections which is to be welcomed.

At the same time, the Committee recommends some enhancements to the work and products of the IESPC, firstly to enhance knowledge of the IESPC and its role. The Committee finds that IESPC could more actively inform the public on the existence of work of the group and ensure that there is an improved understanding of the role of the different security actors. While the ONS has an important convening and coordinating role, this should not be seen to overtake the primacy of the Sierra Leone Police who have ultimate and legal responsibility for the delivery of electoral security.

FINDINGS

- Consensus around lack of neutrality of the police during all previous elections
- Consensus around lack of neutrality, professionalism, and accountability of the security sector during all elections.
- Across elections, security forces have infringed on the FoM, FoA, activities of opposition parties.
- Self-styled security units attached to political parties and civil defense forces cause additional security threats to the people.
- The current Political Parties Code of Conduct does not include any sanctions for violation of the code.
- MAC-P has become a common feature.
- The police could deploy from other units and/or locations when there is a need for local events. MAC-P should be the last resort.
- At elections, presence of well-armed officers is intimidating.
- Little is known of the IPCB and its role.
- The Human Rights Commission has not released any report on the human rights violations during the electoral process.
- Provide further guidance and training for the SL Police to improve policing of elections, especially in regard to the entrench human rights in election policing and reduce reliance on firearms.
- SLP report on inadequate funding and limited logistics.

- Several cases of violence have not been investigated and those being investigated are not done in a timely fashion.
- Cases reported to the SLP both 2018 and 2023 show a number of gaps in record keeping.
- That there is a lack of accountability for security forces.
- Some of the cases of violations have not been investigated and for those that have been investigated and findings made, no action has been taken by the appropriate authority. These include:
    - the killings at the APC party office Freetown;
    - the burning down of the APC party office in Bo town;
    - the burning of the house of the APC southern region publicity secretary;
    - the killing at the SLPP party office in 2018;
    - the shooting at the APC party office by police officers prior to the declaration of the election result; and
    - the raid by presidential bodyguard and that there is a lack of accountability for security forces.

- Notes that the APC presidential candidate was the subject of criminal proceedings which had an impact on his campaigns.

Recommendation 23: IESPC to draft a Declaration outlining the security agencies involved in election security, defining their roles and responsibilities, the working procedures and use of force, and outlining the security Code of Conduct, for security personnel assigned to electoral activities and facilities.

There should be an accompanying Memorandum of Understanding between the Sierra Leone Police and the Electoral Commission that incorporates the Declaration and should specify the Sierra Leone Police as the primary electoral security actor as recommended to be prescribed in the Public Elections Act, the Police in turn being supported by the other participating election security agencies listed in the Declaration. It should also outline the documents to be shared with the Electoral Commission, including the deployment plan of the election security personnel, the risks assessment(s), and the time frames for sharing those documents. The said MoU to be shared with the IESPC and the participating political parties.

The security Code of Conduct should be revised to include reference to the penalties for non-compliance that already exist in law.

The IESPC develops a suite of materials for every election, including an overall Electoral Security Strategy, a Communications Strategy and a threat assessment. The Committee has noted various elements that can be improved to enhance compliance with international good practice and to inform the work for the next electoral cycle in a more structured fashion.

Recommendation 24: IESPC to enhance transparency and the right to information by drafting and submitting a post-elections security assessment report to the EMBs and political parties, which includes a lessons-learned section.

Threat Assessment

The Committee was provided with both a summary and a detailed National Elections Threat Assessment / District Risk Mapping for the 2023 General Election. According to the documents, the objective of the assessment was twofold: classify the kinds of threats and risks on the one hand and evaluate the degree of preparedness of electoral management bodies and stakeholders to ensure a safer, peaceful, free, fair, and

credible election, on the other. The threat assessment was commissioned by the National Security Council Coordinating Group with development assistance and carried out by a national CSO. While valuable in providing insight into public perceptions of electoral security, any assessment carried out by non-security actors will not be immediately ready for operationalisation. While CSO involvement in threat assessment and electoral security is to be encouraged, it cannot be a substitute for the security forces carrying out their own threat assessment that addresses their operational planning and needs.

FINDINGS

- Existing threat assessment is weak. No provision for response mechanisms and operational planning.
- Existing threat assessment was carried out by a CSO.

Recommendation 25: IESPC and security forces be resourced to conduct a comprehensive election threat and risk assessment that addresses their operational planning and needs. Guidance to be provided to reinforce capacities. Enhanced coordination and cooperation between CSOs, including women's organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities, and the security forces in the development of the assessment is encouraged, with each keeping their own line of operation and commands.

Communications

The Committee was also provided with the 2023 Electoral Security Communications Strategy. While the strategy helpfully identifies different messages for different electoral phases, it lacks structure, strategic thinking, and operational planning. Crucially, it is unclear whether the IESPC is the communications body for all security agencies during the elections. While the Committee commends the grassroots initiatives and community outreach efforts by the security forces, it also heard from stakeholders that there is a public demand for clearer and more timely information on electoral security than the strategy was able to deliver.

FINDINGS

- Issues with institution's external communications as regards content, channel, tone, professionalism, and timing of disclosure.

Recommendation 26: Future electoral security communications strategy documents to: (a) Enhance its purpose as a pan-security sector election communications strategy that sets out a clear and consistent approach to messaging during each election phase; (b) Enhance accountability and public trust by including a dedicated transparency section that mandates timely and ongoing reporting on investigations related to election violence and offences; (c) Recognise and build upon the effectiveness of existing communication methods, such as peace marches and "no violence" songs, by evaluating their impact and incorporating successful elements into the overall strategy. d) Produce a final assessment report based on pre-identified indicators.

The IESCP should meet and update the Electoral Commission on a regular basis and inform the public on progress and broad security issues via the publication of meetings minutes through pre-identified specific communication channels.

The Committee discussed at its engagement with the security forces the process that underpins the decision to invoke what has become known as MAC-P, or Military Aid to the Civilian Power. There are well elaborated procedures for this use of military assets to enforce civilian policing capacities. The Committee

was especially pleased to have the confirmation that the Sierra Leone Police remain in command no matter the origin of the forces under their command. This can be reinforced by more public information on MAC-P, including announcing when it is in force and when it ends.

Recommendation 27: Government to enhance the right to information and the right to security by recognising the importance for the public to be informed when MAC-P is invoked.

External monitoring of electoral security provision

Due to perceived partisanship and limited policing resources, external monitoring mechanisms are essential for ensuring electoral security and peaceful elections. These mechanisms can complement the efforts and the capacity of the Sierra Leone Police through monitoring election related violence nationwide and identifying early warning signals. This allows for preventive measures and de-escalation actions, such as community dialogue and mediation, to be taken before conflicts escalate. An appropriate body can be identified and resourced to lead these activities and engage communities, including women and people with disabilities, through effective nationwide campaigns and communication.

Recommendation 28: Establish a civilian-led multi-stakeholder structure incorporating non-security state and non-state actors to: (a) Monitor and report election violence in a timely, factual, and objective manner; (b) Publish data periodically through online reports, press releases, and open-source mapping, in order to ensure transparency, foster public trust, and reinforce accountability.

As noted above, a variety of fundamental human rights are engaged during an electoral process. While Sierra Leone has an independent Human Rights Commission, this Commission has not produced any reports on electoral matters that the Committee was able to locate. The Human Rights Commission has in the past sought accreditation from the Electoral Commission as an observer, and if it wishes to do so in future should be expected to produce a report. The Human Rights Commission also has an educational mandate and should expand its work in this area around electoral processes.

Recommendation 29: The Human Rights Commission to monitor election related human rights violations and release reports.

Under the auspices of the Human Rights Commission, increase human rights respect by developing a human rights campaign aimed at the security forces, the human rights organizations, and the public at large to foster dialogue and understanding, in advance of the election security trainings.

Sierra Leone Police

The Sierra Leone Police carry overall responsibility for election security. They are an active participant in the IESPC and must then translate IESPC documents into operational policing plans and orders. The Police also have responsibility for training the thousands of police and auxiliary forces to be deployed during the electoral period. As elections, and election offences, are relatively rare issues for the police compared to road traffic and personal safety, comprehensive guidance and training for these officers must be delivered in a timely fashion.

Recommendation 30: Sierra Leone Police to conduct a comprehensive election-focused training needs assessment to identify thematic gaps and the specific police units that require additional training, particularly in crowd management. Plan accordingly to address these needs effectively and ensure the training curriculum tailored to the specific needs of the trainees.

Plan for real time testing exercises and review training schedule to ensure all necessary cascade trainings are implemented, including for newly recruited constables.

Stakeholders repeatedly shared concerns with the Committee as to the time taken to investigate electoral cases and the lack of information shared with the public in this regard. As noted above, election offences are specific and unusual from a policing perspective and so the Police need additional resource and training to manage them, including on how to handle Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E) issues and cases.

The Committee was grateful to receive from the Sierra Leone Police summaries of electoral matters reported to Police in 2018 and 2023. Our review of these summaries demonstrated that there is no common approach across the country to recording and reporting electoral matters, and this is an issue on which the Police should take action.

Recommendation 31: Provide necessary funding and plan for adequate human resources and materials to capacitate the Sierra Leone Police in effectively carrying out their duties.

Reinforce investigative and interview skills and techniques to ensure impartial investigations, with specific training on handling complaints from women who should be encouraged to report offences. Additionally, provide training on the use of material.

The collection of data should be standardized across police divisions, regions, and elections. Data should be disaggregated by gender according to international standards. Election-related cases should be recorded to align with election offences identified in the Public Elections Act and Political Parties Act and guidance to be issued on recording and reporting electoral cases.

Reported and observed cases of violence have to be investigated by the police in a timely manner and appropriate actions taken.

Independent Police Complaints Board

Given public perceptions that the Police are not able to take appropriate action in response to perceived electoral offences, the Committee also found it useful to meet the Independent Police Complaints Board (IPCB). As the name suggests, this Board receives and investigates complaints on police conduct on an external basis. Should the ONS and Sierra Leone Police accept our recommendations in this part, then they should fully involve the IPCB in their reviews and assessments. The IPCB could also, in line with our recommendation to the Police, keep statistics on electoral-specific matters disaggregated from their wider statistical summaries. The IPCB should have its status and profile enhanced to help improve confidence in the policing of elections.

Recommendation 32: To reinforce accountability and transparency, develop a communications campaign aiming at informing the public about the IPCB, its role, and how the public can interact with it.

While issues have been raised during the electoral cycles under review about the activities of so-called ‘militia’ or armed groups being used by parties and candidates to shrink campaign space, there has been some effort to address this in the 2022 Political Parties Act, especially through giving the Political Party Code of Conduct a statutory footing and improving the definitions. The Committee feels that the strength of these sections should be kept under review.

Recommendation 33: PPRC to enforce Section 9 of the Political Parties Code of Conduct in relation to raising militia to sponsor violence.

Findings and Recommendations: Legal Reform

General electoral arrangements

Fixed election dates

The law does not set a date for election of the president or Parliament, despite the terms of the presidency and Parliament being fixed at 5 years by the Constitution. In some of the electoral cycles under review, there has been controversy in the setting of election dates, especially in light of the split constitutional responsibility where the Electoral Commission sets Presidential election dates and the President those for Parliament but with the underlying acceptance that these will be on the same day.

To avoid such issues in the future and to allow the electoral management bodies and the Government to reap the planning benefits of a fixed date, the Constitution should be amended.

Recommendation 34: It is proposed to amend Section 43 and 87 of the Constitution to provide a fixed date for holding Presidential and Parliamentary elections on the last Saturday in March, April, or May in every fifth year.

Appointment of Commissioners to Electoral Commission and PPRC

Section 32 of the Constitution provides a set of baseline qualifications for Electoral Commissioners, echoing those for other public offices. Section 32 does not set out merit-based criteria for appointment of ECSL Commissioners. Section 32 of the Constitution only lists disqualifications. The skills needed to compose an EMB consequently span a range of fields including management, integrity, professionalism and technical competence.

The Committee considers that the disqualifications in Section 32 can be usefully supplemented by a further requirement relating to professional experience. This will strengthen the commissioners' capacity to provide professional guidance to the Secretariat in the carrying out of the functions of the Commission.

Recommendation 35: Amend Section 2(3) of the Public Elections Act to require professional qualifications and experience in governance and public management for Electoral Commissioners in addition to the requirements of Section 32(4)(a) and (b) of the Constitution.

During the electoral cycles under review, stakeholders have pointed to perceived anomalies in the process undertaken before the nomination of individuals to the Commission by the President. Section 32(3) of the Constitution makes the appointment of the members of the Electoral Commission subject to consultation with the leaders of all registered political parties and approval of Parliament. However, Section 32 does not provide a formal structure for the consultations. As the Electoral Commission is a key constitutional body, the Committee believes that there should be a more open process to identify suitable candidates and a more prescriptive consultation process. The Committee further considers that the same process should be applied for the appointment of the Chair of the Political Parties Regulation Committee.

In engagements with the Committee, some political parties stated that they were not consulted in the appointment of Electoral Commissioners.

Recommendation 36: It is recommended to amend Section 32(3) of the Constitution, section 2 of the Public Elections Act and section 34 of the Constitution to provide for a Search and Nominating Committee for the appointment of all members of the Electoral Commission and the Chair of the Political Parties Regulation Commission that comprises nine persons from all walks of life (with an overall number of women in line with GEWE), including one from each of:

Inter-Religious Council
The Bar Association
Civil Society
Labour Congress
SL Association of Journalists
Women's organisations
Youth groups

Search and Nominating Committee to be administratively supported by the Public Services Commission.

Within six months of their establishment the Search and Nominating Committee will finalise an Electoral Commissioner job description that details roles and responsibilities, following consultation with Electoral Commission stakeholders and Parliament.

Following an application and search process the Search and Nominating Committee undertakes a selection process, including interviews.

The Committee will recommend to the President a shortlist of three persons for each post who have met the criteria under Section 32 of the Constitution and Section 2(3) of the Public Elections Act for appointment to the Commission. The President can only appoint a Commissioner that is on such a shortlist.

Electoral Commissioners must be appointed on a staggered basis over the electoral cycle.

Section 2(2)(b) of the Public Elections Act elaborates that the other (non-Chair) Commissioners are to be appointed for 'each region' of Sierra Leone. The Committee considers that this should be expanded so as to require those Commissioners to be stationed in their respective region, so as to be better able to reflect the needs and circumstances of that region in their work. If necessary, there may need to be amendments to the Public Elections Act to clarify that formal Commission meetings can occur through electronic means, allowing these regional Commissioners to utilise online meeting arrangements.

While the allocation of Commissioners to regions is still required, the Committee is concerned that this not give rise to perceptions of ethnic or political bias. Therefore, there should also be legal amendments to ensure that a Commissioner is not appointed to region of origin.

Recommendation 37: Include provisos to Section 2(2)(b) Public Elections Act to stipulate that regional Electoral Commissioners are (a) not to be appointed to their regions of origin and (b) that their duty station is to be in the region of their appointment.

Use of census data for electoral purposes

In many countries the use of official census data for electoral matters such as operational planning and boundary delimitation draws little notice and no controversy. In the electoral cycles under review, this has

not been the experience in Sierra Leone. Constitutional amendment could provide more clarity on the use of census data for electoral purposes.

Recommendation 38: The Constitution to be amended so that:

a) The proviso to Section 38(4) to be amended so that only the data from decennial census to be used for electoral purposes; and
b) A proviso to Section 38(5) should be inserted to provide that where the final report of a decennial census is published at or less than 24 months before a general election, the data collected from that census should not be used for purposes of delimiting boundaries for use at that general election.

Digital rights

After the 2023 elections, electoral observers noted that the relatively new Cyber Security and Crime Act, passed in 2021, was perhaps too heavy handed. The 2021 Cyber Security and Crime Act contains vague definitions of various cybercrimes and leaves room for enforcement agencies to exert pressure on critical voices and trigger self-censorship. This does not align with international and regional standards. The Committee agreed that this Act could be improved to guard against the arbitrary exercise of power and ensure alignment with international and regional instruments.

Recommendation 39: Consider aligning the definitions in section 2 of the 2021 Cyber Security and Crime Act with the regional and international instruments, in particular to review the definitions of:

- Cyber-terrorism
- Cyberstalking
- Cyberbullying
- Incendiary information

Electoral Observers

The presence of electoral observers, both national ('domestic') and international is a well-established feature of Sierra Leonean elections, and the contribution of electoral observers is well appreciated. This Committee has conducted a full review of international and domestic electoral observation reports that cover the electoral cycles under review, and they have been an invaluable resource for our work.

At the same time, over the cycles, stakeholders have seen an increase in the number and type of electoral observers being accredited. Many of these groups appear to have a tangential at best interest in improving the electoral process, and most do not publish or submit reports. We have noted that the Public Elections Act requires the submission of a report from accredited observers within three months of an election, but it does not appear to us that the Electoral Commission relies upon this section to either withdraw accreditation or refuse it at subsequent elections. We have concluded that the legislation for electoral observers should be strengthened in this regard and that the Electoral Commission should review their observers Code and accreditation procedures accordingly.

In common with other electoral participants there has been an increase in the level of vitriol and threats directed at electoral observers over recent electoral cycles. Observers should receive legal protection as human rights defenders in line with international good practice.

Recommendation 40: There should be a consultative process of drafting relevant legislative provisions to provide protection for election observers as human rights defenders.

Amend section 167 of the Public Elections Act to make explicit the obligation that observers submit reports and to provide that those observers who do not submit reports will not be eligible for accreditation in the future.

The Government of Sierra Leone to publish written responses to all submitted reports.

Recommendation 41: The Electoral Commission to use the 2012 *Declaration of Global Principles and Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors* and the 2005 *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers* as the basis for a new Sierra Leone code; then to consult upon the draft code and make a Regulation. Previously accredited observer groups should be included in the consultation process.

The Electoral Commission should send all observer reports received to the Parliamentary oversight committee.

The Electoral Commission to publish written responses to all submitted reports.

List of accredited observer groups to be published in good time and sent to registered political parties.

Electoral Commission operations

As discussed in the Electoral Management and Institutional Reform sections, the Committee has found that the Electoral Commission and the PPRC must improve their stakeholder consultation processes. As an important step in such an endeavour, the Committee believes that the Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) should be placed on a statutory footing that provides for its role, membership and meeting frequency.

Recommendation 42: Amend the Public Elections Act to mandate that Electoral Commission convene a Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) to meet at least monthly, and to make public all PPLC documents including the agenda and formal minutes.

PPLC should be chaired by the Chair of ECSL or their representative and consist of all registered political parties, HRC, NCD, NCRA, ONS, Peace Commission, PPRC, RSLAF, SL Police and CSOs accredited to ECSL. The two largest political parties in Parliament are to be co-chairs. Consideration should be given to making a reference to PPLC in the Political Parties Act in relation to the PPRC.

This statutory provision for PPLC is to include a mechanism for a political party's registered officer to make nominations and withdraw nominations for that party's PPLC membership (including provision for an alternate).

In its own work the Committee has experienced difficulties in accessing information and documents generated by the Electoral Commission, including regulations, election results, and Commission meeting documents. Over the electoral cycles under review electoral observers have also experienced the same and frequently recommended a more structured and open information sharing process be instituted. While in most cases a fully transparent electoral management body will do this in the course of their operations, our interaction with the Commission has suggested a need to mandate this in law.

Recommendation 43: Amend the Public Elections Act 2022 to include requirements and timeframes for the publication of:

- Electoral Commission decisions, regulations and formal policies;
- Electoral Commission meeting agendas and minutes;
- A register of formal Commission decisions;

in the Gazette, on the ECSL website and social media platforms. The law to require that these documents are permanently maintained for public access on their website and for hard copies to be available for inspection at all ECSL offices.

Section 52(b) of the Public Elections Act to be revised to provide a timeframe (7 days) of the announcement) for publication of the results of the presidential election.

Section 52(b) of the Public Elections Act be amended to stipulate that publication must be in the Gazette, website, and distributed to registered political parties.

Recommendation 44: The Electoral Commission to make a Regulation on the movement of electoral materials well in advance of each general election and the timing of the movements to be included in the electoral cycle calendar.

Qualifications for voting and candidacy

Electoral inclusion of incarcerated persons

Prisoners are currently disqualified from voting regardless of the nature of offence and duration of sentence, which is inconsistent with international standards prohibiting unreasonable restrictions on the right to vote.

The blanket ban on prisoner voting rights has been highlighted as needing review over several electoral cycles. The current ban is not in line with international human rights instruments to which Sierra Leone is a party. The Committee therefore recommends that such a review be undertaken and that as a minimum, prisoners be enfranchised for presidential elections. As candidacy qualifications start with the franchise, this will also need review.

Recommendation 45: Revise Section 17(c) Public Elections Act, which disqualifies all persons who are serving a sentence of imprisonment from voting, to make provisions for prisoners to vote in presidential elections, including persons in pre-trial detention.

Unless otherwise provided by law, status as a prisoner should not be a *de facto* disqualification for candidacy; any such disqualification should be as separately provided for in law.

Disqualification of public officers

Over the electoral cycles under review, the Committee noted several calls to reduce the period of time by which a public servant would have to resign their office to be qualified to run for elected office. The Committee agrees that the 12 months period does impose a burden on would-be candidates. At the same time, the Committee considered that there could be an examination of the definition of a Public Officer, to see if there could be further refinement made between those public officers who hold high level roles such as senior Ministry posts and those large cadre of public servants such as teachers and nurses who deliver vital public services across the country.

Recommendation 46: The Committee recommends an amendment to section 76(1)(b) of the Constitution to stipulate a six-month resignation deadline for public officers seeking elected office.

This Committee feels that further clarity on the legal definition of a Public Officer under Section 171 of the Constitution would be useful for the future.

Disqualification of dual citizens

The Committee notes that there have also been calls for the consideration of the disqualifications for potential presidential and parliamentary candidates in regard to citizenship. While finding that maintaining the requirement for presidential candidates to be only a citizen of Sierra Leone to be proportionate, we have concluded that dual citizens should be permitted to run for Parliament.

Recommendation 47: Section 76(1)(a) of the Constitution and section 43(2)(d) of the Public Elections Act and any other relevant law (e.g. Citizenship Act 1973) should be amended to allow a Sierra Leonean citizen with dual citizenship to be qualified to be nominated as a Member of Parliament, subject to safeguards such as a requirement of residency for the six months preceding the election or payment of Sierra Leone local tax, which is currently a requirement for seeking a parliamentary seat.

No changes are recommended for presidential candidacies.

Qualification of independent candidates

Over the electoral cycles under review, electoral observers have repeatedly noted that the prohibition on independent presidential candidacies is out of step with international electoral standards and human rights instruments to which Sierra Leone is a party. Accordingly, the Constitution should be amended to allow for independent candidates for the Presidency. Independents can already contest Parliamentary and local elections.

There needs to be a balance between enabling political participation and preventing unnecessary disruptions to the electoral process, such as excessive costs for managing candidacies and printing ballots. It is important to exclude candidates who have little chance of winning by requiring evidence of community support before accepting their candidature, typically achieved through the collection of signatures. However, laws should avoid discrimination by imposing overly restrictive conditions on independent candidates that party candidates do not face.

Recommendation 48: Allow independent candidates to nominate for Presidential election through amendment of section 41(b) and 42(1) of the Constitution. Additional conditions for independent candidacies may be considered by Parliament.

In making amendments to the primary legislation to allow independent candidacies, there should also be full application of all regulatory requirements relating to conduct and financing to be applied to independent candidates by the Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Regulation Commission.

Status of presidential candidates

In considering the provision of security and policing services around elections (see Institutional Reform section) the Committee received stakeholders' allegations around the use of criminal charges to deter citizens from pursuing election to the presidency. Respecting the independence of the prosecution process, the Committee nonetheless sees merit in providing some shield against this issue in statute.

Recommendation 49: In the event that a presidential candidate is standing trial on a criminal charge to which the State is a party one year prior to the election, such trial must be suspended until one year after the election. The legislation will need to incorporate independent candidacies into definitions.

Special inclusion measures

The introduction of the Gender Empowerment and Women' Equality Act has seen an increase in the proportion of women in elected office. While an important step forward for Sierra Leone, the country is also party to international human rights instruments that require similarly direct action by States to ensure the inclusion of young people and people with disabilities into the political process.

Recommendation 50: The Persons with Disability Act should be amended to ensure that there is progressive implementation of the principle that up to 5% of the members of the public in elective and appointive offices are persons with disabilities and that the starting point be at least 2%.

Section 58 of the Public Elections Act should be amended to require that all political parties must ensure that their national nomination lists for elective positions must include at least 2% PWD.

Recommendation 51: Adopt a National Youth Development Act, similar to GEWE, to provide for at least ten percent of the members in elective and appointive bodies to be youth using the African standard of up to 35 years old.

Section 58 of the Public Elections Act to be amended to reflect this quota.

For appointments to public office made by persons other than the President, at least 10% shall be youth.

International good practice is also to provide practical support for the inclusion of women, young people and people with disabilities in electoral processes. A concrete way to open candidacy to more such citizens is to provide for a reduction in nomination fees.

Recommendation 52: Amend Sections 45(1) and 58(6) of, and the Eleventh Schedule to, the Public Elections Act to provide that women, young people to the age of 35 and people with disabilities will only be required to pay half of the nomination fee prescribed by the Electoral Commission for other candidates.

Conduct of elections

Presidential voting system

The Committee noted that while various stakeholders and observers commented on the threshold for parliamentary elections in 2023, none raised issues with the presidential threshold. The Committee has considered this issue, noting that the 55% is an unusual threshold found nowhere else on the continent and being mindful of the financial burden of a second round of polling and counting. The Committee did note that some two-round presidential systems such as Kenya and Nigeria require both a numeric and geographic threshold in the first round, and so commends such a model for Parliamentary consideration.

Recommendation 53: A constitutional amendment to Section 42(2)(e) of the Constitution so that in presidential elections, a candidate can only be elected on the first round if they:

(a) Obtain 50% + 1 vote of the total valid votes cast nationally; and

(b) Obtain 25% of the total valid votes cast in each District in at least half of the Districts of Sierra Leone.

If the two thresholds are not met there is a second round and the candidate with the highest number of valid votes will be declared elected.

Voter Registration

The Committee has made recommendations elsewhere in this report regarding the voter registration process. Some refinement of the legislative framework will also enhance the process and improve access to voter registration data as well as the voters' register itself.

Recommendation 54: Amend section 13 of the Public Elections Act to require the Electoral Commission to use the National Identity Number for electoral purposes, including but not confined to the registration of voters and the identification of voters on polling day.

Recommendation 55: Amend section 15(2) of the Public Elections Act to require the Electoral Commission to publish the locations of voter registration centres two months before voter registration commences. This list is also to be provided to registered political parties.

Recommendation 56: Amend the Public Elections Act to require that before any deduplication of the voter registration database can occur, the Electoral Commission must make a formal decision to do so and notify all registered political parties of their intention. The legislation should further stipulate that deduplication can only be carried by Electoral Commission staff using Electoral Commission software and that this process is to be open to observation and party agents.

Recommendation 57: Amend section 37 of the Public Elections Act to require that the final voters' register for use at a general election must be published no later than six months to the polling day for those elections. This register must include for each voter the name, National Identity Number, address, and the polling station and polling centre assignment. This register must be publicly available for citizen verification.

This final register of voters should be provided to registered political parties no later than two months before the polling day. The legislation must also require the Electoral Commission to use appropriate technology for voters to access and confirm their entry on this list, such as through a mobile app, search engine and/or SMS service.

The Committee also proposes the introduction of a mandatory external audit of the voters' registration to improve public and stakeholder confidence in the register, as is the practice in other jurisdictions.

Recommendation 58: Amend the Public Elections Act to require the Electoral Commission to commission an independent and impartial organisation to conduct an external audit of the provisional voters' register to assess the accuracy and completeness of the register nine months before a general election. Only once the audit is completed is the register to be considered final. The report of the audit to be published.

Nomination issues

At present, in presidential elections a political party can nominate a replacement in the event of the death of a candidate. This should be extended so as to allow for the nomination of a replacement candidate by a political party within seven days should their candidate be disqualified before the election.

Recommendation 59: Amend section 47 of the Public Elections Act to align with section 42(2)(d) of the Constitution so that in a situation where a political party presidential candidate is disqualified before elections, a political party must be given seven days to nominate a replacement candidate.

Over several of the electoral cycles under review issues have arisen in relation to order in which candidates appear on ballot paper. This is left under the current framework to the Electoral Commission. The Committee feels that this is an issue that is important enough for primary legislation.

Recommendation 60: Amend the Public Elections Act to define the order that candidates should appear on the ballot paper following consultation on this issue.

Access to polling stations

The Electoral Commission has made notable improvements to the polling process for voters with disabilities over the cycle under review. As a consequence of the geography of Sierra Leone, however, providing fully accessible polling stations remains a challenge. In recent electoral cycles there has been confusion noted by late changes to polling stations for access reasons. The Commission should schedule access assessments for all electoral venues much earlier in the process.

Recommendation 61: The Electoral Commission to make access assessments of all proposed polling stations before the publication of the final voters' register and the final allocation of voters to polling stations. Where forced by local circumstance to use an inaccessible polling station the Commission to make suitable logistic provision to make the station accessible for voters with disabilities.

Procurement of electoral materials

As we were informed by the current Electoral Commission, Sierra Leone has now taken full responsibility for the procurement and purchase of electoral materials; this was previously provided by development partners. Accordingly, the legal framework should provide new safeguards for this to be performed in an open and transparent manner.

Recommendation 62: Amend the Public Elections Act to make the procurement and printing of electoral materials, including ballot papers, more transparent and open to registered political parties.

Missing ballot boxes

In the event that a ballot box is damaged or goes missing during transit, the provisions under Section 90 of the Public Elections Act should be amended to enhance transparency. The current legislation permits a counting officer to submit an affidavit certifying the accuracy of the statement of results in the case of the loss or destruction of a ballot box. This provision grants considerable discretion to the counting officer, which may adversely affect the integrity of the election process.

Recommendation 63: To improve accountability, Section 90 of the Public Elections Act should be amended to mandate that the counting officer's certified statement be witnessed by counting agents.

Campaign issues

In order to allow for better compliance with campaign regulations, it was felt that the current campaign period was not long enough to allow for all the campaign events that parties wished to hold to be done so in peaceful fashion on allocated days. If independent candidates are permitted at future presidential elections, time must be provided for their events as well.

Recommendation 64: Amend Section 154(1) the Public Elections Act to provide that the general election campaign period is three months.

Like many countries, all the electoral cycles in Sierra Leone under review gave rise to allegations of the misuse of state resources for campaigning. It therefore appears to the Committee that it would be timely to review if the legislation and its penalties are fit for purpose.

Recommendation 65: Increase penalties under section 132 and 160 of the Public Elections Act for the misuse of state resources in campaigning, including disqualification of candidates who do not comply or whose supporters do not comply.

Campaign finance regulation

While there is a legislative framework for the regulation of political party and campaign finances, this is not well instrumentalised.

Recommendation 66: It is recommended that the PPRC enact Regulations under Section 45(1) of the Political Parties Act to regulate campaign financing for both political parties and independent candidates.

Disputes relating to presidential elections

Electoral Dispute Resolution in general

There is an inordinate delay in the resolution of disputes filed after elections. Following consultation with the representative of the Chief Justice, it was proposed to draft specialised rules on election petitions to address the handling of presidential, parliamentary, and paramount chief elections.

Disputes preceding declaration of election results

Section 46(3) of the Public Elections Act stipulates that any objections to a presidential candidate's nomination must be submitted within 7 days of the nomination and must be adjudicated within 30 days of filing. However, this timeline does not ensure effective or timely resolutions of objections. The limited time between the nomination and election day creates a likelihood of decisions on objections being rendered very close to the election date. The Act also lacks clear guidelines on how the 30-day period for hearing objections is to be managed. Consequently, it has been proposed that the Supreme Court establish specific rules for handling presidential election disputes. These rules would cover both objections to nominations and the declaration of presidential election results, aiming to provide a more structured and predictable framework for resolving such disputes. This is also in keeping with the international and regional instruments that Sierra Leone has ratified, which require that an effective (timely and enforceable) remedy should be available for all citizens for violations of their rights throughout the electoral process.

Recommendation 67: The Committee recommends that the Chief Justice draft specialised rules on the handling of election petitions. These rules might cover such issues such as evidential standards and timeframes.

Disputes arising when the first round of a presidential election indicates the need for a second round

Section 42(2)(f) of the Constitution, which requires the second round of a presidential election to be conducted within 14 days, does not leave room for resolution of any disputes that may arise out of the first round. The Committee considered the need for the Constitutional provisions to also allow for legal challenges to the first round of a presidential election which does not declare a president-elect and set timeframes for those challenges to be dealt with.

Recommendation 68:
The Committee presents this recommendation in narrative form, in the interests of wide comprehension, and invites those who wish to see the technical instructions to consult the legal annex.

It is recommended to revise Sections 42(2)(f) of the Constitution to provide for the following:

That when the National Returning Officer declares a first-round presidential result that indicates the need for a second round, he or she will send this result to the Chief Justice immediately.

There is then a period of three days within which a citizen who voted in the election may lodge a petition. If no petitions are lodged, the Chief Justice is to advise the National Returning Officer that the declaration is confirmed. The Electoral Commission shall immediately declare that the second round of polling will take place in 14 days.

If a petition is lodged, there is to be a 14-day period in which the case must be heard and decided. On decision, the Court will either confirm the first-round result as declared or order a fresh poll to be held. If the declaration is confirmed, The Electoral Commission shall immediately declare that the second round of polling will take place in 14 days. If a fresh poll is required, then the Electoral Commission must set a day for this to occur within 60 days of the court decision.

Disputes arising when a candidate is declared president-elect

While section 54 of the Public Elections Act allows a citizen who has voted to challenge the validity of the presidential outcome within seven days of the declaration of the result, section 42(3) of the Constitution requires that the person elected to the office of President assume office on the day that he/she is declared elected by the Returning Officer or upon expiration of their predecessor's term of office, whichever is the latter. This can give rise to a person being sworn in before any petitions as to their election have been lodged or resolved; there is also no specified timeframe for the resolution of presidential election petitions. Additionally, the law does not clearly define the grounds for invalidating an election or specify the level of evidence required to support such claims. The Committee has concluded that there should be amendments made to the Constitution to provide a reasonable time period for the disposal of presidential election petitions before a swearing-in and assumption of office can take place. There should also be a timeframe set for the holding of a fresh election if so ordered by the Court.

Recommendation 69:

The Committee presents this recommendation in narrative form, in the interests of wide comprehension, and invites those who wish to see the technical instructions to consult the legal annex.

It is recommended to revise Sections 42(3) of the Constitution to provide for the following:

That when the National Returning Officer declares a candidate elected to the office of President, he or she will send this result to the Chief Justice immediately.

There is then a period of seven days within which a citizen who voted in the election may lodge a petition.
If no petitions are lodged, the Chief Justice is to advise the National Returning Officer that the declaration is confirmed and after a further seven days can swear in the President-elect.

If a petition is lodged, there is to be a 21-day period in which the case must be heard and decided. On decision, the Court will either confirm the declared result as declared or order a fresh poll to be held.
If the declaration is confirmed, the Chief Justice can swear in the President-elect after a further seven days.
If a fresh poll is required, then the Electoral Commission must set a day for this to occur within 60 days of the court decision.

This process is applicable whenever a candidate is declared elected President, whether or a first or second round of polling.

Political Party Matters

The Political Parties Act provides a frame for the work of the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) in relation to the registration and de-registration of political parties. It was clear to the Committee in our interaction with PPRC that there could be a more useful stipulation for the PPRC to rely on in determining that a political party is non-functional for electoral purposes.

However, Section 35(1) of the Constitution (which is restated in Section 21 of the Political Parties Act, outlines the comprehensive role of political parties, which includes:

- Participating in shaping the political will of the people,
- Disseminating information on political ideas and on social and economic programs of national character,
- Sponsoring candidates for Presidential, Parliamentary, or Local Government elections.

The Constitution does not confine the existence or legitimacy of political parties to their electoral success. This broader mandate underscores that political parties are integral to the democratic process, facilitating dialogue and representing diverse viewpoints. Under international instruments to which Sierra Leone is a party, restricting party registration based on electoral success alone could undermine democratic participation by compelling individuals to align with more popular parties, thereby stifling diversity in political discourse.

Given these considerations, this proposal to deregister non-winning political parties would need to be reconciled with its international obligations under the ICCPR and the constitutional provisions safeguarding the broader functions of political parties.

Recommendation 70: The Political Parties Act to be amended to require that if a political party does not win any elected office (at local or national level) at two consecutive general elections then the party will be deregistered.

The Committee considered the regulatory role of the PPRC in addition to its registration functions. Recognising that the 2022 revision of the Political Parties Act remains relatively recent, there is a need for further tightening in some specific areas and to give effect to other Committee recommendations such as those on independent candidates.

Recommendation 71: Section 25 of the Political Parties Act should be amended to limit the right to object to an alteration to registered members of a political party.

Proposed new Section 25 (1):
Where a political party registered under section 22 intends to alter
its Constitution;
its rules or regulations;
the name or address of a founding member;
the title, name or address of an office holder; or
its name, symbol, colour or motto
it shall notify the Commission of its intention and the Commission shall, within 14 days of the receipt of the notification, publish the intended alteration in the Gazette and invite objections from a registered member of the relevant political party to anything contained in the alteration.
Provided that the Commission shall not receive an objection from a member of a political party without proof of an attempt to first resolve the matter within the internal dispute resolution mechanism of the party before approaching the Commission.

To strengthen the dispute resolution capacity of parties, it is recommended to amend section 22 of the Public Elections Act to require that as part of the requirements for party registration, a party must supply information on its internal party dispute resolution mechanism.

Recommendation 72:
Part VIII of the Political Parties Act should be revised to regulate individual's non-compliant conduct in addition to that of political parties.
Part VIII-CONDUCT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND INDIVIDUALS
To expand the scope of this party to over both party conduct and the conduct of individuals, replace the current section 39 (1) with the following new subsection:
(1) This part shall apply to:
every political party, its members, supporters, candidates and operatives;
independent candidates
to replace the current subsection 2 with the following subsection
(2) A person or political party listed in subsection 1 shall not be involved in
violent conduct in party or independent candidate offices or activities, whether directly or indirectly;
the use of thugs;
the use of profane and obscene language or provocative songs against political opponents;
the use of incendiary and inciting statements, including hate speech against political opponents or;
the obstruction of the activities of political opponents including the destruction of campaign materials.
(3) Where a person or political party listed in subsection (1) contravenes subsection (2), they are liable, upon proof by the Commission to penalties in the following order:
a written warning;
a fine not less than Nle 100,000;
a suspension and
de-registration.
(4) A penalty imposed by the Commission under subsection (3) shall not preclude a person who has suffered as a result of conduct prohibited in subsection (2) from seeking redress under any other law.
(5) A person or political party found liable by the Commission for any of the conduct proscribed in subsection 2 shall be at liberty to appeal against the decision of the Commission to the High Court of Sierra Leone and such appeal shall be determined within 30 days of the date of its assignment.
(6) A political party shall not extend the tenure of any of the executives for more than 6 months.
40 (2) replace the words 'a political party or independent candidate' with 'a person or party listed in subsection 1…'
40 (3) replace the words 'a political party or an independent candidate' with 'a person or party listed in subsection 1…'

Electoral Security

The Committee considered the arrangements in place for electoral security and has made recommendations on planning and practice in the Institutional Reform section. Our examination of these issues has also highlighted some areas of legislative reform to bring Sierra Leone into line with international electoral standards and to reflect developments in the classification and response to electoral violence.

Section 131 of the Public Elections Act provides an offence for disorderly conduct at an election. This needs to be updated to reflect the unfortunate emergence of gender-motivated electoral violence, as well as the use of technology in inciting or undertaking disorderly conduct.

Recommendation 73: Elaborate on election violence in Section 131 of the Public Elections Act to explicitly include gender-based violence (GBV), sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) and Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in order to facilitate the collection and analysis of relevant incidents.

Our stakeholder engagements highlighted the perception that the security forces do not act in a suitably neutral manner when policing electoral events, including campaign events. This appears to have been an issue in all electoral cycles under review. As noted in the Institutional Reform section, there are also fundamental human rights considerations at play in electoral periods that must also be respected. The Election Security Strategy upholds the right of all political parties and their supporters to assemble peacefully, in accordance to existing laws and regulations. However, at the same time the Public Order Act undermines the freedom of assembly.

Recommendation 74: Enshrine the neutrality, the non-partisanship and the impartiality of the security forces in the exercise of their functions into the Constitution and all security sector-related Acts.

Ensure that all legislation in this space is drafted so as to safeguard the fundamental right of political parties and their supporters to assemble and rally in public. Amend the Section 17 of the Public Order Act to safeguard this right in line with international standards and regional standards and ensure that the Political Parties Act and Public Elections Act are also reviewed in this regard.

Develop an electoral security part in the Public Elections Act to: (a) Clearly designate the SL Police as the primary actor for implementing election security. (b) Stipulate that the security forces provide security coverage for all political parties on a level playing field. (c) Including the misuse (or other suitable definition) of security forces by any political party or individual as an electoral offence.

Noting the utility of the Independent Police Complaints Board as a redress mechanism for those who feel the police do not handle electoral cases appropriately, the Committee believes it timely to place this Board on a statutory footing in common with other public institutions that support electoral events.

Recommendation 75: Enshrine the Independent Police Complaints Board in legislation, along with its mandate, functions and powers.

Media Issues

The Committee noted a substantial increase in the strength and volume of hate speech during the 2023 elections. While this issue had occurred sporadically in the electoral cycles under review, the spread of social media and mobile phones by 2023 saw hate speech explode around the elections. At the same time, concerns were raised – as they had been in previous cycles – that the SLBC was not capable of acting as an independent public broadcaster, and that the Independent Media Commission was yet to be operationally capacitated to perform its role. The Committee has set out some initial recommendations below to address the most pressing issues of media regulation.

Recommendation 76: Amend the Independent Media Commission Act to make the appointment of the Independent Media Commission Chair subject to a more transparent process than at present. Independent Media Commission powers should be reviewed to ensure there is sufficient power to enforce the Media Code of Conduct. The Code should also be reviewed taking into account the role of social media in spreading hate speech during elections and whether sanctions are sufficient.

The Independent Media Commission could usefully offer training for journalists on political and electoral matters, perhaps in conjunction with the Electoral Commission and Political Parties Regulation Commission.

Recommendation 77: The state broadcaster, SLBC should be transformed into an independent public service broadcaster with editorial independence from government and financial autonomy.

Establish in legislation a limit in the maximum amount of airtime that political parties and candidates can buy on SLBC during an election campaign period, in order to avoid disadvantages between those parties with greater financial capacity than other parties.

Other Issues

Process to choose a voting system for parliament and local councils

In the electoral cycles under review, Sierra Leone used a single member constituency model, known as first past the post, to elect members of parliament and local councils in 2007, 2012 and 2018. In 2023, these bodies were elected using a proportional representation system with the existing Districts as the constituency, each District returning between 4 and 16 Members of Parliament.

Reports on the 2023 election and comments received at the outreach meetings indicated concern about two elements of this change – public understanding of the process that gave rise to the change, and then public comprehension of how the system would work, and what they as voters needed to know to correctly make their election choices. Comments on the second issue have underpinned Committee conclusions on voter information and education above.

In relation to the choice of system, the Committee firstly noted the ongoing process of Constitutional Review launched by H.E. The Presidency and agreed that this was the appropriate forum to discuss the provisions of section 38A of the Constitution. The Committee found that this should be accompanied by a national dialogue on the choice of voting system for Parliament and local councils.

Noting the progress made in women's representation since the passing of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act in 2022, that this dialogue should not undermine the implementation of this Act. If other representational special measures are to be legislated, implementation methods must be made clear.

Recommendation 78: There should be a national dialogue on the choice of electoral system to be adopted for Parliament and local councils between the district proportional representation system and the First Past the Post system.

Whichever electoral system is adopted should ensure that a minimum 30% female representation is maintained at all levels, consistent with the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act.

In advance of each general election the Electoral Commission must make a regulation that sets out how the GEWE quota and any other similar measure (such as for youth, People With Disabilities) are to be managed in the voting system to be used at that election.

Special voting arrangements

While provision for special voting arrangements exist in the legal framework, these are not widely used before the implementation of supplementary voters' list for electoral and security staff enfranchisement. In 2023, special advance voting was offered to citizens departing Sierra Leone on the Haj pilgrimage which coincided with the electoral dates. This has led to calls for further special voting arrangements, including for the diaspora, to be made available at future elections.

Recommendation 79: The Committee recognises the need for early and diaspora voting but would suggest that this issue be discussed in the national dialogue recommended in recommendation 78.

Responses to our report and monitoring of implementation

This report contains recommendations not only for constitutional and legislative change but many internal actions for various state institutions. As noted above, some of these institutions are independent bodies that are not to be directed by the executive in their duties, and the Committee wishes to both respect and strengthen that principle.

Moral guarantors will help monitor progress towards implementation.

Recommendation 80:
That the final report be tabled in Cabinet and that the Cabinet develops a Cabinet Paper to guide Government of Sierra Leone implementation, including legislative reforms, as required.

Parties call upon development partners and other international organizations to provide technical and financial assistance for implementation.

Areas of Divergence

The bulk of the report represents the agreed findings and recommendations of the Committee, as above, intended to strengthen and protect our electoral system. The committee endeavoured to focus on national issues and reach concrete joint recommendations wherever possible. There are, however, some areas where the Committee had different analysis and could not reach joint conclusions, primarily around the 2023 election results, potential resulting accountability issues, and conduct of elections, which require continued discussions by the parties.

As part of the methodology adopted in working on the Final Report, the Committee broke up into individual Teams to work on the areas of divergence, where there were challenges in agreeing on text for inclusion in the Final Report. It is important to note, there is a degree of potential convergence in some of the recommendations in some areas of divergence. There are a number of areas where the parties' analyses differ, but we have nonetheless identified a shared recommendation.

The Government of Sierra Leone and the APC made a good faith effort to reach agreement on the results of the 2023 elections and potential resulting accountability issues. Despite this effort, the parties could not agree in some areas.

The APC holds that statistical inconsistencies called into question the results declared by the ECSL and demands a rerun facilitated by the ECOWAS Commission and the resignation of election management bodies personnel, as detailed in the APC report. The APC's full statistical analysis is available on its website and is annexed to this report.

The GoSL maintains that the results as declared by the ECSL are valid. They thanked the Election Management bodies for their great work in the 2023 elections and remain committed to implementing reforms to strengthen the performance of election management bodies in line with the next electoral cycle in 2028. The government party's full statistical analysis is available on the ECSL website and is annexed to this report.

Despite these differences, the Parties jointly committed to national cohesion, national security, and continued dialogue around these issues.

GoSL team		**APC team**	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
Section 92 (1 to 4) of PEA not respected	The Government of Sierra Leone's agents who were part of the SLPPs election management Team and other political parties consulted indicated and confirmed that Section 92 subsections (1-4) was adhered to as summary of polling station results were compiled at regional tally centres, certified by District Returning Officers, and copies shared to political party agents present at the tally centres. Summary of district results were further compiled and certified by the Regional	Many ballot boxes arrived at the tally centres open and unsealed. Some tamper-evident envelopes TEE received at the tally centres were not sealed. The result tallying and tabulation process at the regional centres was not transparent and inclusive. Party agents and observers were not allowed to meaningfully observe the process and the result tallying was not projected. At regional tallying centres there was no progressive	Strict compliance with the provisions of Section 92 1-4 of the PEA 2022. Ensure strict adherence to the ECSL Tally and Results Procedures at the Polling Centres and Stations and Tally Centres. Tally and Results Procedures must be reinforced, made more transparent, allow for full observation of each step of the process in line with Articles 1.2 of the Tally and Results Procedures.[8] Procedures manuals and training materials must be

[8] Authorised persons who can observer tally process. ECSL Tally and Results Procedures, 2023.

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
	Returning Officers and provided to the National Returning Officer. The summary of regional results was also compiled by the national returning officer which informed the final result announced by the national returning officer. **It is recommended that Political parties are supported to identify, train and deploy experienced and dedicated Polling agents in all future elections to monitor and participate in the Results management processes**	release of information provided on polling station results received, processed, audited and excluded per district. *2007 EU EOM final observation report, the tally process: "was transparent and in line with best international practice regarding the publication of results."*[5] *2012 EU EOM:" Publication of progressive presidential election results evenly representing all regions/districts during the tallying process, combined with prior voter education about the nature of these results, could increase the overall transparency of the results tallying process and defuse any potential tensions which may publicly arise during the period between election day and the day of the announcement of results."*[6] *2018 EU EOM: "Publication of progressive presidential election results representing all regions/districts during the tallying process, combined with prior voter education about the nature of these results, could increase the overall transparency of the results tallying process and defuse any potential tensions which may publicly arise during the period between election day and the day of announcement of results."*[7]	developed and delivered to districts in a timely manner. Procedures for the transmission of results must be transparent, easily explained to the public, and as simple as practically possible taking into account cyber-security issues (avoid possible data breach). Procedures for shipment, tallying and announcement of results at regional and national levels have to be available well in advance and involved staff has to be well trained. Interactive training programmes must be conducted for the ECSL and tally staff. If resources and capacity are available, a tally should be carried out at the district level as defined by the Law Section 92 (1-4).

[5] EU EOM SLE 2007, Final Report page 34-35. https://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20SIERRA%20LEONE%202007_en.pdf
[6] EO EOM SLE 2012, Final Report, page 39
[7] European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report, Sierra Leone, Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections 2018.

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
Some Tamper Evident Envelops (TEEs) received at Tally Centres were not sealed	Polling officials are required to seal all TEE at polling stations. Any unsealed TEE received at the tally centre was not entered into the result database. **It is recommended that in future elections all Tamper Evident Envelopes (TEEs) are inspected by Party accredited agents present, accepted and documented for reference and accountability purposes**	For the 2023 elections, contrary to Section 88(4) of the Public Elections Act, many of the ballot boxes arrived at the regional tally centres open and unsealed. Some tamper-evident envelopes TEE received at the tally centres were not sealed. The result tallying and tabulation process at the regional centres was not transparent and inclusive. Party agents and observers were not allowed to meaningfully observe the process and the result tallying was not projected. At regional tallying centres there was no progressive release of information provided on polling station results received, processed, audited and excluded per district. *2007 EU EOM final observation report, the tally process: "was transparent and in line with best international practice regarding the publication of results."*[9] *2012 EU EOM:" Publication of progressive presidential election results evenly representing all regions/districts during the tallying process, combined with prior voter education about the nature of these results, could increase the overall transparency of the results tallying process and defuse any potential tensions*	Ensure that all ballot boxes are sealed consistent with PEA 2022. ECSL to ensure procurement of a sufficient number of ballot boxes for future elections.
Ballot boxes arrived open and unsealed at Tally Centres	The general practice in Sierra Leone's electoral system is that Ballot boxes procedurally need not be brought to tally centres. In cases where they are brought, they serve as containers to convey TEE. Therefore, whether they are open or not has no effect on the credibility and the transparency of the electoral process. **It is recommended that in all future elections in Sierra Leone where Ballot boxes are required to be brought to Tally centres for any purpose information must be made public in advance especially to Political parties and accredited Election observers (National as well as International)**		**It is recommended that in all future elections in Sierra Leone where Ballot boxes are required to be brought to Tally centres for any purpose information must be made public in advance especially to Political parties and accredited Election observers (National as well as International)**

[9] EU EOM SLE 2007, Final Report page 34-35. https://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20SIERRA%20LEONE%202007_en.pdf

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
		which may publicly arise during the period between election day and the day of the announcement of results."[10] *2018 EU EOM: "Publication of progressive presidential election results representing all regions/districts during the tallying process, combined with prior voter education about the nature of these results, could increase the overall transparency of the results tallying process and defuse any potential tensions which may publicly arise during the period between election day and the day of announcement of results."*[11]	
Reception of material at district level slow and disorganised and procedural issues noted in 15 districts	The Government of Sierra Leone finds this information paradoxical. The ECSL was in position to produce Presidential results within 48 hours of close of polling. This potentially could have been almost impossible where significant delay (as reported) could have taken place. **It is recommended that ECSL prepares Regulation to indicate the duration between end of polling and release of results so that Political parties and citizens could predict the duration. In addition, any operational and logistical challenges encountered and or envisaged in the movement of Polling**	For the 2023 elections, contrary to Section 88(4) of the Public Elections Act, many of the ballot boxes arrived at the regional tally centres open and unsealed. Some tamper-evident envelopes TEE received at the tally centres were not sealed. The result tallying and tabulation process at the regional centres was not transparent and inclusive. Party agents and observers were not allowed to meaningfully observe the process and the result tallying was not projected. At regional tallying centres there was no progressive release of information	**It is recommended that ECSL prepares Regulation to indicate the duration between end of polling and release of results so that Political parties and citizens could predict the duration. In addition, any operational and logistical challenges encountered and or envisaged in the movement of Polling materials prior to and after polling should be instantly made known to Political parties, accredited Election observers and the public**

[10] EO EOM SLE 2012, Final Report, page 39

[11] European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report, Sierra Leone, Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections 2018.

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
	materials prior to and after polling should be instantly made known to Political parties, accredited Election observers and the public	provided on polling station results received, processed, audited and excluded per district. *2007 EU EOM final observation report, the tally process: "was transparent and in line with best international practice regarding the publication of results."*[12] *2012 EU EOM:" Publication of progressive presidential election results evenly representing all regions/districts during the tallying process, combined with prior voter education about the nature of these results, could increase the overall transparency of the results tallying process and defuse any potential tensions which may publicly arise during the period between election day and the day of the announcement of results."*[13] *2018 EU EOM: "Publication of progressive presidential election results representing all regions/districts during the tallying process, combined with prior voter education about the nature of these results, could increase the overall transparency of the results tallying process and defuse any potential tensions which may publicly arise during the period between election day and the day of announcement of results."*[14]	

[12] EU EOM SLE 2007, Final Report page 34-35.
https://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20SIERRA%20LEONE%202007_en.pdf
[13] EO EOM SLE 2012, Final Report, page 39
[14] European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report, Sierra Leone, Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections 2018.

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
Tabulation and announcement of result proved to be sticking point; system opaque, meaningful observation prevented	The Party of the ruling Government (SLPP) and many other Political parties as well as members of the public are aware that Tabulation of 2023 election results was done in accordance with legal framework and existing historical practice in Sierra Leone and in similar manner as it was done in 2007, 2012 and 2018. **It is recommended that the Government of Sierra Leone engage Political parties and other national stakeholders in a national consultation on determining the mode of Tabulation of Results for all future General elections in Sierra Leone consistent with international best practice in comparable jurisdictions**	In the June 2023 elections, the ECSL announced presidential elections results in two phases; in the first phase the commission announced uncertified partial Presidential results representing 60% of polling stations on the 26th of June 2023 contrary to Section 92 (2) of the Public Elections Act of 2022. In the second phase, the Commission announced final Presidential elections results on the 27th. June 2023. Detailed analysis of the results, in comparison with other independently gathered data and data from previous elections, revealed several statistical inconsistencies and discrepancies in the results announced as follows: i. the partial uncertified result released on the 26th of June 2023 constituted 7,098 polling stations. It was found that in eight districts (Kailahun, Kenema, Bombali, Karena, Port Loko, Bo, Bonthe and Pujehun) the average valid vote per polling station reported exceeded the 300-voter threshold per polling station, contrary to Section 84(1) of the Public	For future elections verification of district-level tabulation should be conducted and Section 84 of the PEA should be applied, as appropriate.

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
		Elections Act of 2022. ii. In the summary of the statement of final Presidential results announced by the ECSL on the 27th June 2023, the total invalid votes recorded by the ECSL is 10,883 representing 0.39%. This is not only inconsistent with the estimated 4.5% and 5.7%, from NEW's PVRT data but also deviates significantly from historical trends. In 2007, invalid votes accounted for 7.3% of total votes, while in 2012 and 2018, the rates were 4.7% and 5.2%, respectively. This calls to question the integrity of the results announced. iii. the summary of the statement of final presidential elections results was announced by the ECSL on the 27th June 2023. It was found that copies of district level result from all provincial districts were certified on the same date (27th June 2023). However, copies of Presidential results from Western Region (Urban and Rural) were certified on the 1st. of July 2023,	

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
		though announced on the 27th June 2023. After several attempts and engagements for clarification, ECSL was unable to provide any justification to support that the final results announced for the 2023 Presidential Elections is accurate. All of the above exhibit significant elections irregularities and malpractices that potentially influenced the outcome of the Presidential election results as not being a true reflection of the will of the people. It is however clear that this action to undermine the democratic elections in 2023 has been machinated by all elections management bodies and other public institutions designed to deliver democratic elections in Sierra Leone. Due to these statistical inconsistencies, the APC continues to demand a rerun facilitated by the ECOWAS Commission. Our full analysis is available in the APC analysis of the 2023 elections. The APC has low confidence in the judicial processes on election related matters, as it has had a bad experience with the court's ruling on its 2018 elections petition three years after filing. This is amidst several mishandling of cases against individual APC leaders and supporters. In addition, it is a globally accepted fact that	

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
		the 2023 elections were rigged. This is backed by the APC's analysis of 70.2% of RRFs showing that Dr Samura Kamara had a commanding lead of 57.15% as against the SLPP's Julius Maada Bio with 39.80%. Therefore, it is impracticable that Julius Maada Bio could have won the presidential election on the first ballot with more than 55%. In addition, analysis of ECSL's 60% results of polling stations and 100% announced on 26 and 27 June 2023 respectively, showed statistical inconsistencies and over-voting in nine districts.	
Result tallying and tabulation process not transparent, result tallying not projected	Tallying of result was not projected because it is not part of the legal framework. It must be noted that Political parties in Sierra Leone and members of PPLCs for various electoral cycles are aware that Result tallying as undertaken in 2023 followed similar patterns of 2007, 2012 and 2018. **It is recommended that Government of Sierra Leone engage Political parties and other national stakeholders in a national consultation on determining how all future Results tallying and tabulation processes should be conducted/ undertaken by ECSL consistent with international best practices in comparable jurisdictions**		

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
2007 transparent tallying process and in line with international best practice	The 2007 tallying process was done at National level where no projection of results was done. Political Party agents and observers were given access in similar fashion as they were given access in 2012, 2018 and 2023 election tally processes. **It is recommended that national Consultation be held by Government, political parties and other Stakeholders to agree minimum standards consistent with International best practice in comparable jurisdictions as it relates to what is '' transparent tallying process''.**	*2007 EU EOM final observation report, the tally process: "was transparent and in line with best international practice regarding the publication of results."*[15]	
ECSL did not publish 2023 election polling station result	PEA Section 92 does not require the ECSL to publish disaggregated polling station results. **It is recommended that the PEA be revised to make provision for an amendment to Section (92) consistent with International best practice in comparable jurisdictions**	Despite public demand, ECSL did not publish the 2023 Elections polling station level results. On the ECSL website is available the 2023 Presidential election results as total number of valid ballots cast per district, without providing number of polling stations counted per district. No information is provided by ECSL regarding the 120 polling stations not counted per district. Despite the high public demand, ECSL did not publish the 2023 Elections polling station level results.	Amend the PEA to require the publication of elections results by Polling Station immediately following the declaration of final elections results and copies of the said results be sent to every political party that participated in the elections and observers, with penalties for non-compliance. The PEA to be amended to stop all progressive/partial/preliminary results announcement at national level by percentages. The commission will instead announce final results at district level as completed and certified. Sections 92 of the PEA to be amended to require that in the compilation of summaries and certification of elections results

[15] EU EOM SLE 2007, Final Report page 34-35.
https://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20SIERRA%20LEONE%202007_en.pdf

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
			be done at district level in the presence of party agents of all participating political parties and elections observers. That party agents and observers present must sign the certified results for validation. The PEA to mandate ECSL to project the tallying and tabulation of all election results in the presence and full view of Party agents and elections observers. The PEA to ensure that non-compliance with legal requirements and regulatory framework of ECSL to establish procedures and criteria for transparency is punishable.
		Since ECSL has provided only district level results for the 2023, 2018 and 2012 elections, it is impossible to conduct proper review and examination of electoral results. There is no information provided by ECSL on how many polling stations have been counted for the 2023 elections in each district, therefore it is difficult to examine polling stations with possible overvoting cases. Please note that 120 polling stations[16] were not entered in the 2023 elections results data and ECSL has not provided to the public any information regarding the	Publish on the ECSL website comprehensive election results data by polling station, including results per candidate and per party, the number of registered voters and of valid and invalid votes, in a timely manner and in an easily trackable and downloadable database format." 2023 EU EOM final report. [17] ECSL must keep archive of the announced results on its website for public consumption and institutional memory. Necessary amendments to the 2022 Public Election Act should be made requiring the ECSL to publish results by Polling Station.

[16] ECSL Statement, June 27, 2023.

[17] Sierra Leone 2023 – EU EOM Final Report on General Elections June 2023, page 40 - https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-sierra-leone-2023/sierra-leone-2023-final-report-general-elections-june-2023_en?s=410315

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
		distribution of these polling stations by districts.	
Little information provided by ECSL in advance that provides certainty for electoral contestants	The party of the ruling Government and other political parties that participated in the 2023 Electoral cycle were provided relevant electoral education to all contestants during stakeholder engagements that were held in all districts. **It is recommended that ECSL collaborate with CSOs and other State institutions to supplement Electoral education for all segments of the population and particularly contestants in all layers of the electoral process. The information should ensure consistency in messaging, credibility, and predictability of events with dates etc. It must also be noted that political parties have obligations to facilitate and enhance electoral education for their membership which must be supported and encouraged by ECSL and PPRC**		
Section 94 does not create room for accountability on the part of ECSL	Section 94 of PEA is essential as it prevents ECSL operations from being held to ransom due to the absence of party agents. There are political parties which fail to recruit agents and as such may necessarily not be available by wilful absence and may tend to present ECSL as being non-accountable.		

GoSL team		APC team	
Findings from issues log	**Recommendations**	**Findings from APC document**	**Recommendations**
	It is recommended that ECSL records Parties in attendance as well as those that are absent as a mark of accountability		
Need for certification process of presidential result to be transparent	There is need to define 'transparency definition and threshold'. The current mode of Certification is through **signing** and **stamping** by respective Returning officers of ECSL. I**t is recommended that Political parties engage ECSL on agreeing definition of transparency and threshold that is acceptable for all levels of elections consistent with International best practice in comparable jurisdictions**		

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MEDIATED DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE AND THE ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS PARTY

(16th - 18th OCTOBER, 2023) AT THE BINTUMANI HOTEL, FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

AN AGREEMENT FOR NATIONAL UNITY

PREAMBLE

A. Welcoming the 3-day mediated dialogue between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party, (herein after referred to as "the Parties"), to address the political impasse post the June 24th 2023 multitier elections;
B. Thanking the mediators of the dialogue - African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commonwealth, and the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) for their effort to bring the Parties together;
C. Noting that the laws of the Republic of Sierra Leone, especially the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act 6, 1991) are sacrosanct;
D. Given that the Parties to the mediated dialogue (Government of Sierra Leone - GoSL and the All Peoples Congress Party - APC) note records of cases filed in the Supreme Court against the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone - ECSL;
E. Noting that the All Peoples Congress has continued to ask the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone for the release of the "summary of all statements of the results from the polling stations" (Section 92, Public Elections Act, 2022) for the 24th June 2023 multi-tier elections;
F. Noting further that the All Peoples Congress continues to demand for the immediate resignation of the Chairman and Chief Electoral Commissioner and all Regional Commissioners of ECSL;
G. The Government of Sierra Leone notes the provisions in Section 32 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (as amended);
H. The APC Party acknowledges the relevance of Section 2(1) of the Right to Access Information Act, 2013;
I. Noting that no individual or candidate who participated in the June 24th 2023 elections challenged the gazetted results (20th July, 2023) in court;

RESOLUTIONS

The Parties resolved the following:

1. His Excellency the President to make a 'National Address' on dialogue, unity, cohesion, and peace
2. The APC will end its "non-participation in governance"
3. His Excellency the President, in consultation with the APC party, will constitute a cross party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review with a three-way leadership nominated by the Government of Sierra Leone; the APC Party and Development Partners. This body will examine the electoral systems, structures and processes of the 2023 multi-tier electoral cycle. The committee will also be informed

DMS

by previous elections with a view to highlighting and addressing the contentious issues of elections and results management including the collation, verification, authentication and publishing of electoral data consistent with international best practice to enhance the credibility of all future elections in Sierra Leone that guarantees elections to be free, fair and credible.

   a. The Terms of Reference will be developed under the joint leadership of the committee within 30 days
   b. The duration of the committee will be 6 months from the date of establishment
   c. The Recommendations from the Committee shall be actionable and implementable
   d. The committee will be gender-balanced

4. The parties to the dialogue agree to the following:
   a. Release of any persons arrested, detained and/or imprisoned for alleged elections and civil protest (informed by a list to be submitted by the APC and other Political Parties and considered by the Government of Sierra Leone)
   b. The discontinuation of any politically motivated court cases against the APC, other parties and their supporters (based on a list to be submitted by the APC and other parties and considered by the Government of Sierra Leone)
   c. Support the resettlement of any Political Party supporters internally and externally displaced due to political intimidation, attacks and harassment (informed by a list to be submitted by the APC, and other parties and considered by the Government of Sierra Leone) as soon as possible
   d. That upon assumption of their elective governance positions, all elected APC officials (Members of Parliament, Mayors, Chairpersons, Councillors) will have the issue regarding their entitlements addressed accordingly by the appropriate institutions
   e. Parliament to address any issues as it relates to the leadership, composition of Committees and representation in International Parliaments on behalf of APC (the composition of Committees and international Parliaments must reflect APCs share of seats in accordance with the Constitution of Sierra Leone)
5. Both parties agree to the institutionalisation of an inter-party dialogue framework between the APC, the SLPP, and other political parties. This will be facilitated by the government
6. Both parties commit to re-engineer and rekindle the relationships within the national socio-political ecosystem such as between His Excellency the President and former political leaders (former Presidents and Vice Presidents); the APC and SLPP leaderships, etc.
7. The government of Sierra Leone and the APC party strictly condemn all citizens at home and abroad who incite violence, spread hate speech and disrupt national cohesion (online and offline) and government will continue all efforts to bring those involved to justice

DMS

8. There shall be actions and commitments by the Parties to implement the agreements reached during this mediated dialogue. To this end, the Government of Sierra Leone and the APC Party commit to the establishment of an independent committee of 'Moral Guarantors' whose membership shall be agreed by the Parties to support and monitor the implementation of this Agreement.

Signed: Government of Sierra Leone and the All Peoples Congress Party

Government of Sierra Leone	All Peoples Congress Party
Dr David Moinina Sengeh (CHIEF MINISTER)	Dr Samura Mathew Wilson Kamara (LEADER OF THE PARTY)

Witness:

Government of Sierra Leone	All Peoples Party

Signed in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on this 18th Day of October, 2023

Mediators

H.E Madam Fatoumata Jallow-Tambajang, Former Vice President of The Gambia
(Joint Facilitator)

Amb Abdel-Fatau Musah, PhD
(Commissioner, Political Affairs, Peace and Security –ECOWAS Commission)

Justice (RTD) Amraphael Mbogholi Msagha
(Commonwealth Secretary-General's Envoy)

Patience Chiradza
(Director Governance and Conflict Prevention - African Union)

Convener:

Rev Shodankeh Johnson
(Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion):

2023

1. INTRODUCTION

The June 24 2023 multi-tier elections which declared H.E President Julius Maada Bio as winner ended in a controversy with the APC rejecting the announced results; a three-day mediated dialogue between the Government of Sierra Leone and the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party (hereinafter referred to as the PARTIES), was held to address the political impasse; the mediation was facilitated by the African Union, ECOWAS, Commonwealth, and The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC).

One outcome of the mediation agreement (Resolution 3) was the constitution of a Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review (The Committee).

The Terms of Reference of the Committee were developed under the joint leadership of the committee within 30 days of the commencement date of 19th December 2023. The duration of the Committee will be six (6) months from the date of its commencement.

The recommendations from the Committee shall be actionable and implementable;

The Committee is being established to examine the electoral systems, structures, and processes of the 2023 multi-tier electoral cycle. The Committee will be informed by previous elections with a view to highlighting and addressing the contentious issues of elections and results management including the collation, verification, authentication and publishing of electoral data consistent with international best practice to enhance the credibility of all future elections in Sierra Leone that guarantees elections to be free, fair and credible. No such comprehensive

analysis has been undertaken to evaluate the electoral architecture in Sierra Leone within the context of its functional capacity to deliver credible elections that can foster faster and smoother political transitions, reducing the cost of elections to stability and, development. This exercise will rely primarily on the recommendations of Election Observer Missions spanning 2007 to 2023. Additionally, it will assess the institutional capacity of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and other entities that are part of the election's architecture in Sierra Leone. Using a combination of desk review and primary data collection methodologies such as key informant interviews, the Review Committee will prepare a report on key recommendations to improve the performance of EMBs and the peripheral institutions that support the delivery of elections. The examination will primarily address the erosion of institutional capacity of key institutions that make-up Sierra Leone's electoral system with a view to bolstering their independence and credibility through institutional and legal reforms. This technical assessment which will be contextualized within Sierra Leone's broader political economy dynamics will result in the development of a legal and institutional reform roadmap to strengthen the capacity and the independence of the entities responsible for delivering elections. The reform roadmap will seek to enhance the simplicity, transparency, and modernization of Sierra Leone's electoral system to consistently deliver free, fair, and peaceful elections.

2. CONTEXT

On 27th June 2023, His Excellency, the President, Brigadier (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio was declared winner of Sierra Leone's presidential race, by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), securing 56.1% of the popular vote. Thirteen candidates contested in the presidential election and fourteen parties put up over 870 candidates for parliamentary

seats, and 2,784 candidates in 22 local councils across the country. The 24th June 2023 elections re-introduced the District Block Proportional Representation system (DBPR) with a threshold of 11.9% for a political party or independent candidate to gain a parliamentary seat. Additionally, the recently adopted Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act promoted the political participation of women in elected offices, political parties were required to have 30% women nominated for elected seats which is roughly about every 1 in 3 seats in Parliament designated for women.

While the lead up to and the election day were widely considered peaceful, but with reported cases of fracases between political party supporters and security forces, the period between voting and the announcement of election results on the other hand was marred with escalating tensions. Moreover, consistently weak communications by the ECSL and operational challenges such as the (alleged) poor quality of the voter identification cards, limited voter education, concerns about the timeliness of the publication of the national register of voters, and late delivery of ballot boxes in certain polling centers significantly undermined the "good faith" extended to ECSL and by extension, the credibility of the elections process. These concerns were further amplified by statements made by some Partners and Election Observer Missions calling into question the integrity and credibility of results before they were announced by ECSL. Additionally, immediately after ECSL results were announced, the National Elections Watch (a coalition of civil society organizations) published its own parallel results using the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) that showed that no candidate met the threshold of 55%. These factors have created a post-election environment that is marred with mistrust resulting in heightening tensions

between the ruling party and the opposition. This has also put into focus the ECSL and how the election was conducted.

It is evident that ECSL, a de jure independent entity charged with the responsibility to undertake the 2023 election process has struggled with communication and operational challenges during the election process resulting in an erosion of public trust. As a result of these weaknesses, following the announcement of the election results, the re-elected Bio administration was called upon by development partners to respond to concerns about the transparency and credibility of the process. However, the Bio administration has remained steadfast that it would not interfere at any point in the process to maintain in law and in practice the independence of ECSL. The governing party itself was a participant in the election conducted by an independent institution that declared a winner, and there are established due processes to challenge the results. In a burgeoning democracy such as Sierra Leone, the integrity and independence of institutions, especially those that confer legitimacy to the political leadership of a country must be preserved. As such, significant steps have been taken over the years to establish the independence of ECSL as a necessary and sufficient condition to grow Sierra Leone's democracy especially in a post-conflict context.

Key markers of the independence of ECSL include the appointment of its leadership requiring the approval of the Sierra Leone Parliament in consultation with other Political parties. ECSL's activities are also governed by a strong legal framework including the 1991 Constitution (as amended as to 2008); 2012 Public Elections Act (as amended 2022); 2022 Political Parties Regulation Act; 2022 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act; 2022 Local Government Act; and the other regulations and procedures. There is also a 2020-2024 Electoral Cycle ECSL

Strategic Plan. Essentially, given that its authority has emanated from a multi-partisan Parliament, the ECSL in principle should have strong credibility and legitimacy to conduct national and sub-national elections. However, each election cycle presents its own set of challenges as seen during these elections.

An assessment of Election Observer Mission findings, example, the *Carter Center's Sierra Leone 2023 National Elections and the European Union Election Observer Mission Reports* outlined some of the following challenges that undermined public trust in ECSL during the 2023 election cycle resulting in statements of concerns from some Partners on the process. While this list is not exhaustive, identified below are the key concerns presented:

Pre-Election

i. Introduction of the DBPR less than six months before the elections with limited consultation amongst political parties and other relevant stakeholders
ii. Restrictively high DBPR threshold of 11.9%, reducing the space for smaller parties to participate in political life
iii. Lack of acceptance of the voter register by political parties
iv. The process of determining boundary delimitations using the "contested" 2022 census
v. Only 4 out of all parliamentary lists had women as the first candidate which indicates some unwillingness to fully embrace the GEWE Act
vi. Lack of clear communication by ECSL in the lead up to the elections eroded public confidence
vii. Unbalanced coverage by media houses of the candidates during the campaign period, most the coverage was focused on Sierra

Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All Peoples Congress (APC)

Election Day

i. Lack of transparency in the tabulation of polling results
ii. Observation of ballot boxes with broken seals and inappropriately opened ballot boxes
iii. Polling stations opened later than planned

Other

i. Electoral redress mechanisms are often slow

Similar observations were made by other Observer Missions in their reports. However, the preliminary statement from the African Union Observation Mission noted that "the elections were conducted in a generally peaceful, transparent, and credible manner, up to the counting on polling day, despite reported incidents of violence particularly during the pre-election period" (African Union, 2023). While concerns have been raised by external parties, no legal filings contesting the election results were made in the Courts of Sierra Leone by any political party or private citizen within the stipulated period as provided for in the laws, which is a minimum standard to prompt investigations into an election process. However, the Committee notes records of cases filed in the Supreme Court against the ECSL. Additionally, there are lingering concerns raised by the international community and some civil society organizations on alleged election "irregularities" that are yet to be substantiated.

3. Establishment of the Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review

In His Excellency, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio's statement for the Opening of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone, he announced the establishment of a National Electoral Systems Review

Committee (NESRC) to be chaired by the Honorable Vice President. He indicated that the objective of the Committee is two-fold:

i. review the prevailing legal framework related to institutional and operational arrangements to deliver elections, and
ii. propose key reforms for institutionalizing the recommendations to enhance the operations of the entire electoral architecture in Sierra Leone. However, the said Committee, as proposed by H.E the President, was never established.

The post-election phase of the June 24th multi-tier elections was characterized by the declaration of non-participation in Governance and in particular the 'refusal' by elected representatives of the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party to present themselves, subscribe to oath and take up their positions and roles in the House of Parliament and Local councils. This situation was viewed with concern by His Excellency the President who despite directing the establishment of the NESRC also sought ways of ensuring that the 'political impasse- through the non-participation in Governance by the APC be addressed for amicable resolution.

The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) an entity established by an Act of Parliament in 2021 and whose mandate can be traced in part to the Lome Peace Agreement that ended Sierra Leone's 10+ years of civil war, initiated actions to settle the 'political impasse' of APC non-participation in governance. After a number of institutional efforts could not yield much progress and on the suggestion of the APC, 'Third Parties' were subsequently identified and invited to support a mediated dialogue.

The ICPNC succeeded in getting the endorsement of the United Nations, Commonwealth, the African Union, and the ECOWAS, to support a mediated dialogue. In the Bintumani Hotel in Freetown from the 16th October – 18th October 2023 the three organizations through their envoys

undertook a mediated settlement and on Wednesday 18th October, 2023 the 'National unity Agreement'' was signed between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) party. In Resolution (03) of the 'Agreement for National Unity', it was agreed thus *'' Constitution of a Cross party Committee on Electoral systems and Management Bodies Review with a three-way Leadership.'*

On the 1st November, 2023 a meeting was convened at the National headquarters of the All Peoples Congress (APC) party between representatives of the GoSL (led by the Chief Negotiator, Dr David Moinina Sengeh, Chief Minister) and the APC (led by Dr Samura M.W. Kamara, National Leader). The details of the 'Agreement for National Unity' were discussed and a matrix of actions agreed by the 'Parties'. As part of the deliberations, it was agreed that each party shall nominate seven (07) Persons for the consideration of His Excellency the President in constituting the Cross-party committee. The GoSL and APC nominated members and His Excellency the President endorsed and approved the APC list (as submitted in its entirety) alongside the GoSLs nominated representatives. The United Nations Resident Coordinated (UNRC) was also endorsed as the third Co-chair. In the spirit of inclusivity and participation, representation from CSOs and critical State institutions were included as part of the expanded committee as observers.

To this end the Committee shall:

A. Review and examine the electoral systems of the 2023 multi-tier electoral cycle;
   a) The First-Past-the-Post Single-Member Constituency
   b) Proportional Representation (PR) System (District Block);

B. Review and examine the Structures and processes of the 2023 multi-tier elections and other electoral cycles consistent with the law and international best practice.

C. Review and examine the evolution of electoral cycles and previous elections to highlight and address the contentious issues in elections.

i. Elections management
ii. Legal framework and an assessment of reforms that came out of the assessment of previous elections that were implemented during the 2023 elections cycle
iii. Functional review of the key Elections Management Bodies (EMBs) that deliver elections
iv. Electoral redress mechanisms (within the EMBs, Security Sector and the Judiciary)
v. The role of political parties
vi. Media landscape with a focus on social media
vii. Security landscape

By assessing the aforementioned factors, the Review Committee will develop an electoral systems reform roadmap for the implementation of its recommendations. The reform roadmap will seek to enhance transparent, free, fair, peaceful and credible elections in Sierra Leone consistent with international best practices. Elections are the foundation of a strong democratic polity as the process of voting allows individuals to exercise their civil liberty to choose representation. In this vein, the confidence of citizens in the capacity of the institutions (EMBs) to deliver credible elections that reflects the will of the people is critical to creating a peaceful and stable environment where democracies can flourish.

4. Mandate of the Committee

In the fulfilment of its mandate, the Committee shall take the following actions:

i. If during the course of its examination, the Committee determines that certain persons, groups or institutions bear responsibility for undermining democratic elections in Sierra Leone, including the 2023, 2018, 2012 and 2007 electoral cycles, the Committee shall recommend appropriate action to the President.
ii. Request access to all relevant documents, records, and information necessary for the conduct of its examination.
iii. Invite and speak to experts, government officials, EMBs, political party representatives and any other individuals deemed necessary for the examination.
iv. Request resources, technical expertise, or assistance from relevant national or international organizations and development partners to support its work.
v. Recommend necessary actions and reforms thereafter, improvements or amendments to electoral laws, procedures, and regulations to ensure free, fair transparent, and credible electoral process in future elections in the country.

5. Scope of the Terms of Reference

The Scope of the Terms of Reference as provided for by the agreement as thus:

"… This body will examine the electoral systems, structures and processes of the 2023 multi-tier electoral cycle. The Committee will also be informed by previous elections with a view to highlighting and addressing the contentious issues of elections and results management including the collation, verification, authentication and publishing of electoral data consistent with international best practice to enhance the credibility of all future elections in Sierra Leone that guarantees elections to be free, fair, and credible". These have been organized within the factors below:

i. a) Elections Result Management

- Review the processes involved in printing the Provisional and Final Voter Register.
- Assess the procedures for shipment, tallying, and announcement of results at regional and national levels.
- Examining procedures for the transmission of results from Polling Centers to Districts.
- Examine the procedures for the transmission of results from regional tally centers to the national tally center, including staff involvement, verification, and authorization.
- Examine the results announced by ECSL/NEC for the June 2023, 2018, 2012 and 2007 elections.

b) Examine the procedure for the certification and publication of results in the June 2023 multi-tier and previous elections in Sierra Leone including 2018, 2012 and 2007 consistent with the law.

ii. Review Electoral Laws and Regulations:

- Examine the efficacy of the Public Elections Act 2022 and other relevant laws and regulations that relate to the conduct of elections
- Examine the processes and procedures for data migration in elections management
- Examine stakeholder involvement in the review of the PEA 2022 and other electoral laws

iii. Elections Management Bodies (EMBs)

- Examine the role and conduct of Elections Management Bodies and related institutions as it relates to the 2023 multi-tier and previous elections, and adherence to the law and international best practise. These include: Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL),

Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Office of National Security (ONS), Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), Statistics Sierra Leone, the Judiciary, National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA).

iv. Examine the Institutional, Staff Capacity, and Infrastructure of the ECSL

v. Examine Elections Observation Mission (EOM) recommendations in their final reports

vi. Review Elections Financing, Accountability, and Transparency for political parties and EMBs:

vii. Voter Registration Process:

- Examine the voter registration process to ensure accuracy, inclusivity, and compliance with electoral laws.
- Operational plan and timeline for Voter Registration
- Criteria for allocation of Voter Registration Centres
- Conduct of Voter Registration, Exhibition, Card Distribution, Inquiry, Inclusions, Voter Transfers and Corrections
- De-Duplication exercise details
- Compliance with Voter Registration publication timeline
- Voter ID Cards printing and distribution
- Assess methodology of mapping Voter Registration Centres

viii. Conduct of Elections and Referenda:

- Announcement of election dates and timelines
- Assess the nomination processes and the development of an online application system for candidate nomination, accreditation of political party agents/observers, and its impact.
- Examine the fairness and transparency of the campaigning process, assessing media coverage and its impact on public opinion.

- Polling day activities and tallying procedures
- Evaluate the execution of election day procedures, focusing on the conduct of polling officials, security measures, established protocols, etc.

ix. Electoral Education, Communication, and Outreach:

- Strategy and funding sources for education and outreach
- Impact of education and outreach on the electoral process

x. Review and examine the evolution of electoral cycles and previous elections to highlight and address the contentious issues in elections.

6. High Level Tasks of the Review Committee

The Review Committee shall undertake the following:

i. Elections Management

- Prepare a political economy analysis of the 2023 elections
- Assess the communication infrastructure in the lead up, during and after the election and determine its impact on the election process
- Review over time the implementation of previous (before 2023) recommendations of Election Observer Missions and identify which recommendations have not been implemented with a view towards assessing their relevance to improving the conduct of the future elections
- Comment on the post-election atmosphere and factors that increased tensions in the lead up and after election results were announced by the Election Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)
- Assess the nature of the political transition after the 2023 election results were announced

ii. Legal framework and an assessment of reforms implemented during the 2023 elections cycle

- Review all policies, laws and regulations that informed the 2023 Elections including consultations and public education before and after new laws were passed
- Assess the implementation of the laws during the 2023 Elections (this review should at a minimum consider the following laws (1991 Constitution (as amended as to 2008), 2012Public Elections Acts (as amended 2022), 2022 Political Parties Regulation Acts, 2022 Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, 2022 Local Government Act).
- Assess the legal functional capacity of relevant EMBs including the number of staff providing legal support, capacity of the staff in the legal departments, relationship with the judiciary and other relevant bodies, etc.

iii. Functional review of the key Elections Management Bodies (EMBs) that delivered elections

- Comment on the de jure and de facto independence of the main elections body-ECSL
- Assess the institutional arrangements in support of the 2023 Electoral cycle
- Review the adequacy and timelines of financial support from Government and Partners to the relevant election entities
- Assess the reported operational challenges and their root causes during the polling day

iv. Electoral redress mechanisms (within the EMBs, Security Sector and the Judiciary)

- Compile list of all relevant cases that were brought forward during the election cycle and details on when they were concluded or not to establish a timeframe for the delivery of justice
- Assess available grievance redress mechanisms related to election complaints
- The role of political parties and regulations around campaign financing

v. Media landscape with focus on social media

- Asses the role of traditional media outlets in providing balanced coverage of candidates and campaigns during the election cycle
- Assess the impact of relevant laws, especially those that apply to the use of social media and other digital platforms to curb the dissemination of harmful and false news related to the elections

vi. Security landscape

- Assess the quality of the enabling environment for Election Observer Missions to undertake their work
- Assess the responsiveness of the Judiciary, the Sierra Leone Police, and other bodies to reported elections violence in the lead up and during the election
- Assess the adequacy of the security services provided during the election cycle

7. Structure of the Tripartite Committee

The Tripartite Committee will comprise representatives from the parties to the signed Agreement for National Unity-the GOSL, the APC, and

Development Partners. Other institutions and organizations will be coopted as moral guarantors or observers.

The Committee shall establish an Ad-Hoc Secretariat and recruit experts to assist the Committee in the discharge of its functions. Separate Terms of Reference for these ad-hoc staff will be developed consistent with the relevant provisions in this TOR. The experts will undertake special tasks, activities or research, based on the evolving needs of the Review exercise. The TORs for the expert positions shall be dealt with by a Secretariat Sub-Committee. The report of the sub-committee shall be annexed to this TOR.

The Development Partners, acting in consultation with the tripartite committee, shall coordinate the recruitment of experts.

I. The Ad-Hoc Secretariat will be headed by a Secretary to facilitate the work of the Committee.
II. The Secretary shall be a trusted administrator with expert knowledge in elections.
III. The Secretary will be accountable to the Co-Chairs.
IV. The Secretary will coordinate the meetings of the Tripartite Committee

The Committee, with assistance from the Secretariat and the experts will use desk reviews, literature reviews, one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions and commission special research to conduct the Review exercise. It is expected that the Review will be concluded within (6) six months consistent with the 'Agreement for National Unity' signed by the 'Parties' of Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and All Peoples Congress (APC).

8. Methodology

Phase 1: Rules and Regulations

Develop Rules and Procedures for engaging and receiving information from third parties

Phase 2: Desk Reviews

Desk Review/Examination of Election Observer Mission Reports; relevant laws, policies, and regulations; publications of the Elections Commission and other bodies; and other relevant information.

Phase 3: Data Collection

The Committee, with support from the Secretariat and experts, will lead primary data collection activities with a specific focus on EMBs, the Judiciary, political parties, the security sector, and other entities that make up the elections architecture. The Committee may use interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, submissions and other tools to gain insights into the functions of these institutions. Furthermore, through this process, the Committee will assess the conduct of these institutions during the recently concluded elections and other election cycles with a view to understanding:

- Legal and Regulatory Framework
- Human capacity
- Resource availability
- Root causes of challenges (management, processes, procedures, etc.) and any other issues as may be deemed necessary by the Committee.

Phase 4: Plenary Sessions of the Committee

- The plenary sessions of the Committee shall be conducted in a manner as contained in the Rules of Proceedings of the Committee

Phase 5: Public Engagements

The public engagement of the Committee will be informed by a communications framework that will be attached to this TOR.

I. The proceedings of the Committee shall be open to the local Moral Guarantors including Institutional Representatives for observation in order to aid their appreciation of the process and enhance their advisory role in the implementation phases of the recommendations of the Committee;

II. The external guarantors – the UN, Commonwealth, AU, and ECOWAS – shall pay regular visits to Sierra Leone during the electoral examination process to clear potential bottlenecks through mediation; and

III. The Committee shall apportion specific roles to the Moral Guarantors and Institutional Representatives in the work of the Committee as well as in the implementation process.

Consultations will be undertaken with civil society groups and other local interest groups on the recently concluded elections process. These engagements will give the Committee an opportunity to discuss emerging themes and test initial reform recommendations. These engagements will also be an opportunity to engage the public on the efficacy of elections related grievance redress mechanisms with a view towards recommending more accessible and appropriate tools including in the courts.

Phase 6: Production of Final Report and Reform RoadmaThe Committee shall prepare a comprehensive report outlining its findings, conclusions and recommendations.

During phases 1 to 5 it is anticipated that initial recommendations would have emerged to address the institutional and legal shortcomings within

the current electoral system. During Phases 1 to 5, the Committee will compare the findings and initial recommendations within regional and international best practices.

The Committee shall recommend necessary actions and reforms thereafter, improvements or amendments to electoral laws, procedures, and regulations to ensure free, fair transparent, and credible electoral process in future elections in the country.

The Report will be accompanied by a reform roadmap that identifies key reform activities to be implemented with timelines and resource requirements identified (technical, financial, etc.) where relevant.

Phase 7: Submission of Report

The Committee will submit a report of its findings and recommendations to His Excellency, the President.

9. Timeline

The report will be submitted to H.E the President no later than six months from the commencement date of 19th December 2023.

COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR SIGNATURES

Dr. Emmanuel Gaima (GOSL)
Sign:
Date:

Dr. Kefala Marah (APC)
Sign:
Date:

MS. Saraphine Wakana (U.N Res. Coordinator)
Sign:
Date:

RULES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. Guiding Principles

a) The operations and functioning of the Committee shall be guided by an agreed Terms of Reference jointly prepared by the Parties to the Agreement for National Unity
b) The 'Preamble' to the Agreement of National Unity shall at all times provide the basis/ general operational framework guiding the operations, deliberations, and decisions of the Committee
c) As and when considered necessary, the Committee could establish sub committees/ ad hoc Committees with nominations from the Government of Sierra Leone and APC Teams
d) All documentation prepared by the 'Parties' shall be deemed as draft until discussed and endorsed by the entire Committee at a general meeting
e) The Development Partners, in consultation with the Committee shall be responsible for managing the recruitment of agreed Technical staff mindful of rules and procedures of contributing partners but also ensuring direct Committee ownership and oversight of the recruitment process
f) Public information/communication shall be governed by agreed protocols as would be contained in the Communications Framework developed by the Committee.
g) The Rules of Proceedings could be updated as and when Committee members deem it necessary and in aid of the execution of the agreed functions of the Committee

2. Meetings of the Committee

a) Meetings will be held by the Committee on Tuesdays and Thursdays, commencing at 10am. Committee members shall make best efforts to attend meetings and participate fully in discussions and decision making.
b) The Co-chairs shall meet and agree on dates and time for convening meetings of the Committee and thereafter each Co chairs shall communicate with its Team members
c) The quorum for all meetings of the Committee shall be eight (8) with at least four (4) members from each of the PARTIES and including at least one party Co-Chair and the UN.

d) Meetings and engagements must be undertaken by the parties with utmost regard to mutual respect and dignity of each and every member of the Committee
e) Deliberations of the committee shall be transparent and made public or closed door where the Committee deems it necessary.
f) Issues raised must be discussed and consensus reached during Committee deliberations and in an event where an issue cannot be resolved, the Committee could decide as to whether to bring in the Moral Guarantors to listen and provide guidance

3. Co-chairpersons of the Committee shall:

a) Alternate the chairing of meetings.
b) Ensure that at every point in time, a solution is found that all committee members can accept.
c) Ensure that during meetings deliberations remain focused on the business of the review committee only
d) Participate equally, along with any other committee member, in the discussions and decisions of the committee.
e) Convene special meetings to deal with matters of urgent concern.

4. The Secretary

a) The Secretary shall in consultation with the Co-chairs prepare meeting agendas and distribute them to other committee members at least two days in advance.
b) The Secretary shall share the meeting agenda through email or post the same on a common shared media platform such as WhatsApp.
c) Maintain a register of attendance for all meetings.
d) The Secretary shall prepare minutes of meetings.
e) The Secretariat (when adopted) shall operate as an auxiliary to the Committee and cannot make any decision without seeking approval and authorisation from the Committee.

Dispute Resolution

In the event of any disagreement in relation to anything set out in the terms of reference, committee members will make best efforts to resolve the disagreement in an open, frank, and cooperative manner. Disagreements that cannot be resolved be referred to the moral guarantors for guidance.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

Constraints and Issues to Note
Timeframe of 6 Months against an expansive scope and scale of work must be acknowledged. Therefore, we will require organisational efficiency through the deployment of our most valuable assets - human and expert capital - through thematic windows and teams. We will also develop ***delivery trackers*** embedded with ***timelines*** to guide the teams in the delivery process.

SIGN POST

1. Potential risk of delay - timely recruitment of the experts (identify time line)
2. Availability of funds to commence/support work of the Committee

3. Proposed that each team embarks on a preliminary work ahead of the recruitment of experts to prepare the ground for easy landing of experts. These will include data gathering, for example, the legal team could source and assemble relevant electoral laws, regulations over time, and available literature, etc

STEP ONE
Thematic windows and teams
The following thematic teams are hereby established:
1. Legal Team
2. Elections Management Team
3. Institution Reform Team

1) THE LEGAL TEAM: 4 Committee members (2 drawn from each side)
1. Boniface Kamara Esq. (APC)
2. Bernadette Kargbo (APC)
3. Hon Alpha Sesay Esq. (GoSL)
4. Hon. Justice Jon Kamanda (GoSL)

Preliminary work should have been done by the team (relevant resource materials assembled), for example, as follows:

a) The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone (amended 2008)
b) The 2012 Public Elections Act (as amended 2022)
c) The 2022 Political Parties Regulation Act
d) The 2022 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act
e) The 2022 Local Government Act
f) Expert reports and policy documents
g) Official reports, etc
h) Compile list of all relevant cases that were filed in the courts during the election cycle

Identify thematic areas in the Terms of Reference to determine relevant sources of information to enable the work of the Committee.

Recruit Legal Expert(s) to work with the above team (time line)

Legal Expert will conduct Desk Review (time lines)

- Determine whether research assistant is needed
- Test the efficacy of the country's electoral laws, regulation etc
- Review elections redress issues
- Role of relevant institutions such as the PPRC
- Test whether legal framework meets international best practice
- Identify persons to be interviewed (in-camera or open)

Interface with the Committee through feedback loop: decide on the frequency of providing feedback to the Committee

Draft initial report in collaboration with team lead/secretary (time lines)

Integrate report into the Committee Report (time line)

2) **THE ELECTIONS MANAGEMENT TEAM:** 4 Committee members (2 drawn from each side)

1. Dr Richard Konteh (APC)
2. David Fornah (APC)
3. Napoleon Koroma (GoSL)
4. Isatu Jabbie-Kabbah (GoSL)

Preliminary work should have been done by the Team ahead of expert recruitment – relevant resource materials are available, for example:

a) The 2020-2024 Electoral Cycle ECSL Strategic Plan, and previous editions
b) Relevant legislations in tandem with the Legal Team
c) Relevant documents and reports on the first-past-the-post single-member constituency
d) Relevant documents and reports on proportional representation (PR) System (District Block)
e) Relevant election observer mission reports and recommendations (over time)
f) Relevant documents, systems and information on elections results management
g) Relevant elections results covering the various elections
h) Relevant documents on political transition after the 2023 election results were announced
i) Relevant third-party reports on ECSL, and EMBs handling of the electoral process on alleged irregularities, etc

Identify thematic areas in the Terms of Reference to determine relevant sources of information to enable the work of the Committee.

Recruit Elections Expert(s) to work with the above team (time line)

Expert will conduct Desk Review (time lines)

- Determine whether research assistant is needed
- Review available and additional materials as required
- Identify persons to be interviewed (in-camera or open) in collaboration with the thematic team

Interface with the Committee through feedback loop: decide on the frequency of providing feedback to the Committee

Draft initial report in collaboration with team lead/secretary (time lines)
Integrate report into the Committee Report (time line)

3) **THE INSTITUTIONAL REFORM TEAM:** 4 Committee members (2 drawn from each side) (time line)

1. Hon. Ambassador Dr. Alimamy Philip Koroma (APC)
2. Ibrahim Prince Tholley (APC)
3. Hon Helen Kuyembeh (GoSL)
4. Hon. Dr Fatmata Hassan (GoSL)

Preliminary work should have been done by the Team ahead of expert recruitment – relevant resource materials are available, for example:

a) The 2020-2024 Electoral Cycle ECSL Strategic Plan, and previous editions
b) Relevant institutional and functional reviews of EMBs; papers and reports on the working relationships between Election Management Bodies (EMBs)
c) Reports and relevant information on human resources capacity, physical infrastructure, funding, update of IT systems, staffing policies, decision-making, operations and use of discretion, dialogue and consultation, communication, etc
d) Relevant reports on managing partners, political parties, and other stakeholders
e) ECSL Annual Reports (for example, 2021; etc)
f) Election observer mission reports

Identify thematic areas in the Terms of Reference to determine relevant sources of information to enable the work of the Committee.

Recruit Institutional Reform Expert and Team Lead to work with the above team (time line)

Expert will conduct Desk Review (time lines)

- Determine whether research assistant is needed
- Review available and additional materials as required
- Identify persons to be interviewed (in-camera or open) in collaboration with the thematic team

Interface with the Committee through feedback loop: decide on the frequency of providing feedback to the Committee

Draft initial report in collaboration with team lead/secretary (time lines)
Integrate report into the Committee Report (time line)

STEP TWO
Hold a Workshop (immediately the experts are recruited)

Objectives:
■Establish working relationships and protocols within the teams; for example, the legal team, and its interface with the Committee, and the public

■Agree time lines to guide workflow of the Committee

■ Develop a tracker to ensure organisational efficiency and timely delivery of the Committee's mandates

ACTIVITY – SCHEDULE OF WORK

MONTH (2024)	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
December 2023/January 2024	Development of Committee TOR Development of Secretariat structure and staff TOR Development of Rules for Proceedings of Committee Development of Communications framework Development of Delivery Framework	
February	Recruitment and induction of experts Dossier of reference documents	
March	Workshop – Committee and experts	

	Inception report	
April	Desk reviews and Interviews Public engagements	
May	Interviews and public engagements Workshop (retreat) – Committee and experts Analysis and preliminary drafting	
June	Follow-up retreat Continued drafting Review of first drafts Final drafting Submission of Report	

COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS PARTY COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND MANAGEMENT BODIES REVIEW

1 Background/Context

In line with the Terms of Reference of the Cross Party Committee on Elections Systems and Management Bodies Review, the public communication framework outlines the Committee's overall as well as specific objectives in its communication with each of the stakeholder groups, the nature of messages and information to be communicated, the communication tools or channels to be deployed, and feedback mechanisms that will be used for assessing the effectiveness of the Committee.

The Communication Framework provides guidance on standards and intends that both the Committee Members and Ad-Hoc Technical Secretariat staff are aware of and abide by it.

2 Overall Objectives

The purpose of this framework is to ensure that communication across the Committee is well co-ordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the Committee, Institutions and the general public.

The Communication Framework's overall objectives are informed by the Mandate, Scope and Key Tasks of the Committee, which are embedded in the following policy documents:

- The Cross-Party Committee Agreement for National Unity signed on the 18th of October 2023.
- The Terms of Reference for the Cross Party Committee on Electoral Systems Management Bodies Review;
- The Terms of Reference of the Adhoc Technical Secretariat; and
- The Communication Framework as well as the plans, projects, programmes and activities that will be developed and implemented by the Committee.

3 Specific Objectives

In the implementation of this Communication Framework, the Committee will work towards the achievement of these broad objectives, namely:

- ✓ To ensure that the Committee transmits a coherent and harmonized message to the public.
- ✓ To provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objectives and complete information about Committee's Terms of Reference.

- ✓ To ensure that Committee Members and Ad-Hoc Technical Secretariat are visible, accessible and accountable to the public.
- ✓ To employ a variety of ways and means to communicate, and provide information in multiple formats and channels to accommodate the needs of all stakeholders.
- ✓ To deliver prompt, courteous and responsive communication service that is sensitive to all aspects and stages of the examination process.
- ✓ To ensure that the electorate have a proper understanding of basic issues in the stages of the examination process, including public participation, timeframes, timelines, appropriate procedures, etc.
- ✓ To encourage Sierra Leoneans and experts, both at home and abroad to contribute to the review process.
- ✓ To enhance the Committee's transparency, credibility and integrity as well as to strengthen public trust and confidence in the Committee.

4 Target Audience

The Public Communication Framework identifies the following key stakeholder groups and constituencies that the Committee will need to communicate with in a targeted manner:

1. Electorate/Public
2. Political Parties
3. The Media
4. Civil Society Groups
5. Professional Associations
6. Trade Unions
7. Development Partners
8. Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
9. Parliament
10. Local Councils
11. Judiciary
12. Domestic Observers
13. International Observers
14. Diplomatic Community
15. Law Enforcement/Security Agencies
16. Elections Management Bodies
17. Youth groups
18. Women groups
19. Persons With Disabilities (PWDs)
20. Sierra Leonean Diaspora
21. Traditional and Religious Institutions
22. Elections Vendors, Contractors and Service Providers
23. Educational Institutions

5 Key Communication Channels

Spokespersons The Co-chairs of the Cross Party Committee will exercise different levels of responsibilities for public communication including the nomination of team members to act as official spokespersons for the Committee.

a) The Co-Chairpersons of the Committee shall nominate one Member each from their teams to act as the Committee's Chief Spokespersons to speak on behalf of the Committee on any issue affecting the work of the Committee as a whole or the operations of the Committee at all times.
b) The Secretary, through the Public Communication Officer, working in consultation with the Co-chairs, will have overall and primary responsibility for making announcements regarding arrangements, preparations, issues arising from and the outcome of decisions.
c) Any Committee member or any other Adhoc Secretariat staff or designated sub-committee may represent the Committee, as the circumstances may warrant or dictate and for communicating with the public on related matters subject to the approval of the Co-chairs.
d) The Tripartite Committee shall hold joint press conferences facilitated by Public Communications Officer to keep the public reliably informed about the work of the Committee and progress made so far.

6 Communication Mix

6.1 Internal Communication: Internal communication is critical for the effective organization and coordination of the Committee members and Adhoc technical Secretariat staff. The following measures will therefore be implemented to enhance internal communication:

- Minutes of meetings should be routinely taken at every meeting as a record of discussions and decisions or agreements at the meeting.
- Internal communication by email, as well as external communication, should be done only from an official email account with an official address.
- Systems and mechanisms for internal communication also need to be put in place to ensure that those responsible for any form of external communication are fully informed and have a common understanding of the Committee.
- The Public Communication Officer must be able to access information from the Secretariat in real time to be able to respond to queries, whether from the media or other stakeholders, in a timely fashion.

6.2 External Communications: There will be a Public Communications Officer who shall be responsible for sourcing necessary information from the Committee and making such available to stakeholders and the public. The Public Communication Officer shall establish, review materials proposed for publication, including editing and proof-reading, before they are published, whether electronically or in print subject to the approval of the Co-Chairs.

Where applicable, the Committee shall engage members of the Public and specific target audience through approved media channels. Where the Commiteee deems it necessary, proceedings may be open to the Public, Moral Guarantors, institutional representatives, etc, to aid their appreciation of the process and enhance their interest in the work of the Committee.

6.3 Others: Information technology and communications facilities must be used sensibly, professionally, lawfully, and consistently with respect for colleagues and in accordance with the ToR, Communications Framework and other rules and procedures of the Committee.

The Committee shall take advantage of ICT and adopt other mechanisms as may be appropriate from time to time for its communication needs.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF KONO

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the Kono district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	32,067	25.88
Charles, Sahr	853	0.69
Chendeka, Unisa Aiah	981	0.79
Daramy, Ibrahim Kalil	2,347	1.89
Foyoh, Aiah Emmanuel	451	0.36
Gbonda, Steven Komba	538	0.43
Mbiriwa, Sia Tabitha	1,312	1.06
National Unity and Reconciliation Party	359	0.29
People's Movement For Democratic Char	9,911	8.00
Sierra Leone People's Party	74,290	59.96
Williams Brian Joshua Biango	787	0.64
Total Valid Votes	**123,896**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**233**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

01 JUL 2023

ELECTORAL COMMISSION SIERRA LEONE
EASTERN REGION
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF KAILAHUN

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Kailahun** district for each Political party/candidate Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	6,813	3.82
Sierra Leone People's Party	171,622	96.18
Total Valid Votes	**178,435**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	660

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
EASTERN REGION
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF KENEMA

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Kenema** district for each Political party/candidate election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	11,541	4.04
Conteh, Alusine	1,508	0.53
Mattia, Peter	1,473	0.52
Sierra Leone People's Party	271,066	94.92
Total Valid Votes	**285,588**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**1,106**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
EASTERN REGION
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF TONKOLILI

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Tonkolili** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	125,015	80.41
Bangura, John Ahmed	3,592	2.31
Conteh, Alpha Jonathan	5,052	3.25
Kamara, Foday S	1,513	0.97
Sierra Leone People's Party	20,299	13.06
Total Valid Votes	**155,471**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**743**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:.....
NORTHERN REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF KOINADUGU

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Koinadugu** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	33,127	62.53
Marah, Kaifala	2,126	4.01
National Democratic Alliance	492	0.93
National Grand Coalition	912	1.72
Republic National Independent Party	282	0.53
Sierra Leone People's Party	16,036	30.27
Total Valid Votes	**52,975**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**298**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:.....
NORTHERN REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF FALABA

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Falaba** district for each politcal party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	16,606	42.90
National Democratic Alliance	994	2.57
National Grand Coalition	1,189	3.07
Republic National Independent Party	278	0.72
Sierra Leone People's Party	19,646	50.75
Total Valid Votes	**38,713**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**245**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

01 JUL 2023

Sign:.....

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
NORTHERN REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF BOMBALI

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Bombali** district for each politcal party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	140,566	91.64
Sankoh, Hassan	1,545	1.01
Sesay, Godson Kandeh	924	0.60
Sierra Leone People's Party	10,361	6.75
Total Valid Votes	**153,396**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**715**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:.....
NORTHERN REGION
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUJEHUN

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Pujehun** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	4,961	4.40
Peoples Movement For Democratic Change	2,450	2.17
Sierra Leone Peoples Party	105,413	93.43
Total Valid Votes	**112,824**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**632**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
SOUTHERN REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER
Sign:.....

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF MOYAMBA

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Moyamba** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes Obtained
All Peoples Congress	18,825	17.17
Bend, Roy Charles	1,279	1.17
National Grand Coalition	2,029	1.85
Peoples Movement For Democratic Change	1,767	1.61
Sierra Leone Peoples Party	85,759	78.21
TOTAL VALID VOTES	109,659	100.00

Total Invalid Votes	**533**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:.....
SOUTHERN REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF BONTHE

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Bonthe** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	4,154	4.83
Sierra Leone Peoples Party	81,894	95.17
Total Valid Votes	**86,048**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**363**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:.....
SOUTHERN REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF BO

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Bo** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	24,148	9.79
CLINTON, SAMUEL	26	0.01
National Unity and Reconciliation Party	641	0.26
Peoples Movement For Democratic Chan	3,262	1.32
Saccoh, Lansana	2,607	1.06
Sierra Leone Peoples Party	215,025	87.21
Sinnie, Fouad Patrick	843	0.34
Sulaiman, Osman	1	0.00
Total Valid Votes	**246,553**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**815**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
SOUTHERN REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER
Sign:.....

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF WESTERN AREA URBAN

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the Western Area Urban district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	307,479	55.12
Cole, Dennis Desmond Fredrick	1,544	0.28
Kanu, Alie Sani	676	0.12
Kpaka, Abdul	1,386	0.25
National Grand Coalition	2,483	0.45
People's Democratic Party	516	0.09
Richards, Chiny	516	0.09
Sesay, Ahmed Senousi	2,962	0.53
Sierra Leone People's Party	239,403	42.92
Weekes, Thomas Christian	837	0.15
Total Valid Votes	**557,802**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**1,596**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:
WESTERN AREA
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF WESTERN AREA RURAL

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Western Area Rural** district for each Political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	175,410	52.34
Kallon, Jenneh Grace	2,509	0.75
Kamara, Abdulai Driscoll	2,694	0.80
National Grand Coalition	1,751	0.52
Peace and Liberation Party	1,131	0.34
Sierra Leone People's Party	151,670	45.25
Total Valid Votes	**335,165**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**1,499**

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

01 JUL 2023

Sign:.....

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
WESTERN AREA
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMARESION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF PORT LOKO

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Port Loko** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	101,142	59.42
Fofanah, Osman	2,267	1.33
Kabia, Mohamed	927	0.54
Koroma, Abdul Rahman	2,373	1.39
National Grand Coalition	2,424	1.42
Sierra Leone People's Party	61,071	35.88
Total Valid Votes	**170,204**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	**831**

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
NORTH WEST REGION ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

Sign:.....

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF KARENE

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Karene** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	54,058	71.97
Mansaray, Musa	15	0.02
Revolutionary United Front Party	1,502	2.00
Sierra Leone People's Party	19,540	26.01
Total Valid Votes	**75,115**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	357

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:.....
NORTH WEST REGION
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

1st July,, 2023

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR THE DISTRICT OF KAMBIA

As required by section 92(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), I hereby certify that the following are the number of votes cast in the **Kambia** district for each political party/candidate in the Parliamentary election held on 24th June, 2023.

Name of Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of valid votes obtaind
All Peoples Congress	57,970	56.36
National Democratic Alliance	2,333	2.27
National Grand Coalition	7,381	7.18
Sierra Leone People's Party	35,164	34.19
Total Valid Votes	**102,848**	**100.00**

Number of Invalid votes	545

Signed: Regional Returning Officer

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE
01 JUL 2023
Sign:.....
NORTH WEST REGION
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

OAU Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown

27th June, 2023

Statement from the Chief Electoral Commissioner, Chairperson and National Returning Officer of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone on the Presidential Election Results held on 24th June, 2023

1. IN EXERCISE of the powers conferred on it by Sections 33, 42(2)(e) and 38A (as amended) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) and pursuant to Sections 7 and 68 (1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) conducted a Presidential election on 24th June, 2023.

2. Both the polls and tallying processes were observed by political parties' agents, various National and International Observation Missions/Groups, Embassies and the Media.

3. The Results:

- **11,712** polling station results were entered into the result database, representing **98.98%** of all polling stations across the country.
- The national turnout is **2,800,691** representing **83** % of all registered voters.
- The total number of valid votes cast is **2,789,808**
- The total number of invalid votes cast is **10,883** representing **0.39** % of the votes cast
- A total number **120** polling stations were not entered into the Result Database due to either being tampered with and therefore quarantined at Regional Tally Centres; or unavailability of Result Forms caused by violence at identified polling stations.
- The above outstanding results cannot materially affect the outcome of the final Presidential election results.
- Details of the results at polling stations will be posted on the ECSL website at https://ec.gov.sl/
- A full breakdown of the results by districts is attached to this statement.

4. Below is the total number of votes obtained by each Presidential candidate:

SN	Name of Candidate	Political Party	Total Number valid Votes obtained	Percentage of valid votes
1	BAH MOHAMED CHERNOH	National Democratic Alliance **(NDA)**	21,620	0.77
2	BIO JULIUS MAADA	Sierra Leone Peoples Party **(SLPP)**	1,566,932	56.17
3	COKER PRINCE	Peoples Democratic Party **(PDP)**	5,981	0.21
4	JONJO MOHAMED	Citizens Democratic Party **(CDP)**	2367	0.08
5	KABUTA SAA TURAY	United National Peoples Party **(UNPP)**	4,059	0.15
6	KAKAY IYE	Alliance Democratic Party **(ADP)**	4,336	0.16
7	KAMARA NABIEU HENRY	Peace and Liberation Party **(PLP)**	7,717	0.28
8	KAMARA SAMURA MATHEW WILSON	All Peoples Congress **(APC)**	1,148,262	41.16
9	MARGAI CHARLES FRANCIS	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change **(PMDC)**	16,012	0.57
10	SACCOH ABDULAI DOUGAKORO	Revolutionary United Front Party **(RUFP)**	6,796	0.24
11	SANDY JONATHAN PATRICK	National Unity and Reconciliation Party **(NURP)**	1,369	0.05
12	SOWA-TURAY MOHAMED	United Democratic Movement **(UDM)**	1,665	0.06
13	WILLIAMS BERESFORD VICTOR	Republic National Independent Party **(ReNIP)**	2,692	0.10
TOTAL VALID VOTES CAST			**2,789,808**	**100**

5. Therefore, by the powers vested in me as the National Returning Officer by Section 67, 51(2) and 92(4) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022) and pursuant to section 42(2)(e) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991), I hereby certify that **BIO, JULIUS MAADA,** having polled **1,566,932** of valid votes cast representing **56.17** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Presidential election duly elected President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

6. Any citizen who has lawfully voted in this election may challenge the validity of the said election of the President by petition to the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone within seven days after the declaration of Presidential result pursuant to Section 54(1) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022).

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chief Electoral Commissioner/Chairman
National Returning Officer

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Kailahun

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **661** out of **679** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **97.3** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **154,899**
- The percentage voter turn out is **80.53 %**
- There were **666** invalid votes, representing **0.42 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Kailahun** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	LAMIE, SAHR AHMED	143,056	92.75
2.	LENGOR, MORIE SAM	1,791	1.16
3.	NGOBEH, JUSU JAKA	9,386	6.09

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **LAMIE, SAHR AHMED of the SLPP,** having polled **143,056** of valid votes cast representing **92.75** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Kailahun** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR MAYORAL ELECTION HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

City - Kenema

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **390** out of **395** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **98.73** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **78,416**
- The percentage voter turn out is **68.98 %**
- There were **385** invalid votes, representing **0.49 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Mayoral** election in **Kenema** City.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	BAIO, THOMAS KARIMU	66,838	85.66
2.	BOCKARIE, HASSANATU SAO	213	0.27
3.	FOFANAH, JAMINATU	217	0.28
4.	KAMARA, HAWA	164	0.21
5.	SANNOH, BOCKARIE	130	0.17
6.	SHAW, ABDUL KARIM	331	0.42
7.	TARMOH, EMMANUEL	10,138	12.99

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that BAIO, **THOMAS KARIMU of the SLPP,** having polled **66,838** of valid votes cast representing **85.66** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Mayor, **Kenema** City Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Kenema

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **639** out of **732** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **87.29** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **150,863**
- The percentage voter turn out is **73.38 %**
- There were **653** invalid votes, representing **0.43 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Kenema** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	FARMA, MORIE MOMOH	797	0.53
2.	SELLU, GEORGE	9,134	6.08
3.	SESAY, MOHAMED AMADU	140,279	93.39

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **SESAY, MOHAMED AMADU of the SLPP,** having polled **140,279** of valid votes cast representing **93.39** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Kenema** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR MAYOR ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

City - Koidu New-Sembehun

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **228** out of **228** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **100** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **47,289**
- The percentage voter turn out is **71.69 %**
- There were **380** invalid votes, representing **0.80 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Mayor** election in **Koidu New-Sembehun City**

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	BONGA, SAHR	321	0.68
2.	BONGAY, AMINATA	407	0.87
3.	KAMANDA, WILLIAM BRAHAM	14,669	31.27
4.	MBENDAKWIA, AIAH JAMES	5,125	10.93
5.	SAM, KOMBA	25,423	54.20
6.	SOH, MOHAMED PEREDJOR	964	2.06

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **SAM, KOMBA** of the **SLPP,** having polled **25,423** of valid votes cast representing **54.20** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Mayoral election duly elected Mayor, **Koidu New-Sembehun City** Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Kono

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **380** out of **388** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **97.9** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **74,154**
- The percentage voter turn out is **68.61 %**
- There were **539** invalid votes, representing **0.72 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Kono** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	GBONDO, SOLOMON SAHR	8,552	11.59
2.	MBAWA, KOMBA	18,391	24.93
3.	SHEKU, AUGUSTINE SAHR	45,592	61.80
4.	YAMBA, IBRAHIM TAMBA	1,237	1.68

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **SHEKU, AUGUSTINE SAHR of the SLPP**, having polled **45,592** of valid votes cast representing **61.80** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Kono** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR MAYORAL ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

CITY: Bombali

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **236** out of **241** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **97.92 %** of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **42,091**
- The percentage voter turn out is **58.86 %**
- There were **197** invalid votes, representing **0.46 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the Mayoral election in **Bombali** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	KABIA, RAMATU	112	0.27
2.	KAMARA, ABDL RAHMA	194	0.46
3.	KAMARA, ABU BAKARR	39,122	93.38
4.	KAMARA, AMADU AMADU	2,358	5.63
5.	KAMARA, FATMATA ALIMATU	77	0.18
6.	KOROMA, ALHAJI BUNDU	31	0.07

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **KAMARA, ABU BAKARR of the APC,** having polled **39,122** of valid votes cast representing **93.38** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Mayor, Makeni City Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Bombali

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **471** out of **480** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **98.12** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **101,581**
- The percentage voter turn out is **75.31 %**
- There were **462** invalid votes, representing **0.45 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Bombali** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	BANGURA, AMRA	896	0.89
2.	CONTEH, BORNOH	517	0.51
3.	DABOR, ALIE	7679	7.59
4.	SISAY, MOHAMED MARK BARBAH	92027	91.01

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **SISAY, MOHAMED MARK BARBAH of the APC,** having polled **92,027** of valid votes cast representing 91.01 % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, Bombali District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District -Falaba

1. Analysis of the results:

- **234** out of **250** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **93.6 %** of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **41,028**
- The percentage voter turn out is **59.31 %**
- There were **247** invalid votes, representing **0.60 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Falaba** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	KAMARA SUNKARIE SERAH	557	1.37
2.	KARGBO, LANSANA EMMANUEL	17,257	42.32
3.	MARAH, SAIO	345	0.85
4.	SESAY, IBRAHIM SORIE	21,077	51.68
5.	TURAY, MARK IBRAHIM	685	1.68
6.	TURAY, MOHAMED FEREK	860	2.11

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **SESAY, IBRAHIM SORIE of the SLPP,** having polled **21,077** of valid votes cast representing **51.68** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, Falaba District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District -Koinadugu

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **309** out of **309**polling station results were entered into the result database representing **100.00** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **59,169**
- The percentage voter turn out is **69.43 %**
- There were **325** invalid votes, representing **0.54 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Koinadugu** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	FAROH, SHEKU	815	1.41
2.	JALLOH, ALPHA OSMAN	417	0.72
3.	KARGBA, KBBA	568	0.98
4.	KARGBO, LAWRENCE TETEH	37,935	65.52
5.	KURAISY, FODAY MAMUDU	17,857	30.84
6.	MANSARAY, MAMUDU	307	0.53

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **KARGBO, LAWRENCE TETEH of the APC,** having polled **37,935** of valid votes cast representing **65.52** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, Koinadugu District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Tonkolili

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **720** out of **729** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **98.76** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **157,321**
- The percentage voter turn out is **75.8 %**
- There were **720** invalid votes, representing **0.45 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Tonkolili** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	FOFANAH, MUSA KEMOH	1,816	1.16
2.	LARKOH, FATMATA	809	0.52
3.	SESAY, ALUSINE ABDULAI	21,087	13.47
4.	SESAY, AHMED MAMADIE	3,057	1.95
5.	SESAY, YABOM	129,832	82.91

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by to section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **SESAY, YABOM of the APC,** having polled **129,832** of valid votes cast representing **82.91** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Tonkolili** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Kambia

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **513** out of **547** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **93.78** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **71,535**
- The percentage voter turn out is **46.86 %**
- There were **376** invalid votes, representing **0.52 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Kambia** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	BANGURA, MOHAMED YAYAH	3,867	5.43
2.	KAMARA, AMADU ISATU	840	1.18
3.	KAMARA, MOHAMED ALIM	20,267	28.48
4.	MANSARAY, MOHAMED ABDUL MANSARICO	45,429	63.84
5.	MOGAN, SARAH	756	1.06

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **MANSARAY, MOHAMED ABDUL MANSARICO of the APC,** having polled **45,429** of valid votes cast representing **63.84** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Kambia** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Karene

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **348** out of **359** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **96.93** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **75,357**
- The percentage voter turn out is **75.13 %**
- There were **359** invalid votes, representing **0.47 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Karene** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	MBAYOH, SAHR	1,349	1.80
2.	SACCOH, THERESA	10,319	13.76
3.	TURAY, ABDUL KANDEH	63,330	84.44

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **TURAY, ABDUL KANDEH of the APC,** having polled **63,330** of valid votes cast representing **84.44** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Karene** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR MAYORAL ELECTION HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

City - Port Loko

1. Analysis of the results:

- **70** out of **78** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **89.74** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **15,174**
- The percentage voter turn out is **71.27 %**
- There were **77** invalid votes, representing **0.50 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Mayoral** election in **Port Loko** City.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	KAMARA, IBRAHIM	2,528	16.75
2.	KAMARA, THIGIDAKAY DOLLY	93	0.62
3.	TARAWALLIE, ALIEU BADARA	12,310	81.54
4.	TARAWALLIE, SALMATU IBRAHIM	94	0.62
5.	TURAY, MARIATU SAUDATU	72	0.48

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **TARAWALLIE, ALIEU BADARA of the APC,** having polled **12,310** of valid votes cast representing **81.54** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Mayor, **Port Loko** City Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Port Loko

1. **Analysis of the results:**

· **754** out of **758** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **99.47** % of all polling stations in the district.
· The total number of votes cast is **153,099**
· The percentage voter turn out is **70.96 %**
· There were **754** invalid votes, representing **0.49 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Port Loko** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	KABBA, LAMIN	1,509	0.99
2.	KAMARA, SORIE IBRAHIM	1,346	0.88
3.	SACCOH, SHEKU TEJAN	128,549	84.38
4.	SUMAH, FATMATA MBAMBAY	20,941	13.75

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **SACCOH, SHEKU TEJAN of the APC,** having polled **128,549** of valid votes cast representing **84.38** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Port Loko** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR MAYORAL ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

CITY: Bo

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **390** out of **390** polling station results were entered into the result database representing 100.00 % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **81,849**
- The percentage voter turn out is **72.00 %**
- There were **392** invalid votes, representing **0.47 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the Mayoral election in **Bo** City Council.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	DUMBUYA, ABDULAI SANKO	14608	17.93
2.	FOTOMA, ZAINAB	355	0.44
3.	MUSA, KOBBA	65,121	79.95
4.	WAI, RAMATU	1104	1.36
5.	YAMBASU, GLORY PHOEBE	269	0.33

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **MUSA, KOBBA of the SLPP,** having polled **65,121** of valid votes cast representing **79.95** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Mayoral election duly elected Mayor, Bo City Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Bo

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **679** out of **719** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **94.43** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **134,841**
- The percentage voter turn out is **66.24 %**
- There were **568** invalid votes, representing **0.42 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Bo** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	HINDOWA, VICTOR KORSEH	124,265	92.55
2.	KARGBO, SALLAY MRIAN AUGUTA	7,438	5.54
3.	SALLIAH, FODAY MORIE	864	0.64
4.	SHERIFF, MOHAMED MAMBU	1,706	1.27

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **HINDOWA, VICTOR KORSEH of the SLPP,** having polled **124,265** of valid votes cast representing **92.55** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Bo** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR MAYORAL ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

CITY: Bonthe

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **18** out of **18** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **100.00 %** of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **3,526**
- The percentage voter turn out is **95.63 %**
- There were **18** invalid votes, representing **0.51 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the Mayoral election in **Bonthe Municipality**.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
3.	NDIMAWA. FANNY NEMA	404	11.52
4.	ROBINSON, MOHAMED MOMOUD	3,104	88.48

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **ROBINSON, MOHAMED MOMOUD of the SLPP,** having polled **3,104** of valid votes cast representing **88.48** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Mayoral election duly elected Mayor, Bonthe Municipal Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Bonthe

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **342** out of **366** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **93.44** % of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **81,619**
- The percentage voter turn out is **78.51 %**
- There were **341** invalid votes, representing **0.41 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Bonthe** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	ALLIEU, MUSTAPHA MODIBOR	584	0.72
2.	CONTEH, ASIATU	77,681	95.57
3.	ONIEL, THERESA TENNEH	3,013	3.71

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **CONTEH, ASIATU of the SLPP,** having polled **77,681** of valid votes cast representing **95.57** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairperson, **Bonthe** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Moyamba

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **533** out of **537** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **99.25%** of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **112,110**
- The percentage voter turn out is **74.54 %**
- There were **530** invalid votes, representing **0.47 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Moyamba** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	JEMBEH, GASSIMU SORIBA	1,357	1.22
2.	JOMBLA, JIMMY HINGA	2,622	2.35
3.	KORPOI, MUSA TAPEIMA	21,750	19.49
4.	MBOGBA, JOSEPH BENEDICT	85,851	76.94

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **MBOGBA, JOSEPH BENEDICT of the SLPP,** having polled **85,851** of valid votes cast representing **76.94** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Moyamba** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Pujehun

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **410** out of **422** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **97.15%** of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **101,626**
- The percentage voter turn out is **87.66%**
- There were **422** invalid votes, representing **0.41 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Pujehun** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	ROGERS, FDAY KANDEH SENIOR	97,108	95.95
2.	SWARAY, DENNIS	4,096	4.05

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **ROGERS, FDAY KANDEH SENIOR of the SLPP,** having polled **97,108** of valid votes cast representing **95.95** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, **Pujehun** District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR MAYORAL ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Western Area Urban

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **1,932** out of **2,049** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **94.2 %** of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **564,003**
- The percentage voter turn out is **94.27 %**
- There were **1,954** invalid votes, representing **0.34 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in Mayoral election in **Western Area Urban** District.

No	Name of Political Party/ Independent candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	AKI-SAWYERR, DENISE YVONNE	288,683	51.36%
2.	BANGURA, JONATHAN PAUL SIDIQUE	1,487	0.26%
3.	BARRIE, SHERIFF	1,801	0.32%
4.	CONTEH, KASSIM	309	0.05%
5.	KABBA, SERAY MARIAMA	556	0.10%
6.	KAMARA, LILIAN	753	0.13%
7.	KAMARA, MOHAMED GENTO	268,213	47.72%
8.	SANKOH, IBRAHIM	247	0.04%

1. **DECLARATION:**

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **AKI-SAWYER, DENISE YVONNE of the APC,** having polled **288,683** of valid votes cast representing **51.36** % of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Mayoral election duly elected Mayor of Freetown City Council

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

O. A. Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown

DECLARATION OF RESULTS FOR CHAIRPERSON ELECTIONS HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2023

District - Western Area Rural

1. **Analysis of the results:**

- **1,095** out of **1,161** polling station results were entered into the result database representing **94.3 %** of all polling stations in the district.
- The total number of votes cast is **300,411**
- The percentage voter turn out is **87.87 %**
- There were **1,096** invalid votes, representing **0.36 %** of votes cast

2. Now therefore, as National Returning Officer, I hereby announce the results obtained by each candidate in the **Chairperson** election in **Western Area Rural** District.

No	Name of candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of votes obtained
1.	BARRIE, MOHAMED DAINKEH	2,074	0.69
2.	COLE, EUGENE AYO	135,079	45.13
3.	HOLLAND - COLE, KASHO JOSEPH	157,164	52.51
4.	KAMARA, ABDULAI D. G.	2,467	0.82
5.	KAMARA, AMIDU IBRAHIM	620	0.21
6.	KARGBO, SULAMAN SAMBA	328	0.11
7.	KOROMA, MARIAMA	829	0.28
8.	TIPSON, PHEBIAN	754	0.25

DECLARATION:

In exercise, of the powers conferred on me as the National Returning Officer, by section 92 of the Public Elections Act 2022, I hereby certify that **HOLLAND - COLE, KASHO JOSEPH of the APC,** having polled **157,164** of valid votes cast representing **52.51 %** of total valid votes cast in the 24th June, 2023 Chairperson election duly elected Chairman, Western Area Rural District Council.

Signed: .....

Dated: 1st day of July, 2023

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chairperson/National Returning Officer
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

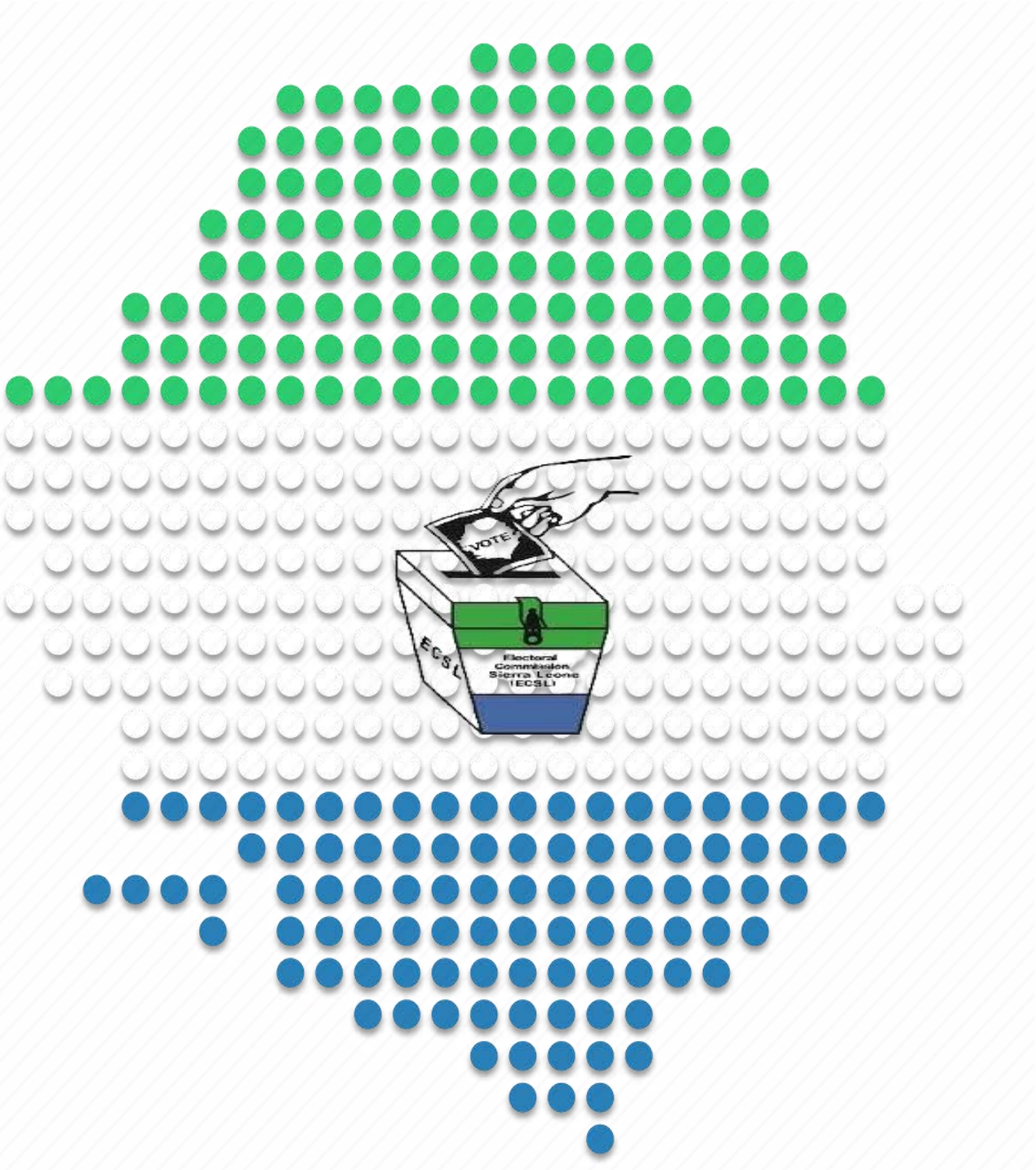
ANNUAL & MULTI-TIER ELECTIONS REPORT

2023

ANNUAL & MULTI-TIER

ELECTIONS REPORT

2023



2023 SAFUL ELECTIONS

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Foreword by the CEC and Chairman

Chairperson: Mohamed Kenewui Konneh

In my capacity as Chairman and Chief Electoral Commissioner for Sierra Leone, I am honoured to submit the 2023 ECSL Annual and Multi-tier Elections Report. Both reports are an extensive record of the key electoral processes that led to the conduct of the landmark 2023 Presidential, Parliamentary, Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP), Mayor/Chairperson, and Councillor elections in Sierra Leone. They also symbolized a critical phase in the democratic journey, spanning from the Pre-Election phase to the Election Phase of the 2020-2024 Electoral Cycle.

The ECSL 2023 Annual Report in particular is written in fulfilment of the legal requirement for the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL); pursuant to Section 32 (12) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No 6 of 1991).

"The Chief Electoral Commissioner shall submit a report on the programme and work of the Commission at least once a year to the President and a copy of such report shall be laid before Parliament".

The year 2023 was very successful and climaxed on key milestone achievements for the period under review. It witnessed the conduct of the June 2023 multi-tier elections, the Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP) elections and the Village Head Elections in the Western Rural District. It focused primarily on operationalizing policy decisions into actions including but not limited to: issuance of Voter Registration Card, Nominations, Campaigns, Strategic Partnership with both National and International Partners, Electoral Education and Communication, Accreditation of both National and International Observer Missions, Polling day activities , Tallying and Announcement of Results and the Monitoring and Evaluation of the electoral process among others; in line with the ECSL Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 Electoral Cycle.

The Commission recorded tremendous achievement in the overall implementation of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. **108** activities were wholly implemented out of a total of **167**, representing **64.67%**. **25** have been partially implemented representing **14.97%**. **26** are currently under implementation representing **15.57%** and **8** activities are yet to be implemented, representing **4.79%.** It is my fervent hope that by the close of 2024, over **80%** of activities in the Strategic Plan would have been implemented.

In spite of the tremendous successes, the Commission faced a myriad of challenges, including but not limited to social media misinformation, disinformation, political intimidation and violence during campaigns and the overarching desire by some national and international partners acting outside their expected mandate.

In terms of its engagement with stakeholders, the Commission continued to enjoy collaboration with both national and international partners in the area of staff capacity building, infrastructural development, financial and logistical assistance among others. Commissioners and staff benefitted from a number of international trainings, Election Observation Missions, provision of

Technical Support and experience sharing with other Election Management Bodies.
Similarly, the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) deployed an Electoral Risk Management (ERM) Tool for monitoring the electoral processes through data collections, analysis and report on identified risks.

Since election conflicts are inevitable, the Commission and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) continued to support the Elections Conflict Prevention and Mediation Group (ECP&MG). This group was very effective in addressing conflict prevention and mediation initiatives which impacted greatly in the conduct of peaceful elections in 2023.

The Commission implemented Legal Reforms in 2022 notably, the revised nomination fees for all elections, increase quota for female representation, Regulations for Early Voting and the conduct of the June 2023 elections under the Proportional Representation (PR) System.

With support from the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Commission continued to support the Electoral Inclusion Department with the strategic objective of increasing the participation of Women, youths, aged and Persons with Disability (PWDs). Consequently, the year 2023 saw the implementation of programmes on Gender and Persons with Disability Coordination Groups in all sixteen (16) electoral districts across the country. This contributed immensely to the increase in participation of such groups in the electoral processes.

Another strategic achievement in 2023 was the implementation of the National Elections Sustainability Trust (NEST) fund by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and International Partners. This Basket Fund provided a ready source of income for the implementation of programmes for the period under review. It is however worthy to mention that the Government of Sierra Leone provided **90%** of the funds for the conduct of the 2023 elections.

The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone also benefitted from a reasonable amount of **$ 500,000 (Five Hundred Thousand Dollars)** grant as part of ECOWAS Elections Support to member states which was used specifically on Electoral Education and Sensitization. With this funding, the Commission contracted 30 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from across the country to engage in massive sensitization especially in the area of Proportional Representation System. This created a significant impact on the Voter Education drive and also created an opportunity for the Civil Society Organizations to be part of the electoral processes.

I would like to acknowledge the support from colleague Commissioners, Management, and staff of the Commission, which had been enormous and the main source of strength in attaining all these achievements.

It is my fervent hope and confidence that with the support of the Government and People of the Republic of Sierra Leone, multilateral partners, the Commission will continue to build on its credential of conducting free, fair, and credible elections in Sierra Leone in the years ahead.

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Mohamed Kenewui Konneh
Chief Electoral Commissioner & Chairman

Overview of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone

Introduction:

Pursuant to Section 32 (11) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) and Section 3 of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) is an independent body set up by an Act of Parliament to serve as the electoral authority with the constitutional mandate, under Section 33 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, (Act No. 6 of 1991); Section 7(1) of the Public Elections Act (PEA), 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022) and Section 28 of the Paramount Chieftaincy Act 2009 to:

- Conduct all public elections and referenda.
- Register eligible voters for all public elections and referenda i.e. prepare, maintain, and regularly revise the Register of Voters.
- Demarcate electoral boundaries i.e. delimit constituency and ward boundaries in accordance with the Constitution and any other enactment.
- Facilitate the observation, monitoring, and evaluation of elections.
- Conduct electoral education and promote knowledge of sound democratic election processes.
- Make regulations and codes of conduct for the efficient performance of its functions.
- Regulate the process for nomination of candidates for elections.
- Carry out such other functions as may be provided for by the Constitution or any other enactment.

The ECSL is charged with the responsibility of conducting all elections including:

a. Public Elections

i. Presidential
ii. Parliamentary
iii. Mayor/Chairperson and
iv. Councillor elections
  - Local Councils:
    - District Council Chairpersons.
    - City / Municipal Council Mayors.
    - Local Ward Councillors.

b. **Other Elections**

i. Paramount Chieftaincy.
  - Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP).
  - Village Heads.

c. **Referenda**

Structure of the Commission

The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) is structured to ensure effective management and execution of its responsibilities in conducting free, fair and credible elections. This structure is aligned with international standards for independent electoral bodies, emphasizing transparency, efficiency, level playing field and widespread accessibility. The independence of the Commission in the performance of its functions is guaranteed in Section 32(11) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) and in Section 3 of the Public Elections Act 2022, (Act No. 17 of 2022) which states that:

"In the exercise of any functions vested in it by this Constitution, the Electoral Commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority" and section 3 of the Public Elections Act 2022 as follows:

"Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022) Section 3. By virtue of subsection (11) of section 32 of the Constitution, the Commission is an independent body."

An outlook of its structure:

1. **Members of the Electoral Commission:** The Commission is headed by the Chairman and Chief Electoral Commissioner and five (5) other Commissioners. These members are responsible for setting policies, overseeing the electoral processes, and ensuring adherence to the legal framework. Their selection process, typically involving nomination by the President and approval by Parliament, is designed to promote impartiality and represent a broad spectrum of political viewpoints. This multi-member composition aligns with international practices, ensuring balanced representation and reducing the risk of bias.

2. **The Secretariat**: Serving as the administrative and operational backbone of the Commission, the Secretariat is crucial for the day-to-day management of electoral activities. It handles tasks ranging from voter registration to public communication, and election logistics. The Secretariat's role is pivotal in implementing the strategic objectives set by the Commission's members and ensuring adherence to international electoral standards, such as efficient voter registration, transparent vote counting, and effective dissemination of electoral information.

3. **The Administration**: This component of the Commission involves the management of resources, personnel, and logistics essential for conducting elections. It ensures that all operational aspects of the election process, including staffing, procurement, and logistics, are handled effectively. The Administration's efficient functioning is vital for maintaining the integrity and credibility of electoral processes in line with international standards.

4. **Locations of the Commission**:

   - **National Headquarters**: Located at Tower Hill in Freetown, the headquarters serve as the central command and coordination centre for all electoral activities nationwide. It's a hub for strategic planning, decision-making, and nationwide coordination, ensuring that electoral practices are uniformly applied across the country.

   - **National Warehouse and Data Centre**: Situated in Wellington, Freetown, this facility is crucial for the secure storage of electoral materials and the management of electoral data. The presence of a dedicated data centre reflects a commitment to maintaining robust and secure electoral information systems, a key aspect of transparent and reliable elections.

   - **District Offices**: With one in each of the sixteen districts, these offices facilitate localized management of electoral processes. They ensure that the Commission's presence and services are accessible to voters across the nation, enhancing participation and representation, essential components of democratic elections.

   - **Sub-District Offices**: Located in Bonthe Island and Gbinti in the Karene districts, these offices further decentralize the electoral process. They play a significant role in reaching remote and potentially marginalized communities, ensuring inclusivity and equal access to electoral services.

The Members of the Electoral Commission

The structure of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), as delineated in Section 32 of the 1991 Constitution (as amended), and further defined by the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022), is designed to ensure the integrity and efficacy of the electoral process in Sierra Leone. This structure is crucial for maintaining democratic principles and conducting elections that are transparent, free, and fair. Here's an elaboration on this structure:

1. **Composition of the Commission**: The ECSL is composed of six members, including a Chief Electoral Commissioner who serves as the Chairperson, and five other Electoral Commissioners. This multi-member structure is intended to provide a broad range of perspectives and expertise, contributing to balanced and fair decision-making in the electoral process.

2. **Appointment Process**: The Commissioners, including the Chairman, are nominated by the President of Sierra Leone, in consultation with leaders of all registered political parties. This process is designed to ensure that the Commission is not solely under the influence of the ruling government, but rather represents a wide array of political interests. Their appointment is subject to approval by Parliament, which adds a layer of democratic legitimacy and oversight to the process.

3. **Oversight Responsibilities**: Each Commissioner is tasked with overseeing the functions of various departments within the ECSL. The Executive Secretary works under the supervision of the Commission and he is responsible for the administrative functioning of the Commission. During the 2023 elections, the Commission operated 15 different departments, each with specific roles in the electoral process. This division of responsibilities ensures that every aspect of the election is meticulously managed and overseen.

4. **Legal Status and Powers**: The ECSL is a corporate body with perpetual succession, legally capable of suing and being sued, acquiring, holding, and disposing of property, and performing all acts that corporate bodies are legally entitled to perform. This legal status allows the ECSL to operate independently and manage its resources effectively.

5. **Role of the Chief Electoral Commissioner**: Serving as the head of policy and the spokesperson for the Commission, the Chief Electoral Commissioner plays a pivotal role in shaping the electoral policies and representing the Commission's decisions and actions to the public and other stakeholders.

6. **Regional Oversight**: The five Electoral Commissioners are each responsible for overseeing specific departments and regions (East, North, North-West, South, and West). This regional approach ensures that the electoral processes are tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of different parts of the country, promoting equitable participation in the electoral process.

7. **Tenure and Terms of Service**: Commissioners serve for a tenure of five years, with their terms and conditions of service prescribed by Parliament. This fixed tenure helps in maintaining the independence of the Commissioners, shielding them from political pressures and influences.

8. **Responsibilities of the Commission**: As the oversight and policy-making body, the ECSL is responsible for supervising and controlling all aspects of the electoral processes. It prepares, organizes, and adopts necessary measures to ensure credible and acceptable elections. The Commission's mandate includes everything from voter registration to the declaration of election results, encompassing the entire electoral cycle.

9. Appointment of Electoral Commissioner North-Western Region

A vacancy occurred as a result of the constitutional amendment of section 32(2) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone ,1991 and Part 11 Section 2(2)(a) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 which made provision for the appointment of an Electoral Commissioner for the North-Western Region.

In fulfilment of the aforementioned legal framework, His Excellency the President Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio appointed Mr. Albert Samba Kanu as Electoral Commissioner for the North-Western Region on the 12th January 2023.

On the 7th February, 2023; the Sierra Leone Parliament approved Mr. Albert Samba Kanu as Electoral Commissioner for the North-Western Region. According to the Constitution of Sierra Leone the new Commissioner shall before assuming the functions of his office take and subscribe before the President the oath as set out in the Third Schedule of the Constitution of Sierra Leone,1991. The newly appointed ECSL Commissioner for the North-Western Region subscribed to the Oath of Office before His Excellency President Retired Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio on the 13th March, 2023.

During the oath-taking ceremony, Commissioner Albert Samba Kanu had this to say; *"Your Excellency Sir, Retired Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio; I am truly honoured and privileged to stand before you today. On behalf of my family and myself, I thank you very much sir for the opportunity you have given me to serve as Electoral Commissioner North-Western Region. It is truly the honour of a lifetime. I am proud and humbled to be part of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone led by Chairman Mohamed Kenewui Konneh. I will work to promote electoral integrity and patriotic service to Sierra Leone."*

In a brief statement, His Excellency President Retired Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio congratulated Mr. Albert Samba Kanu on his approval by Parliament as Electoral Commissioner for the North-Western Region, saying that the task ahead was enormous within a limited timeframe to conduct the 2023 general elections. He further assured that his government would continue to support the activities of the ECSL in the exercise of its duties to the nation.

The president concluded by reiterating that: "the ECSL as an institution is doing a great job for our democracy to survive." He congratulated Commissioner Albert Samba Kanu and wished him the best in his tenure of office.

Fig. 1: Electoral Commissioner for the North -Western Region delivering his credentials to His Excellency President Retired Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio.

Commissioners and their Oversight Responsibilities

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh

Chief Electoral Commissioner & Chairman

July 2020 - Date

Mohamed Kenewui Konneh, noted for his dedication to public service, has made significant contributions to electoral management and financial oversight, particularly as the Chief Electoral Commissioner & Chairperson of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL). With a strong background in financial intelligence and anti-corruption, Konneh has previously worked as a Principal Investigation Officer at the African Development Bank (AfDB), focusing on corruption and fraud investigations. His experience at the Anti-Corruption Commission of Sierra Leone includes managing the country's first public servants' Assets Declaration process and leading key investigations. In his role at ECSL, he is responsible for overseeing Finance, Data Management and Voters Roll, Internal Audit, and Ethics Unit, enhancing transparency and accountability in Sierra Leone's electoral processes.

Edmond Sylvester Alpha

Commissioner – Southern Region

April 2019 - Date

Sylvester serves as the Electoral Commissioner for the Southern Region, managing the Operations, Procurement & Logistics, and External Relations departments. His extensive experience includes roles such as Director of Training and Electoral Education (2010-2019), over fifteen years as an EMB Operations/Admin Officer, District Electoral Officer in Tonkolili, and Chief of Field Coordination and Reporting unit. He is also an International BRIDGE Facilitator. Academically, Sylvester has contributed as a former lecturer at Njala University and a visiting lecturer at St. Paul's Major Catholic Seminary. He pioneered as the first Training Coordinator at the Institute of Electoral Administration and Civic Education, emphasizing election and civic education, showcasing his broad expertise in electoral processes and education.

Marian Sia Nyuma-Moijueh

Commissioner – Eastern Region

December 2020 – September 2023

Marian oversees the Human Resource and Capacity Building, Training & Procedures, and Electoral Inclusion departments. A retired civil servant, Nyuma-Moijueh has significantly contributed to various institutions and boards, including as Chairman of the Holy Rosary Secondary School in Kenema and the Network Movement for Justice & Development (NMJD), as well as a Board Member of CARITAS SL, Kenema, and the Guma Valley Water Company, Freetown. Appointed as Electoral Commissioner on December 8, 2020, she brings extensive experience in supervising operations and departments focused on human resources, training, gender, and administration.

Zainab Umu Moseray

Commissioner – Western Region

November 2021 - Date

Zainab Umu Moseray serves as the Electoral Commissioner for the Western Area at the Electoral Commission, overseeing ICT, Electoral Education, and Media & Communication departments. With over 13 years of experience in administration and human resource management, she brings extensive expertise in electoral processes. Moseray holds prominent roles, including Chairperson of the Governance and Nomination Committee at World Vision International Sierra Leone, Vice Chairperson of the World Vision Sierra Leone Advisory Council, and a Board Member of the Africa Young Female Advisers Initiative. She previously acted as the Registrar of the Political Parties Registration Commission and was an International Elections Observer in Nigeria for the IRI.

Abubakarr Mahmoud Koroma

Commissioner – Northern Region

March 2022 - Date

Serving as the Electoral Commissioner for the Northern Region, he oversees the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, Administration, and Legal Affairs departments. Abubakarr joined the Electoral Commission in 2005 as an Assistant District Electoral Officer and posted in Tonkolili District. In 2006, he became District Electoral Officer in Pujehun District and was District Returning Officer for the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. He became Senior Elections Officer in Bo and subsequently Regional Chief Field Coordination Officer for the Southern Region. In 2014, he became Director of Administration, Procurement and Logistics. His extensive experience in administration and electoral operations equip him with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively manage and supervise crucial areas within the Electoral Commission.

Albert Samba Kanu

Commissioner – North-West Region

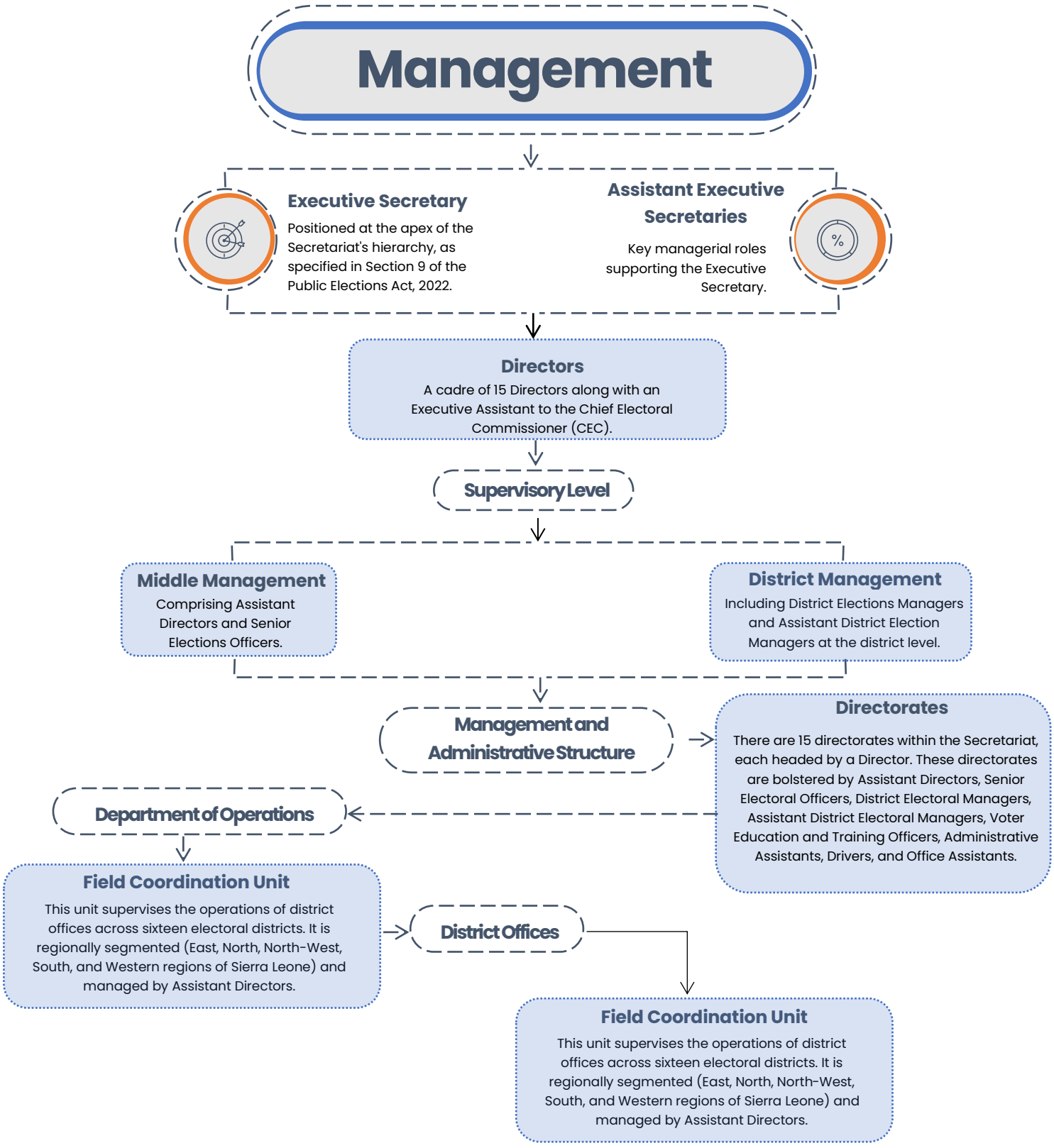
February 2023 - Date

Albert brings a wealth of experience from his nearly two-decade tenure at the National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT), where he ascended to the position of Regional Manager. In 2022, following the amendment to Section 32 (2) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, which expanded the number of Commissioners from five to six, the President honoured Albert Samba Kanu by appointing him as the inaugural Electoral Commissioner for the North West Region.

The Secretariat

Overview:

The Secretariat, a pivotal component of the electoral framework, is an amalgamation of management and administrative sectors. It operates under the guidance of skilled directors and field staff, ensuring a structured approach to electoral processes. This report delineates the organizational hierarchy and responsibilities within the Secretariat, as mandated by the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022).



Mission and Vision of the Commission

Mission Statement:

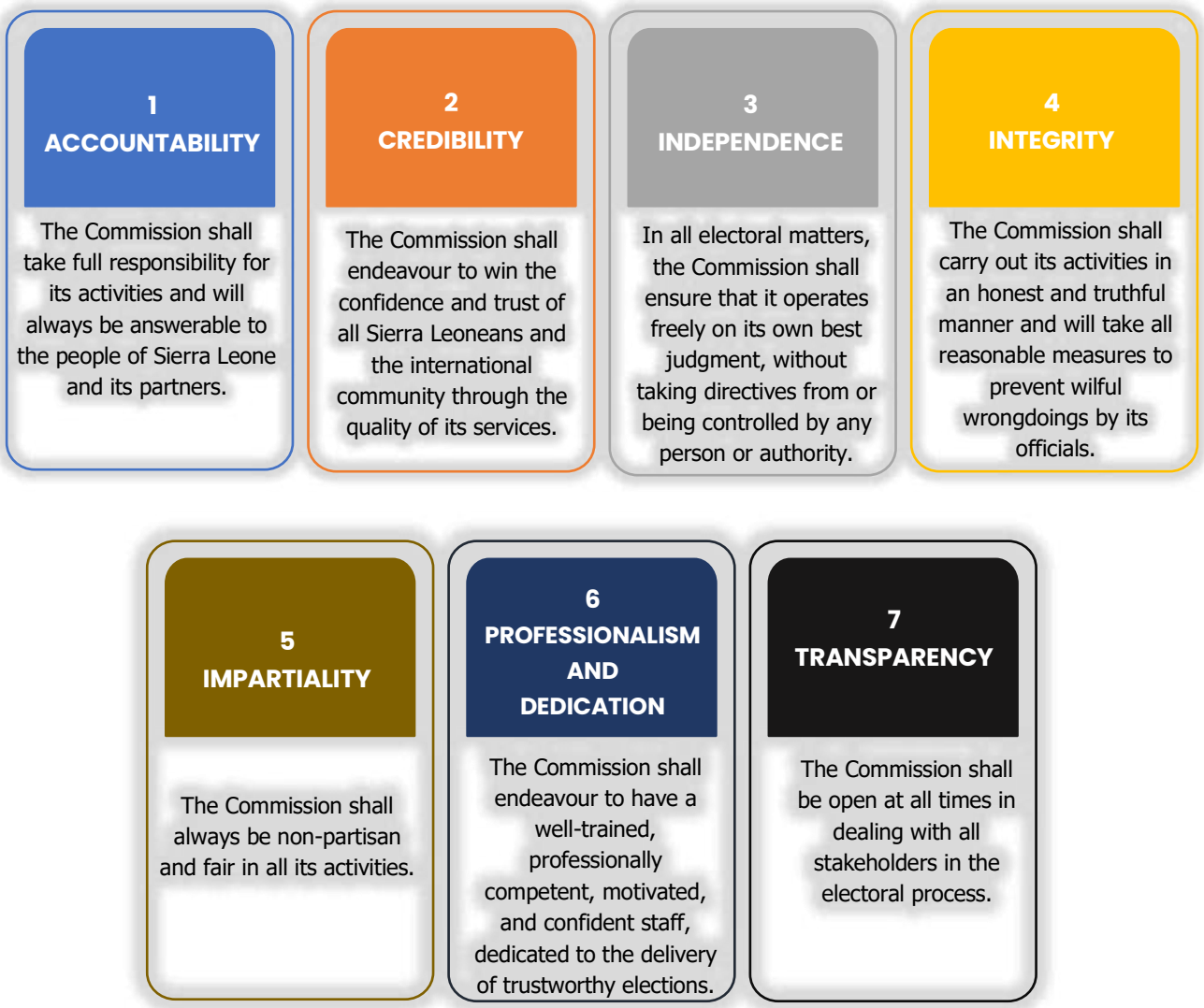
The Mission of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) is to conduct all public elections and referenda, register all eligible voters, demarcate constituency boundaries, and make regulations for the efficient execution of its functions in promoting sustainable Democracy and Good Governance.

Vision Statement:

The Vision of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) is that of an independent, credible and well-resourced institution which promotes democracy and good governance by continually administering elections that meet international standards and best practices.

Guiding Principles

The Commission shall endeavour to uphold the following overarching principles:



Overview by the Executive Secretary

Executive Secretary: William Ado Davies

The Electoral Commission is proud to present both the 2023 Annual and Multi-Tier elections report that climax the conduct of the June,2023 Presidential, Parliamentary, Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP), Mayor/Chairperson, Councillor and Village Head Elections in line with International best practices.

These reports comprehensively detailed the activities undertaken throughout the electoral cycle for the conduct of elections as outlined in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan with the theme **"Strengthening Electoral Processes for Maximum Performance."**

For the period under review the Commission focused primarily on the implementation of strategic electoral activities such as the issuance of Voter Registration Cards, Nominations, Campaigns, Accreditation of International and Domestic Observers, Stakeholders engagement, polling day activities, tallying and announcement of results, Electoral Education and Communication, Monitoring and Evaluation of electoral activities.

The Commission also continued to invest in capacity building programmes for Commissioners and staff members both at the national and international levels. In 2023, the Commission maintained a work force comprising six (6) Electoral Commissioners and Two Hundred and Twenty-Five (225) staff members.

The Commission noted significant milestone achievements for the year under review, notably with the appointment of the Electoral Commissioner, Mr. Albert Samba Kanu with oversight for the North-Western Region. It also marked the end of tenure of Commissioner Marian Sia Nyuma-Moijueh as Electoral Commissioner for the Eastern Region.

Both reports acknowledged the impact of the increasing number of political parties in the electoral process which increased stakeholders' participation.

The reports also emphasized the critical role of training of election staff and party agents which enhanced clear understanding and consistency in the application of electoral laws, regulations and procedures for the successful conduct of elections. The report also highlighted successes and areas for improvement, including the implementation of online systems and efficient logistics, which contributed to high voter turnout.

The Commission would like to acknowledge the Government of Sierra Leone which through the NEST fund continued to sustain the funding requirements of the Commission by providing budgetary support for salaries, allowances, recurrent costs, electoral programmes and infrastructural projects.

The Commission would like to acknowledge the collaboration with International Partners in the area of staff capacity building and other electoral programmes. In 2023, the European Union (EU) continued to provide support to the Electoral Cycle through the project entitled "Support to the

Governance Sector in Sierra Leone". They also supported electoral trainings on polling day activities and Electoral Inclusion Programmes on Gender and Persons with Disability.

Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) facilitated the development and approval of the Election Project on "Fostering Peaceful, Credible and Inclusive Elections in Sierra Leone 2022-2023." The project was funded by the UNDP, EU and Ireland. Furthermore, the project supported the Electoral Education and Inclusion programmes targeting the participation of women, youths, the aged and Persons with Disability (PWDs).

In a bid to evaluate its activities, the Commission held a Post Election Evaluation Retreat (PEER) to assess its successes, Challenges and plans for future engagement.

In conclusion, the 2023 Annual and Elections report underscore the commitment of the Electoral Commission to work with all stakeholders to enhance the electoral process and ensure the sustainability of democracy in Sierra Leone. The Commission extends its gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of these elections, reinforcing the nation's reputation for peaceful, free, fair, and credible elections.

William Ado Davies
Executive Secretary

2023 Elections at a Glance

On June 24, 3.3 million voters elected a new president.

House of Parliament

135 SEATS

Head of State

PRESIDENT

Directly elected by the people for a five-year term.

Holds executive powers, including being the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

Total Number of Voter Turnout. **2,789,808**

Gender Analysis of Voter Turnout in the 2023 Election

Male 47.12% — 1,314,558

Female 52.88% — 1,475,250

16 **DISTRICTS**

13 **PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES**

11,832 **POLLING STATIONS**

3.3 million **REGISTERED VOTERS**

18 years **REGISTERED VOTERS**

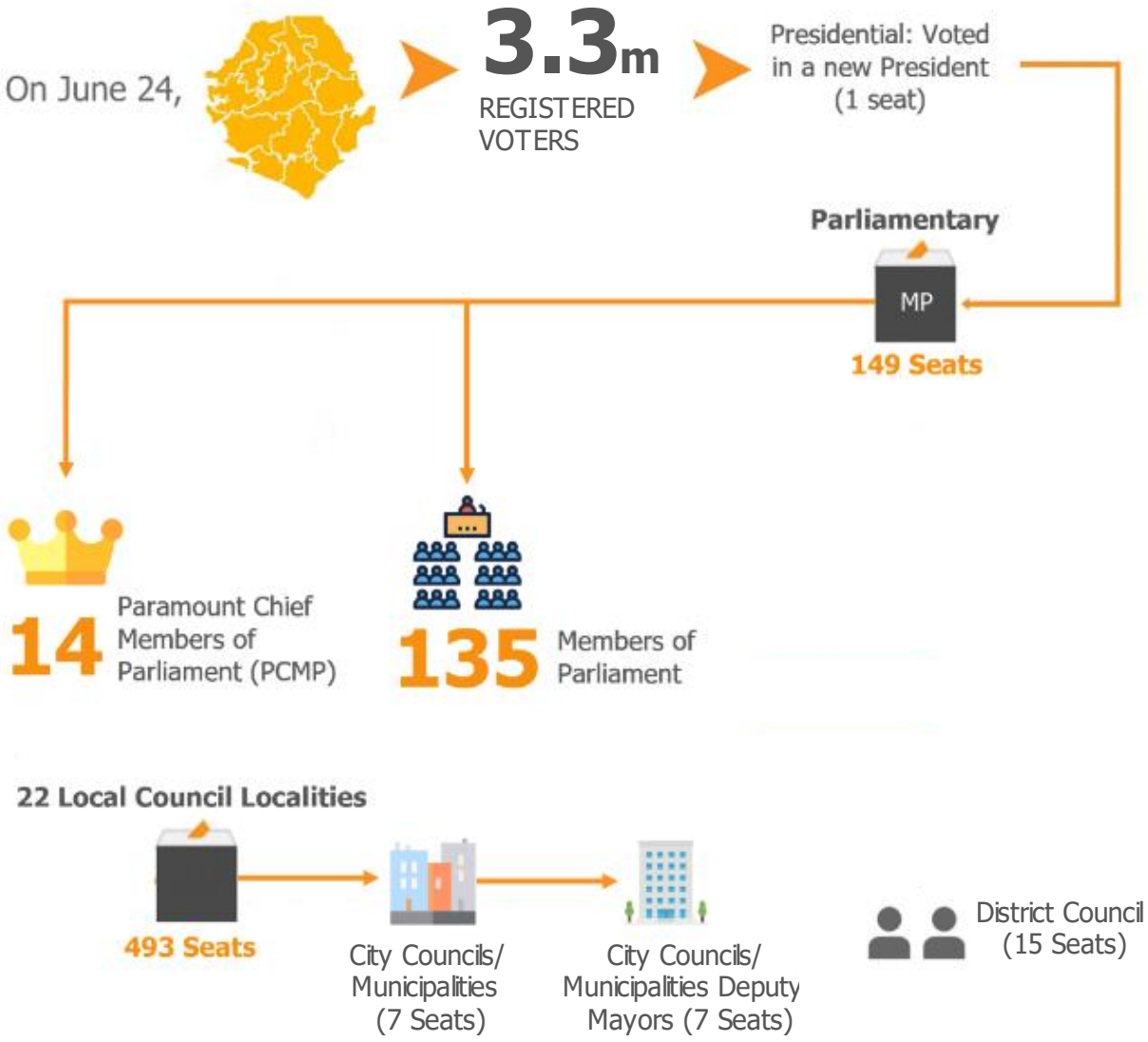
7.5 million **POPULATION**

Male 47.85% — 1,614,729

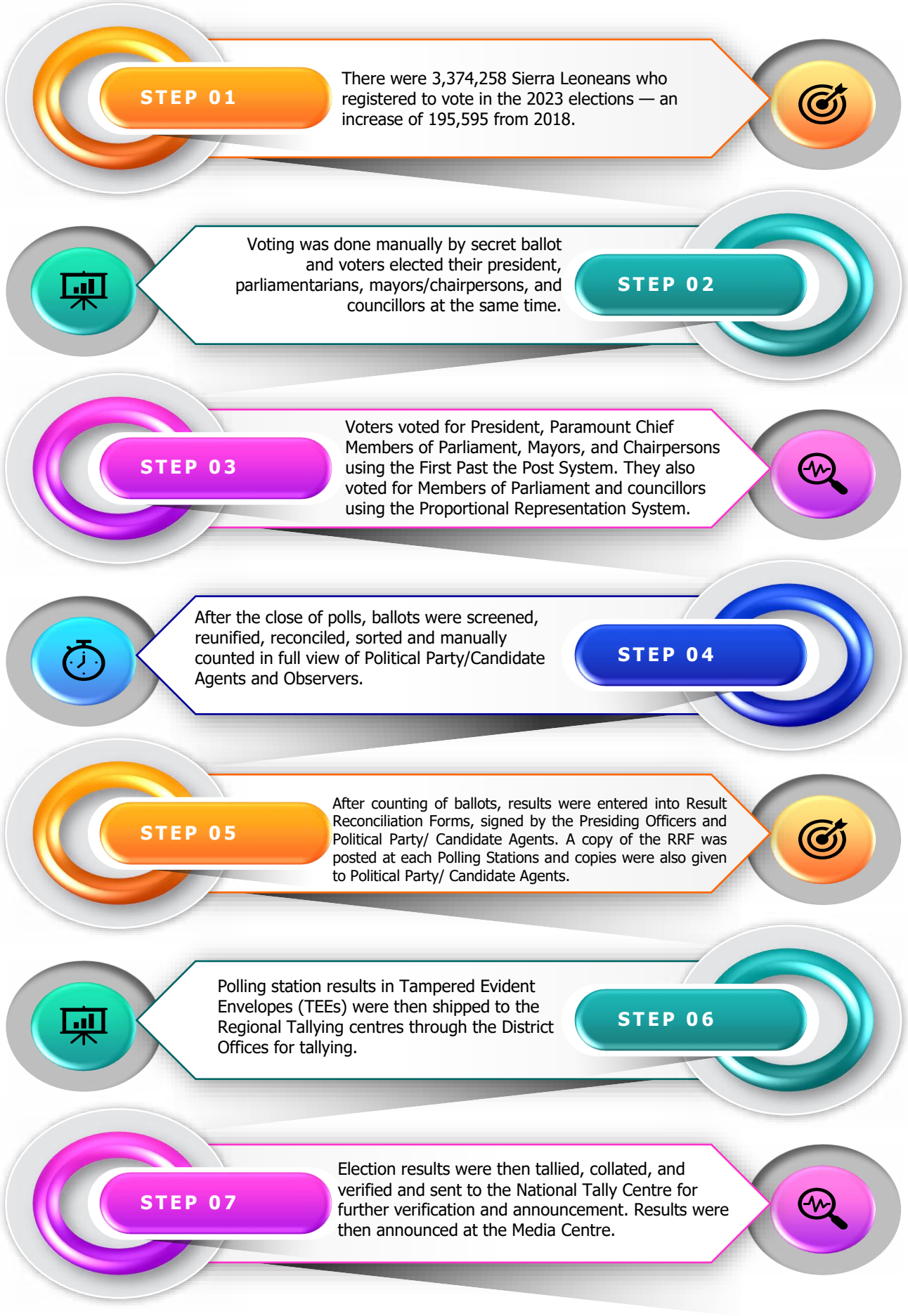
Female 52.15% — 1,759,529

Elections for which voting was conducted.

A total of 3,374,258 Sierra Leoneans registered to vote in 2023 elections – an increase of 195,595 voters from 2018. Voting was done manually by the secret ballot and voters elected their Presidential, Parliament and Mayoral/Chairperson and Councillors candidates at the same time.



Voting, Counting and Tallying Process in 2023

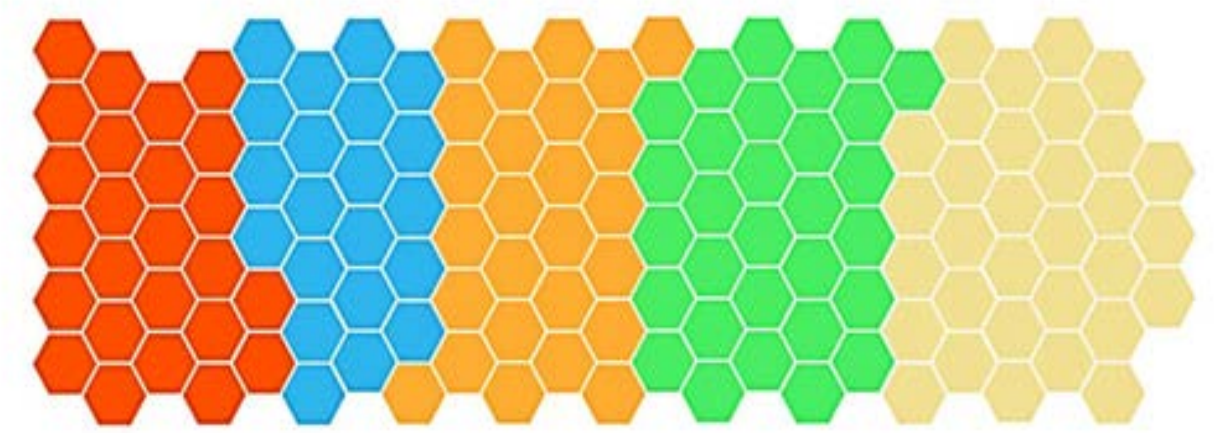


The Declaration of Result

- To be declared a winner, a presidential candidate must secure at least **55%** of the total valid votes cast. If this is not achieved in the first round of voting, a run-off election will be held (within two weeks) between the two candidates with the highest votes — as was the case in the 2018 election.
- The proportional representation system was used to elect Members of Parliament and councillors whilst Mayors and Chairpersons were elected using the First-Past-the-Post system.
- Parliamentary seats were allocated by district/region. The allocation of the 135 seats by district/region were as follows: 32 seats for the East, 26 for the North, 21 for the Northwest, 30 seats for the South, and 26 seats for the West.
- A political party or an independent candidate must meet the threshold of 11.9 percent for members of parliament and 4.5 percent for councillors to earn a seat. When the threshold is met, the party or independent candidate then receives a share of the seats based on the proportion of votes obtained.

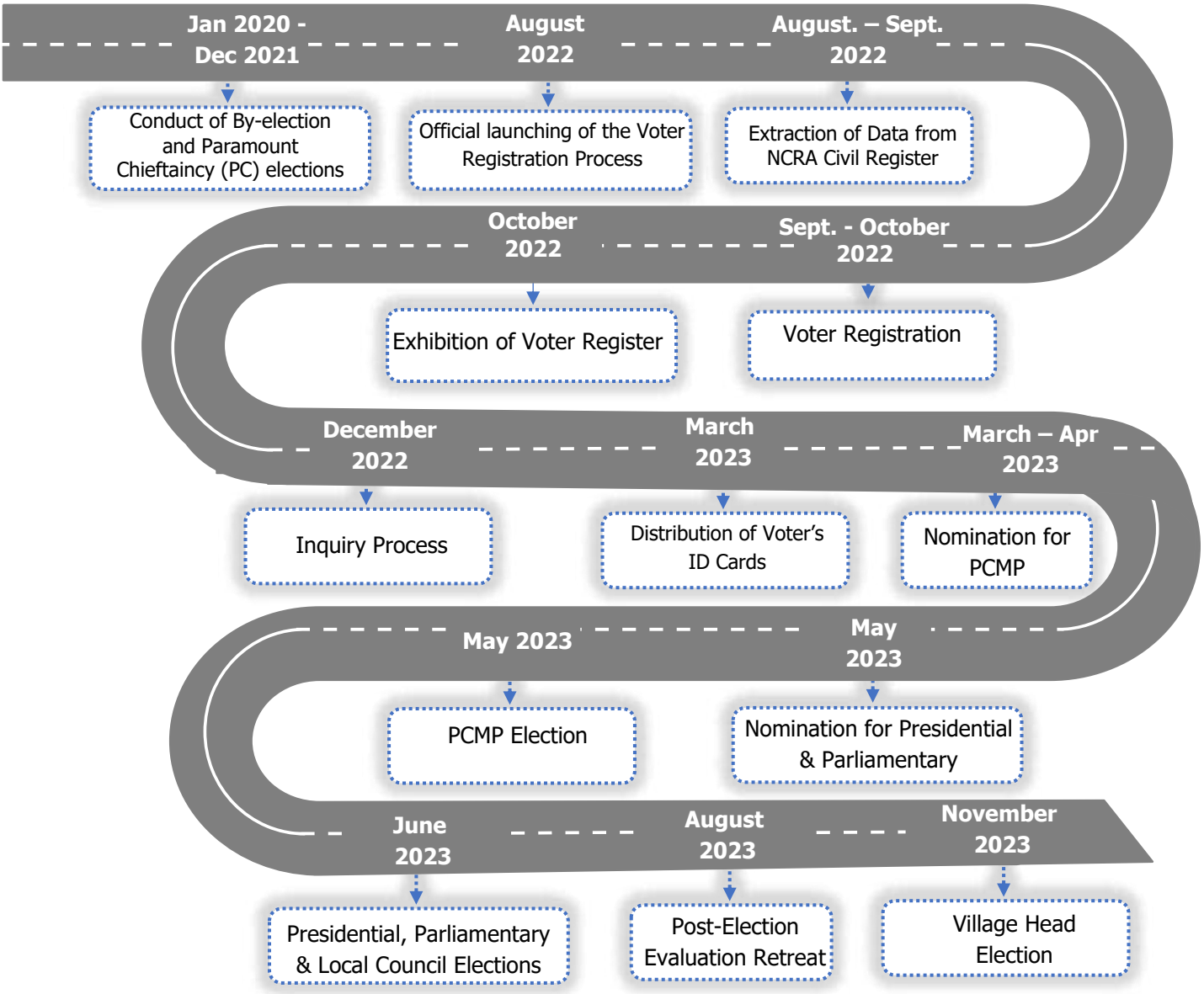
Composition of Parliament and Local Councils

The current Parliament after the June 24 elections comprises 149 Members: 135 directly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) and 14 indirectly Paramount Chief Members of Parliaments (PCMPs). The Speaker is elected by Members of Parliament, the deputy speaker who is an elected Member of Parliament is also elected by the elected members of parliament.



135	14	7	15	493
Members of Parliament (MPs)	Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMPs)	Cities/Municipality Mayors/Deputies	District Council Chairpersons/ Deputies	Councillors

Roadmap to the 2023 Elections



STATUS REPORT ON THE ECSL STRATEGIC PLAN: 2020-2024

Introduction

Over the previous electoral cycles, the Commission graduated from the stages of Reform in 2005, Capacity Development in 2009 and Consolidation for Sustainability in 2015. After the successful conduct of the 2018 general and local government elections and the lessons learnt through the 2015-2019 Electoral Cycle, the Commission was motivated to position itself as a transparent and credible elections management body with the use of secured and advanced technology to improve on Election Result Management and to gain public trust and confidence in the electoral process.

To achieve this, the Commission developed its 2020-2024 Strategic Plan with the theme 'Strengthening Electoral Processes for Maximum Performance' which guided the activities and trajectory of the Commission within this cycle. The theme hinges on 10 (Ten) Strategic Pillars to deliver on the Commission's mandate of conducting transparent and credible public elections that meets international standards and best practices.

The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan is aligned with and compliments the National Development Agenda (Sierra Leone's Mid Term National Development Plan 2019) with specific reference to Cluster 3.1 which is consistent with the Commission's commitment to invest in renewable energy through solar power installations at its HQ and district offices, Cluster 4 on governance and accountability which is in consonance with the mandate of the Commission to conduct, transparent and credible elections for democratic consolidation and national development and Clusters 5 and 6 which deals with youth and women empowerment and their inclusion in governance and electoral processes .

The Electoral Cycle 2020-2024 has been considered as a period in which the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone strengthened its professional growth, increased the number of departments from 10 to 15 and bolstered capacity development for effective election management.

Within the period under review, the Commission continues to be an independent, credible and well-resourced institution with the aim to promote democracy, good governance and conduct credible elections in line with international standards and best practices, as evident in the recently held 2023 multi-tier elections.

Summary of Performance on the Programme of activities for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

The Commission made remarkable strides in the discharge of its constitutional mandate as evident in the deliverables in the ten Strategic Pillars within the electoral cycle 2020-2024:

Pillar 1: Institutional, Staff Capacity and Infrastructural Development

As a means of reducing staff attrition to achieve institutional growth, the Commission reviewed the Terms and Conditions of Service for Commissioners and staff that reflected a competitive salary structure. Also, during this cycle, Risk Allowances were paid to all staff and end of Service benefits were paid to retirees and resignees who deserved them. The Commission continues to pay Annual Leave Allowances to staff on an "AS and When" basis. Furthermore, the Standing Order B and the Human Resource Policy Manual were reviewed to accommodate recent trends.

On staff capacity development, the Commission continued to capacitate the professional staff through the conduct of several national and international trainings. This included trainings on National Procurement laws for Senior and Middle Management staff at the Civil Service Training College in Freetown, Human Resource Information Management Systems for HR Staff, Certified training on ICT for 20 ECSL staff at the Blue Crest College in Freetown, Training for ECSL Drivers on Driving Roles, Responsibilities and Regulations among others.

Staff also benefited from international trainings such as the BRIDGE Modular training on "Election Day Result Management" conducted for some senior and middle level staff including Commissioners at the Atlantic Hotel in Freetown, BRIDGE "Train the Facilitator" (TtF) course in Ghana, BRIDGE training on Boundary Delimitation in Togo undertaken by the Directors of Human Resource and Operations respectively.
The Commission also supported senior and middle level staff to participate in networking, study tours and specialized short courses.

On infrastructural development, the Commission constructed two regional offices in Kenema and Bo and rehabilitated the regional office in Makeni, the Warehouse, Tally Centre, and the National Headquarters. It also installed solar power/renewable energy and Close Circuit Television Security System (CCTV) at the National Headquarters, Warehouse and Tally Centre at the Wellington premises.

To aid its operations, the government of Sierra Leone procured six (6) Prado jeeps for Commissioners and fifteen (15) Toyota 4x4 Mitsubishi vehicles for field operation. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other donor partners procured two 165 KVA for the National Tally Centre, eighteen 5kva generators for ECSL district offices. The Geographic Information System Lab was also upgraded, and the Media and Situation room were operationalised during the 2023 elections.

Pillar 2: Elections Financing, Accountability and Transparency

During the conduct of the 2018 elections, the Commission identified funding as a major challenge that affected the smooth and effective delivery of its constitutional mandates of conducting public elections consistent with the legal framework in line with international best practices. It was also observed that the Commission lacked an independent funding mechanism for the conduct of public elections, referenda, and other elections apart from the GoSL and development partners. Furthermore, the GoSL funding is inadequate, untimely and irregularly provided.

In view of the forgoing, the Commission in collaboration with other stakeholders advocated for the establishment and effective management of the National Elections Sustainability Trust (NEST) Fund including a legislation on the effective management of the fund. This proposal was approved by the GoSL and a legislation passed in parliament for the establishment and effective management of the fund. The NEST Fund provided oversight and facilitated improved financial management, prompt decision making for the timely and professional conduct of elections.

To address the issue of Transparency and Accountability, the Commission trained district staff on Financial Management, Transparency and Accountability processes. It also developed and operationalized an Audit Plan for the conduct of elections.

Pillar 3: Boundary Delimitation

With the declaration of the Mid -Term Population and Housing Census Data the Commission commenced the delimitation of boundaries. A Boundary Delimitation Committee was set up and sensitization on the process was also ongoing. However, as a result of time constrains, the Commission advised His Excellency the President that the Commission was time constrained to delimit boundaries. As a result of the forgoing, His Excellency the President pursuant to Section 38A of the Constitution of Sierra Leone,1991 as amended in 2001 directed that the Commission conduct the 2023 Parliamentary and Local Council Elections using the Proportional Representation System.

Pillar 4: Voter Registration

With the proclamation of date for the conduct of Parliamentary election and Voter Registration by His Excellency the President in March 2022, followed by the declaration of date for the conduct of Presidential and Local Council Elections by the Chief Electoral Commissioner, the Commission embarked on the update of the Voter Register in September to October, 2022. A total of 3,374,258 eligible voters were registered an increase of 195,595 registered voters from the 2018 elections. The registration data formed the basis for the planning and conduct of the June, 2023 polls.

Pillar 5: Legal Reforms

In order to address the numerous Elections Observation Mission (EOM) recommendations in previous elections, the Commission embarked on Constitutional and Statutory legal reforms in preparation for the 2023 elections.

Prior to the commencement of legal reforms, the Commission with support from the European Union (EU) recruited an international Legal Electoral Expert, Hon. DR. Justice John Chifundo Kachale (a Malawian Judge) to review the Public Election Act, 2012 (PEA 2012). He submitted his Inception Report in December 2019. Unfortunately, COVID-19 broke out and he could not continue beyond the inception stage.

Following his departure, a local Legal Elections Expert, Dr. Emmanuel Saffa Abdulai, was recruited by the Commission with support from EU to continue the review process. He concluded the review process and submitted his Report in June 2020. Furthermore, some individuals proceeding for Muslim pilgrimage applied to the Commission to be accorded the privilege of early voting prior to their departure. In order to address this situation, the Commission also passed "The Public Elections (Early Voting) Regulations 2023. This gave opportunity to voters proceeding on Islamic Pilgrimage to cast their ballots for Presidential Election before their departure.

In June and July 2022 respectively, 2 Stakeholders Conferences were held at the New Brookfields Hotel to validate the Reports and make recommendations. The Conference Reports and Communiques were submitted to the Commission for onward submission to the Law Officers' Department (LOD) for drafting of the various bills.

Sections 32(2&8), 76(1) (a &b) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone were proposed for amendment. However, only section 32(2 & 8) was amended. Section 32(2) was amended to provide for 5 Electoral Commissioners, instead of 4, as was enshrined. This was due to the increase in the number of regions from 4 to 5.

Section 32(8) was also amended to remove the word 'Misbehaviour' and replaced it with the word 'Gross Misconduct'. This was due to the fact that Misbehaviour, as a reason to remove Electoral Commissioners, was too trivial. This was to guarantee further the independence of the Commission in the discharge of its mandates.

Section 76(1) (a&b) were not approved by Parliament. The Commission proposed for a fixed election date. This was rejected by Members of Parliament on the grounds that it contradicts certain entrenched constitutional provisions and thereby warrant the amendment of other sections of the Constitution.

The Public Elections Act, 2012 (Act No. 4 of 2012) was reviewed, revised and enacted into a new Act called the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022).

Passing of Regulations

Three Electoral Regulations were passed in 2022 and 2023. Out of the three, two were pursuant to section 38A of the 1991 Constitution, in which the Commission was directed to conduct the 2023 Elections by Proportional Representation (PR) System. However, there were no Regulations to further explain how such PR System of Elections were to be conducted. Two regulations were passed to address the lacuna in the Constitution in relation to Section 38A:

- The Public Elections (District Block Proportional Representation) Regulations 2022 and
- The Public Elections (Local Council Proportional Representation) Regulations 2022.

The Commission updated the Compendium of Electoral Laws to include the amended portions of the 1991 Constitution and the PEA,2022.

In order to facilitate the legal reform, the Commission had a sustained engagement with the judiciary. This facilitated not only legal reforms, but it paved the way for the training of the Judiciary on Elections and Electoral Laws, the establishment of a permanent Elections Offences Court and speedy litigation of elections matters.

Pillar 6: Conduct of Elections and Referenda

In addition to the conduct of the 2023 Presidential, Parliamentary, Paramount Chief Members of Parliament, Mayors/Chairperson, Councillor and 121 Village Head Elections, the Commission also conducted 11 (eleven) Parliamentary, 22 (twenty-two) Local Council bye elections and 43 Paramount Chieftaincy elections.

Pillar 7: Electoral Education, Communication and Outreach

As a means of educating the electorate on electoral activities, the Commission embarked on a sustained electoral/Voter education exercise. The Commission developed an Electoral Education and Communication Strategy to help guide electoral/voter education, Communication and outreach processes.

The activities of the Ward Electoral Education Committees (WEECS) were activated to carry out voter/ electoral education exercise on electoral activities in all Wards nation-wide. Radio and TV talk shows were also held at both district and national levels. Stakeholders' engagement was also intensified both at district and national levels through Political Party Liaison Committee (PPLC) meetings, stakeholders' meetings, press conferences among others.

Furthermore, the Commission upgraded the ECSL website to promote access to information on the electoral process in a timely manner.
The Commission trained selected media houses on media reporting on elections, accredited political parties and observers in all electoral process and facilitated the preparation of campaign calendar for all bye elections and the 2023 elections.

Pillar 8: Pillar Eight: Inclusion, Participation and Equity

The Commission desirous to ensure the inclusion of women, youths, Persons with Disability (PWDs) and the aged, established an Electoral Inclusion department. The department facilitated the development of a Gender and Disability Policy in order to engender electoral inclusion.

In order to ensure an effective coordination of all inclusion programmes, the Commission formed Stakeholders Coordination groups at national and district levels. This was done particularly to promote the participation of persons with disabilities, women, youths and the aged in the electoral process. Assistive tools such as Tactile Ballot Guide (TBG) were provided to facilitate the voting by the visually impaired and aged. Ramps and Planks were also provided in all polling centres to aid accessibility by PWDs. The Commission also developed sex disaggregated data collection form for all electoral activities to determine the participation of both males and females.

Pillar 9: ICT and Result Management

Prior to the commencement of the Voter Registration exercise, the Commission established the Department of Data Management to aid its operations. The ICT and Data Management departments in collaboration with the Operations Department mapped out all Voter Registration Centres and electoral billboards using Geographical Information System (GIS) technology.

In collaboration with the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA), the Commission was able to produce a voter register for all bye elections and the 24th of June,2023 elections.

The Commission also re-engineered and updated the ECSL website with the creation of a new domain (ec.gov.sl) to facilitate the accreditation of Political Party Agents and Observers, the Commission developed an online application system for the accreditation of Political Party Agents/ Observers for Election Observation and Monitoring.

Pillar 10: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

In a bid to strengthen research, monitoring and evaluation of the Commission's activities and to ensure that it achieve its objectives as stated in the Strategic Plan 2020-2024, a Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy was developed. This was to ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of all Commission's activities.

The Commission produced annual reports pursuant to section 32(12) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991). The 2023 election report was also produced in line with international standards and best practices.

An election related research was also conducted with the aim to improve on the conduct of credible elections that meets international standards and best practices.

Table 1: Status of the Strategic Plan 2023-2024

Pillar Number	Pillar Title/Name	No. of activities	No. of activities completed	No. of activities partially completed	No. of activities in progress	No. of activities not achieved
1.	Institutional, Staff Capacity and Infrastructural Development	50	23	12	11	04
2.	Elections Financing, Accountability and Transparency	21	16	1	2	2
3.	Boundary Delimitation	3	0	3	0	0
4.	Voter Registration	13	12	0	0	1
5.	Electoral Legal Reforms	13	11	1	1	0
6.	Conduct of Elections and Referendum	11	9	1	1	0
7.	Electoral Education, Communication and Outreach	20	12	3	5	0
8.	Inclusion, Participation and Equity	8	7	1	0	0
9.	ICT and Result Management System	15	8	3	4	0
10.	Monitoring and Evaluation	13	10	0	2	1
Totals		**167**	**108**	**25**	**26**	**8**
Percentage		**100%**	**64.67%**	**14.97%**	**15.57%**	**4.79%**

1. PRE-ELECTION PHASE

LEGAL AFFAIRS: REFORMS, AMENDMENTS AND LITIGATIONS

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of electoral governance, the legal framework serves as the bedrock for credible, fair, and transparent elections. This section delves into the critical legal matters pertaining to the electoral process for the period under review. It meticulously examines the evolution, modification, and establishment of laws and legal instruments vital for the conduct of the Presidential, local and Paramount Chieftaincy Elections. Furthermore, it provides an in-depth discussion on the Proportional Representation System (PRS) employed in Parliamentary and Local Council Elections, alongside issues related to election petitions and related legal matters.

Overview of Electoral Legal Affairs

The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) emerges from the robust framework of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991), particularly section 32. This foundational document not only brings the ECSL into existence but also outlines its functions, operational methodologies, voting mechanisms, referendum processes, constituency delimitation, and vacancy filling protocols (Sections 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, & 39) of the constitution of Sierra Leone 1991. Moreover, the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022), under section 7, reinforces the ECSL's corporate identity, granting it the capacity to initiate or face legal proceedings. The Chieftaincy Act, 2009 (Act No. 10 of 2009), particularly section 28, mandates the ECSL to oversee all Paramount Chieftaincy elections. Within this legal milieu, the ECSL's Department of Legal Affairs plays a pivotal role in addressing all legal matters.

The period in question witnessed the ECSL's successful conduct of the 2023 Multitier Elections, encompassing Presidential, Parliamentary, PCMP, Local Council and Village Head Elections.

This period was marked by significant legislative developments: repealing the Public Elections Act, 2012 (Act No.4 of 2012), enacting the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022) and introducing various regulations and amendments, including The Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022 (Act No.13 of 2022), which notably amended Section 32(2) and (8) of the Constitution and early voting regulations.

Electoral Legal Reforms

The Commission's commitment to electoral legal excellence is evident in its proactive engagement in legal reviews and reforms during this period.

Noteworthy, legislative enactments include The Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022), and various regulations aimed at enhancing the efficacy and inclusivity of the electoral process.

The Review and Repeal of The Public Elections Act, 2012

The Public Elections Act, 2012 (Act No.4 of 2012) represented a consolidation of dispersed electoral laws and was a direct outcome of recommendations from various Election Observation Missions (EOMs). Post-2012 and 2018 elections, EOMs advocated for a thorough review of the electoral legal framework.

Subsequent efforts culminated in the involvement of notable legal experts, **including Hon. Dr. John Chifundo Kachale** and **Dr. Emmanuel Saffa Abdulai**, whose contributions were instrumental in the review process. This phase included extensive stakeholder engagement through national conferences and collaborative efforts with international partners like the EU and UNDP, leading to a comprehensive report that laid the groundwork for the drafting of the Public Elections Act, 2022.

The Amendment of Electoral Laws

In pursuit of legal refinement, the ECSL proposed amendments into crucial sections of the Constitution. The Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022 (Act No.13 of 2022) successfully amended Section 32(2) and (8), enhancing the composition and defining terms for the removal of Electoral Commissioners. However, proposed amendments to Section 76(1)(a) and (b) did not secure parliamentary approval.

The Passing of Electoral Regulations

To effectively administer the PRS elections, the ECSL facilitated the passage of key regulations in 2022: The Public Elections (District Block Proportional Representation System) Regulations, 2022 (S.I. No.14 of 2022) and The Public Elections (Local Council Proportional Representation System) Regulations, 2022 (S.I. No.13 of 2022). These regulations provided a structured approach for conducting PRS elections, incorporating independent candidates and outlining specific procedures. Additionally, the Public Elections (Early Voting) Regulations, 2023 (S.I. No.3 of 2023) was enacted, recognizing the voting rights of individuals embarking on religious pilgrimages.

Litigations

During the period under review, the Commission was actively engaged in a series of pivotal elections petition cases, which were brought before the esteemed High Court and Supreme Court of Sierra Leone. These cases, as detailed below, encompassed a range of petitions related to Presidential constitutional directives, tallying of election results among others. The involvement of the Commission in these legal proceedings underscores the critical role of the Commission and the judiciary in upholding the sanctity and integrity of the electoral process.

The cases presented before the High Court and Supreme Court were not just legal challenges; but reflect the dynamic interplay between constitutional provisions, electoral laws, and the practicalities of conducting elections. The Supreme Court and High Court's decisions provided crucial guidance on interpreting and implementing electoral laws, ensuring that the electoral process aligns with constitutional mandates while adapting to practical realities. These judgments serve as essential references for future electoral processes, ensuring that elections are conducted within the ambit of the law and uphold democratic principles.

Case Summaries

1. **Case Title**: Hon. Abdul Kargbo & Councillor Hakiratu Caulker vs. Attorney-General & Minister of Justice, & ECSL
   - **Facts**: This case, initiated by Originating Notice of Motion dated 28th November 2022, was brought before the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone. It contested the interpretation and application of Section 38A of the Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001 (Act No. 15 of 2001) in relation to the conduct of Proportional Representation (PR) elections. The petitioners argued against the Presidential directive to the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) for conducting PR elections, claiming it exceeded constitutional powers and was inconsistent with the existence of established constituencies.
   - **Jurisdiction**: National
   - **Court**: Supreme Court
   - **Status/Remarks**: Concluded. The Supreme Court, by majority decision, upheld the constitutionality and lawfulness of the Presidential directive to the ECSL. It was determined that the directives were within constitutional bounds and did not violate the 1991 Constitution.

2. Case Title: All Peoples Congress (APC) & Lansana Dumbuya vs. ECSL & CEC

- **Facts**: The petitioners challenged the process of tallying and certification of election results, asserting that it should be conducted at the district level by District Returning Officers (DROs), as per Section 92(2) of the Public Elections Act, 2012 (Act No. 4 of 2012). The respondents, however, contended that the provision did not obligate them to exclusively tally and certify results at the district level.
- **Jurisdiction**: National
- **Court**: High Court
- **Status/Remarks: Concluded**. The High Court ruled in favour of the respondents. The judgment clarified that the tallying and certification of election results were not restricted to the district level and could be conducted at regional levels as well.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM AND SEAT ALLOCATION

Introduction

The Proportional Representation (PR) system, a prevalent electoral mechanism, assigns seats based on the proportion of valid votes a party or candidate receives. For instance, if a party secures 60% of the votes, it gains 60% of the seats.

The electoral landscape of Sierra Leone has experienced significant transformations over the years, particularly in the adoption and implementation of various electoral systems. The Proportional Representation (PR) system, a method used globally to elect political representatives, has been intermittently utilized in Sierra Leone under specific circumstances. This system, which allocates seats in proportion to the number of valid votes garnered by a political party or candidate, represents a departure from the Simple Majority or First Past the Post System (FPTP) traditionally used in the country.

Historical Context and Evolution

Sierra Leone's journey with the PR system dates back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, times marked by the challenges posed by war and the absence of clearly delineated electoral boundaries. In 1996 and 2002, the PR system was adopted as a pragmatic solution and response to these challenges. The 1996 elections, conducted under a decree, set a precedent for the 2002 elections, which were held following an amendment in 2001. Hence, this marked a temporary shift from the FPTP system, which was later reinstated for the elections in 2007, 2012, and 2018.

However, the FPTP was later reinstated in 2007. This reinstatement was indicative of the country's evolving political and administrative landscape, signalling a return to a semblance of normalcy and stability in the post-war era. However, the flexibility demonstrated in earlier years remained a hallmark of Sierra Leone's approach to electoral management, showcasing the nation's ability to tailor its electoral systems in response to prevailing circumstances.

Fig. 2: Stakeholders meeting on PR.

The 2023 Elections and the Adoption of PR System

The 2023 elections in Sierra Leone marked a significant turn in the nation's electoral strategy with the re-adoption of the Proportional Representation (PR) system for the Parliamentary and Local Council Elections. This decision was the culmination of a series of critical factors and constraints that influenced the electoral framework in the country.

A pivotal element in this electoral shift was the Mid-term Population and Housing Census conducted in December 2021. The outcomes and timing of this census played a crucial role. Coupled with this was the challenge of time constraints faced by the Electoral Commission. These factors together made it impractical to undertake the demarcation of constituency boundaries as required by section 38(3) of The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991.

The delineation of constituencies is a vital process in the FPTP system, ensuring equitable and representative electoral divisions. The inability to perform this task effectively necessitated an alternative approach.

In response to these challenges, the Electoral Commission advised the President to consider an alternative electoral approach. This led to a critical decision by the President to invoke Section 38A of The Constitution, a move that marked the shift to the PR system for the 2023 elections. The significance of this decision was further solidified by the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone. In a landmark ruling on January 27, 2023, the Supreme Court affirmed the adoption of the PR system, providing judicial validation to the electoral change.

Implementation of Section 38A (1) for the 2023 Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone

The 2023 Parliamentary elections were conducted under the PR System as stipulated in section 38A (1) of The Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 as amended by the Amendment Act 2001.

One of the primary challenges in the lead-up to the 2023 elections was the absence of established constituencies. This situation could have posed significant hurdles in conducting elections under the conventional First Past the Post (FPTP) system, which relies heavily on well-defined constituency boundaries for the allocation of parliamentary seats. Section 38A (1) provided a timely and effective solution to this issue.

Under Section 38A (1), the 2023 Parliamentary elections were conducted using the district block representation system, a method that allows for elections to be held based on existing districts rather than specific constituencies. This approach was particularly advantageous in ensuring that the electoral process could proceed smoothly despite the absence of delineated constituency boundaries. By utilizing the existing administrative district divisions, the electoral system was able to maintain a structured and representative approach to parliamentary elections.

Closed Party List PR System and Independent Candidacy

In the Closed Party List PR system adopted for these elections, political parties were required to submit a pre-ordered or ranked list of candidates. Seats were allocated based on the ranking on these lists, with the number of candidates on each list being double the number of vacant seats within an electoral area. Each of the 16 districts was allocated a specific number of seats, and interestingly, the system also accommodated independent candidates, allowing them to contest elections.

The Public Elections (Local Council and Parliamentary Proportional Representation System) Regulations 2022 (No. 13 of 2022)

The Public Elections (Local Council Proportional Representation System) Regulations 2022 (No. 13 of 2022), as per Section 38A (1) of The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, authorized the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone to implement the Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system for Local Council elections. This regulation, ratified by Parliament, outlines the foundational principles and guidelines for conducting Local Council elections under the PR system.

Key elements of these regulations include:

1. **Seat Allocation Methodology (Part 3)**: This section describes the process for distributing seats among localities. The allocation is based on population quotas determined by averaging the population data from the 2015 and 2021 Mid-Term Censuses.

   The seat calculation method for both the District Block and Local Council Proportional Representation (PR) systems in Sierra Leone is governed by a combination of legislative frameworks: Part III of The Public Elections (Local Council Proportional Representation System) Regulations 2022 (No. 13 of 2022), The Public Elections (District Block Proportional Representation System) Regulations 2022 (No. 14 of 2022), and Section 4 of the Local Government Act, 2022. These regulations collectively shape the approach to seat allocation in a way that is both legally compliant and reflective of democratic principles.

2. **Threshold Calculation for Seat Apportionment (Part 4):** This part specifies the mechanism for calculating the representational quotient, essential in determining the distribution of council seats to political parties and independent candidates.

3. **Nomination Procedures (Part 5)**: The regulations under this section provide comprehensive guidelines on nomination processes within the PR framework. This includes the ordering of candidates based on preference, a standardized approach for nomination fee payment, stipulations for the nomination and representation quota of female candidates, and protocols for the event of a candidate's death and subsequent replacement.

Allocation of Parliamentary Seats for the 2023 elections using the Highest Remainder Formula

The allocation of Parliamentary seats for the 2023 elections in Sierra Leone was done using the Highest Remainder Formula, a method designed to ensure a proportional and fair distribution of seats. This process, as outlined in the legal framework, is a systematic approach to representational equity in the parliamentary structure.

Here's how the formula was applied:

1. **Population Quota Calculation**: The first step involves calculating the population quota. This is done by dividing the total population of Sierra Leone by the number of seats prescribed by Parliament for Ordinary Members of Parliament.

Formula:

- Total Population of Sierra Leone: **7,548,702**
- Total Number of Seats in Parliament: **135**
- Population Quota = $\frac{\text{Total Population}}{\textit{Total Number of Seats}}$
- Therefore, Population Quota = $\frac{7{,}548{,}702}{135} = 55{,}916$

2. **Calculating Representational Quotient for Each District:** The next step involves dividing the total population of each district by the population quota. This calculation yields the Representational Quotient for each district, which consists of a whole number and a fractional remainder.
   Formula:
   - Population of a District (e.g., Kailahun District): **550,435**
   - Representational Quotient = $\frac{\textit{District Population}}{\textit{Population Quota}}$
   - Therefore, Representational Quotient for Kailahun = $\frac{550{,}435}{57{,}187} = 9.62519$

3. **Initial Seat Allocation Based on Whole Numbers:** Each district is initially allocated a number of seats equivalent to the whole number in its Representational Quotient.

   Formula:
   - Whole Number from the Representational Quotient indicates initial seats.
   - Therefore, Kailahun District gets 9 seats (ignoring the decimal part).

4. **Determining Remaining Seats**: After allocating seats based on whole numbers, the total number of seats allocated is subtracted from the overall number of seats to be distributed. The result is the number of seats that remain to be allocated.

Formula:

- Add up all the initial seat allocations.
- Subtract this sum from the total number of seats to find the remaining seats.
- If the sum of initial allocations is 120 seats, then Remaining Seats = $135 - 120 = 15\ seats$

5. **Allocating Remaining Seats Using Highest Remainders:** The fractional parts of the Representational Quotients are then ranked from highest to lowest. The remaining seats are allocated to these fractions, starting with the highest remainder. This process continues down the ranked fractions until all the seats have been allocated.

Allocation of Local Council seats for the 2023 Local Council Elections using the Highest Remainder Formula

The allocation of Local Council seats for the 2023 elections in Sierra Leone using the Highest Remainder Formula is a comprehensive process designed to ensure fair and proportional representation. Here's a detailed breakdown of the formula.

1. **Initial Allocation to Each Local Council:**
   - Each of the 22 Local Councils is allocated 1 Chairperson/Mayor and 11 Councillor seats. For example, Kailahun District Council receives 1 Chairperson and 11 Councillors, Makeni City Council receives 1 Mayor and 11 Councillors, etc.
2. **Calculation of Total Councillor Seats Initially Allocated:**
   - Total seats allocated in the first step
     $= 22\ Local\ Councils\ x\ 11\ seats\ each = 242\ Councillor\ seats$
3. **Determining Remaining Seats for Allocation:**
   - Total seats allocated for Local Councils = 489 seats.
   - Subtract the initially allocated seats from the total: 489 - 242 = 247 seats remaining for allocation.
4. **Population Quota Calculation:**
   - Divide the total population of Sierra Leone by the remaining number of Local Council seats.
   - Total Population of Sierra Leone: **7,548,702**.
   - Remaining Seats: **247**.
   - Population Quota:
     $= Total\ Population \div Remaining\ Seat$
     $= 7{,}548{,}702 \div 247 = \mathbf{30{,}562}$.
5. **Representational Quotient Calculation for Each Locality:**

   Divide the total population of each locality by the population quota.

   Example: Population of Kailahun District = 550,435.
   Representational Quotient for Kailahun District = 550,435 ÷ 30,562 = 18.01070502.
6. **Initial Seat Allocation Based on Whole Numbers:**

   Allocate each District a number of Local Council seats equal to the whole number part of the Representational Quotient.
   Example: Kailahun District receives 18 seats based on its whole number quotient.
7. **Determining Remaining Seats:**

   Sum all seats allocated based on whole numbers. Subtract this sum from the total number of seats to be allocated to find the remaining seats.
8. **Allocating Remaining Seats Using Highest Remainders:**

   Rank the fractional remainders of the Representational Quotients from highest to lowest.

   Allocate the remaining seats to the localities with the highest remainders, one seat per locality, until all remaining seats are allocated.

Table 2: Allocation of 135 Parliamentary Seats for the 2023 Parliamentary Elections.

REGION	DISTRICT	Seat Allocated base on 2015 Census figures	Seat Allocated base on 2021 Census figures	Total	2023 Seat Allocation
EASTERN	KAILAHUN	10	10	20	10
	KENEMA	11	13	24	12
	KONO	9	11	20	10
	TOTAL	**30**	**34**	**64**	**32**
NORTHERN	BOMBALI	8	7	15	8
	FALABA	4	3	7	4
	KOINADUGU	4	4	8	4
	TONKOLILI	10	10	20	10
	TOTAL	**26**	**24**	**50**	**26**
NORTH-WEST	KAMBIA	6	6	12	6
	KARENE	5	5	10	5
	PORT LOKO	10	9	19	10
	TOTAL	**21**	**20**	**41**	**21**
SOUTHERN	BO	11	13	24	12
	BONTHE	4	5	9	5
	MOYAMBA	6	6	12	6
	PUJEHUN	6	7	13	7
	TOTAL	**27**	**31**	**58**	**30**
WESTERN AREA	WESTERN RURAL	8	12	20	10
	WESTERN URBAN	20	11	31	16
	TOTAL	**28**	**23**	**51**	**26**
	GRAND TOTAL	**132**	**132**	**264**	**135**

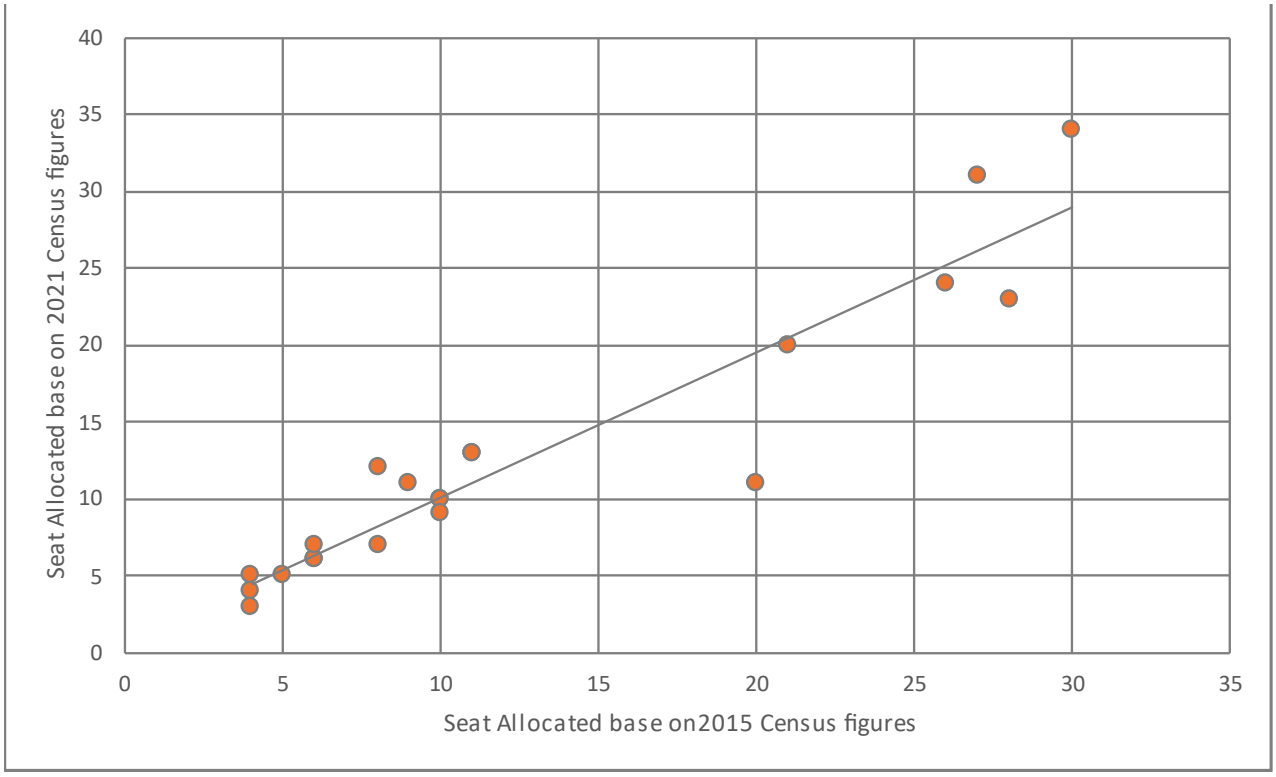


Fig. 3: Seat Allocated based on 2015 Census figures and Seat Allocated based on 2021 Census figures.

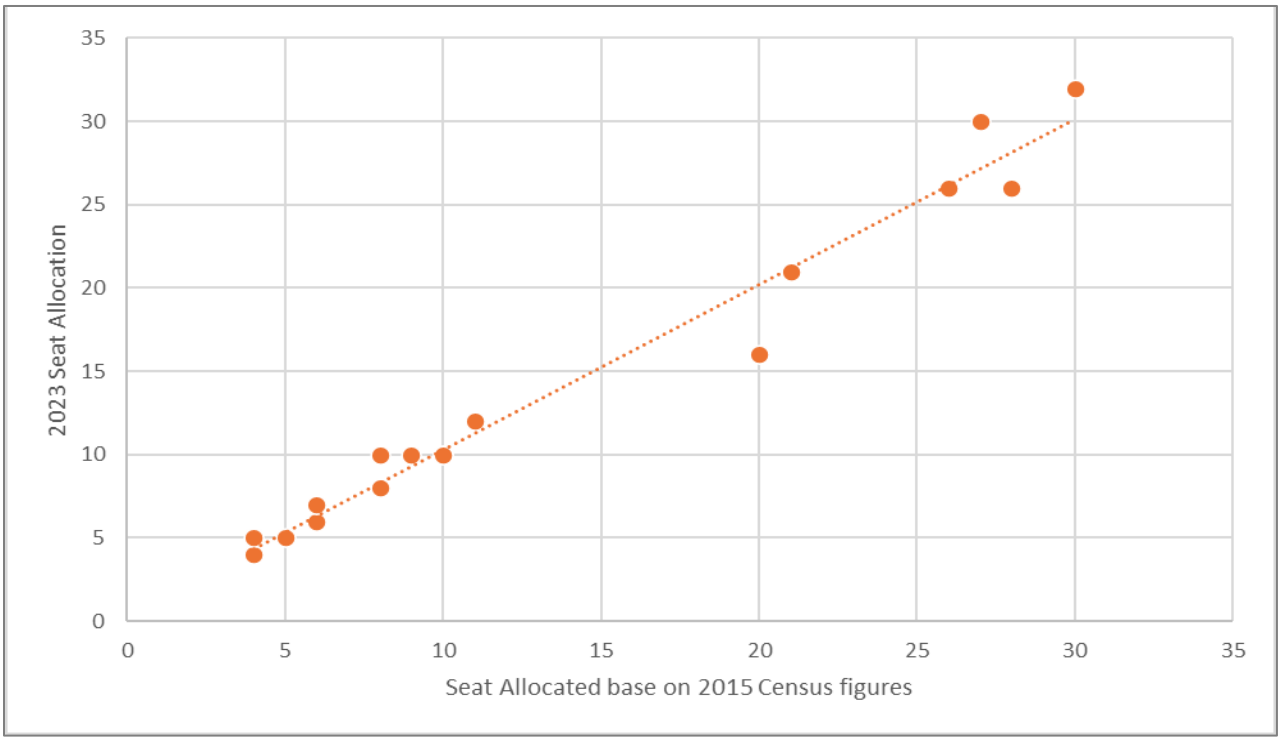


Fig. 4: Seat Allocated based on 2015 Census figures and Seat Allocated based on 2023 Census figures.

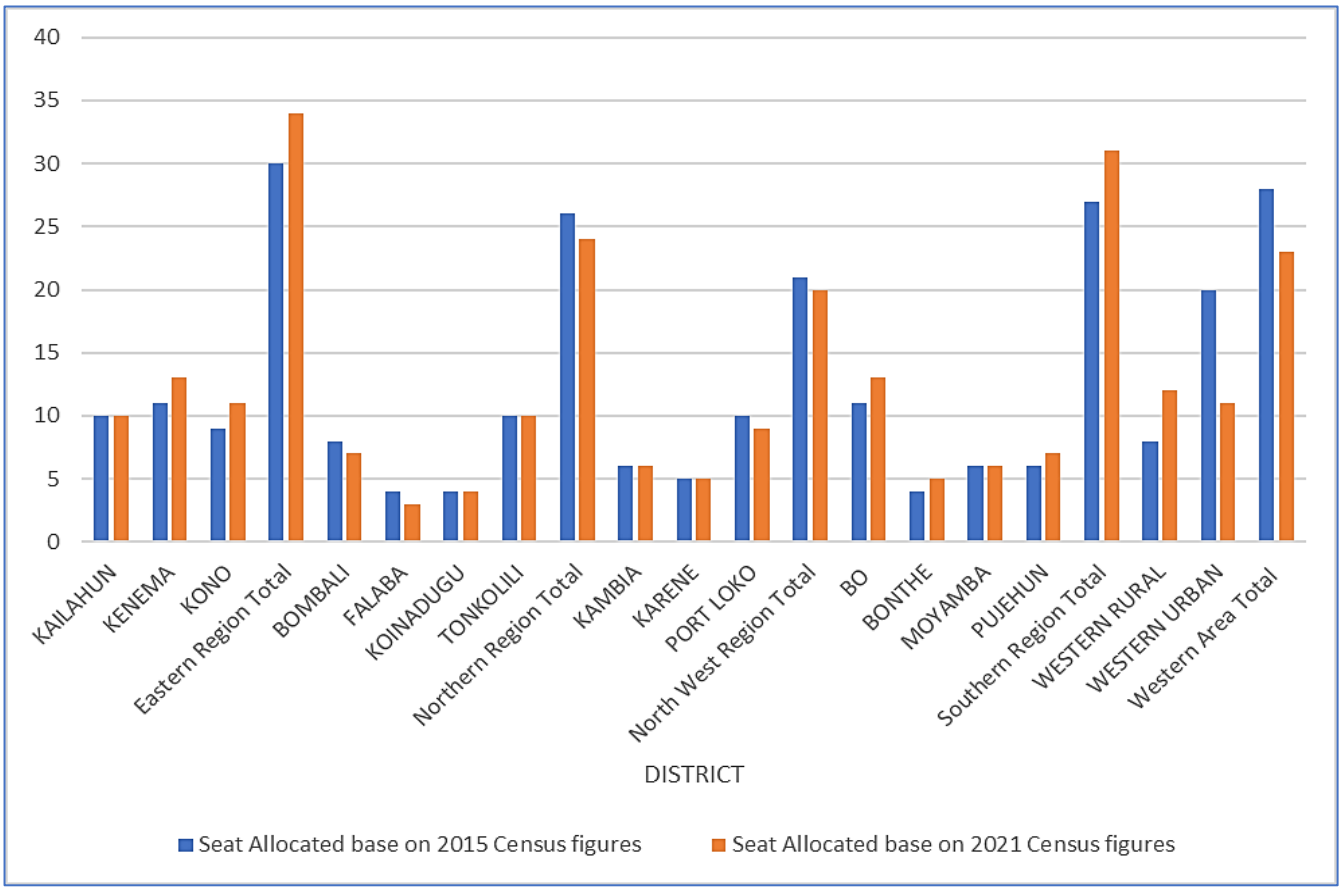


Fig. 5: 'Seat Allocated based on 2015 Census figures', 'Seat Allocated based on 2021 Census figures', 'Total' by 'DISTRICT'.

FORMULA FOR ALLOCATING SEATS UNDER THE DISTRICT BLOCK REPRESENTATION SYSTEM – **TWELFTH SCHEDULE (Section 58)**

- **Seat Allocation Basis**: Seats are allocated to political parties based on the total number of valid votes cast in each district, known as the total district votes.
- **Vote Compilation**: Total district votes are compiled by summing up all valid votes from the polling stations within the district.
- **Example Scenario**: The example considers six political parties (A, B, C, D, E, and F) competing for a total of six seats in a specific district.
- **Total District Votes**: In the example, the total district votes amount to 172,885.
- **Individual Party Votes**: Votes for each party (referred to as party votes) are calculated separately to determine the number of valid votes each party received.

Let us assume that the votes obtained by the six parties are as in the chart below.

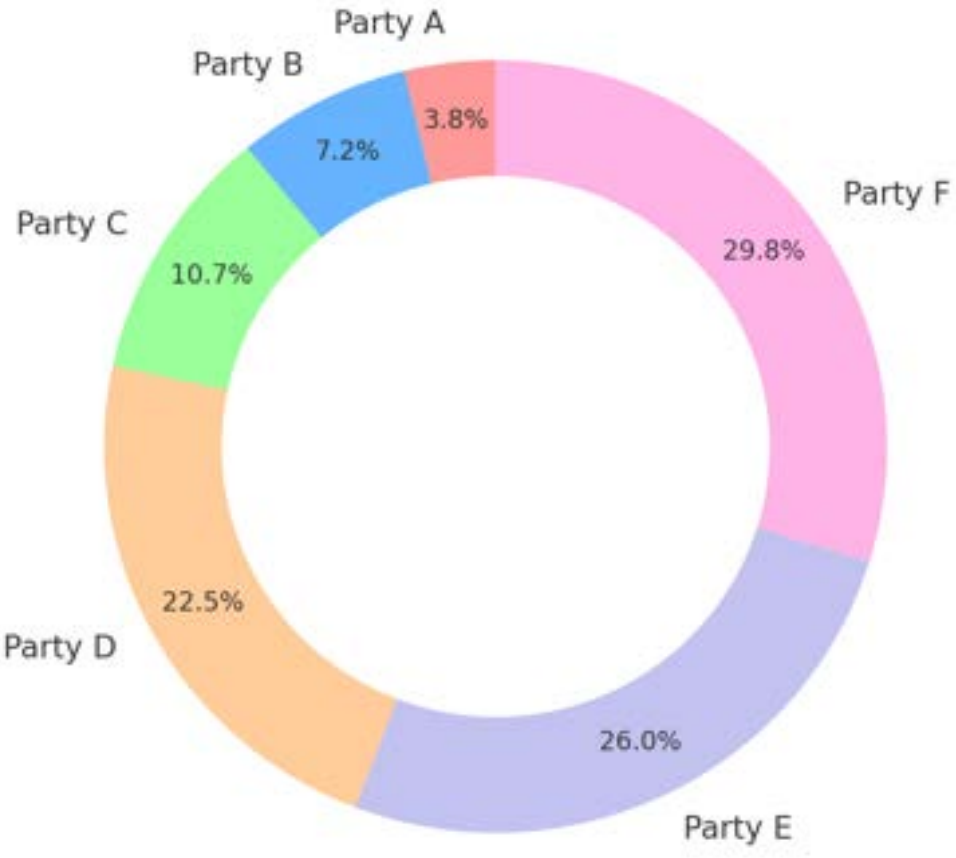


Fig. 6: Percentage of Votes received by each party.

INSIGHT: Ensure that the sum of the party votes (individual votes for each party) equals the total district votes. This is a crucial consistency check to confirm that all votes are properly accounted for.

1. In each District the number of votes that a political party requires to be allocated one seat will be determined by dividing the total District votes by the district seats. The number of votes so determined will hereafter be referred to as the threshold or quota of votes. The threshold or quota of votes can be obtained in two ways:

   (a) As a percentage of the total District votes: to get the percentage divide 100% (representing 1000 of the district votes) by the district seats. In this example if we divide 100% by 6 (the number of seats being competed for by the political parties) the results will be 16.66% as the threshold or quota of votes. Expressed as a percentage the threshold or quota of votes can easily be determined for each district before the elections, as soon as the total number of seats for each District is known.

   (b) As actual votes: in this case, divide the total District votes by the district seat. In this example, if we divide 172,885 votes (being the total District votes) by 6 (being the number of District seats) the results will be 28,814 votes as the threshold or quota of votes. This can be done only after the elections when the total District votes are known.

   It is to be noted however that in both instances the result is the same as 28,814 votes represent 16.66% of 172,885 votes.

2. Any political party whose share of the total District votes is less than the threshold or quota of votes fails to win a seat and therefore, drops out of any further calculations for purposes of the allocation of seats. The table below shows the status of the six parties in this regard.

Table 3: Summary of the votes, percentages, and whether each party meets the threshold:

Party	Votes	Percentage	Meets Threshold
PARTY A	6,501	3.76%	No
PARTY B	12,430	7.19%	No
PARTY C	18,505	10.70%	No
PARTY D	38,916	22.51%	Yes
PARTY E	44,969	26.01%	Yes
PARTY F	51,564	29.83%	Yes
TOTAL	**172,885**	**100%**	**N/A**
THRESHOLD	**28,814**	**16.67%**	**N/A**

It can be seen from the table that each of Parties A, B and C did not obtain the required quota of 28,814 votes or 16.66% of the total District votes; and therefore, fails to win any seat.

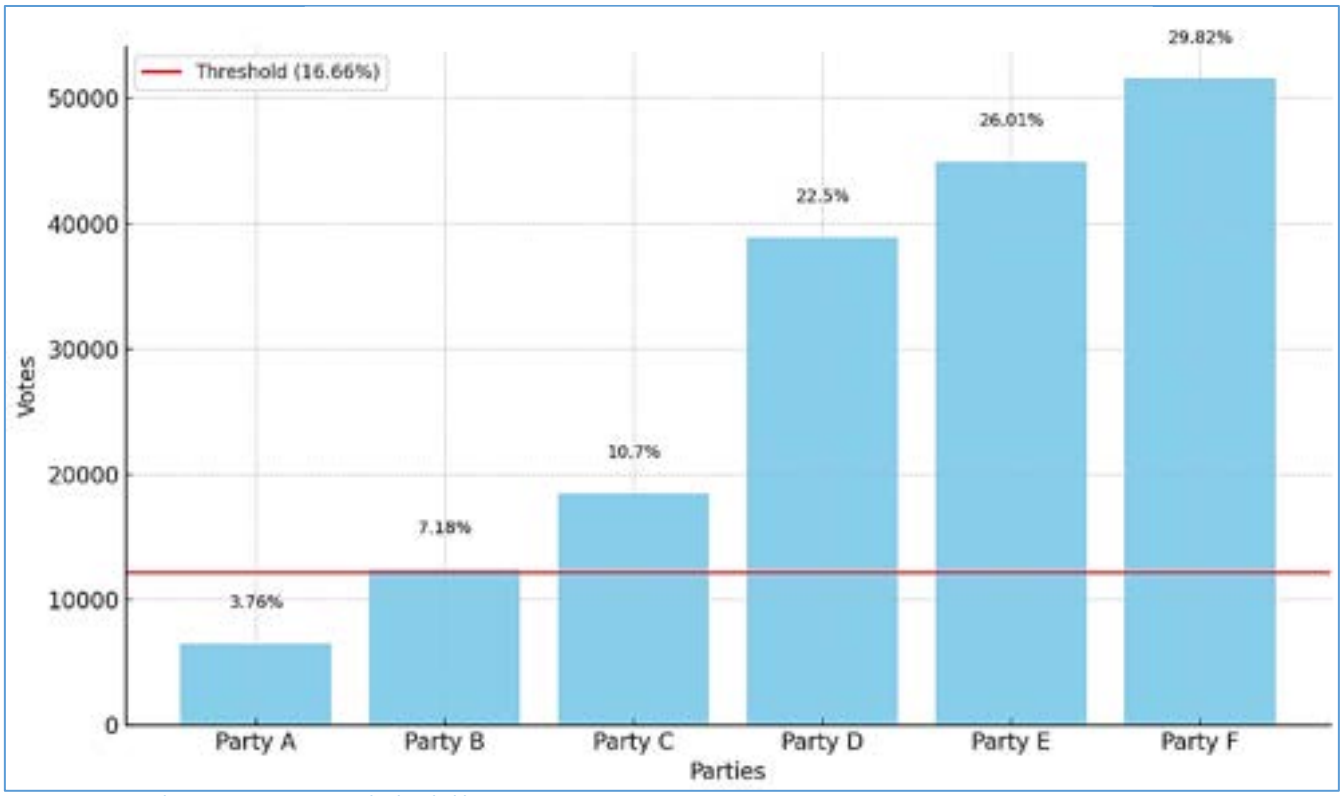


Fig. 7: Votes Distribution Among Parties with Threshold Line

The bar chart above displays the vote distribution among the parties and illustrates how they compare to the threshold. Here's a summary:

- Parties **E** and **F**, having the highest vote counts, are well above the threshold line.
- Party **D** also surpasses the threshold, albeit by a smaller margin.
- Parties **A**, **B,** and **C** are below the threshold.
- The red line represents the threshold of 16.66%, serving as a reference to gauge each party's performance relative to this benchmark.

3. The remaining parties **D**, **E** and **F** will thus be allocated the six District seats in accordance with their percentage shares of the total District votes. For this purpose, their percentage shares will be treated as ratios in relation to one and another, thus giving the equation.

   22.50;26.01;29.82=6

   The equation is to be worked out in the following way:

   - Add up the ratios: i.e. $22.50 + 26.01 + 29.82 + 78.3$
   - So, the equation becomes $78.33 = 6.$

   The results for the 3 parties will be:

   $D\ (22.50\ \times\ 6\ \div\ 78.33)\ = 1.72$
   $E\ (26.01\ \times\ 6\ \div 78.33)\ = 1.99$
   $F\ (29.82\ \times\ 6\ \div\ 78.33)\ = 2.28$

4. Seats will first be allocated to the parties without taking any decimal fractions into consideration. In this example, the allocation will be:

   $D: 1\ seat$
   $E: 1\ seat$
   $F: 2\ seats$

5. The number of seats so allocated will then be added up $(1 + 1\ + 2 = 4)$ and the total subtracted from the district seats $(6 - 4 = 2)$ The resultant (2) represents the seat that remains to be allocated.

6. Any number of remaining seats will be allocated to the parties in the following manner:

   - The party with the highest decimal fraction (E with. 99) gets the 1st of the remaining seats.
   - The party with the next highest fraction (D with .72) gets the 2nd of the remaining seats.
   - The process continues in descending order until all the remaining seats have been allocated.

7. In this example, since 2 seats remained to be allocated, party **F** with a decimal fraction of $.28$ gets no additional seats. So, the final allocation of seats to the political parties will be:

   $D\ (1 + 1)\ = 2$
   $E\ (1 + 1)\ = 2$
   $F\ (2 + 0)\ = 2$

8. In case there is only one seat remaining to be allocated, and 2 or more parties have the same decimal fractions, the seats will be allocated to the party with the highest elective vote. The elective votes for each of the parties concerned will be obtained by dividing the total party votes (being the total number of votes cast for each party separately) by the number of seats already allocated to the party plus one (the sum being the number of seats the party will obtain overall if one or more seats is to be allocated to it). This scenario is illustrated in the table below, in which three parties are assumed to have competed for six District seats, with a tie (0.4) in the decimal fractions.

Table 4: Seat Allocation Overview for District Parties Based on Vote Ratios and Elective Votes

	TOTAL VOTES	RATIO	FIRST ALLOCATION	ELECTIVE VOTES IF PLUS 1 SEAT	RANK	FIRST ALLOCATION PLUS	FINAL SEATS
PARTY A	87,729	2.4	2	29,241 (87,729 ÷ 3)	1st	2+1	3
PARTY B	80,399	2.2	2			2+0	2
PARTY C	51,165	1.4	1	25,583 (51,165 ÷2)	2nd	1+0	1
DISTRICT	219,288	6	5(1)			5+1	6

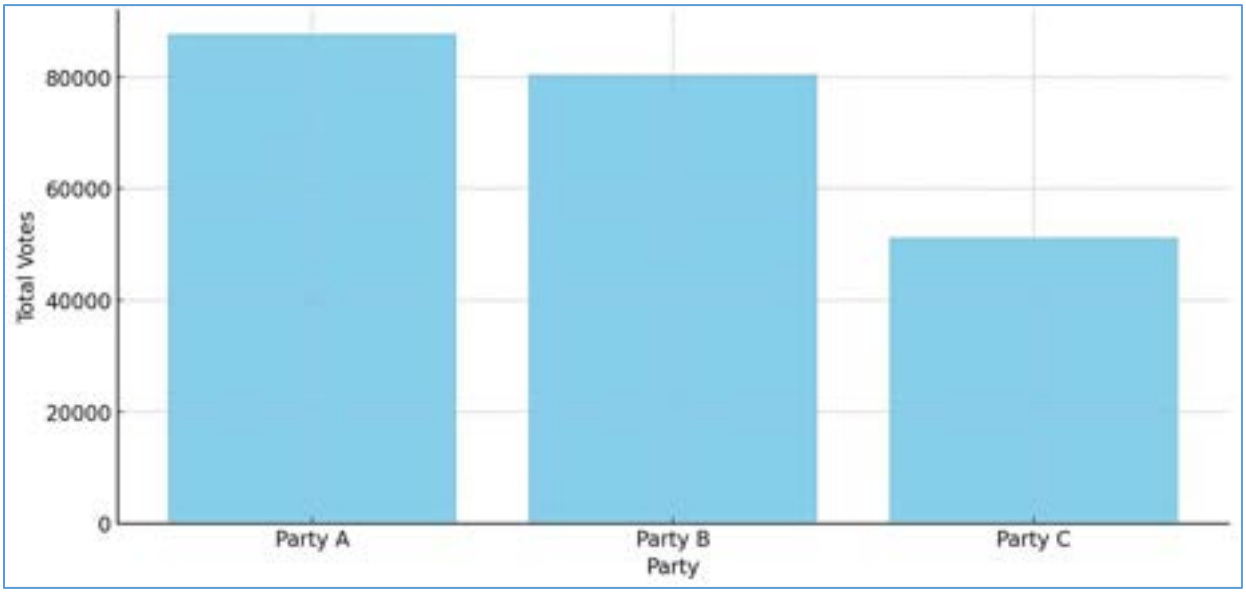


Fig. 8: Total Votes Received by Each Party

Party A, B, and C are shown with their respective total votes. Party A has the highest number of total votes, followed by Party B and then Party C.

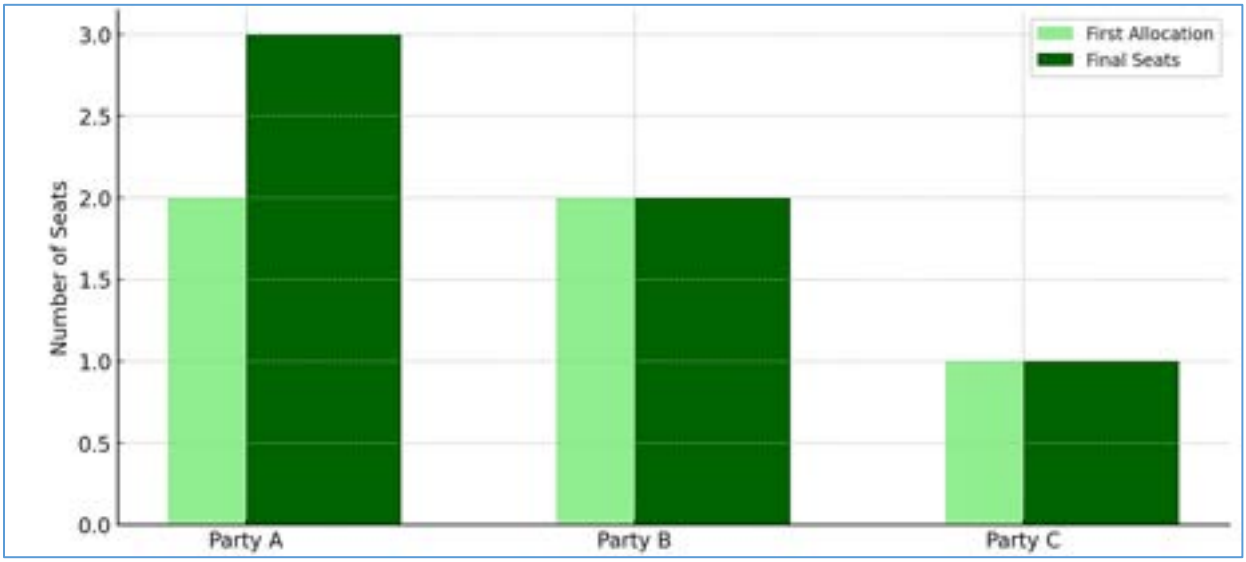


Fig. 9: First Allocation vs. Final Seat

The initial allocation of seats (First Allocation) and the final allocation after additional considerations (Final Seats) are shown. Party A gained an extra seat in the final allocation, while Parties B and C maintained their initial seat allocations.

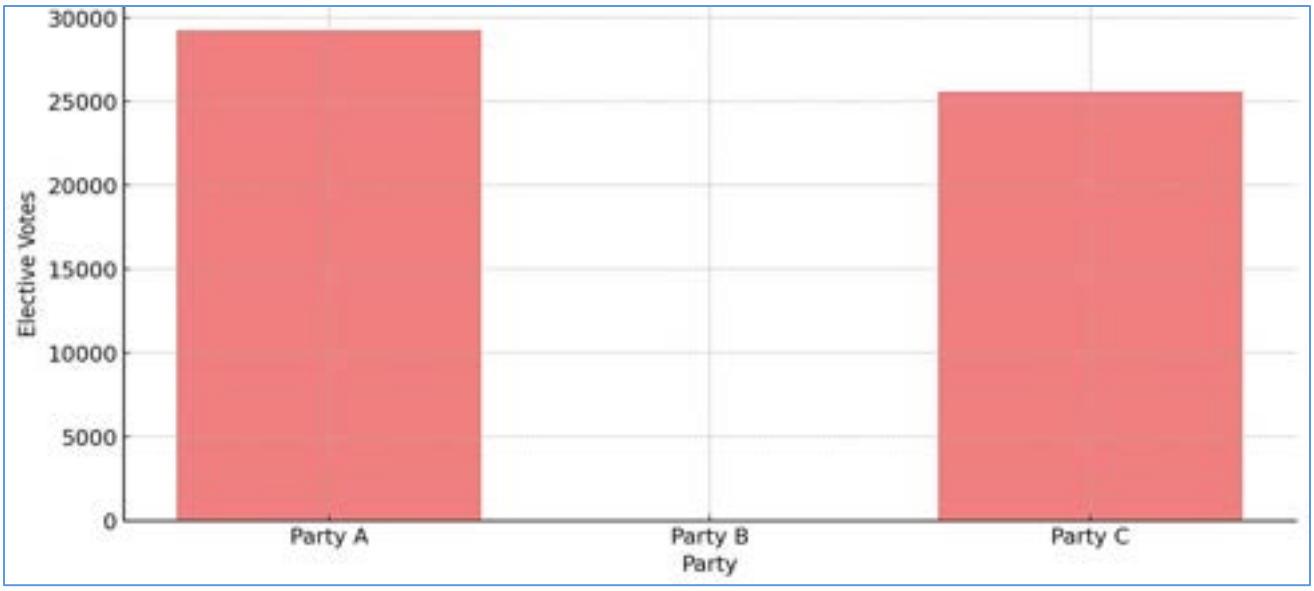


Fig. 10: Elective Votes if +1 Seat per Party

This shows the number of electives votes each party would have if one more seat was allocated. Party A and Party C are represented, while Party B has no data for this metric.

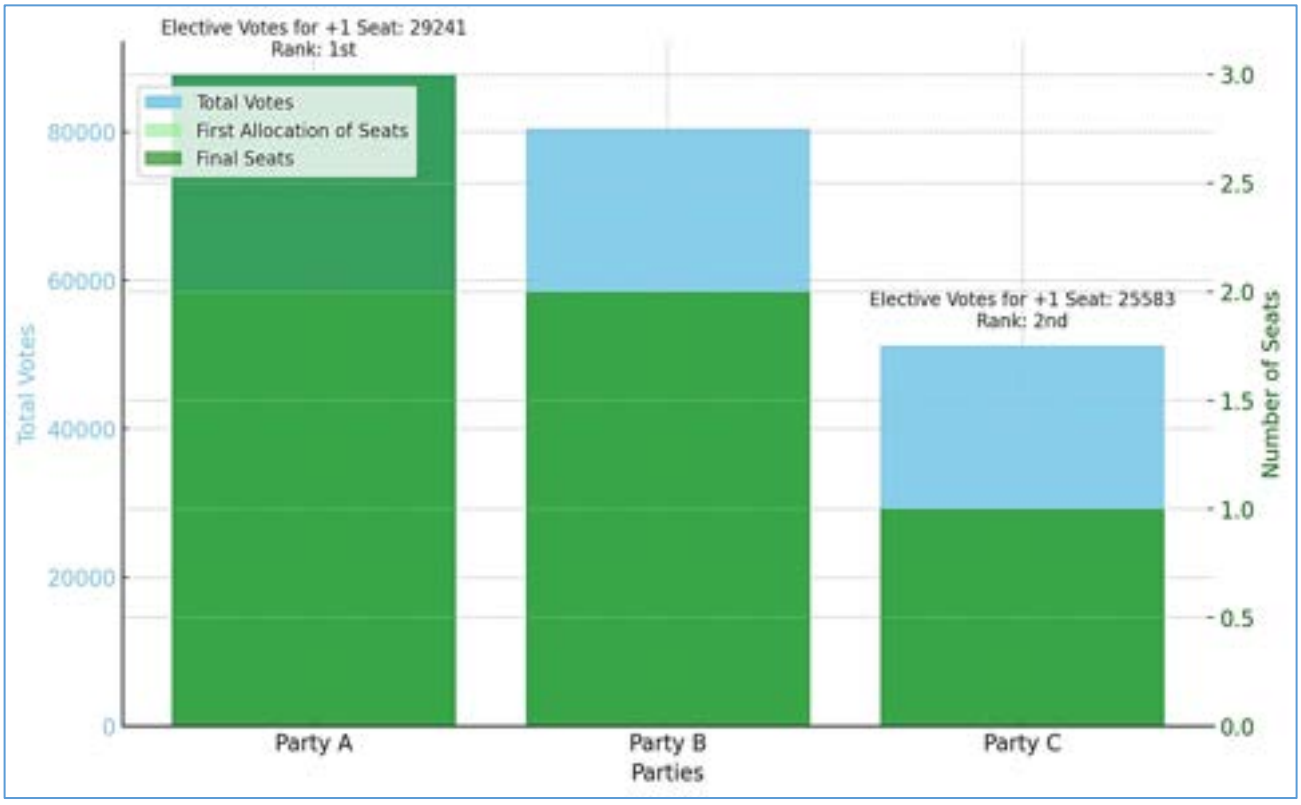


Fig. 11: Party Votes, Initial and Final Seat Allocation

VOTER REGISTRATION

Voter Registration Process Overview

Voter Registration stands as a cornerstone of democratic governance, representing a foundational mechanism in the electoral cycle. It involves the systematic and methodical compilation of eligible voters' lists, a process pivotal for the actualization of free, fair, and transparent elections. This phase is not merely administrative but embodies the broader principles of inclusivity, accessibility, and equality, serving as a direct reflection of the democratic health of a nation.

For the 2023 multi-tier elections, a carefully structured timeline was adhered to. His Excellency President Retired Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio officially declared the period from 3rd September to 4th October 2022 for Voter Registration. This period was earmarked after thorough deliberation, aligning with the legal framework and logistical considerations to ensure maximum participation and the integrity of the electoral process. The Voter Registration phase was not only about updating the electoral roll but also about reaffirming the commitment to a participatory democracy where every eligible citizen is empowered and given the platform to contribute to the nation's democratic journey.

In this context, Voter Registration transcends the realm of procedural necessity and ventures into the domain of democratic expression, symbolizing ECSL's dedication to fostering an electoral environment where every vote is not just counted but also valued. The meticulous planning and execution of this phase reflects the resolve to nurture a robust democratic framework, setting the stage for the forthcoming electoral milestones.

Pre-Registration Preparations

The pre-registration phase was marked by strategic foresight and meticulous planning, ensuring the foundation for a seamless and inclusive Voter Registration process. Recognizing the significance of accessibility and convenience for potential voters, a comprehensive review and expansion of Voter Registration Centres were pivotal initial steps. The decision to increase the number of centres by 10% from 3,300 to 3,630 was not merely a quantitative enhancement but a strategic move aimed at bolstering voter accessibility, reducing potential overcrowding, and accommodating the diverse geographical and demographic spread of the electorate.

Fig. 12: Commissioners at the launching of the Voter Registration Exercise at the New Brookfield Hotel, New England Vill

Fig. 13: Participants at the launching of the Voter Registration Exercise at the New Brookfield Hotel, New England Vill

The utilization of Geographical Positioning System (GPS) technology in mapping all centres was a testament to the Commission's commitment to leveraging technology for electoral excellence. This advanced mapping not only facilitated optimal location placement but also ensured that the centres were strategically positioned to serve the most remote and underserved populations, thus reinforcing the principles of fairness and inclusivity.

The official inauguration of the Voter Registration process on 24th August 2022, at the New Brookfields Hotel in Freetown, was a significant milestone. This event was not just a procedural formality but a vibrant forum that fostered multi-stakeholder engagement. The attendance of political parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and donor partners underscored a collective commitment to a transparent and participatory electoral process. The presentation on the Voter Registration process and the dissemination of the timeline were crucial for ensuring clarity, setting expectations, and promoting a unified approach among all stakeholders involved.

This phase of pre-registration preparations was a clear reflection of a well-coordinated effort to lay a robust foundation for the Voter Registration process. It encapsulated a blend of strategic planning, technological integration, and inclusive stakeholder engagement, setting a high standard for the subsequent phases of the electoral cycle.

Inter-Institutional Collaboration

Collaboration with the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA)

The collaboration between the Commission and the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) exemplifies the strategic alliance pivotal for enhancing the integrity and efficiency of the Voter Registration process. Grounded in the legal mandate of Section 25 (b) of The National Civil Registration Act, 2016, this partnership was not just a procedural alignment but a concerted effort to synergize resources, expertise, and databases for the collective goal of creating a comprehensive and accurate Voter Register for the 2023 elections.

The NCRA's role was instrumental in harnessing the power of existing national demographic data. By extracting data of eligible voters from the National Civil Register, the NCRA provided a rich and validated database, serving as a critical starting point for the Voter Register update. This integration of data was not

just about volume but about ensuring the precision and authenticity of voter information, reflecting a commitment to upholding the sanctity of every individual's right to vote.

Moreover, the adoption of advanced technological tools, including the ECSL registration kits and the dual laptop setup, was a testament to the forward-thinking approach of the Commission. This technological infusion into the registration process aimed to streamline operations, reduce redundancies, and ensure a seamless transition of data. The dual laptop setup, with one unit dedicated to updating details of previous registrants and the other to capturing new registrants, epitomized the balance between maintaining historical electoral integrity and embracing new participatory engagements.

This inter-institutional collaboration between the Commission and the NCRA was a strategic endeavour, reflecting a multidimensional approach that combined legal compliance, technological innovation, and inter-agency cooperation. It set a precedent for future electoral processes, highlighting the significance of collaboration, innovation, and meticulous planning in crafting a Voter Registration process that is inclusive, accurate, and reflective of the democratic fabric of the nation.

Voter Registration Execution

Procurement and Training

The execution phase of Voter Registration was marked by a methodical and strategic approach, ensuring that the operational backbone of the process was robust, technologically advanced, and personnel ready. The Commission's procurement activities were not just transactions but a strategic investment in technological infrastructure, aimed at modernizing the voter registration process and ensuring its efficiency and reliability.

Adhering to the principles of transparency and competitive fairness, the procurement was conducted through International Competitive Bidding (ICB) processes. This approach ensured not only the acquisition of high-quality resources but also the integrity of the procurement process, aligning with international best practices. The procurement of high-specification laptop computers, accessories, fingerprint scanners, and USB drives represented a significant technological upgrade, ensuring that the voter registration process was equipped with state-of-the-art tools to handle data accurately and securely.

The inclusion of portable solar-powered generators was a thoughtful addition, addressing the challenges of power supply in remote and underserved areas. This strategic move ensured that the voter registration process was not hindered by infrastructural limitations, reaffirming the commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.

Furthermore, the procurement of specialized voter registration software indicated a move towards a more streamlined, efficient, and error-minimizing registration process. This software was pivotal in ensuring that the data capture, storage, and retrieval processes were seamless, secure, and in compliance with data protection standards.

The Commission's commitment to a comprehensive and successful voter registration exercise was further exemplified by its investment in human capital. The recruitment and comprehensive training of both permanent and temporary staff were critical components of the execution phase. The provision of detailed Training and Procedure Manuals ensured that the staff were not only operationally ready but also aligned with the ethical, procedural, and technical standards expected in such a significant national exercise.

The training was not just about imparting knowledge but about building a team that was cognizant of the importance of their roles, equipped to handle challenges, and committed to upholding the principles of transparency, efficiency, and fairness. This human-centric approach, coupled with the technological investments, underscored the Commission's holistic strategy in executing a voter registration process that was robust, transparent, and reflective of the democratic values of the nation.

Registration Phases and Challenges

The field data capture, a critical component of the Voter Registration process, was strategically done in two distinct phases, ensuring systematic coverage and operational manageability. This bifurcation of the registration timeline into the first phase (3rd to 17th September) and the second phase (20th September to 4th October 2022) was a deliberate strategy to optimize resource allocation, manage human capital effectively,

and ensure a focused and orderly registration process. This phased approach also allowed the Commission to monitor, evaluate, and adjust operations dynamically, ensuring that the process remained responsive to the needs and challenges that emerged on the ground.

The implementation of such a significant national operation was not without its challenges. The initial phase was marked by technical and logistical hurdles – a not uncommon scenario in large-scale operations involving multifaceted coordination and technology deployment. These challenges ranged from technical glitches in the newly procured registration equipment to logistical bottlenecks that impacted the smooth progression of the registration process.

However, the true measure of the Commission's preparedness and commitment was evident in its proactive and responsive approach to these challenges. Recognizing the paramount importance of inclusivity and comprehensiveness in the Voter Registration process, the Commission made a strategic decision to extend the registration period by two days. This extension was not just a logistical adjustment but a reaffirmation of the Commission's dedication to ensuring that every eligible voter was afforded ample opportunity to register, thereby upholding the principles of participatory democracy.

This adaptive response to challenges highlighted the Commission's resilience and its unwavering commitment to ensuring that the Voter Registration process was not just about numbers but about inclusivity, fairness, and the democratic right of every citizen to participate in the electoral process. The phased approach, coupled with a responsive strategy to overcome hurdles, underscored the Commission's holistic and dynamic approach to managing the complexities of the Voter Registration process.

Preliminary Findings

The meticulous data capture and subsequent analysis phase formed the bedrock for understanding the landscape of voter engagement and identifying areas necessitating attention or intervention. The initial analysis of the data did not only provide a quantitative snapshot of voter registration but also offered insights into the quality and integrity of the registration process. These insights are critical for ensuring the credibility of the electoral roll and, by extension, the electoral process as a whole.

The preliminary findings painted a comprehensive picture of the registration landscape:

- **Total Registered Voters Nationwide**: The data revealed a substantial figure of **3,269,462 (provisional figures)** registered voters, reflecting the extensive reach and effectiveness of the registration campaign. This figure represents the collective outcome of strategic planning, robust execution, and the active participation of citizens, underscoring the vibrancy of the democratic ethos within the nation.
- **Underage Registrations**: The identification of **607** underage registrations, though constituting a small fraction of the total registrations, is significant. It highlights the robustness of the data verification protocols and the vigilance exercised in safeguarding the integrity of the electoral roll.
- **Double Registrations**: The figure of **257,123** double registrations underscores the complex challenge of maintaining an accurate and up-to-date electoral roll in a dynamic and populous nation. This statistic is a call to action, prompting a review of registration processes and the implementation of more stringent verification mechanisms. It also emphasizes the need for continuous public education on the importance of individual responsibility in maintaining the sanctity of the electoral process.

These preliminary findings are not merely statistics; they are indicators of the strengths and areas for improvement within the Voter Registration process. They provide a roadmap for targeted interventions, be it in the form of technological enhancements, process optimizations, or voter education campaigns, to ensure that the final voter's roll is not only comprehensive but also a true and fair representation of the eligible electorate. The insights gained from this phase are invaluable for shaping strategies and policies that aim to fortify the democratic process and uphold the principles of fairness, inclusivity, and transparency.

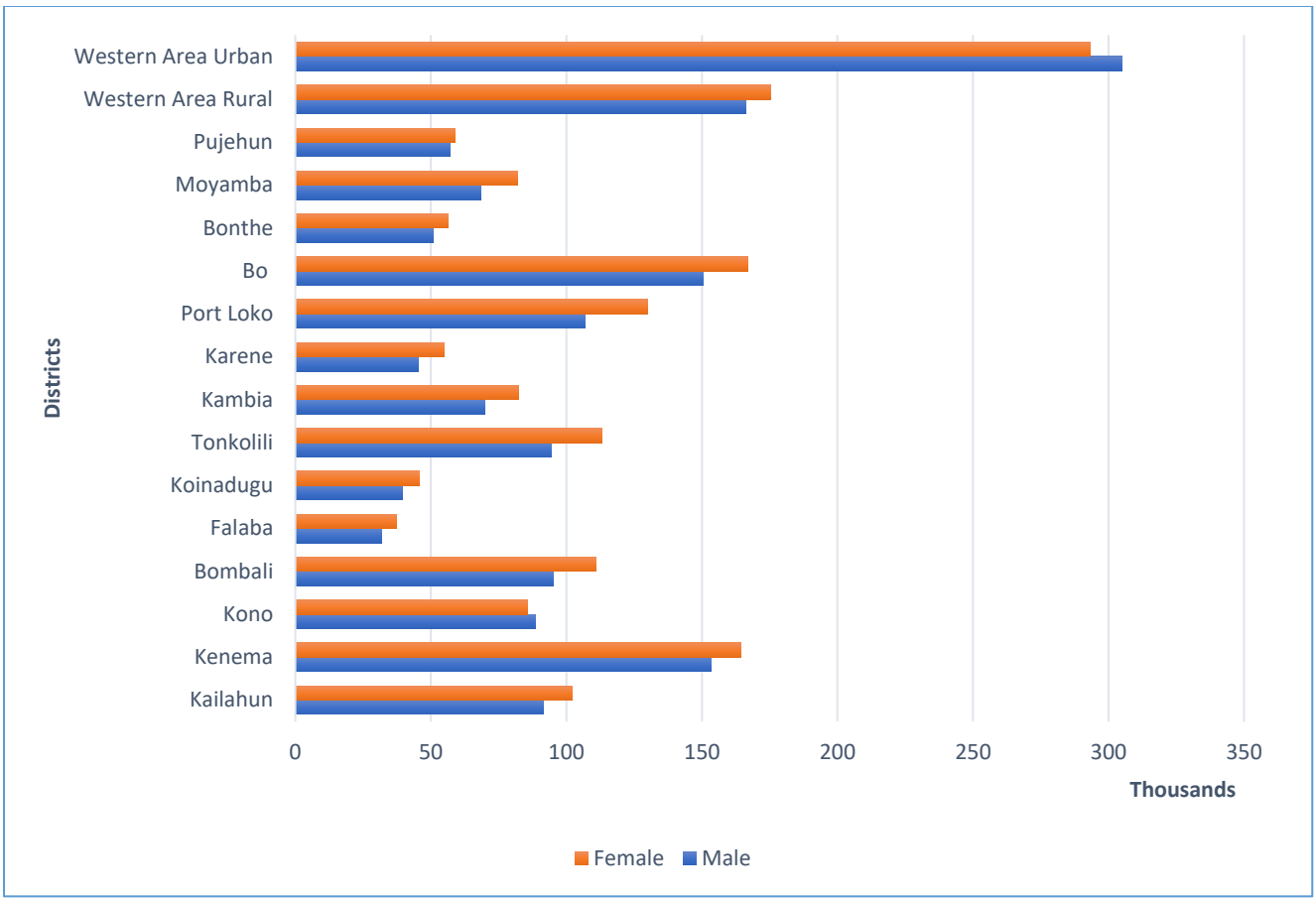


Fig. 14: Number of Male and Female Registered Voters in each district

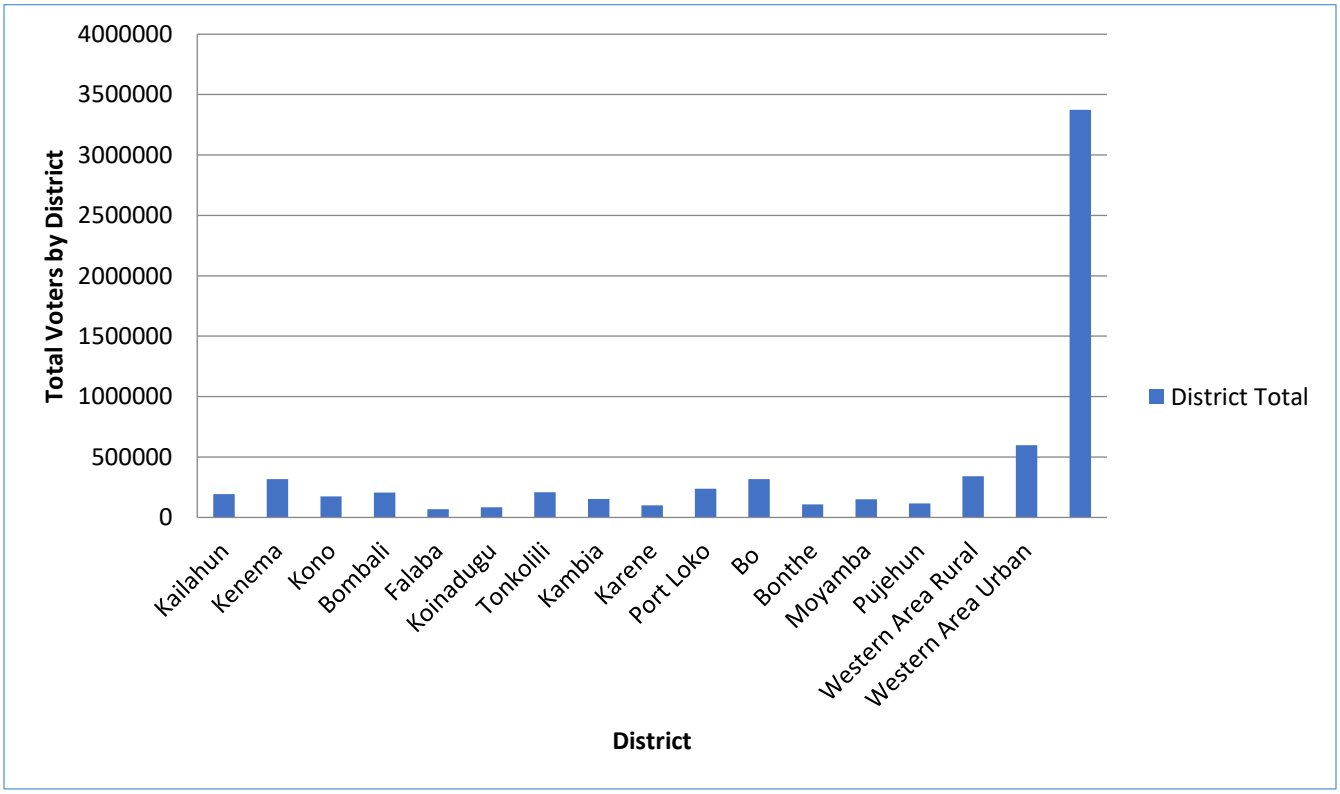


Fig. 15: Total Voters by District

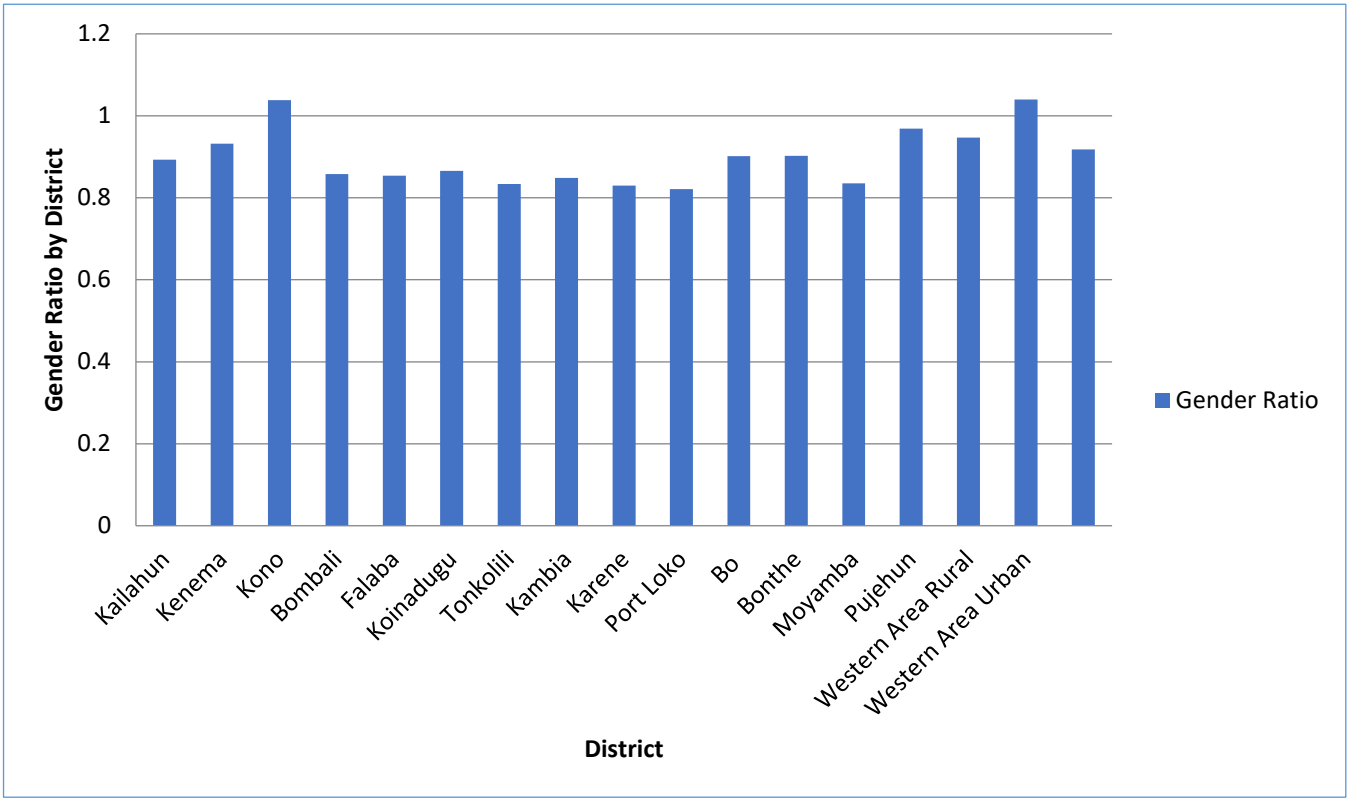


Fig. 16: Gender Ratio by District

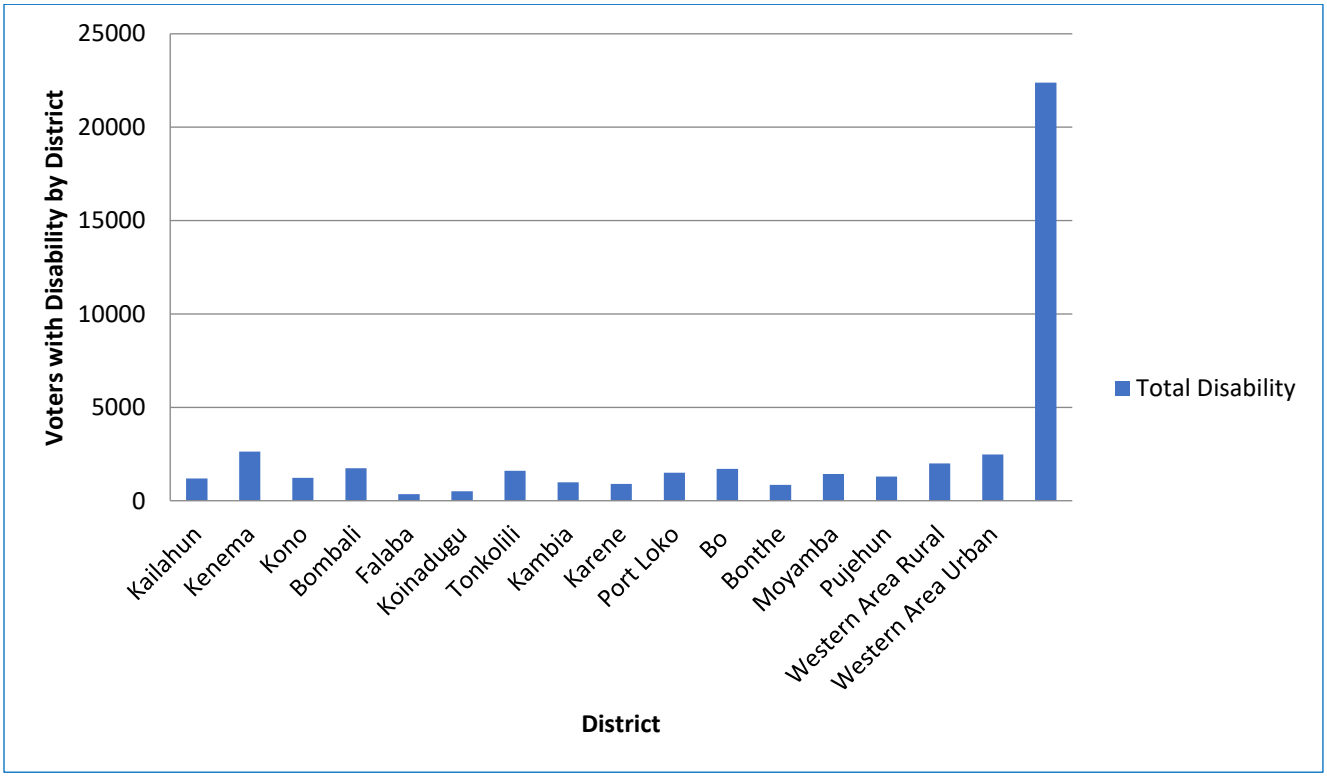


Fig. 17: Voters with Disability by District

EXHIBITION AND INQUIRY

In compliance with the statutory guidelines, the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) diligently conducted the Exhibition and Inquiry phase of the electoral process. This crucial phase was initiated with the display of the Provisional List of Voters (PLV) from 24th to 28th October 2022. This strategic period was instrumental, as it granted registered voters the privilege to scrutinize and verify their personal details as recorded in the PLV. Voters were empowered to take proactive measures, including request for inclusion of their names if they were erroneously omitted from the PLV, or raising objections against the inclusion of ineligible individuals.

Fig. 18: Exhibition of Provisional Voters List

The Exhibition phase was not just a procedural formality but a robust platform to rectify discrepancies, such as omissions of names, presence of photos that did not match the voter's identity (photo mismatches), or instances of incomplete data. To address these anomalies, the ECSL displayed commendable efficiency and technological adeptness by initiating the re-extraction and subsequent re-transmission of data.
This process was primarily facilitated through the use of Voter Verification Kits (VVKs) and Voter Identification Units (VIUs), which proved to be pivotal in rectifying the majority of the issues flagged during the Exhibition and Inquiry phases. As a result, necessary corrections were made, and the cases requiring the inclusion of voters' details were carefully handled, thereby upholding the integrity of the electoral roll.

Subsequently, the Inquiry period, spanning from 4th to 6th December 2022, was conducted across 446 dedicated Inquiry centres. This phase was particularly significant as it provided a structured avenue for individuals who had been subjected to objections or rejections during the Voter Registration or Exhibition phases. It offered them a legitimate platform to appeal against the decisions made by the Voter Registration and Exhibition staff. The handling of Rejection and Objection cases was meticulously governed by the legal framework, ensuring fairness and transparency in the resolution process. Moreover, the ECSL enhanced the verification process by introducing a Search Tool, a strategic initiative aimed at streamlining the verification of registered voters, thus reinforcing the credibility and accuracy of the voter register.

DISTRIBUTION OF VOTER REGISTRATION CARDS

The distribution phase of Voter Registration Cards, conducted from 17th to 26th March 2023, was a testament to the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone's (ECSL) commitment to ensuring an inclusive and accessible electoral process. This phase was marked by a well-planned operation, where all 3,630 Registration/Issuing centres across the nation were simultaneously activated, reflecting the ECSL's dedication to comprehensive coverage and voter accessibility.

In this monumental exercise, a total of 7,260 Card Issuing Staff were strategically deployed, with each centre being proficiently managed by two personnel. This did not only ensure operational efficiency but also facilitated a personalized approach, enabling staff to address individual voter queries and provide assistance where needed, thereby enhancing the overall voter experience.

The significance of this phase extended beyond the logistical feat of distributing cards. It represented a crucial step in fortifying the democratic infrastructure of the nation. The Voter Registration Card was not merely a piece of plastic; it was a key that unlocked the power

of the vote, a tangible symbol of the citizen's right and responsibility in shaping the future of their nation. The widespread distribution ensured that every eligible voter, regardless of their location, was afforded the opportunity to participate in the democratic process, thereby reinforcing the principles of equality and universal suffrage.

The ECSL also implemented practical measures to ensure the security and integrity of the Voter Registration Cards. Advanced security features were embedded into the cards to prevent counterfeiting and unauthorized duplication. Furthermore, comprehensive records were meticulously maintained for each card issued, ensuring
a transparent audit trail and reinforcing the credibility of the voter registration process.

Moreover, the ECSL undertook extensive public awareness campaigns in collaboration with the CSOs and local community leaders. These initiatives were aimed at educating the populace about the importance of the Voter Registration Card, the process of obtaining it, and its pivotal role in the electoral process. Special attention was given to reaching out to marginalized communities, ensuring that language, disability, or remote location did not serve as barriers to obtaining the Voter Registration Cards.

In conclusion, the Distribution of Voter Registration Cards phase was a cornerstone of the ECSL's efforts to facilitate a free, fair, and transparent electoral process. It demonstrated the ECSL's unwavering commitment to upholding democratic values, fostering civic engagement and ensuring that every voice had the opportunity to be heard.

NOMINATION

The Legal Framework for Nomination

The nomination phase is a pivotal juncture in the electoral process, serving as the formal introduction of candidates to the electorate. It is during this phase that individuals with the aspiration and qualification to hold public office officially present themselves as candidates. This process involves the official registration of their names, photographs (where applicable), and party symbols, which are subsequently incorporated into the ballot papers.

In Sierra Leone, the legal framework that governs this critical phase is deeply rooted in the nation's constitutional and legislative framework. The primary legal instruments that delineate the contours of the nomination process include the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991), and more specifically, The Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022). Within this legislative framework of The Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022), distinct sections are dedicated to the nomination procedures for various electoral positions. These include Section 43, pertaining to Presidential candidates; Section 58, which deals with Parliamentary candidates; Section 97, focusing on Paramount Chief Members of Parliament; and Sections 102 and 103, which outline the nomination process for Mayoral, Chairperson, and Councillor Candidates respectively.

Furthermore, the nomination legal framework is supplemented and nuanced by additional legislative instruments. The Local Government Act, 2022 (as amended), and two sets of regulations - the Public Elections (District Block Proportional Representation) Regulations 2022 and the Public Elections (Local Council Proportional Representation) Regulations 2022 - also play a crucial role. Together, these legal texts constitute a comprehensive legal framework that governs the nomination process, ensuring its integrity and alignment with democratic principles.

This legal framework not only stipulates the procedural aspects of the nomination process but also provides clear guidance on various critical components. These include the eligibility criteria for candidates, the structure and amount of nomination fees etc.

Nomination Dates

Table 5: key dates for nomination activities

Date	Activity
30th March – 1st April 2023	Nomination for the Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP)
19th - 28th April 2023	Nomination of Candidates for Local Council Elections (9: 00am – 4:00pm daily) at the District Offices
30th April - 9th May 2023	Nomination of Candidates for President and Members of Parliament (9:00am- 4:00pm) daily

The Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, recognizing the significance of a well-organized and transparent nomination process, engaged in a comprehensive planning and coordination with political parties and other key stakeholders. A critical part of this process involves the development of a nomination calendar, meticulously crafted in accordance with the stipulated of the legal framework. This calendar not only outlines the timeline for the nomination process but also ensures that all stakeholders are well-informed and can prepare adequately.

In addition to the nomination calendar, the Commission undertook a series of briefing sessions with potential candidates. These sessions were geared towards potential candidates for various positions, including Local Council, Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP), and Members of Parliament (MP). The objective of these briefings was to provide candidates with detailed information about the nomination process, clarify the legal requirements and offer a platform for addressing any queries or concerns.

Moreover, the Commission took proactive steps to ensure that the nomination dates and procedures were publicly disseminated. This was achieved through the publication of the Public Notices, which served to inform and engage the electorate. These notices not only announce the dates for the nomination process but also provided instructions for political parties to submit their lists of endorsed candidates. This level of transparency and structured communication was fundamental in fostering an inclusive, fair, and democratic electoral environment.

The Candidate Nomination Process for the 2023 Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council Elections was conducted from 30th March – 1st April 2023 for Paramount Chiefs Members of Parliament (PCMP); 19th – 29th April 2023 for Local Council and 30th April – 9th May 2023 for Presidential and Parliamentary candidates at national and district levels respectively.

The following provides a detailed analysis of the Nomination Process for the June 2024 multi-tier elections.

Nominations for Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP)

The nomination process for the Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP) is a unique and integral component of Sierra Leone's electoral landscape, reflecting the nation's commitment to inclusive governance and representation. The process for the 2023 cycle was meticulously done, taking place from March 30th to April 1st across the 14 Provincial Electoral District Offices, each serving as a hub for the democratic activities within their respective territories.

The culmination of the PCMP Candidates Nomination process revealed a conducive landscape of political engagement across the districts. The democratic spirit was particularly vibrant in five districts, namely: Bombali, Bonthe, Falaba, Kambia, and Pujehun, with multiple candidates stepping forward to represent their districts. This multiplicity of candidates in these districts underscores a competitive political environment, where diverse perspectives and leadership styles vie for the opportunity to represent their communities at the parliamentary level.

Conversely, the nomination process in the remaining nine districts, including Kailahun, Kenema, Kono, Koinadugu, Tonkolili, Karene, Port Loko, Bo, and Moyamba, presented a different scenario. In each of these districts, a single candidate was nominated, reflecting a consensus or a lack of competition within these districts. This scenario could be indicative of a strong, unified support for the nominated individual or could reflect strategic political decisions made at the local level. Regardless of the number of nominees, the process in each district adhered to the stringent legal and procedural frameworks set forth by the electoral guidelines. This ensures that every candidate, whether they stand unopposed or amidst a field of contenders, meets the necessary eligibility criteria and upholds the values and standards expected of a representative in the Paramount Chieftaincy.

Table 6: Nomination for Contested PCMP Elections

	District	Nominated Candidates	Sex
1	Bombali	PC Salifu Mannah Kalawa III	M
2		PC Kandeh Baba Keiha III	M
3	Bonthe	PC Bio Prince Lansana,	M
4		PC Alex J. J. Maada Kaipumu	M
5		PC Alie B. Sheriff	M
6	Falaba	PC Manga Sorie Konko Jawara II	M
7		PC Alhaji Fenda Modu Kamara II	M
8		PC Mohamed Saio B. G. Balleh Marah II	M
9		PC Thor Sheka Terenah Tongos Neya Konkoroba Fonko Lai Marah III	M
10		PC Fasalie Kulako Demba Marah III	M
11		PC Manga Salifu Salito Samura III	M
12	Kambia	Hon. PC Bai Farama Tass Bubu Ngbak IV	M
13		PC Kandeh Kabba Sedu	M
14	Pujehun	Hon. PC Brima Victor Sidi Kebbie III	M
15		PC Lahai AK Sowa II	M

Table 7: Nomination for Uncontested PCMP Elections

	District	Nominated Candidates	Sex
1	Kailahun	Hon. PC Foray Cyril Gondor II	M
2	Kenema	PC Foday Stephen Kpakra Faba	M
3	Kono	PC Paul Ngaba Saquee V	M
4	Koinadugu	Hon PC Alie Balan Sama Marrah III	M
5	Tonkolili	PC Alhaji Masakama Kanamanka III	M
6	Karene	Hon. PC Kandeh Paria Kawaleh II	M
7	Port Loko	PC Bai Shebora Sheba Gbereh III	M
8	Bo	PC Desmond Mahayei Kargobai	M
9	Moyamba.	Hon. PC Haja Fatmata Bintu Koroma Meama Kajue	F

Analysis of Mayoral candidates' nomination by Political parties

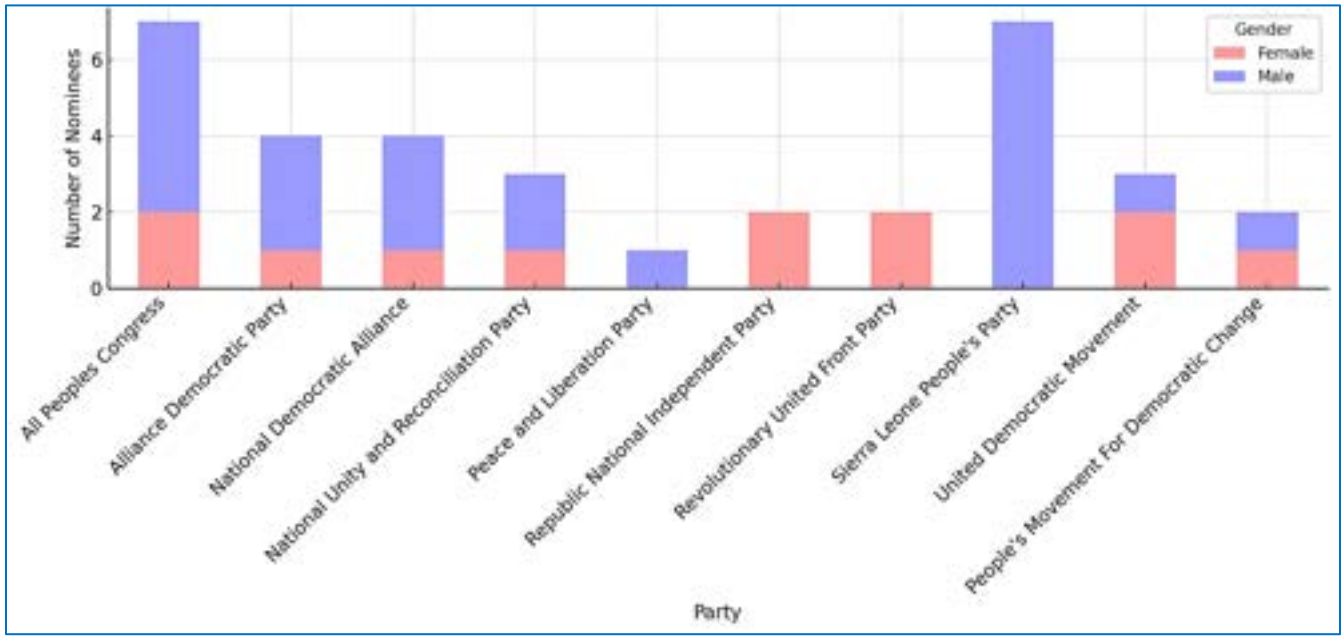
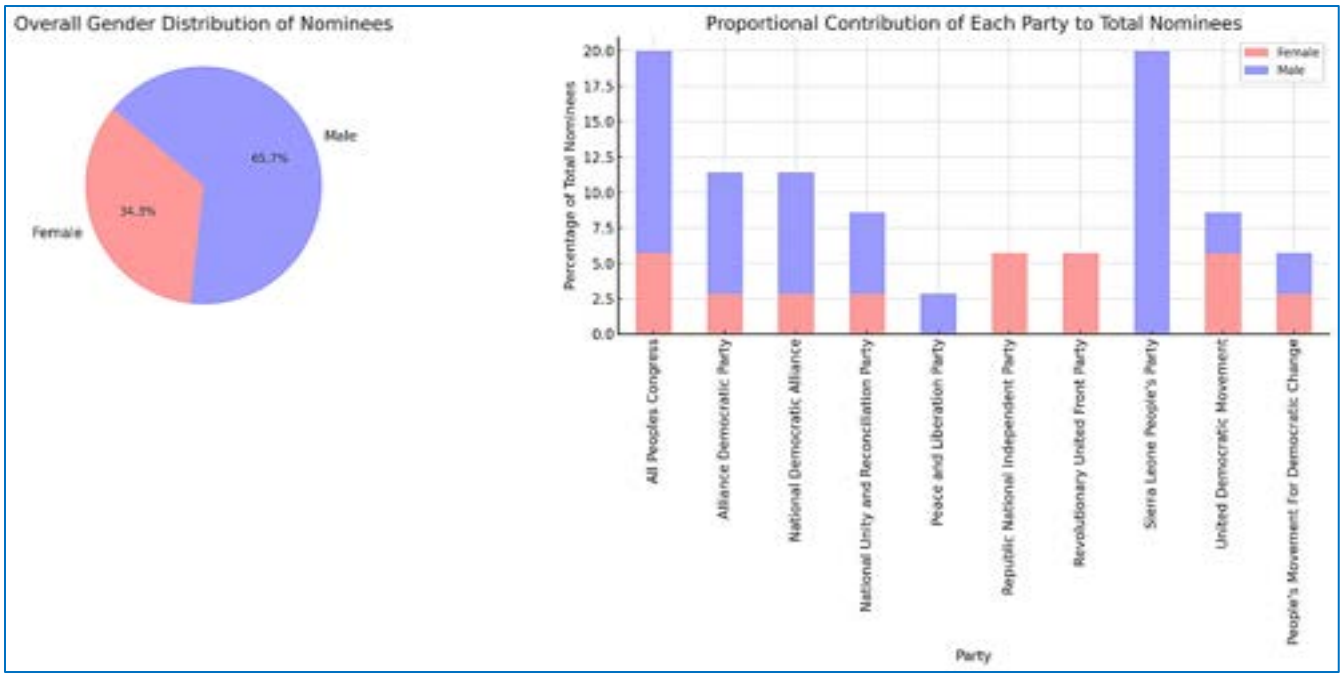


Fig. 19: Number of Nominees by Gender and Party for Chairman Election



- **Overall Gender Distribution of Nominees (Pie Chart)**: This chart shows the percentage of female and male nominees out of the total number of nominees. The pie chart indicates that approximately 34.3% of the nominees are female and 65.7% are male.

- **Proportional Contribution of Each Party to Total Nominees (Bar Chart):** This stacked bar chart displays the proportional contribution of female and male nominees from each party relative to the total number of nominees. Each bar represents a party and is divided into segments showing the percentage of the total made up by female and male nominees, respectively.

Analysis of Chairperson candidates' nomination by Political parties

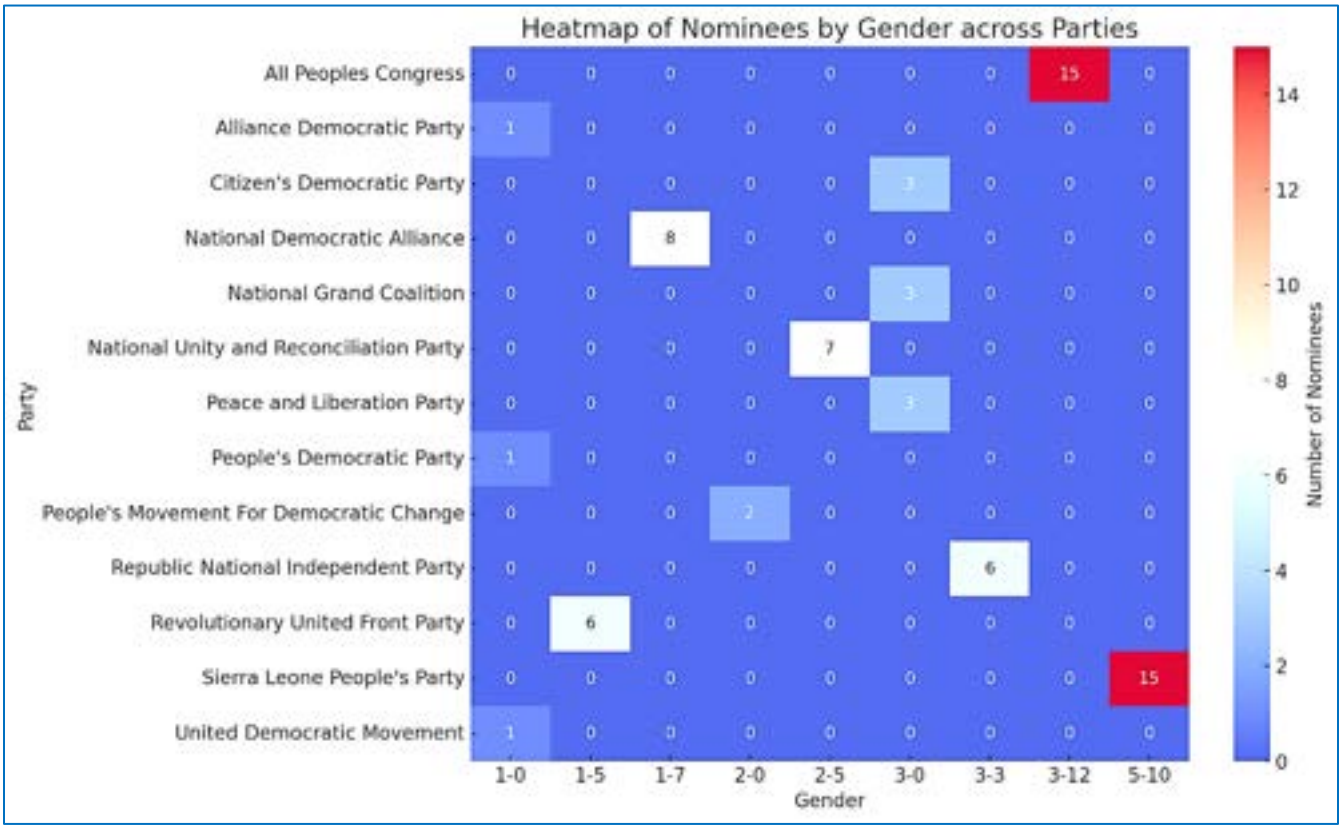


Fig. 20: Heatmap to visualize the number of nominees from each party by gender.

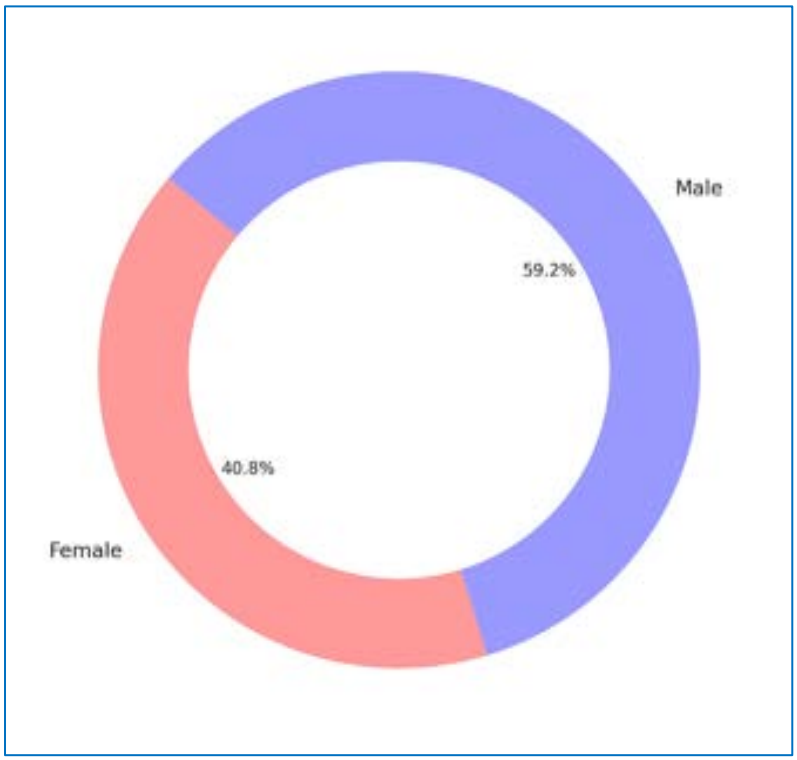


Fig. 21: Donut Chart of Overall Gender Distribution of Nominees

Nominations for Councillor Elections

The Candidate Nomination Process for the Councillor elections was conducted from 19th – 29th April at the 16 electoral district offices nationwide.

The Nomination of Councillor Candidates for the June 2023 elections under the Local Council Proportional Representation system provided for Political Parties to field a list of candidates in order of preference and by the gender requirement as stipulated in Section 58(2) of the Public Elections Act, 2022, which states that for every 3 nominated candidates, one of them shall be female.

Independent candidates were also allowed to present themselves for nomination in any of the electoral districts.

At the close of the Councillor elections candidate nomination, 14 political parties and independent candidates were nominated.

Nominations for Parliamentary Candidate Elections

The Candidate Nomination Process for the 2023 Parliamentary Elections was conducted from 30th April – 9th May 2023.

The Nomination of Parliamentary Candidates for the June 2023 elections under the District Block Proportional Representation system provided for Political Parties to field a list of candidates in order of preference and by the gender requirement as stipulated in Section 58(2) of the Public Elections Act, 2022, which states that for every 3 nominated candidates, one of them shall be female. Independent candidates were also allowed to present themselves for nomination in any of the electoral districts.

At the close of the Parliamentary elections candidate nomination, 14 political parties and independent candidates were nominated.

Analysis of Parliamentary Candidates Nomination by Political Parties

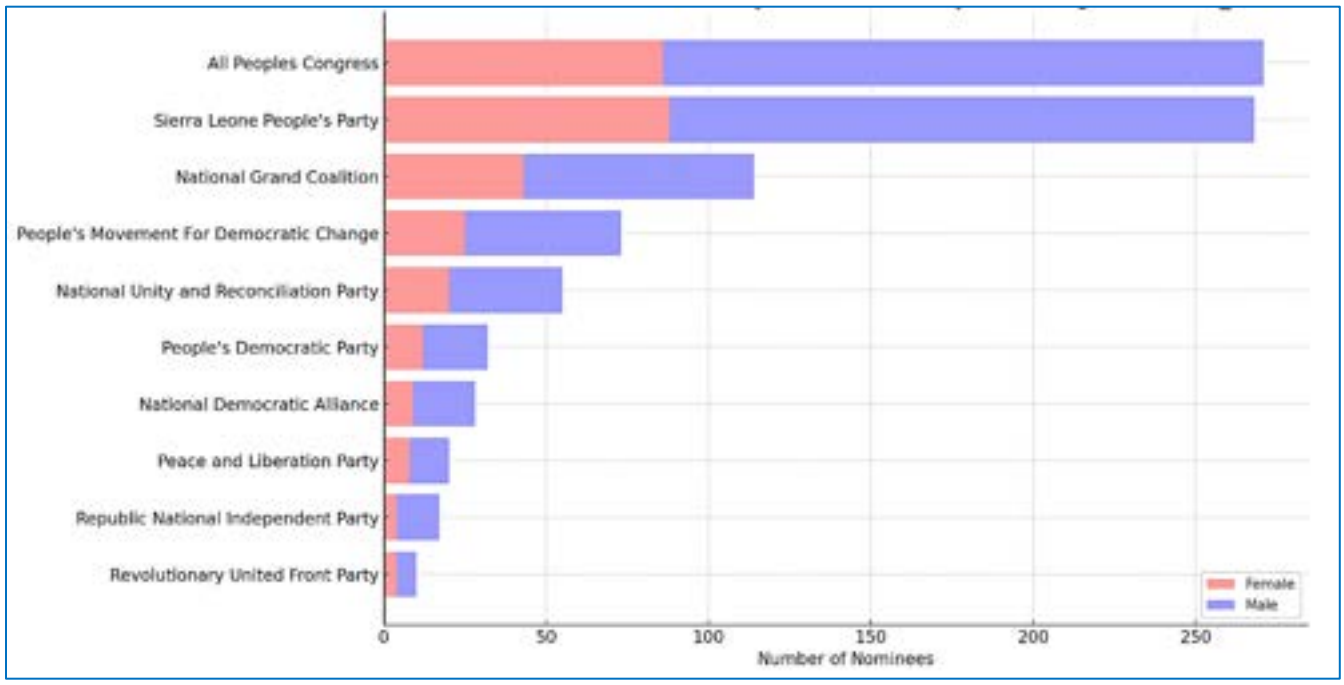


Fig. 22: Horizontal Bar Chart of Nominees by Gender and Party

Horizontal Bar Chart: This chart provides a comparison of the number of female and male nominees across each party. It shows the gender distribution within each party and can highlight any gender imbalances.

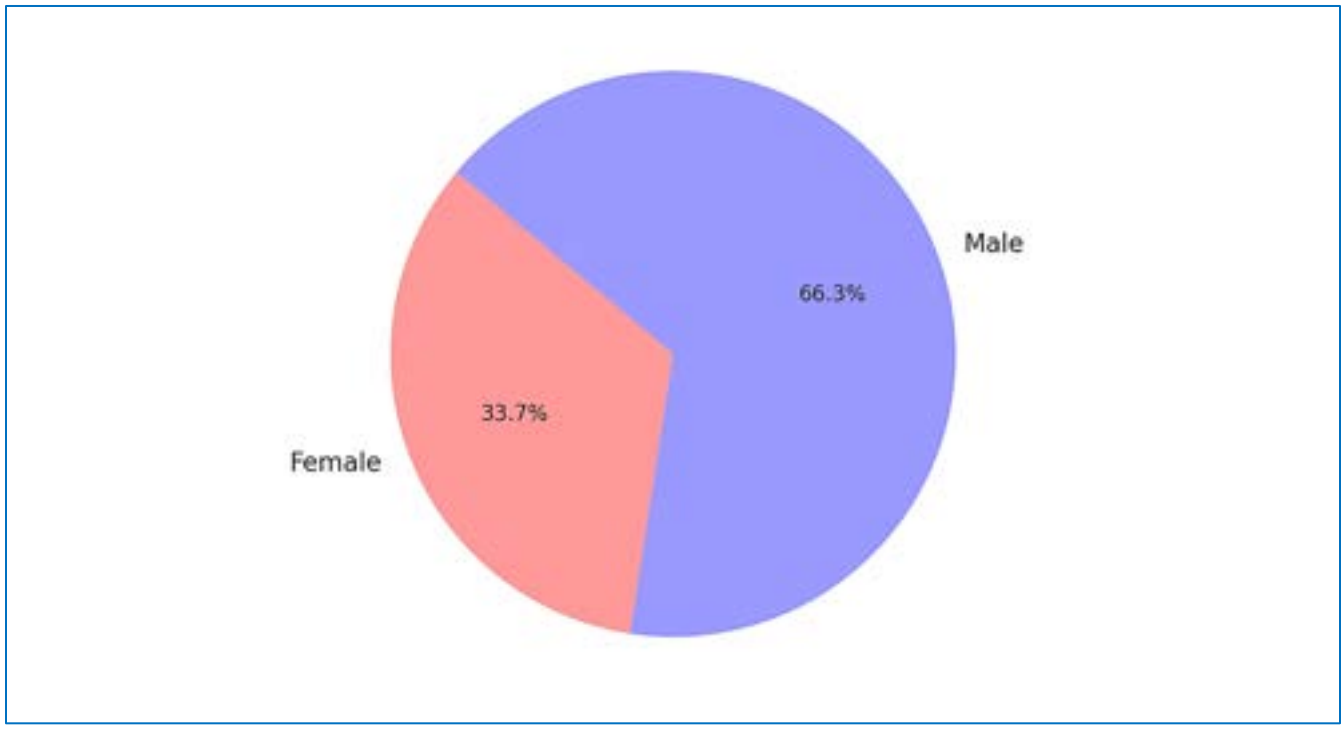


Fig. 23: Gender Proportion of Nominees

Pie Chart: This chart displays the overall proportion of female to male nominees. It clearly shows that there are significantly more male nominees than female, which is a point of interest for electoral stakeholders interested in gender representation.

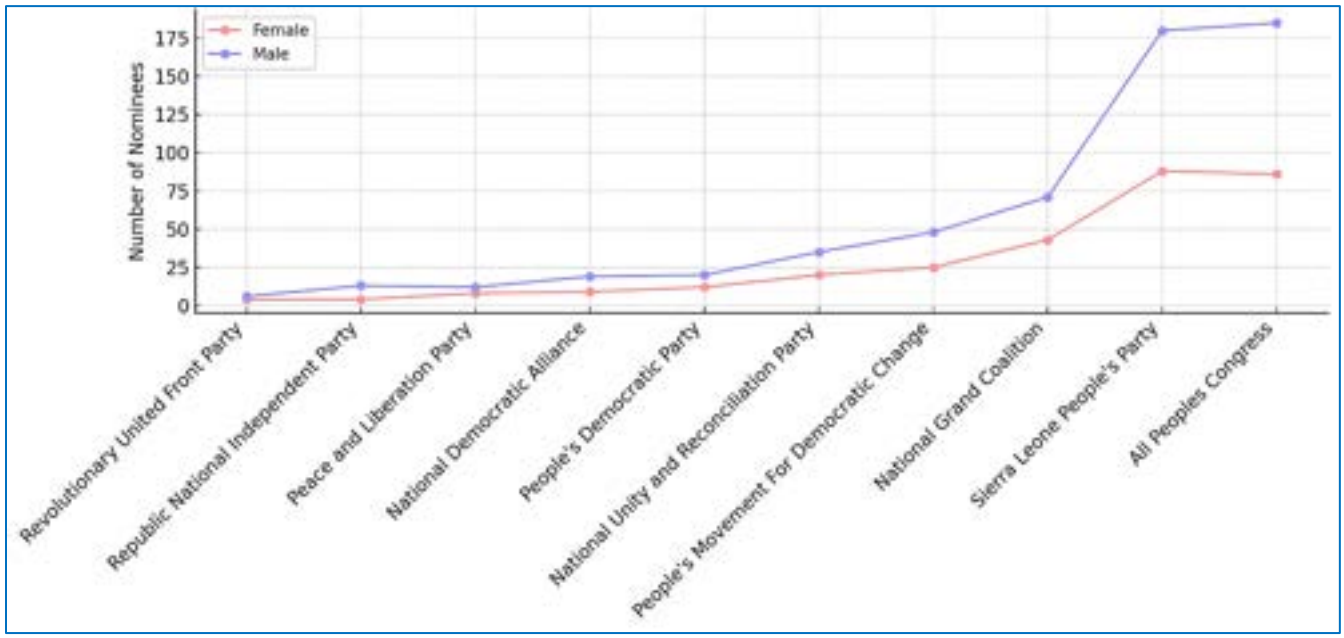


Fig. 24: Line Chart of Nominees by Gender and Party

Line Chart: This chart indicates the trend of female and male nominees across different parties. Although it typically represents continuous data, it can be useful to visualize trends or patterns across categories, such as the number of nominees in this case.

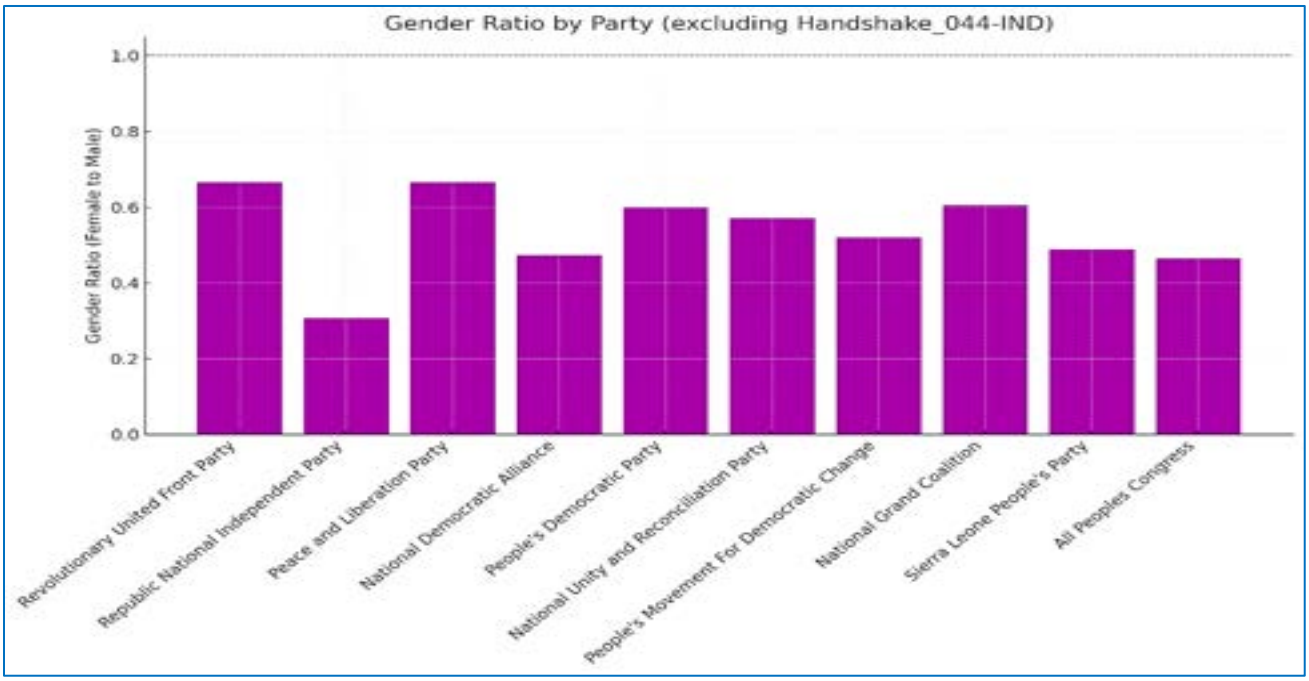


Fig. 25: Gender Ratio by party

The bar chart visualizes the gender ratio (female to male) for each party. Each bar represents a party's ratio of female nominees to male nominees. A bar with a value greater than 1 indicates more female nominees than male nominees within that party, while a value less than 1 indicates fewer female nominees than male nominees. The dashed line at 1 represents an equal number of female and male nominees.

Presidential Nomination

The Candidate Nomination Process for the 2023 Presidential Elections was conducted from 30th April – 9th May 2023 at the Headquarters of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL). At the close of the Presidential Candidates Nomination, 13 political parties fielded candidates.

Fig 26: CEC/ National Returning Officer handing over completed nomination forms to the SLPP Presidential & Vice-Presidential candidates

Fig 27: CEC/ National Returning Officer handing over completed nomination forms to the APC Presidential & Vice-Presidential candidates

Analysis of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates Nomination by Political Parties.

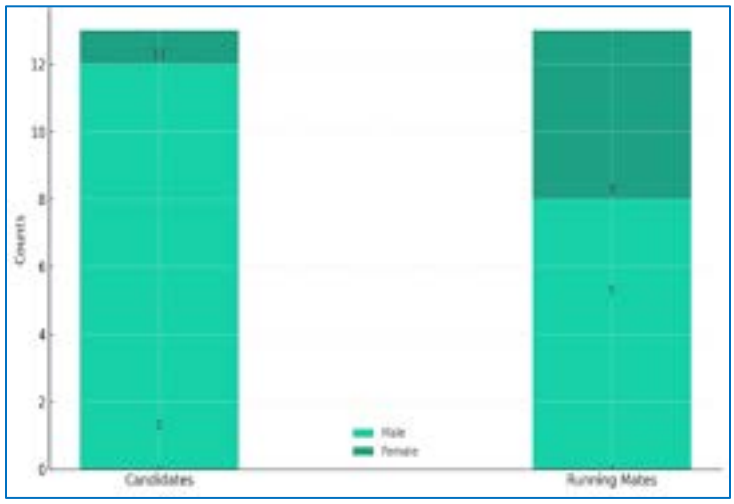


Fig. 28: Gender Distribution among Candidates and Running Mates

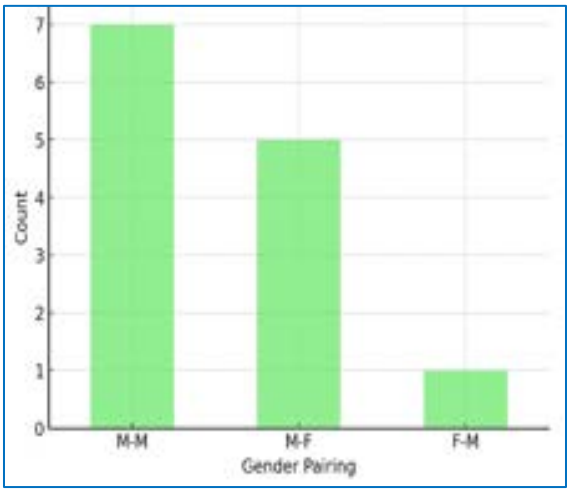


Fig. 29: Gender Pairings of Candidates and Running Mates

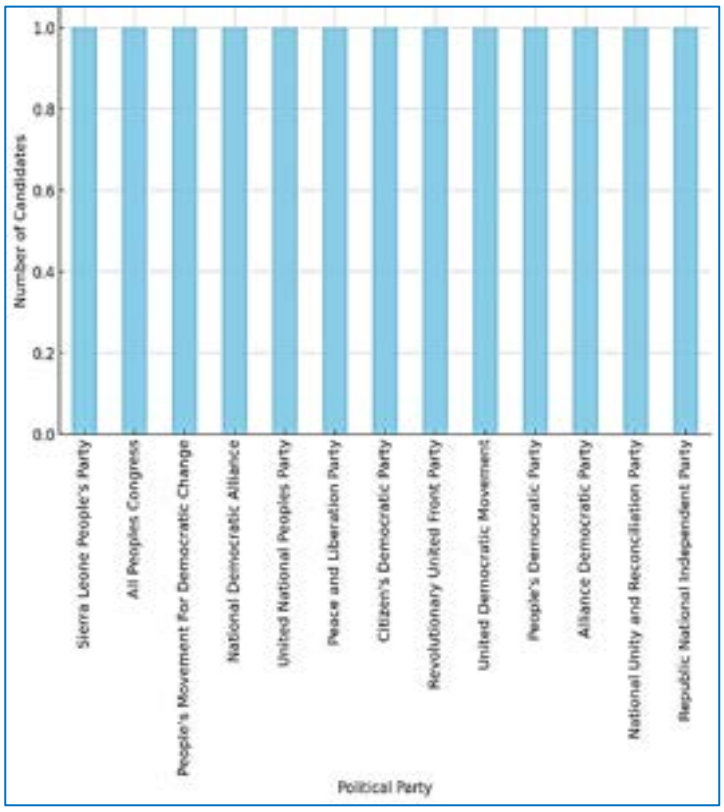


Fig. 30: Number of Candidates per Political Party

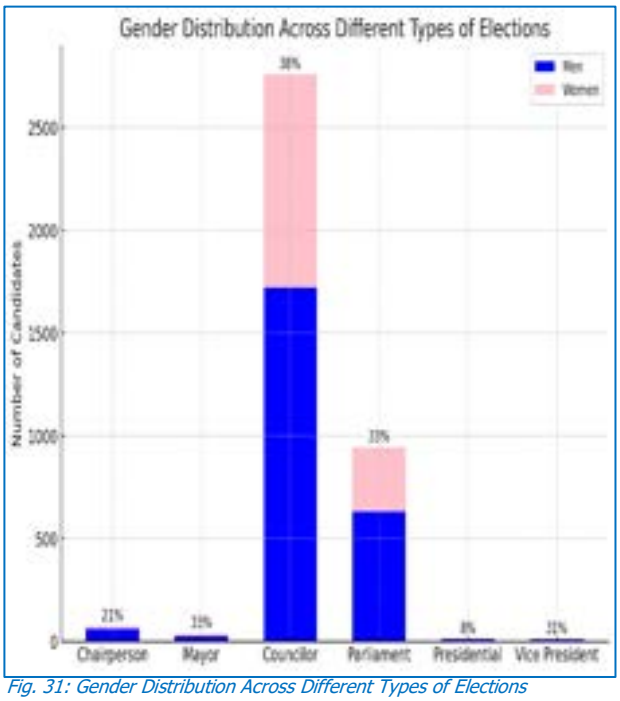


Fig. 31: Gender Distribution Across Different Types of Elections

INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Representation**: Women are underrepresented in the presidential category the most, with only 8% of candidates being women.
- **Relative Representation**: The highest percentage of female representation is in the councillor category, at 38%.
- **Overall Percentage**: Women make up 36% of all candidates, which indicates a significant gender gap in political representation.

INSIGHTS:

- Councillor elections have the highest total number of candidates and also the highest percentage of women candidates at 38%.
- The Presidential election has the lowest percentage of women candidates, at just 8%.
- The Chairperson and Vice President roles have an equal percentage of women candidates at 31%.
- Overall, the gender gap is noticeable in all types of elections, with men candidates outnumbering women candidates.
- Chairperson: Out of 76 candidates, 16 are women, which constitutes 21% of the total.
- **Mayor**: 13 out of 39 candidates are women, representing 33% of the total.
- **Councillor**: Women candidates number 1,039 out of a total of 2,760, making up 38%.
- **Parliament**: There are 313 women out of 945 candidates, equating to 33%.
- **Presidential**: Only one woman is running for president, out of 13 candidates, which is 8%.
- **Vice President**: 4 out of 13 vice presidential candidates are women, which is 31%.
- The total shows 1,386 women out of 3,847 candidates across all categories, which is approximately 36%.

Nomination Objections and Petitions

As per the legal framework, the Commission Published the list of Provisionally Nominated Candidates at District Offices on a daily basis during the Nomination period. In total, two (2) objections were filed against Local Council candidates in the Karene (Councillor) and Western Area Rural Districts (Chairperson), respectively.

The objections were heard but were dismissed by the Returning Officers on lack of merit.

In a similar vein, three (3) Parliamentary objections were received for the districts of Kailahun (1) and Kenema (2). These objections were also heard but were dismissed by the Returning Officers on lack of merit.

One Presidential objection was made to the Supreme Court but was dismissed. There were no appeals made on the decisions of the returning officers for the Local Council and Parliamentary Objections.

ELECTORAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) embodies a crucial element in the democratic fabric of the nation, as prescribed by the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and the Public Elections Act of 2022. In a strategic move to enhance its operational effectiveness, the Commission elevated the Electoral Education Unit, formerly a segment of the Training Department, to a fully-fledged independent department. This structural enhancement underscores the Commission's commitment to reinforcing the integrity and inclusivity of the electoral process.

The newly established department was entrusted with a comprehensive array of duties, encompassing the meticulous planning, coordination and execution of the Electoral/Voter Education initiatives. These initiatives are meticulously designed to fortify the electorate's awareness, knowledge, and comprehension, thereby ensuring their active and informed participation in the electoral process.

In its relentless pursuit of these objectives, the department did an extensive range of activities, all aimed at demystifying the electoral process and making it more accessible to the citizenry. Notably, these activities were executed with the robust backing of the Government of Sierra Leone and an array of Development Partners, reflecting a synergy between national priorities and international support.

A focal point of these endeavours is the targeted outreach to historically marginalized and vulnerable segments of the society, including youths (especially first-time voters), Persons with Disabilities, women, and the elderly. By adopting an inclusive approach, the department seeks to not only elevate the level of electoral participation among these groups but also to imbued them with the knowledge and confidence necessary for active engagement in the democratic process.

The outcomes of these concerted efforts are both tangible and encouraging. There has been a notable escalation in voter turnout, particularly among the vulnerable groups. This surge in participation is a testament to the effectiveness of the educational campaigns and the resonance of their messaging. Moreover, a significant decrease in the rate of invalid votes has been observed, indicating a better comprehension of the voting process among the electorate. This decline in invalid votes is indicative of the electorate's enhanced ability to navigate the electoral landscape, a direct corollary of the meticulous and inclusive voter education strategies employed by the Commission.

Considering these achievements, the ECSL's commitment to fostering an informed, engaged, and inclusive electorate remains unwavering. The Commission continues to refine its strategies, expand its outreach, and fortify its partnerships, all with the aim of upholding the sanctity of the electoral process and ensuring that every vote cast reflects an informed and empowered citizen.

Electoral Education Strategy

In its steadfast commitment to cultivating an informed and participatory electorate, the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) adopted a comprehensive electoral education strategy. This multifaceted approach encompasses a blend of traditional and contemporary methodologies, meticulously designed to reach and resonate with a diverse populace.

Traditional Approaches:

- **Inclusive Training Workshops**: ECSL meticulously organized training sessions focused on Electoral/Voter Education and sensitization. These workshops brought together a broad spectrum of stakeholders including Political Parties, community and religious leaders, market women, youth groups, NGOs, gender and disability groups, and CSOs, fostering a collaborative environment for knowledge sharing and engagement.

- **Direct Engagement**: The Commission ensures regular interaction with electoral stakeholders through meetings and sensitization campaigns, facilitating face-to-face dialogue and building a robust foundation of trust and mutual understanding.

- **School Electoral Literacy Clubs**: In a strategic alliance with the Ministry of Education, the ECSL established School Electoral Literacy Clubs. This initiative, rooted in a Memorandum of Understanding, serves as a vibrant platform for engaging pupils in Electoral/Voter Education activities, nurturing a culture of civic responsibility from a young age.

- **Locality Electoral Education Committees (LEECs)**: ECSL formed LEECs, which are composed of a diverse mix of community, religious, and traditional leaders, alongside representatives of youth, women, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). These committees play a pivotal role in disseminating voter education messages within their localities and ensured grassroots involvement.

- **Engagement with Secret Societies**: Recognizing the unique influence of secret societies, ECSL engaged their leaders through specialized training on Voter Education. This knowledge was then cascaded to potential voters in remote locations, thereby extending the reach of electoral education.

- **Town Criers Initiative**: The recruitment of town criers from various localities was instrumental in disseminating voter education messages, fostering community involvement and a sense of ownership of the electoral process.

- **Collaborative Partnerships**: ECSL forged synergistic partnerships with Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs), the Inter Religious Council, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to facilitate electoral education at the community level, leveraging existing networks for broader impact.

- **Religious Leaders' Involvement**: The services of pastors and imams was harnessed to facilitate electoral education within places of worship, tapping into the moral and spiritual influence these figures wield.

- **Cultural Engagement**: Float parades in district headquarter towns, and performances by local comedians at strategic public locations, was utilized to captivate the youth and disseminate electoral education through culturally resonant mediums.

Impact of Electoral Education

The strategic and effective implementation of Electoral/Voter Education activities by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) played a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics and outcomes of the multi-tier elections held on the 24th June 2023. The impacts of these comprehensive educational initiatives were profound and multifaceted, contributing significantly to the integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process:

- **Broadened Stakeholder Engagement**: The educational campaigns were instrumental in galvanizing the full participation of all electoral stakeholders. This inclusive approach substantially uplifted the confidence levels of eligible voters in the electoral system, fostering an environment of trust and transparency within the democratic framework.

- **Empowerment and Ownership**: The voter education strategies effectively cultivated a sense of ownership among the electorate regarding the Voter Education process. This empowerment facilitated a seamless and more effective facilitation of Electoral/Voter Education activities within various communities, ensuring that voters felt a personal stake in the integrity and success of the electoral process.

- **Expanded Accessibility**: ECSL's innovative outreach efforts provided crucial access to electoral information for eligible voters who might otherwise have been unreachable by ECSL staff. This ensured that every eligible voter, irrespective of their geographical or social position, was well-informed and equipped to participate actively in the electoral process.

- **Increased Voter Turnout and Reduced Invalid Votes**: The wide-ranging coverage of Electoral/Voter Education and sensitization programs significantly enhanced voter turnout and concurrently reduced the incidence of invalid votes compared to previous elections. This indicates a heightened understanding and engagement of the electorate, attributable to the effective dissemination of relevant and comprehensible electoral information.

- **Engagement of First-time Voters**: Targeted initiatives aimed at first-time voters successfully integrated this vital demographic into the electoral process. This did not only result in increased participation rates among young and new voters but also ensured that they were well-prepared, informed, and confident in exercising their democratic rights.

- **Leveraging Technology for Wider Reach**: The innovative use of mobile phone cellular networks transformed the dissemination landscape of electoral education and sensitization messages. This approach significantly widened the reach of vital electoral information, ensuring that every corner of the nation was tapped into the informational flow, thereby promoting an informed and engaged electorate across the nation.

Table 8: Challenges and Recommendations

Challenges and Recommendations			
NO	**CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**	**SUMMARY**	**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**
1.	**Operational Logistical Challenges**	• Vehicle hire for deployment of election materials is a huge challenge. • Late arrival of logistics caused delay in time management particularly in the western region due to vehicle breakdown. • Some service providers are not reliable (Breakdown of vehicles). • Rough terrain, terrible road condition, riverine areas and the rainy season caused operational challenges for deployment and retrieval. • Physical attacks on staff on Election Day caused delays in delivering election materials to certain polling places. • Challenges in managing large number of field staff who are recruited few days to election and some of whom might have political connections.	• To sign an MoU with the Sierra Leone Army for military vehicles to be accessible for deployment nationwide. • Commission to do an assessment on all service providers for a proper management of this sector for effectiveness and efficiency. • Management to effectively coordinate the Logistics Unit to be more proactive. • Need legal reform for a fixed election date to avoid the rainy season. • More collaborative effort with the Security sector is needed. • Effective planning to recruit election staff to allow more time for training and vetting candidates to understand the laws around elections and the Standard Operating Procedures.
2.	**Financial Challenges**	Government of Sierra Leone provided over 90% of the elections budget with our international partners providing the rest. There is need for an effective collaboration and coordination to ensure an easy access to all funds for elections operation.	• Government of Sierra Leone to maintain the National Elections Sustainability Trust (NEST) fund. • A standard operating procedure should be established with donor partners to align with national regulations to ease bureaucracy.
3.	**Misinformation through Social Media**	The new media has created more challenges; misinformation, disinformation, profiling of Commissioners and staff and creating panic and confusion.	• Intensifying stakeholder engagement and sensitization to alleviate tension and foster a supportive environment for electoral education. • Government of Sierra Leone to step up in cybercrime and to create enough awareness on the implications and consequences. • IVerify project to be maintained to serve as an effective tool to counter misinformation.
4.	**Hate speech**	This was the new trend in 2023 elections that caused disaffection, panic and confusion amongst the populace. Most of the perpetrators are well known nationally and internationally.	• Government of Sierra Leone to work with stakeholders to have a coordinated approach of how to deal with hate speech. • The security sector to ensure the safety and security of members of Election Management Bodies before, during and after elections.
5.	**Infrastructural challenges**	A significant challenge in constructing district offices, essential for effective district result management, is the lack of sufficient funding for these projects. Although the Commission has a highly capable Engineering component within the Administration Department, their efforts are constrained by financial limitations.	• Government of Sierra Leone through the ministry of finance should facilitate the necessary actions to kick start the construction of the district elections offices across the country. • The Commission to focus on the warehouse project. There is need to transform the warehouse to a standard in order to ease the operations of the logistics unit.
6.	**Identity politics and electoral violence**	• Increase in regional and tribal identity politics increased the level of suspicion of the commission staff by politicians. • Incidents of electoral violence, including confrontations with some electorates, created a tense and sometimes hostile environment for the electoral education process, demotivating staff and lowering morale.	• PPRC to have the regulatory framework to address identity politics. • Civic education and nationwide sensitization is needed. • The Commission to review the laws on electoral offences and impose stringent measures for future deterrence.

2. ELECTION PHASE

Conduct of Elections

Pursuant to Section 33 of the 1991 Constitution, the ECSL is vested with the responsibility for the conduct and supervision of the registration of voters and all public elections and referenda. It plays a critical role in ensuring that elections are free, fair, and transparent, adhering to democratic principles. The commission's responsibilities include overseeing the electoral process, from voter registration to the announcement of election results, ensuring that the process is credible, and the outcomes are accepted by all stakeholders.

The conduct of the 24th June 2023 elections in Sierra Leone was governed by a comprehensive legal framework, including:

- **The Constitution of Sierra Leone - 1991 (Act no. 6 of 1991):** This is the supreme law of the land, providing the legal foundation for the country's governance structure, including the electoral process.
- **The Public Elections Act, 2022:** This act was enacted to update or replace previous electoral laws, addressing contemporary challenges in the electoral process and incorporating new practices to enhance the credibility and transparency of elections.
- **The Local Government Act, 2022:** This act governs the conduct of local government elections, crucial for decentralization and local governance, ensuring that local authorities are elected in a democratic manner.
- **The Paramount Chieftaincy Act, 2009:** This act relates to the election of paramount chiefs, recognizing the unique traditional governance structures within Sierra Leone and providing a legal framework for their election.
- **The Proportional Representation Regulations, 2022:** These regulations outline the proportional representation electoral system used in Sierra Leone for certain elections, aiming to ensure a fair representation of political parties in elected offices.
- **Early Voting Regulations:** This made provision for people proceeding on Pilgrimage to cast their votes for Presidential Elections prior to the scheduled date.

Fig. 32: Citizens lining up at a designated polling station on election day.

Types of Elections Conducted

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the elections conducted on 24th June 2023 in Sierra Leone, as well as the Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP) elections held on 20th May 2023, it's crucial to delve into the types of elections, their significance in the political landscape of Sierra Leone, the broader context of governance and representation in the country.

Presidential Election

The presidential election is a critical event in Sierra Leone, determining the head of state and government. This election impacts the direction of national policies, governance style and international relations. The President of Sierra Leone plays a central role in the executive branch of government, embodying the unity of the nation and representing the country on the global stage.

The Presidential election in Sierra Leone, conducted on 24th June 2023, utilized a majoritarian or two-round system, an electoral format that plays a pivotal role in shaping the country's political landscape. This system is designed to ensure that the elected President enjoys a broad base of support, reinforcing the legitimacy and stability of the presidency.

For the presidential we have the majoritarian or two-round system and the FPTP system. This aimed at ensuring that the President has a majority support, reflecting a wide consensus among the electorate. If no candidate achieves this majority in the first round, the election moves to a second round, or runoff, between the two candidates with the highest number of votes. This system is aimed at ensuring that the elected President has the support of a majority of voters, enhancing the democratic mandate and the stability of the executive leadership.

In the 2023 Presidential elections, a significant number of political parties, thirteen (13) in total, participated by filing candidates for the Presidential nominations. This high level of participation indicates a vibrant and competitive political environment in Sierra Leone, offering a wide range of choices to the electorate. The successful completion of the nomination process by all parties demonstrates the inclusiveness and fairness of the electoral system, ensuring that a diverse array of political views and policies are represented in the electoral contest.

The outcome of the 2023 Presidential Election was decisive with no need for a run-off because Bio Julius Maada of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party, obtained 1,566,932 (representing 56.17%) of the valid votes cast which was above the 55% threshold required for a candidate to be declared winner in the first round.

Therefore, by the powers conferred on the National Returning Officer by Sections 67, 51(2) and 92(4) of the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No.17 of 2022) and pursuant to section 42(2)(e) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991), the National Returning Officer declared **BIO, JULIUS MAADA**, duly elected President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Table 9: Results of the Presidential Election: Total Valid Votes and Percentages Obtained by Candidates from Various Political Parties

No.	Name of Candidate	Political Party	Total Number of Valid Votes obtained	Percentage of Valid votes
1.	Bah Mohamed Chernoh	National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	21,620	0.77 %
2.	Bio Julius Maada	Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP)	1,566,932	56.17 %
3.	Coker Prince	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	5,981	0.21 %
4.	Jonjo Mohamed	Citizens Democratic Party (CDP)	2367	0.08 %
5.	Kabuta Saa Turay	United National Peoples Party (UNPP)	4,059	0.15 %
6.	Kakay Iye	Alliance Democratic Party (ADP)	4,336	0.16 %
7.	Kamara Nabieu Henry	Peace and Liberation Party (PLP)	7,717	0.28 %
8.	Kamara Samura Mathew Wilson	All Peoples Congress (APC)	1,148,262	41.16 %
9.	Margai Charles Francis	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC)	16,012	0.57%
10.	Saccoh Abdulai Dougakoro	Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP)	6,796	0.24 %
11.	Sandy Jonathan Patrick	National Unity and Reconciliation Party (NURP)	1,369	0.05 %
12.	Sowa-Turay Mohamed	United Democratic Movement (UDP)	1,665	0.06 %
13.	Williams Beresford Victor	Republic National Independent Party (ReNIP)	2,692	0.10 %
TOTAL VALID VOTES CAST			**2,789,808**	**100 %**

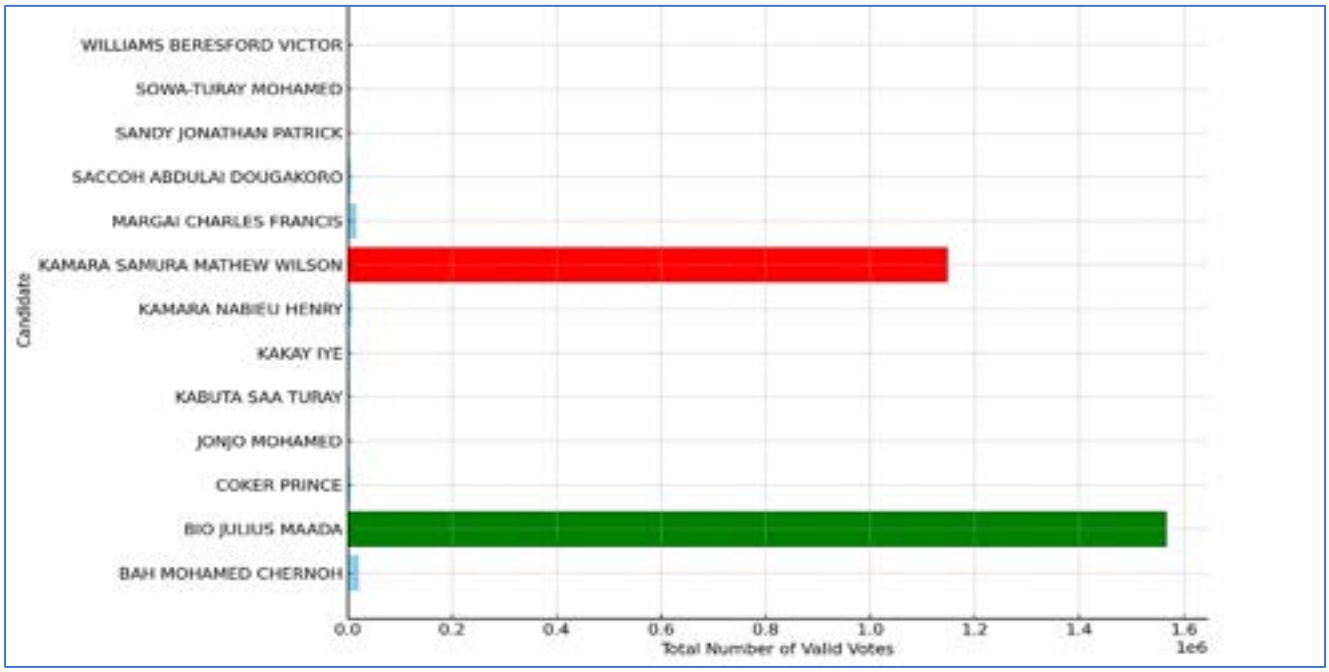


Fig. 33: Total Number of Valid Votes Obtained by Each Candidate (Color-Coded for Leading Candidates)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Bar Graph**: Shows the total number of valid votes obtained by each candidate, further emphasizing the vast difference in vote counts between the two leading candidates and the others. BIO JULIUS MAADA and KAMARA SAMURA MATHEW WILSON stand out significantly, with their vote counts towering over those of the other candidates.

- **Pie Chart:** Illustrates the percentage share of valid votes among all candidates, highlighting the significant dominance of BIO JULIUS MAADA (SLPP) and KAMARA SAMURA MATHEW WILSON (APC), who collectively account for over 97% of the total valid votes. The rest of the candidates have a very small share of the vote percentage, each under 1%.

Fig. 34: Presentation of Winning Certificate to His Excellency Rtd. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio at State House.

Parliamentary Elections

Parliamentary elections are conducted to elect members of the Sierra Leone Parliament, the legislative body responsible for making laws, shaping public policy, and overseeing government's work. These elections are vital for ensuring that the legislative branch reflects the diverse views and interests of the Sierra Leonean population, fostering a representative and accountable governance system.

The Parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone present a unique blend of traditional governance and modern democratic principles through the election of two categories of Members of Parliament: Ordinary

Members of Parliament (MPs) and Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMPs).

Ordinary Members of Parliament (MPs)

The Sierra Leone Parliament comprises 135 Ordinary Members who are elected based on universal suffrage. This means that all eligible voters in the country have the right to vote for these MPs, ensuring that the representation in Parliament reflects the will of the general population.

Electoral System for Ordinary Members of Parliament:

The elections for Ordinary Members of Parliament were conducted using the Proportional Representation District Block (PRDB) system. This electoral system is designed to ensure that representation in Parliament closely matches the proportion of votes received by each political party or independent candidate across the country.

Here's how it works:

- **Contestants**: Both political parties and independent candidates are eligible to contest in the PRDB system, providing a platform for a wide range of political views and policies to be represented in Parliament.
- **Minimum Threshold**: A minimum threshold of 11.9% was established for a Political Party or Independent Candidate to win a seat in Parliament. This threshold is intended to ensure that only
- parties and candidates with a significant level of support across the electorate can gain representation, promoting a more streamlined and effective legislative process.

- **Seat Apportionment**: Seats are apportioned using the Highest Remainder formula (See Annex 12). This method involves first allocating seats based on whole numbers of votes received by each party or candidate, and then distributing any remaining seats based on the highest remainders. This formula aims to maximize the proportionality of the election outcome, ensuring that the distribution of seats in Parliament closely reflects the distribution of votes among the electorate.

Tabular Representation of Results for parliamentary elections by Political Party/Independent Candidate

Eastern Region

District	Political Party/Independent Candidate	List of Winners	Sex	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes Obtained	No. of seat Obtained
Kailahun	All Peoples Congress			6,813	3.82	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Sarty Banya	M	171,622	96.18	10
		Hon. Hindolo Moiwo Gevao	M			
		Hon. Wuyatta Bernadette Songa	F			
		Hon. Musa Lahai	M			
		Hon. Mohamed Kanneh	M			
		Hon. Margaret Feimata Johnson	F			
		Hon. Fallah Kenawah Tengbeh	M			
		Hon. Hawa Rosaline Siafa	F			
		Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi	F			
		Hon. Quintin Salia-Konneh	M			
Kenema	All Peoples Congress			11,541	4.04	0
	Conteh Alusine		M	1,508	0.53	0
	Mattia Peter		M	1,473	0.52	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma	M	271,066	94.92	12
		Hon. Musa Peter Moigua	M			
		Hon. Rugiatu Tarawalli – Mussaffa	F			
		Hon. Francis Amara Kaisamba	M			
		Hon. Boston Munda	M			
		Hon. Alice Kornya Sandy	F			
		Hon. Alie Bayoh	M			
		Hon. Brima Mansaray	M			
		Hon. Mariama Ella Goba	F			
		Hon. Ibrahim Koroma	M			
		Hon. Momoh Bockarie	M			
		Hon. Juliana Aliematu Fatorma	F			
Kono	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Tom Issic Tucker	M	32,067	25.88	3
		Hon. Tamba Kellie	M			
		Hon. Lucinda Finda Kellie	F			
	Charles, Sahr		M	853	0.69	0
	Chendeka, Unisa Aiah		M	981	0.79	0
	Daramy, Ibrahim Kalil		M	2,347	1.89	0
	Foyoh, Aiah Emmanuel		M	451	0.36	0
	Gbonda, Steven Komba		M	538	0.43	0
	Mbiriwa, Sia Tabitha		M	1,312	1.06	0
	National Unity & Reconciliation Party	-		359	0.29	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Saa Emmerson Lamina	M	74,290	59.96	7
		Hon. Tamba Simeon Johnny	M			
		Hon. Rebecca Yei Kamara	F			
		Hon. Musa Fofonah	M			
		Hon. Sia Mahawa Habiama Tommy	F			
		Hon. Komba Quee	M			
		Hon. Sahr Koutu Momodu	M			
	Williams, Brian Joshua Biango			787	0. 64	

Northern Region

District	Political Party/Independent Candidate	List of Winners	Sex	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes Obtained	No. of seat Obtained
Bombali	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Peter Yamba Koroma	M	140,566	91.64	8
		Hon. Paul Samba Conteh	M			
		Hon. Catherine Zainab Tarawally	F			
		Hon. John Charles Conteh	M			
		Hon. Ibrahim Barrie	M			
		Hon. Marie Kamara	F			
		Hon. Mohamed Bangura	M			
		Hon. Sallieu Osman Sesay	M			
	Sanko, Hassan			1,545	1.01	0
	Sesay, Godson Kandeh			924	0.60	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party			10,361	6.75	0
Falaba	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Mohamed Conteh	M	16,606	42.90	2
		Hon. Mohamed Alpha Jalloh	M			
	National Democratic Alliance			994	2.57	
	National Grand Coalition			1,189	3.07	
	Republic National Independent Party			278	0.72	
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Mohamed Billoh Shaw	M	19,646	50.75	2
		Hon. Jabbie Alpha Fode Madie	M			
Koinadugu	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Hamidu Holla Mansaray	M	33,127	62.53	3
		Hon. Daniel Brima Koroma	M			
		Hon. Hawa Conteh	F			
	Marah Karifala			2,126	4.01	
	National Democratic Alliance			492	0.93	
	National Grand Coalition			912	1.72	
	Republic National Independent Party			282	0.53	
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Konkofa Farah Mansaray	M	16,036	30.27	1
Tonkolili	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Aaron Aruna Koroma	M	125,015	80.41	9
		Hon. Aruna Papay Larkoh	M			
		Hon. Mabinty Forna	F			
		Hon. Jawah Sesay	M			
		Hon. Daniel Fornah	M			
		Hon. Rose Marie Bangura	F			
		Hon. Daniel Amadu Bangura	M			
		Hon. Sorieba Alhaji Turay	M			
		Hon. Rugiatu Kamara	F			
	Bangura, John Ahmed			3,592	2.31	
	Conteh, Alpha Jonathan			5,052	3.25	
	Kamara, Foday S.			1,513	0.97	
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Foyoh Tholley	M	20,299	13.06	1

North West Region

District	Political Party/ Independent Candidate	List of Winners	Sex	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes Obtained	No. of seat Obtained
Karene	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Alusine Bash Kamara	M	54,058	71.97	5
		Hon. Mohamed Sheriff Kargbo	M			
		Hon. Cecilia Mabinty Bangura	F			
		Hon. Mohamed Bangura	M			
	Mansaray Musa			15	0.02	
	Revolutionary United Front Party			1,512	2.00	
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Abdul Karim Bangura	M	19,540	26.01	1
Kambia	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara	M	57,970	56.36	4
		Hon. Ernest Koroma	M			
		Hon. Mabinty Alice Taylor-Bangura	F			
		Hon. Mohamed Sheridan Kamara	M			
	National Democratic Alliance			2,333	2.27	
	National Grand Coalition			7,381	7.18	
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Adama Bangura	F	35,164	34.19	2
		Hon. Mohamed Tarawallie Fofanah	M			
Port Loko	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Abdul Karbgo	M	101,142	59.42	6
		Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara	M			
		Hon. Memunatu Jalloh	F			
		Hon. Ibrahim Aziz Bangura	M			
		Hon. Abdul Latif Sesay	M			
		Hon. Aminata Sesay	F			
	Fofanah, Osman			2,267	1.33	
	Kabia, Mohamed			927	0.54	
	Koroma Addulrahman			2,373	1.39	
	National Grand Coalition			2,424	1.42	
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Ishmael Sankoh Yillah	M	61,071	35.88	4
		Hon. Sheikh Santigie Ibrahim Kargbo	M			
		Hon. Racheal Christiana Bundor	F			
		Hon. Abdulai Karim Kanu	M			

Southern Region

District	Political Party/ Independent Candidate	List of Winners	Sex	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes Obtained	No. of seat Obtained
Bo	All Peoples Congress			24,148	9.79	0
	Clinton Samuel			26	0.01	0
	National Unity and Reconciliation Party			641	0.26	0
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change			3,262	1.32	0
	Saccoh Lansana			2,607	1.06	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Bashiru Silikie	M	215,025	87.21	12
		Hon. Christopher Keikura Vandy	M			
		Hon. Massay Ngahiteh Aruna	F			
		Hon. Nenneh Lebbie	F			
		Hon. Ambrose Maada Lebby	M			
		Hon. Joseph Williams Lamin	M			
		Hon. Joseph Abdul Bash Kamara	M			
		Hon. Yusuf Mackery	M			
		Hon. Amie Nyava Moriba	F			
		Hon. Habib Keifa Fabbah	M			
		Hon. Beatrice Maaya Kangbai	F			
		Hon. Osman Abdulai Charles	M			
	Sinnie, Fouad Patrick			843	0.34	0
	Sulaiman, Osman			1	0.00	0
Bonthe	All Peoples Congress			4,154	4.83	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas	M	81,894	95.17	5
		Hon. Jibrila Surmoijueh	M			
		Hon. Alice Jebbeh Kumabeh	F			
		Hon. Idrissa Moiwai Dauda	M			
		Bintu Fatmata Bockarie	F			
Moyamba	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Alpha Ben Mansaray	M	18,825	17.17	1
	Bend, Roy Charles			1,279	1.17	0
	National Grand Coalition			2,029	1.85	0
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change			1,767	1.61	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Edward George	M	85,759	78.21	5
		Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay	F			
		Hon. Sylvester Arnold Maxwell Boima	M			
		Hon. Umu Pyne	F			
		Hon. Mustapha Musa Sellu	M			
Pujehun	All Peoples Congress			4,961	4.40	0
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change			2,450	2.17	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Sidie Mohamed Tunis	M	105,413	93.43	7
		Hon. Dickson Momoh Rogers	M			
		Hon. Hawa Kallon	F			
		Hon. Alex Mattia Rogers	M			
		Hon. Abu Kemokai	M			
		Hon. Mariama Munia Zombo	F			
		Hon. Shiaka Musa Sama	M			

Western Area

District	Political Party/ Independent Candidate	List of Winners	Sex	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes Obtained	No. of seat Obtained
Western Rural	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Abu Bakarr Fofanah	M	175,410	52.34	5
		Hon. Haja Miatta Amara	F			
		Hon. John Sartty Kargbo	M			
		Hon. Kemoko Conteh	M			
		Hon. Zinabu Timbo	F			
	Kallon, Jenneh Grace			2,509	0.75	0
	Kamara, Abdulia Driscoll			2,694	0.80	0
	National Grand Coalition			1,751	0.52	0
	Peace and Liberation Party			1,131	0.34	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Osman Wurie Jalloh	M	151,670	45.25	5
		Hon. Beatrice Iyamide Langley	F			
		Hon. Amara Momoh Kargbo	M			
		Hon. Ibrahim Kabba	M			
		Hon. Ahmed Joseph Kanu	M			
Western Urban	All Peoples Congress	Hon. Osman Abdal Timbo	M	307,479	55.12	9
		Hon. Alpha Amadu Bah	M			
		Hon. Rugiatu Rosy Kanu	F			
		Hon. Unpha Sorie Gbassay Koroma	M			
		Hon. Mahmoud Kamara	M			
		Hon. Adama Conteh	F			
		Hon. Alfred Ayodele Thompson	M			
		Hon. Abdulai Kamara	M			
		Hon. Mariama Bangura	F			
	Cole, Dennis Desmond Fredrick			1,544	0.28	0
	Kanu, Ali Sani			676	0.12	0
	Kpaka, Abdul			1,386	0.25	0
	National Grand Coalition			2,483	0.45	0
	Peoples Democratic Party			516	0.09	0
	Richards, Chiny			516	0.09	0
	Sesay, Ahmed Senousi			2,962	0.53	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh	M	239,403	42.92	7
		Hon. Mohamed Sheriff Rahman-Coker	M			
		Hon. Princess Kadie Daramy	F			
		Hon. Benjamin Turay	M			
		Hon. Idriss Sahid Kamara	M			
		Hon. Fatmata Sarah Soukenah	F			
		Hon. Abdul Sulaiman Marray-Conteh	M			
	Weekes, Thomas Christian			837	0.15	

Graphical Presentations of the Results for Ordinary Parliamentary Elections

Eastern Region

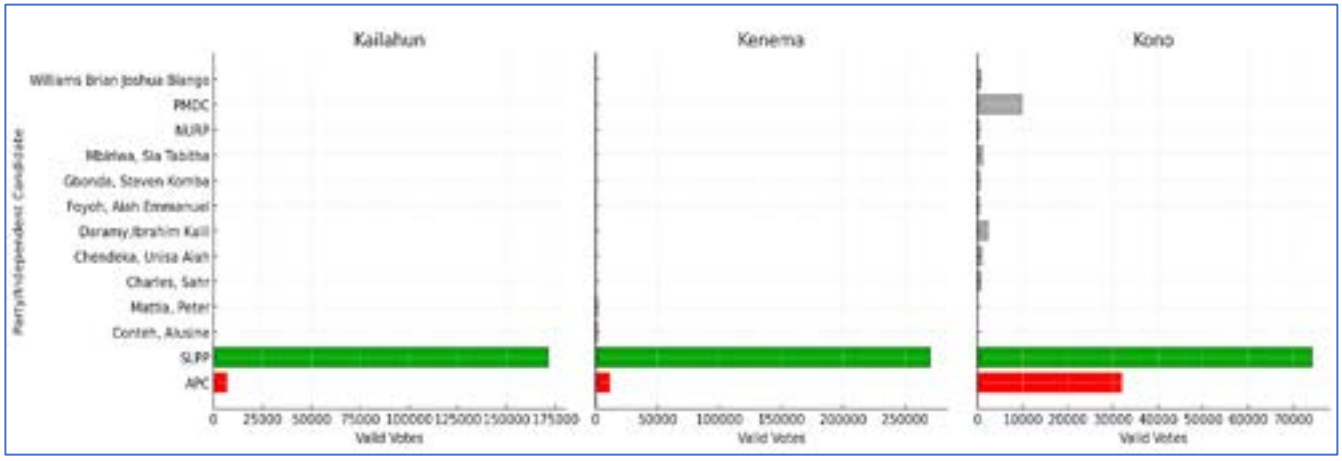


Fig. 35: Vote Distribution by District in the Eastern Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

The bar graphs depict the vote distribution by district in the East region, with the All Peoples Congress (APC) represented in red and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) in green. The other parties and independent candidates are shown in grey. Key observations from the visualization include:

- **Kailahun**: Dominated by the SLPP with a significant majority **(96.18% of valid votes),** while the APC has a minor presence **(3.82%).**
- **Kenema**: Similar to Kailahun, SLPP captures the overwhelming majority of votes (94.92%), with the APC and independent candidates receiving only a small fraction.
- **Kono**: More competitive, with the SLPP still leading **(59.96%)** but the APC capturing a notable share of votes **(25.88%).** This district also shows a diverse range of independent candidates and minor parties, indicating a more fragmented political landscape compared to Kailahun and Kenema.

Northern Region

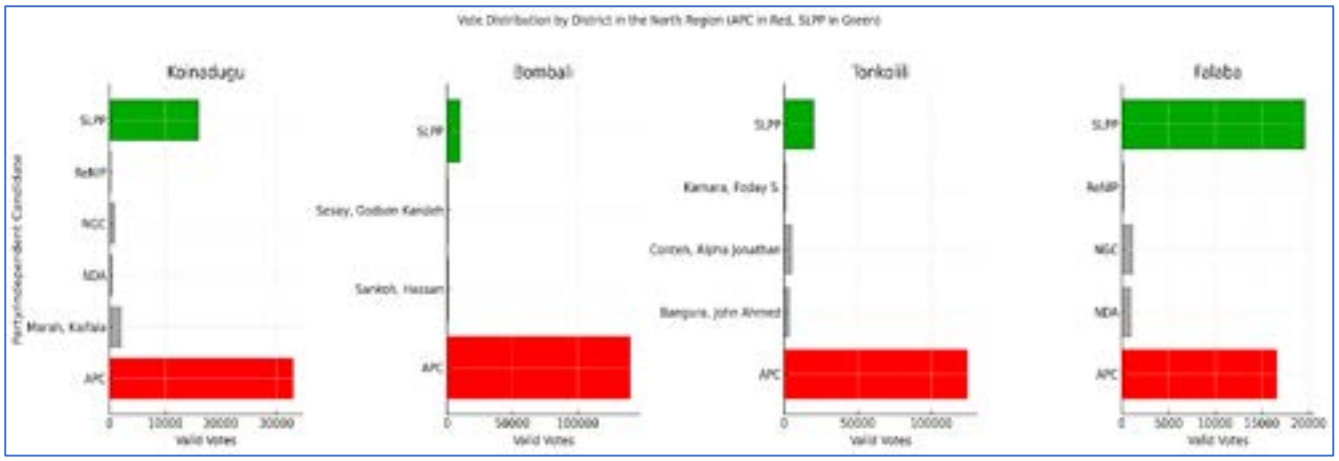


Fig. 36: Vote Distribution by District in the Northern Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

The bar graphs illustrate the vote distribution by district in the North region, with the All Peoples Congress (APC) highlighted in red and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) in green. Other parties and independent candidates are shown in grey. Key insights from the visualization include:

- **Koinadugu**: APC leads with a significant majority **(62.53%),** with SLPP securing **30.27%** of the votes. This indicates a strong but not exclusive preference for the APC.
- **Bombali**: Dominated by the APC with a staggering **91.64%** of the votes, demonstrating overwhelming support for the party in this district. The SLPP has a minimal presence.
- **Tonkolili**: APC also leads comfortably with **80.41%,** while the SLPP holds a modest **13.06%,** reflecting strong APC dominance with some support for SLPP.
- **Falaba**: Presents a contrast where the SLPP leads with **50.75%,** surpassing the APC's **42.90%.** This district showcases a more balanced political landscape compared to the other districts, with a slight majority favouring the SLPP.

Southern Region

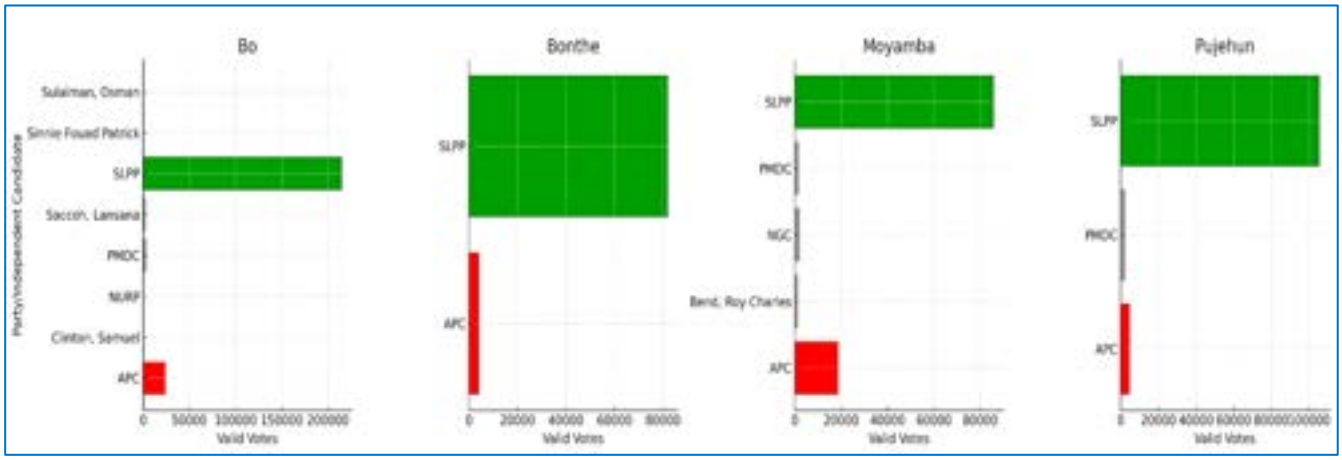


Fig. 37: Vote Distribution by District in the Southern Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

The bar graphs represent the vote distribution by district in the Southern region, with the All Peoples Congress (APC) highlighted in red and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) in green. Other parties and independent candidates are shown in grey. This visualization provides a clear and detailed overview of the electoral dynamics within the Southern region:

- **Bo and Bonthe**: Demonstrates overwhelming support for the SLPP, with over **87%** and **95%** of the votes, respectively, showcasing these districts as strongholds for the SLPP.
- **Moyamba**: While the SLPP still leads significantly with **78.21%** of the votes, the APC has a more substantial presence compared to Bo and Bonthe, indicating some diversity in voter preference.
- **Pujehun**: Mirrors the pattern in Bo and Bonthe with the SLPP capturing a commanding **93.43%** of the votes, further underscoring the strong support for the SLPP in the South region.

North-West Region

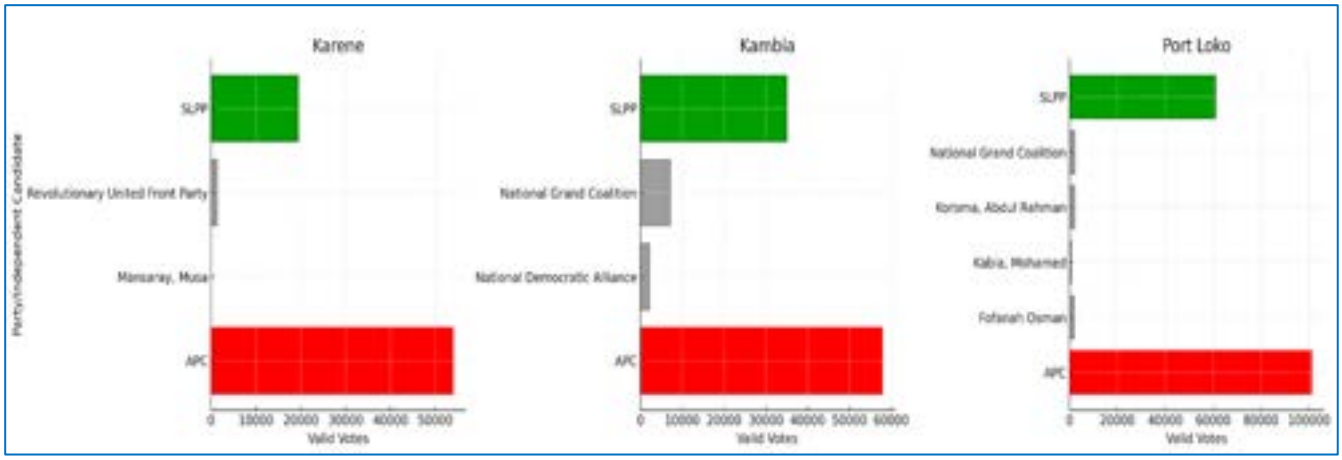


Fig. 38: Vote Distribution by District in the North-West Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

The bar graphs depict the vote distribution by district in the North-West region, with the All Peoples Congress (APC) highlighted in red and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) in green. Other parties and independent candidates are shown in grey. This visualization provides a clear and detailed overview of the electoral dynamics within the Northwest region:

- **Karene**: Demonstrates a strong preference for the APC with **71.97%** of the votes, significantly outnumbering the SLPP, which secured 26.01%.
- **Kambia**: Shows a more competitive landscape with the APC leading at 56.36% and the SLPP holding **34.19%** of the votes, indicating a closer contest between the two main parties.
- **Port Loko**: APC leads with 59.42% of the votes, with the SLPP also having a substantial presence with 35.88%, suggesting competitive but distinct preferences for the APC.

Western Region

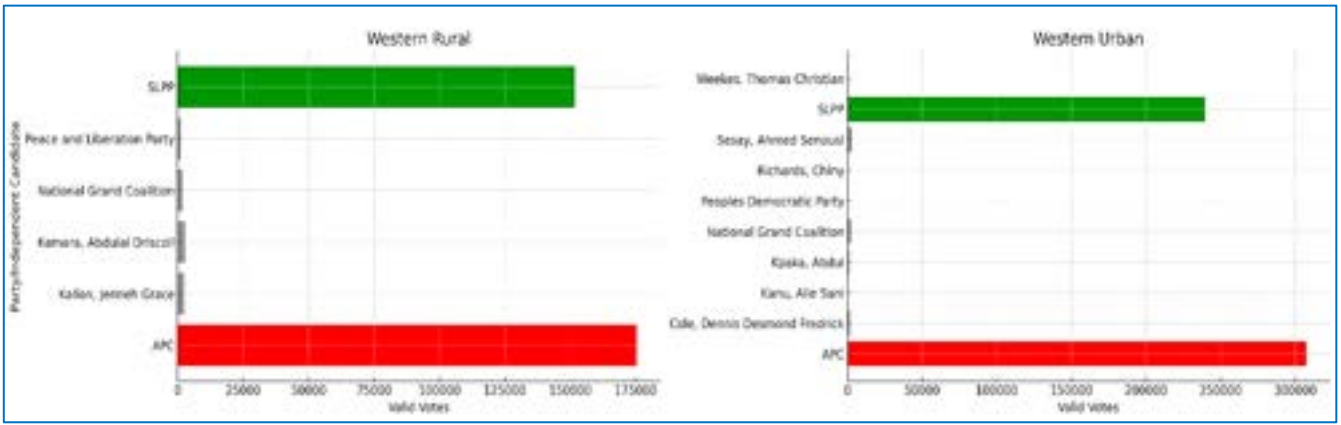


Fig. 39: Vote Distribution by District in the Western Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

The bar graphs showcase the vote distribution by district in the Western region, with the All Peoples Congress (APC) highlighted in red and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) in green. Other parties and independent candidates are shown in grey. This visualization provides a clear and detailed overview of the electoral dynamics within the Western region:

- **Western Rural**: The APC leads with **52.34%** of the votes, closely followed by the SLPP with **45.25%,** indicating a competitive landscape with a slight advantage for the APC.
- **Western Urban:** Demonstrates a stronger preference for the APC, which secured **55.12%** of the votes, compared to the SLPP's **42.92%,** showcasing the APC's robust lead in this district.

Paramount Chief Members of Parliament Elections (PCMP)

In addition to the Ordinary Members, there are 14 Paramount Chief Members of Parliament. PCMP elections are rooted in the traditional practice of electing Paramount Chiefs at Chiefdom level. Voting is based on electoral college wherein only Tribal Authorities (TAs) have the right to cast ballot. TAs are representatives of every 20 taxpayers within a locality nested in a chiefdom. Tribal Authorities otherwise known as Chiefdom Councillors who form the electoral college can return a PCMP to Parliament with simple majority vote.

PCMP is non-partisan and representatives should go to Parliament without Political Party symbols. When all Paramount Chiefs within a certain district resolve by "gentleman's agreement", only one candidate goes through the nomination exercise and could be declared as an uncontested candidate.

The PCMP elections were held on 20th May 2023. They are unique to Sierra Leone's political structure, blending traditional authority structures with formal political governance. Paramount chiefs play a vital role in local governance, particularly in rural areas, their inclusion in Parliament bridges traditional leadership and modern governance. This arrangement acknowledges the importance of traditional leaders in Sierra Leone's social and political fabric, ensuring that they have a voice in the legislative process.

SN	REGION	DISTRICT
1	EAST	Kailahun
2		Kenema
3		Kono
4	NORTH	Bombali
5		Falaba
6		Koinadugu
7		Tonkolili
8	NORTH-WEST	Kambia
9		Karene
10		Port Loko
11	SOUTH	Bo
12		Bonthe
13		Moyamba
14		Pujehun

Nominations for PCMP elections were scheduled for Friday 31st March - Saturday 1st April 2023.

After the close of PCMP Candidate Nominations for the Paramount Chief Members of Parliament in Kailahun, Kono, Karene, Tonkolili, Port Loko, Bo and Moyamba Districts, one candidate each went through the process successfully. For Paramount Chief Members of Parliament nominations in Kenema and Koinadugu Districts, there were candidate withdrawals which resulted in only one candidate remaining in each of the said districts.

PCMP elections were therefore conducted in the respective Chiefdom headquarter towns on Saturday 20th May 2023 in the following districts:

No.	Region	District
1	North	Bombali
2		Falaba
3	North-West	Kambia
4	South	Bonthe
5		Pujehun

Result for Bombali District

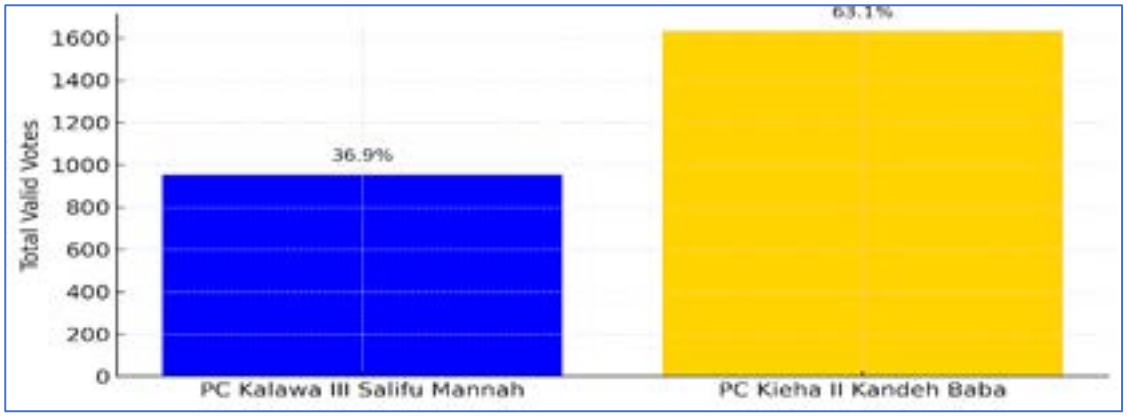


Fig. 40: Vote Distribution between Candidates

Result for Falaba District

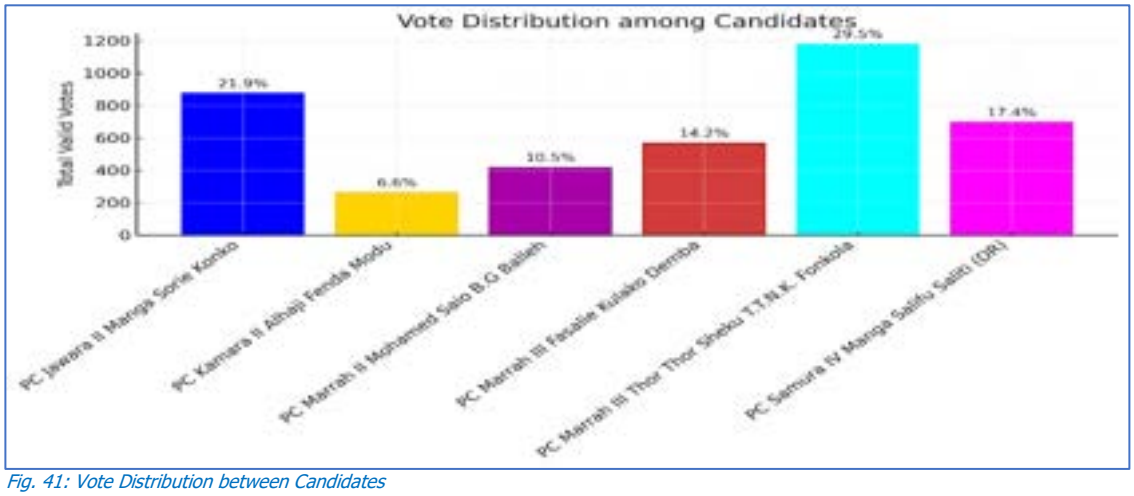


Fig. 41: Vote Distribution between Candidates

Results for Kambia District

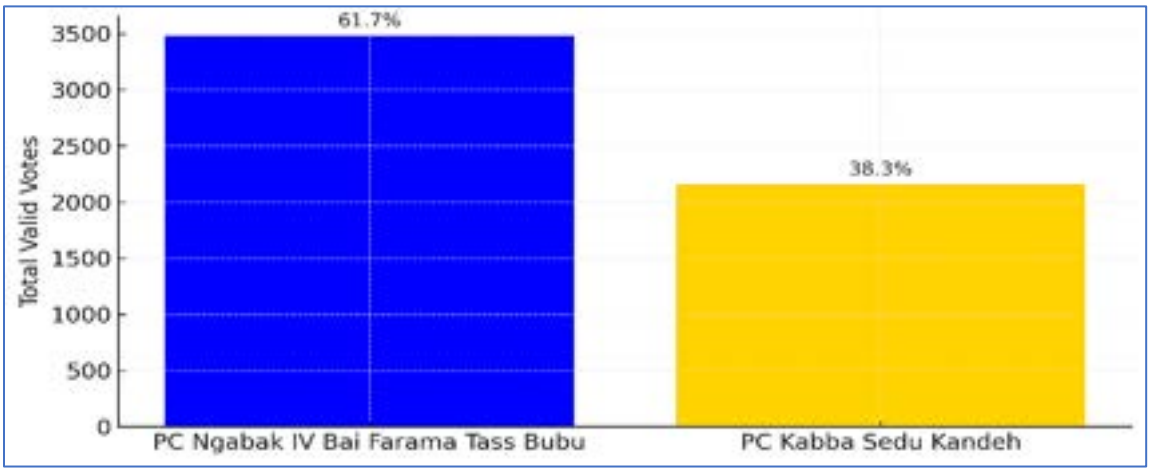


Fig. 42: Vote Distribution between Candidates

Results for Bonthe District

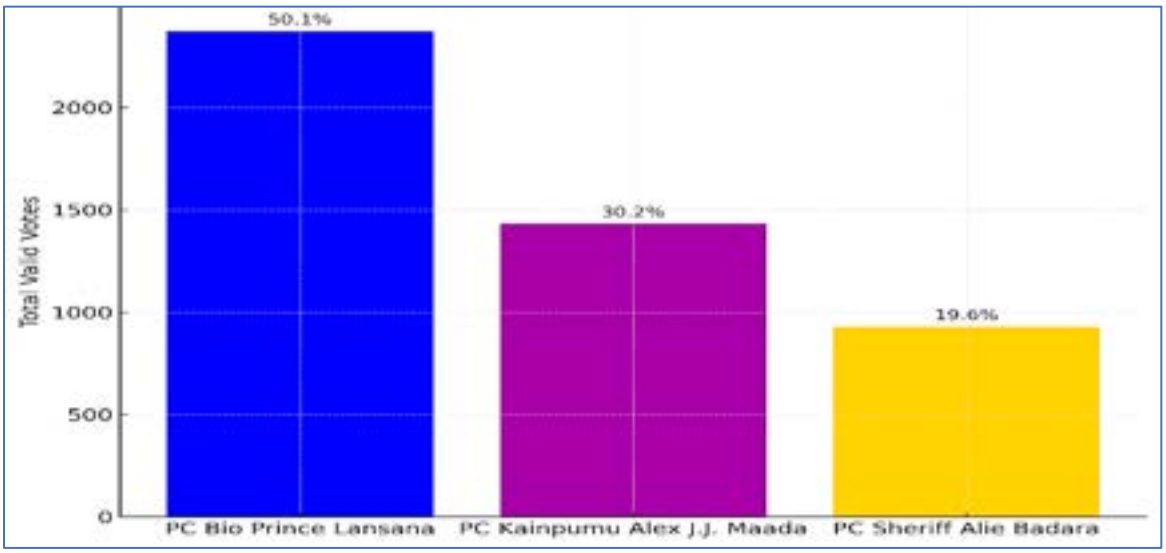


Fig. 43: Vote Distribution between Candidates

Results for Pujehun District

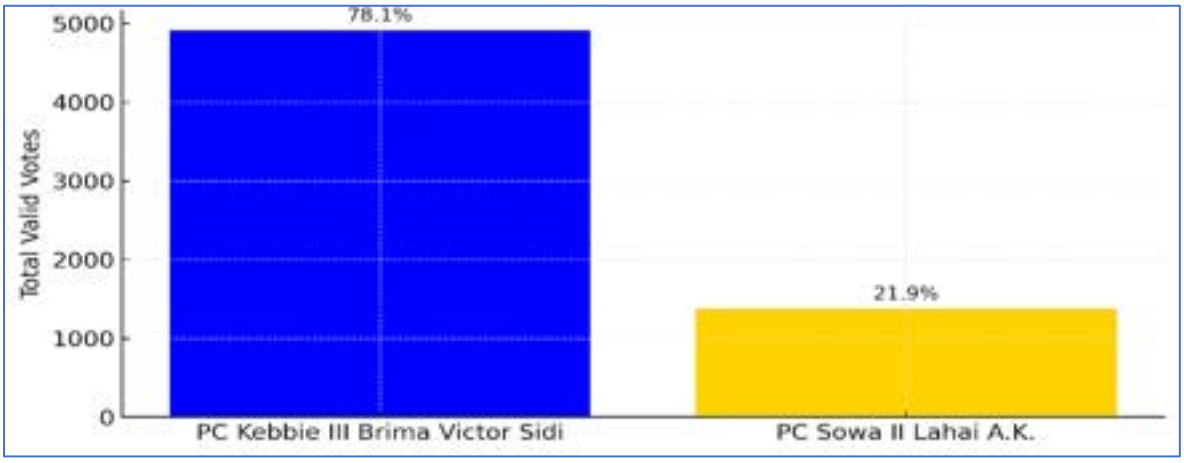


Fig. 44: Vote Distribution between Candidates

Local Council Councillor Elections

The Local Council Councillor elections held on 24th June 2023 in Sierra Leone were a significant component of the country's local governance structure, employing the Proportional Representation (PR) system across 22 local councils or localities nationwide. Councillors are elected to represent various wards within the city and district councils. They are responsible for making decisions on local issues, budgeting, and planning local development initiatives. The election of councillors is fundamental to the democratic process, allowing for grassroots participation in governance and ensuring that local voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

Here's an expanded context on the structure and significance of these elections:

Geographical Coverage and Types of Councils:

- The elections spanned across 22 local councils, including both city and district councils, thereby covering a broad spectrum of Sierra Leone's geographic and demographic diversity. Specifically, the elections involved six City Councils (Freetown, Bo, Makeni, Koidu-New Sembehun, Port Loko, and Kenema), one Municipal Council (Bonthe), and fifteen District Councils, one in each of the fourteen electoral districts in the provinces plus one in the Western area, which is the western rural district. This wide coverage ensures that the local governance structures reflect the needs and aspirations of both urban and rural populations.

Electoral System and Contestants:

- The Proportional Representation (PR) system was utilized for these elections, a method known for promoting fair and equitable representation by allocating seats in proportion to the number of votes received by each political party or independent candidate. This system encourages multiparty democracy and allows for smaller parties and independent candidates to have a fair chance at representation, promoting diversity in local councils.
- Both political parties and independent candidates contested in the Local Council Councillor elections, indicating a vibrant and competitive political environment at the local level. This inclusiveness is crucial for a healthy democracy, as it ensures that a wide range of perspectives and policies are represented in local governance, catering to the varied interests of the local populace.

Minimum Threshold and Seat Apportionment:

- A minimum threshold of 4.5% was required for a political party or independent candidate to qualify as a winner for a Local Council seat. This threshold, lower than that for parliamentary elections, is designed to ensure a broader representation in local councils, recognizing the importance of local governance in addressing community-specific issues and concerns.
- The apportioning of seats was conducted using the Highest Remainder formula, a method that first allocates seats based on whole numbers of votes received and then distributes remaining seats based on the highest remainders. This technique ensures that the distribution of seats closely mirrors the voters' preferences, enhancing the representativeness and legitimacy of local councils.

Tabular Representation of Results for Councillor elections

Eastern Region

District	Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	No. of seat Won
Kailahun District Council	All Peoples Congress	11,260	7.08	2
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	147,811	92.92	27
Kenema District Council	All peoples Congress	10,072	6.04	2
	Sama, Mohamed S. K. Harding	1,036	0.62	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	155,719	93.34	25
Kenema City Council	All Peoples Congress	12,249	16.06	3
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change			
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	64,011	83.94	16
Kono District Council	All Peoples Congress	19,375	26.29	7
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change	9,071	12.31	3
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	45,249	61.40	15
Koidu New Sembehun City Council	All Peoples Congress	14,957	33.06	5
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change	6,725	14.87	3
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	23,558	52.07	8

Northern Region

District	Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	No of seats won
Bombali District Council	All Peoples Congress	88,882	91.44	19
	Alliance Democratic Party	1,033	1.06	0
	Sierra Leone peoples Party	7,292	7.50	2
Makeni City	All Peoples Congress	46,118	93.88	14
	Citizens Democratic Party	178	0.36	0
	Peace and Liberation Party	44	0.09	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	2,802	5.67	1
Falaba District Council	All Peoples Congress	16,060	42.11	8
	National Democratic Alliance	1,070	2.81	0
	National Grand Coalition	1,260	3.30	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	19,747	51.78	10
Koinadugu	All Peoples Congress	32,594	61.81	12
	Citizen's Democratic Party	922	1.75	0
	Mansaray, Alusine	1,419	2.69	0
	National Grand Coalition	1,393	2.64	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	16,408	31.11	6
Tonkolili	All Peoples Congress	123,012	82.34	25
	Bangura, Sullay	3,037	2.03	0
	Conteh, Alusine Bundu	387	0.26	0
	Conteh, Kadiatu	175	0.12	0
	Fullah, Abass Idrissa	1,009	0.68	0
	Fullah, Kadiatu	1,208	0.81	0
	Kargbo, Adamsay Mohamed	294	0.20	0
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change	616	0.41	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	18,666	12.49	4
	Tarawallie, Adamsay	295	0.20	0
	Turay, Fatmata	701	0.47	0

North West Region

District	Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	No. of seats won
Kambia District Council	All Peoples Congress	46,153	64.48	15
	National Grand Coalition	6,158	8.60	2
	Sierra Leone peoples Party	19,265	26.92	6
Karene	All Peoples Congress	62,780	84.84	18
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	11,218	15.16	3
Port Loko City Council	All Peoples Congress	13,208	85.27	11
	Alliance Democratic Party	206	1.33	0
	Sierra Leone peoples Party	2,076	13.40	2
Port Loko District Council	All Peoples Congress	128,022	82.97	24
	National Grand Coalition	4,245	2.75	0
	Sierra Leone peoples Party	22,038	14.28	4

Southern Region

District	Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	No. of seats won
Bo District Council	All Peoples Congress	7,160	5.70	2
	Amadu, Patrick	1.238	0.99	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	117,163	93.31	25
Bo City	All Peoples Congress	11,986	19.10	4
	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change	2,250	3.58	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	48,533	77.32	14
Bonthe District Council	All Peoples Congress	3,491	4.31	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	77,549	95.69	19
Bonthe Municipality	All Peoples Congress	442	12.24	1
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	3,168	87.76	10
Moyamba	All Peoples Congress	21,604	19.26	4
	Citizens Democratic Party	1,407	1.25	0
	National Grand Coalition	2,617	2.33	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	86,519	77.15	18
Pujehun	All Peoples Congress	4,145	4.12	0
	Massaquoi, Jusu	1,353	1.35	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	95,096	94.53	24

Western Area

District	Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	No. of seats won
Western Rural District Council	All Peoples Congress	168,232	68.98	17
	Kargbo, Alie Abu	2,054	0.84	0
	Peoples Democratic Party	954	0.39	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	72,631	29.78	13
Freetown City Council	All Peoples Congress	265,958	69.30	17
	Peoples Democratic Party	2,743	0.71	0
	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	115,066	29.98	13

Graphical Presentations of the Results for Councillor elections

Eastern Region

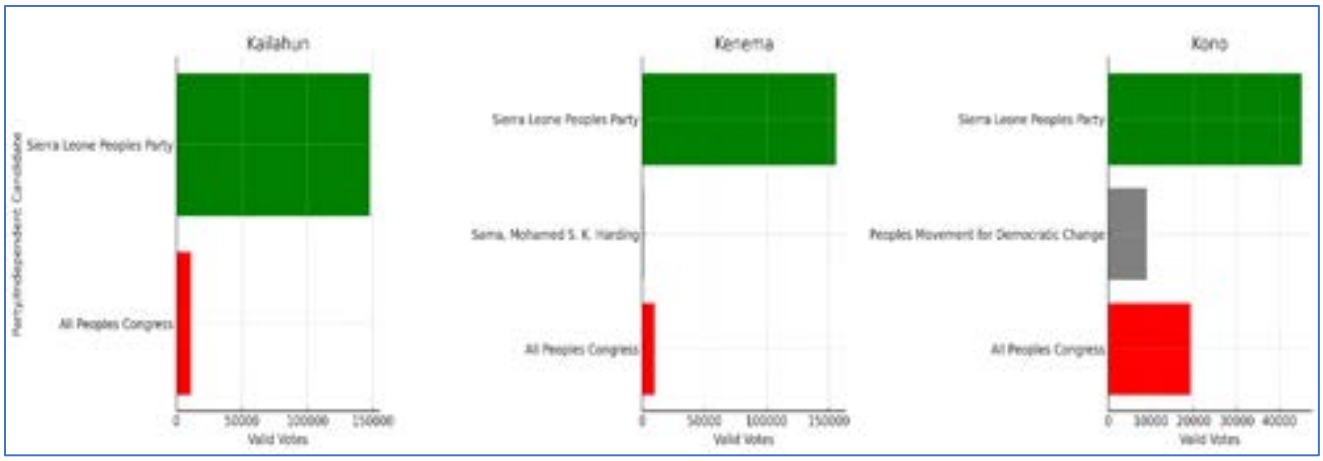


Fig. 45: Vote Distribution by District in the East Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Kailahun**: Demonstrates an overwhelming majority for the SLPP with 92.92% of the votes, significantly outnumbering the APC.
- **Kenema**: Similar to Kailahun, the SLPP captures a vast majority (93.34%), with the APC and an independent candidate trailing significantly.
- **Kono**: Shows a more diverse vote distribution; however, the SLPP still leads with a majority (61.40%). The APC and the Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) capture 26.29% and 12.31% of the votes, respectively, indicating a slightly more competitive landscape compared to Kailahun and Kenema.

Northern Region

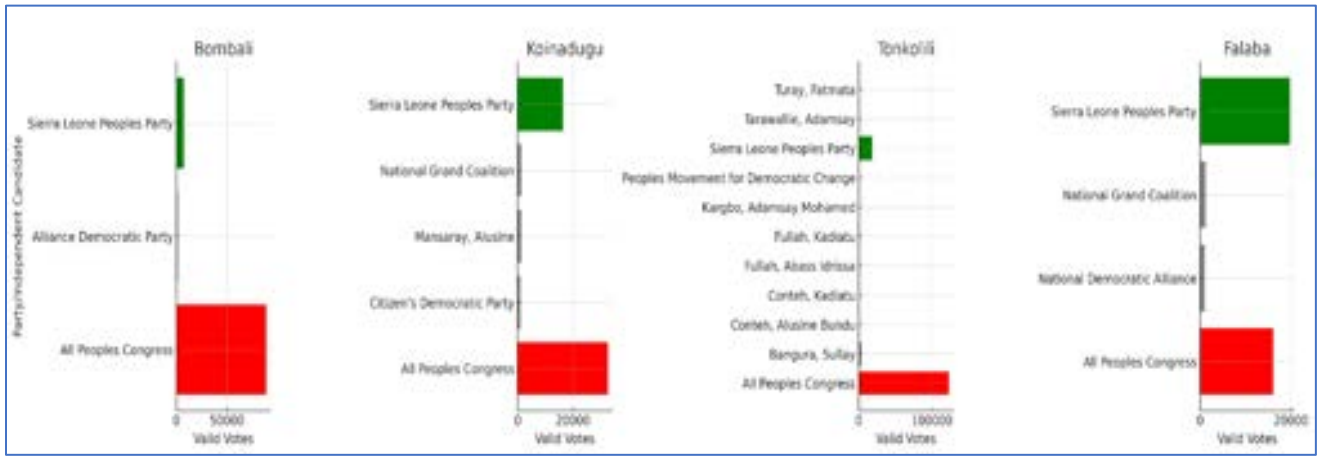


Fig. 46: Vote Distribution by District in the Northern Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Bombali**: Shows overwhelming support for the APC with **91.44%** of the votes, significantly outnumbering other parties.
- **Koinadugu**: Demonstrates the APC leading with **61.81%** of the votes, followed by the SLPP with a substantial **31.11%.**
- **Tonkolili**: Highlights the APC's dominance with **82.34%** of the votes, with the SLPP and other independent candidates receiving smaller portions.
- **Falaba**: Contrasts the other districts with the SLPP leading at **51.78%**, surpassing the APC's **42.11%.**

North-West Region

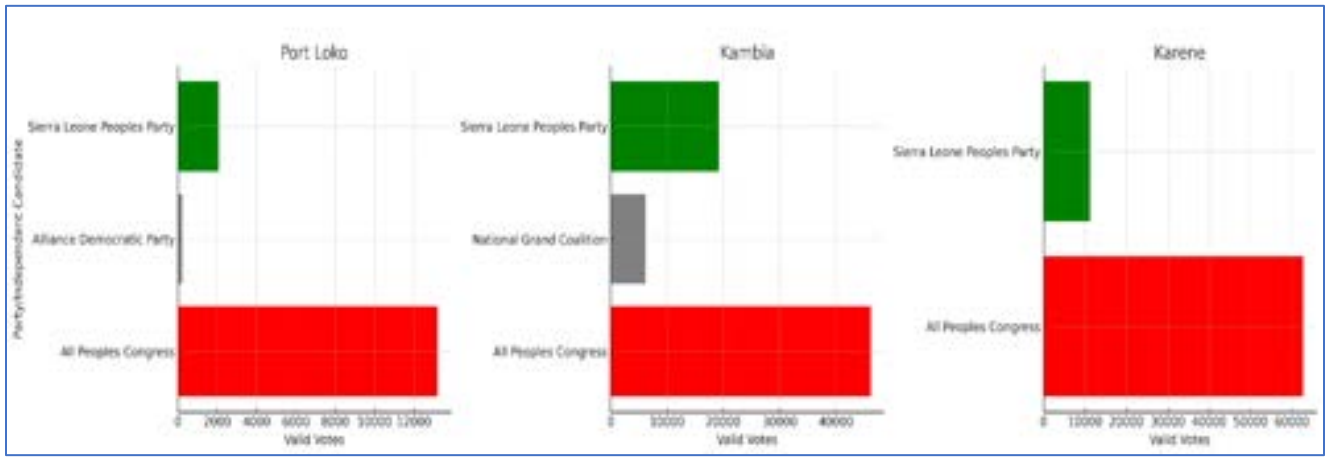


Fig. 47: Vote Distribution by District in the North-West Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Port Loko**: Shows overwhelming support for the APC with **85.27%** of the votes, significantly outnumbering other parties.
- **Kambia**: Demonstrates the APC leading with **64.48%** of the votes, followed by the SLPP with a substantial **26.92%,** and the National Grand Coalition with **8.60%.**
- **Karene**: Highlights the APC's dominance with **84.84%** of the votes, with the SLPP capturing **15.15%.**

Southern Region

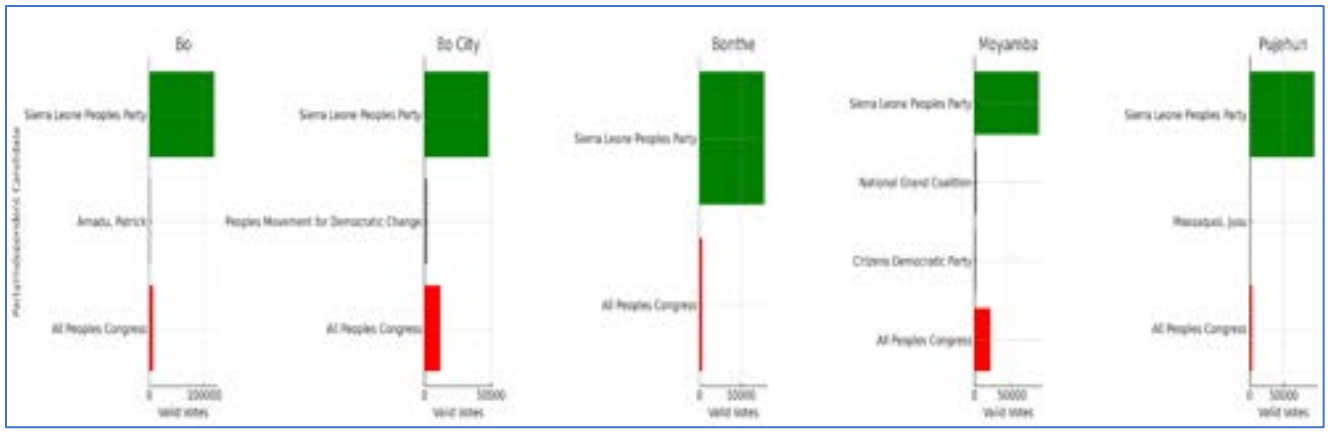


Fig. 48: Vote Distribution by District in the Southern Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Bo**: The SLPP demonstrates overwhelming support with **93.31%** of the votes, significantly outnumbering the APC and an independent candidate, Amadu, Patrick.
- **Bo City**: While still commanding a majority, the SLPP's lead narrows to **77.32%,** with the APC and the Peoples Movement for Democratic Change also receiving votes.
- **Bonthe**: The SLPP secures a dominant **95.69%** of the votes, with the APC capturing a minor **4.31%.**
- **Moyamba**: The SLPP leads with **77.15%** of the votes, amidst a more diverse field including the APC, Citizens Democratic Party, and the National Grand Coalition.
- **Pujehun**: The SLPP's dominance is most pronounced here with **94.53%** of the votes, far outpacing the APC and an independent candidate, Massaquoi, Jusu.

Western Region

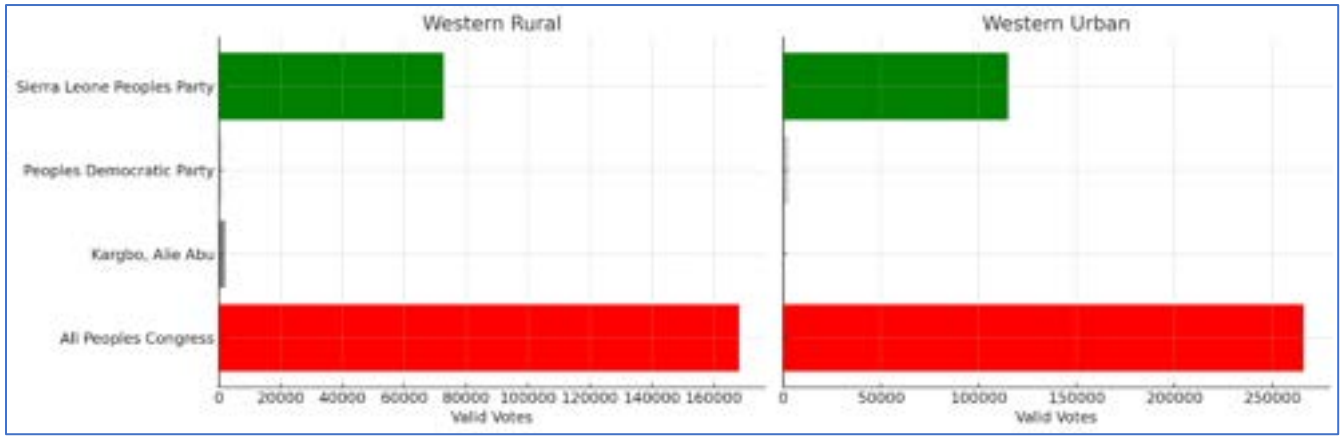


Fig. 49: Vote Distribution by District in the Western Region (APC in Red, SLPP in Green)

Local Council Mayor/ Chairperson Elections

The elections for Mayors/Chairpersons in Sierra Leone, as part of the broader electoral activities on 24th June 2023, highlight the country's nuanced approach to electing local government leaders, utilizing a system that contrasts with the proportional representation method used for councillors. This section of the electoral process underscores the significance of leadership roles within City Councils, the Bonthe Municipal Council, and District Councils.

In Sierra Leone, the leadership structure at the local government level differentiates between urban and rural areas. City Councils and the Bonthe Municipal Council elect Mayors as their heads, symbolizing the urban governance model focused on city administration and urban development. Conversely, District Councils, representing broader geographic areas often encompassing rural locales, elect Chairpersons as their heads. This distinction reflects the varied administrative and governance needs of urban versus rural populations.

Electoral System for Mayors/Chairpersons:

The election of Mayors and Chairpersons is conducted using the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) electoral system.

This system, known for its simplicity and decisiveness, operates on a winner-takes-all basis. Candidates compete for votes within their locality, and the one who secures the highest number of valid votes across all polling stations is declared the winner and duly elected as Mayor or Chairperson.

The FPTP system, while straightforward, emphasizes the importance of securing a plurality of votes.
It encourages candidates to garner wide support across the locality, focusing on direct engagement with voters and addressing local issues and concerns comprehensively.

A notable advancement in the electoral process for Mayors/Chairpersons during this election cycle was the requirement for candidates to contest alongside running mates, mirroring the practice in Presidential elections. This requirement ensures that each elected Mayor or Chairperson has a predetermined Deputy elected on the same ticket, enhancing the continuity and stability of local governance.

Running mates serving as Deputies to their respective Mayors/Chairpersons bring an additional layer of accountability and support to the leadership of local councils. This arrangement ensures a clear line of succession and aids in the distribution of responsibilities within the local government, promoting more efficient and responsive governance.

The use of the FPTP system for electing Mayors and Chairpersons in Sierra Leone's local councils plays a critical role in defining the leadership dynamics at the local level. It promotes direct accountability of elected officials to their constituents, given that they must secure the majority of votes to lead. The introduction of running mates for these positions further aligns with the country's efforts to ensure robust and resilient governance structures, preparing for continuity in leadership and fostering teamwork at the highest levels of local administration.

Tabular Representation of Results for Mayor/Chairperson elections

Eastern Region

District	Name of Candidate	Sex	Political Party/ Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	Remarks
Kailahun District Council	Lamin, Sahr Ahmed	M	SLPP	143,056	92.75	Winner
	Lengor, Morie Sam	M	RUFP	1,791	1.16	
	Ngobeh, Jusu Jaka	M	APC	9,386	6.09	
Kenema District Council	Farma, Morie Momoh	M	ADP	797	0.53	
	Sellu, George	M	APC	9,134	6.08	
	Sesay, Mohamed Amadu	M	SLPP	140,279	93.39	Winner
Kenema City Council	Baio, Thomas Karimu	M	SLPP	66,838	85.66	Winner
	Bockarie, Hassanatu Sao	F	ReNIP	213	0.27	
	Fofanah, Jaminatu	F	RUFP	217	0.28	
	Kamara, Hawa	F	UDM	164	0.21	
	Sannoh, Bockarie	M	ADP	130	0.17	
	Shaw, Abdul Karim	M	NDA	331	0.42	
	Tarmoh, Emmanuel	M	APC	10,138	12.99	
Kono District Council	Gbondo, Solomon Sahr	M	PMDC	8,552	11.59	
	Mbawa, Komba	M	APC	18,391	24.93	
	Sheku, Augustine Sahr	M	SLPP	45,592	61.80	Winner
	Yamba, Ibrahim Tamba	M	NDA	1,237	1.68	
Koidu New Sembehun City Council	Bonga, Sahr	M	NURP	321	0.68	
	Bongay, Aminata	F	UNPP	407	0.87	
	Kamanda, William Braham	M	APC	14,669	31.27	
	Mbendakwia, Aiah James	M	PMDC	5,125	10.93	
	Sam, Komba	M	SLPP	25,423	54.20	Winner
	Soh, Mohamed Peredjor	M	NDA	964	2.06	

Northern Region

District	Party/Independent Candidate	Sex	Political Party/ Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	Remarks
Bombali District Council	Bangura, Amra	M	UDM	896	0.89	
	Conteh, Bornoh	M	PLP	517	0.51	
	Dabor, Alie	M	SLPP	7,679	7.59	
	Sisay, Mohamed Mark Barbah	M	APC	92,027	91,01	Winner
Bombali City Council	Kabia, Ramatu	F	UNPP	112	0.27	
	Kamara, Abdul Rahma	M	ADP	194	0.46	
	Kamara, Abu bakarr	M	APC	39,122	93.38	Winner
	Kamara, Amadu Amadu	M	SLPP	2,358	5.63	
	Kamara, Fatmata Alimatu	F	UDM	77	0.18	
	Koroma, Alhaji Bundu	M	PLP	31	0.07	
Falaba District Council	Kamara, Sunkarie S.	F	ReNIP	557	1.37	
	Kargbo, Lansana E.	M	APC	17,257	42.32	
	Sesay,Ibrahim S.	M	SLPP	21,077	51.68	Winner
	Turay, Mark Ibrahim	M	NDA	685	1.68	
	Turay, Mohamed F.	M	NGC	860	2.11	
	Marah, Saio	M	RUFP	345	0.85	
Koinadugu District Council	Faroh Sheku	M	PLP	815	1.41	
	Jalloh, Alpha Osman	M	NDA	417	0.72	
	Kargbo, Kabba	M	CDP	568	0.98	
	Kargbo, Lawrence Teteh	M	APC	37,935	65.52	Winner
	Kuraisy, Foday Mamudu	M	SLPP	17,857	30.84	
	Mansaray, Mamudu	M	ReNIP	307	0.53	
Tonkolili District Council	Fofanah, Musa Kemoh	M	NDA	1,816	1.16	
	Larkoh, Fatmata	F	ADP	809	0.52	
	Sesay, Alusine Abdulai	M	SLPP	21,087	13.47	
	Sesay, Ahmed Mamadie	M	CDP	3,057	1.95	
	Sesay, Yabom	F	APC	129,832	82.91	Winner

North West Region

District	Name of Candidate	Sex	Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	Remarks
Kambia District Council	Bangura, Mohamed Yayah	M	NGC	3,867	5.43	
	Kamara, Amadu Isatu	F	NDA	840	1.18	
	Kamara, Mohamed Alim	M	SLPP	20,267	28.48	
	Mansaray, Mohamed Abdul Mansarico	M	APC	45,429	63.84	Winner
	Mogan, Sarah	F	PDP	756	1.06	
Karene District Council	Mbayoh, Sahr	M	RUFP	1.349	1.80	
	Saccoh, Theresa	F	SLPP	10,319	13.76	
	Turay, Abdul Kandeh	M	APC	63,330	84.44	Winner
Port Loko District Council	Kabba, Lamin	M	PLP	1,509	0.99	
	Kamara, Sorie Ibrahim	M	NDA	1,346	088	
	Saccoh, Sheku Tejan	M	APC	128,549	84.38	Winner
	Sumah, Fatmata Mbambay	F	SLPP	20,941	13.75	
Port Loko City Council	Kamara, Ibrahim	M	SLPP	2,528	16.75	
	Kamara, Thigidakay Dolly	M	Independent	93	0.62	
	Tarawallie, Alieu Badara	M	APC	12,310	81.54	Winner
	Tarawallie, Salmatu Ibrahim	F	ADP	94	0.62	
	Turay, Mariatu Saudatu	F	NDA	72	0.48	

Southern Region

District	Name of Candidate	Sex	Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	
Bo District Council	Hindowa,Victor Korseh	M	SLPP	124,265	92.55	Winner
	Kargbo, Sallay Marian Augusta	F	APC	7438	5.54	
	Salliah, Foday Morie	M	RUFP	864	0.64	
	Sheriff, Mohamed Mambu	M	PMDC	1,706	1.27	
Bo City Council	Dumbuya, Abdulai Sanko	M	APC	14,608	17.93	
	Fotoma, Zainab	F	NURP	355	0.44	
	Musa, Kobba	M	SLPP	65,121	79.95	Winner
	Wai, Ramatu	F	PMDC	1,104	1.36	
	Yambasu, Glory Phoebe	F	ReNIP	269	0.33	
Bonthe District Council	Allieu, Mustapha Modibor	M	NDA	584	0.72	
	Conteh, Asiatu	F	SLPP	77,681	95.57	Winner
	Oniel, Theresa Tenneh	F	APC	3,013	3.71	
Bonthe Municipality	Ndimawa, Fanny Nema	F	APC	404	11.52	
	Robinson, Mohamed M.	M	SLPP	3,104	88.48	Winner
Moyamba District Council	Jembeh, Gassimu Soriba	M	CDP	1,357	1.22	
	Jombla, Jimmy Hinga	M	Independent	2,622	2.35	
	Korpoi, Musa Tapeima	M	APC	21,750	19.49	
	Mbogba,Joseph Benedict	M	SLPP	85,851	76.94	Winner
Pujehun District Council	Rogers, Foday Kandeh Senior	M	SLPP	97,108	95.95	Winner
	Swaray, Dennis	M	APC	4,096	4.05	

Western Area

District	Name of Candidate	Sex	Political Party/Independent Candidate	Valid Votes Obtained	Percentage of Valid Votes	Remarks
Western Rural District Council	Barrie, Mohamed Dainkeh	M	PDP	2,074	0.69	
	Cole, Eugene Ayo	M	SLPP	135,079	45.13	
	Holland-Cole, Kasho Joseph	M	APC	157,164	52.51	Winner
	Kamara, Abdulai D. G.	M	Independent	2,467	0.82	
	Kamara, Amidu Ibrahim	M	PLP	620	0.21	
	Kargbo, Sulaiman Samba	M	ReNIP	328	0.11	
	Koroma, Mariama	F	RUFP	829	0.28	
	Tipson, Phebian	F	NDA	754	0.25	
Freetown City Council	Aki-Sawyerr, Denise Yvonne	F	APC	288,683	51.36	Winner
	Bangura, Jonathan Paul Sidique	M	Independent	1,487	0.26	
	Barrie, Sheriff	M	NDA	1,801	0.32	
	Conteh, Kassim	M	UDM	309	0.05	
	Kabba,Seray Mariama	F	Independent	556	0.10	
	Kamara, Lilian	F	RUFP	753	0.13	
	Kamara, Mohamed Gento	M	SLPP	268,213	47.72	
	Sankoh, Ibrahim	M	ADP	247	0.04	

3. OTHER ELECTORAL ACTIVITES

Elections Results Management System

Elections Result Management forms one of the most important and critical aspects of the electoral process. The ECSL is the sole authority responsible for conducting all public elections in Sierra Leone. It is also the body mandated by law to manage elections results and to declare and announce the elected winners.

The June 2023 Elections results for the Presidential, Parliamentary, Mayor/ Chairpersons and Councillor elections were tallied and collated at the Regional Tally Centres in Makeni, Port Loko, Bo, Kenema and Freetown.

Fig. 50: Observers at the Northern Regional Tally Centre

Procedures for Elections Result Management System

At the Polling Centre/ Station level

1. Votes are counted immediately polls close at 5p.m in full view of Political Parties and or Candidates Agents and Observers (both Local and International).
2. The Results were then recorded into a Reconciliation and Results Form (RRF), which includes crucial details such as the Number of Ballot Papers issued before Polling, the Number of Ballots USED, UNUSED, SPOILT, etc. This information must reconcile before the counting process.
3. The Votes received by each Candidate or Political Party were then entered in the RRF, ensuring reconciliation with the previously recorded details.
4. Political Party/Candidates Agents were invited to validate and certify the results by signing the RRFs.
5. Subsequently, the Results were securely placed within Tamper Evident Envelopes (TEES) for shipment to the Regional Tally Centres.

Regional Tally Centres

1. The staff at the Regional Tally Centre, overseen by the Regional Director of Operations, verified and confirmed the shipment of all Reconciliation and Results Forms (RRFs) from every Polling Centre/Stations to the Tally Centre.
2. They meticulously followed procedures for entering data from the RRFs into a results database.
3. To ensure accuracy, all RRFs underwent a Double-Blind Data Entry process, allowing comparison of both entries and Quality Control checks before the data was recorded in the results database.
4. Multiple checks and form reviews were conducted throughout the process to guarantee accuracy and legitimacy.

Tabulation, Certification, and Publication of Election Results

1. The Results, after being tallied, were organized into categories based on Political Parties and Candidates. These categorized results were then scrutinized by the Deputy Director of Operations of each region and District Elections Managers at the Regional Tally Centre.
2. Once verified, the results were then certified by the District Returning Officer at district level and submitted to the Regional Electoral Commissioner for certification at the regional level.
3. Summary of the certified election results proceeded to the Bitumani Media Centre, where the Board of Commissioners, under the National Returning Officer, oversaw the final announcement. Any significant issues that emerged were addressed at this level.
4. The Board conducted thorough verification, confirmation, and certification of the results before endorsing the declaration and delivering the final announcement of the elected winners.

Fig. 51: Observers at the North-West Regional Tally Centre

Elections Financing

The responsibility for funding elections in Sierra Leone is the prerogative of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL). However, International Development Partners did also play a key role in election financing for the June,2023 multi-tier elections.

It is worthy to mention that unlike the 2012 and 2018 electoral cycles, the 2023 electoral cycle was over 90% funded by the Government of Sierra Leone. This enhances the timely procurement of electoral equipment and materials such as the Biometric Voter Registration equipment (2000 laptops, Solar generators, Servers etc.), ballot papers, 22 Motor Vehicles, other operational logistics and administrative recurrent expenditure, for the successful conduct of the June 2023 Multi-Tier Elections.

Government of Sierra Leone Funding

In the Financial Years 2022 and 2023, the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) disbursed a total of **SLe 764.62 million** as budgetary support for Salary Grant, Electoral Programmes, Administrative Recurrent expenditures and Capital Development Projects.

A whooping sum of 3 billion Leones was remitted at first instance by the GoSL into the fund and the basket was utilized for funding by the Commission and other Election Management Bodies such as the Political Parties Regulation Commission and the Security sector for the conduct of the 2023 elections.

The National Elections Sustainability Trust (NEST) Fund aided the smooth transfer of the 2023 Multi-Tier Election allocation remittances without delays to the Commission.

The bulk of this amount was used for the following activities:

- Presidential, Parliamentary, Mayoral/ Chairperson and Local Council Elections in June 2023.
- Paramount Chieftaincy Member of Parliament Election in May 2023.
- Voter Registrations, Exhibition and Inquiry.
- Paramount Chieftaincy Elections.
- Bye elections.
- Payment of Administrative Recurrent Expenses.
- Capital Development Projects
- Payment of Staff Costs.

Donor Support

The Commission noted the significant financial and material contributions made by donor partners including The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, ECOWAS, Irish Aid, Government of India etc.

UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) implemented a project entitled "Fostering Peaceful, Credible and Inclusion Elections in Sierra Leone 2022-2023".

The project was funded by UNDP, European Union, Ireland, Iceland, Canada and UN Peace Building Fund. The project provided direct financial support to ECSL totalling **SLe 2.5 million** in the FY 2022 and **SLe 7.76 million** in FY 2023.

In addition, they also supported logistical and other election related activities for the period under review such as:

- Set up of Local Electoral Education Committees (LEECs) to support Electoral Education at Ward Level.
- Paid allowances of LEECs.
- Procured of eighteen (18) 16.1 KVA Generators and (18) printers for all Districts Offices.

- Procured and delivered T-shirts, Speaker and Megaphones for LEECs.
- Procured and delivered 6 giant printers and printing consumables for printing of Final List of Voters (FLV).
- Procured and installed Soler Power Systems at the ECSL Headquarter and the Wellington premises.
- Set up of Gender & Disability working Group at district level.
- Funded the Set-up of a permanent Media Centre at ESCL headquarter for Media Engagement.
- Funded the set-up of the Elections Media Hub at Buntimani International Conference facility for the announcement of the 2023 General Election Result.
- Funded and facilitated the payment of Polling Staff Salaries for the June 2023 General Elections.

EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union (EU) funded the following activities:

- Printed the revised Public Election Act, 2022 (PEA 2022).
- Printed training materials for Voter Registration, Exhibition and Inquiry.
- Setup Gender & Disability Working Groups at regional level.
- Funded the Financial Management Training for district staff at regional level.
- Printed Nomination guide for the June 2023 General Elections.
- Supported the review of the Commission Human Resource (HR) Manual (Standing Order 'B').

ECOWAS

The ECOWAS also provided the Commission with funds totalling SLe 9.74 million to support electoral logistics and civil society organizations which undertook electoral education activities across the country for the June 2023 General Elections.

The Commission notes with appreciation all of these activities supported by the Donor partners mentioned above and solicits their continued collaboration.

INCOME ANALYSIS

YEAR	ELECTIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE RE-CURRENT GOSL	UNDP	ECOWAS	TOTAL
	SLE	**SLE**	**SLE**	**SLE**
2022	359,826,191	2,523,087	-	401,696,386
2023	323,649,115	7,732,870	9,740,300	382,915,156
Total	**683,475,306**	**10,255,957**	**9,740,300**	**784,611,542**

NOMINATION FEES ANALYSIS

YEAR	ELECTIONS	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	RATE (SLE)	AMOUNT (SLE)
2022	VARIOUS ELECTIONS			115,000
SUB-TOTAL				**115,000**
2023				
	PRESIDENTIAL	13	36,000.00	468,000.00
	PALIAMENTARY	898	3,600.00	3,232,800.00
	CHAIRPERSON	58	1,800.00	104,400.00
	MAYOR	40	1,800.00	72,000.00
	PCMP	26	3,600.00	93,600.00
	COUNCILORS	2667	600.00	1,600,200.00
	VILLAGE HEADS	405	300.00	121,500.00
SUB-TOTAL				**5,692,500**
TOTAL				**5,807,500**

EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS

Expenditure category	FY 2022 (SLe)	FY 2023 (SLe)	
PCMP	92,360	2,130,344	2,222,704
Village Head Election	210,150	6,479,117	6,689,267
Paramount Chieftaincy Election	3,059,435	1,903,913	4,963,348
Parliamentary Bye Election	1,812,118	-	1,812,118
Elections/Council Bye Election	1,335,369	-	1,335,369
Presidential/Parliamentary/Local Council (General Elections)	-	261,940,895	261,940,895
Biometric Voter Registration	349,069,775	60,481,263	409,551,038
Sub-Total	**355,579,207**	**332,935,532**	**688,514,739**
Administration	20,650,288	25,366,127	46,016,415
Capital Project	31,618,034	6,725,039	38,343,073
Payroll, Staff Cost	39,403,562	40,477,870	79,881,432
Sub-Total	**91,671,884**	**72,569,036**	**164,240,920**
TOTAL	**447,251,091**	**405,504,568**	**852,755,659**

Challenges

As earlier mentioned, the Commission commends the Government of Sierra Leone for the tremendous financial support for the electoral process.

Although a number of challenges were faced, they were, however, mainly administrative, such as dealing with procurement timelines, inter-departmental constraints etc. However, their occurrences were minimal and do not adversely affect the smooth conduct of the 2023 multi-tier elections.

Stakeholders Engagement

Stakeholders Engagement formed an important component of the Electoral Process for it provided the platform for stakeholders' deliberations on making informed decisions on critical electoral issues emerging from the conduct of all electoral process. The Commission as part of its constitutional mandate maintained a close collaboration with all of its key stakeholders.

Electoral Stakeholders

The key electoral stakeholders the Commission related with were particularly the Political Parties, Democratic and governance -related institutions such as the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), National Commission for Democracy (NCD), the Security Sector including the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), the Office of National Security (ONS), the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), the Sierra Leone Correctional Centre, Sierra Leone Fire Force etc.

The Commission also had a strong collaboration with Civil Society Organizations such as Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), National Elections Watch (NEW), Elections Conflict and Mediation Group (EC&MG), CHARDI and others, in the implementation of its activities.

Stakeholders Engagement

The Commission for the period under review continued its engagement with its stakeholders on issues bordering the electoral process. The engagement was diverse and dependent on the collaborated Institution or Stakeholder. For instance, Political parties were engaged on issues bordering the conduct of electoral operations as stipulated in the legal framework. The Security sector was engaged and collaborated with ensuring that the requisite security was provided for both personnel and materials in the conduct of electoral processes. Civil Society Organizations were engaged in the conduct of activities such as electoral education and sensitization, conflict mediation and or resolution on critical issues that emerged between Inter and Intra-party stakeholders and the Commission.

Fig. 52: Women's engagement on the PR System

Fig. 53: Stakeholders engagement on the PR System in Falaba District

The Political Parties Liaison Committee Meetings (PPLC)

The PPLC is a forum established by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone that constitute key stakeholders such as Political Parties, Civil Society Groups, the Security Sector and Development Partners. The Commission for the period under review held PPLC meetings on a fortnightly basis. Participants were drawn from the 17 registered Political Parties, Election Management Bodies, Civil Society Organizations and the Security sector.

The objective of the meeting was to engage, discuss and update stakeholders on the conduct of electoral activities before, during and after every electoral activity. The meetings which were replicated at the regional and district levels also provided the opportunity to address emerging critical issues that had the potential to negatively affect the electoral process.

Steering Committee

The Electoral Commission was part of the Election Steering Committee that was set up by the GoSL and Development Partners and comprised elections stakeholders, including representatives of the GoSL, Election Management Bodies, Security Sector, Governance Institutions, Development Partners and CSOs and co-chaired by the Chief Minister and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone. The objective of the steering committee was to coordinate and address funding considerations for the 2023 elections in Sierra Leone.

Election Observer Missions

The Commission for the period under review provided access to stakeholders to observe the electoral process. Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations, Domestic and International Observer Groups such as the NEW, ECOWAS, the AU, the Commonwealth, Carter Centre etc; were accredited to observe the electoral process particularly the conduct of polls and Elections Result Management.

The accreditation to observe the Electoral process was aimed at enhancing Transparency and Accountability which had helped to boost the trust and confidence of stakeholders in the operations of the Commission.

The outcome of the Elections Observer Missions can be found in their final reports.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

The Commission for the period under review noted the tremendous collaboration and contributions made by Civil Society Organizations such as the National Elections Watch, Campaign for Good Governance, CHARDI etc.

The collaboration between the CSOs namely Inter Religious Groups, Eminent Women and CHARDI facilitated engagements with electoral stakeholders on mediation of potential conflicts before, during and after the conduct of elections. The intervention of the Elections Conflict and Mediation Group (ECP & MG) had been very effective and was worthy to note in addressing electoral conflicts before, during and after the conduct of the 2023 elections.

The Media

The Commission through its Media and Communication Department maintained a sustained media and communication relationship with its stakeholders and the electorate through information sharing. The main channels of communication were primarily through Radio and Television discussion programmes at both National, Regional and District levels, update of the ECSL website, publishing of ECSL activities on newspapers and others.

The following strategic accomplishments are worthy to note in the conduct of the 2023 elections:

- Held regular Radio and Television programmes dubbed as "the ECSL Elections Hour".
- Facilitated the holding of Press Conferences at national level.
- Facilitated the training of journalists on elections reporting.
- Successfully mapped out print and Electronic Media Houses in setting up of a WhatsApp Group named 'ECSL Media.'
- Popularized the commission's electoral activities through clarification of certain misinformation in a timely manner using various social media outlets.

Collaboration Strategies and Outcomes

The Electoral Commission developed its Communication Policy and Strategies and used them to implement its engagement and collaboration with political parties, civil society, the security sector the media, development partners and the GoSL. The Commission held series of engagements with diverse stakeholders and partners at national and district levels on electoral education, awareness raising and electoral preparedness.

Through collaborative engagements, the Commission trained Political Parties Agents on Polling and Counting Procedures and accredited them to observe the polling, counting and tallying processes in 11,832 polling stations nationwide and 5 regional tally centres. The Commission, with funds provided by ECOWAS, engaged 27 CSOs to conduct nationwide civic and electoral education on nonviolence elections and the Proportional Representation Electoral Systems for the 2023 Parliamentary and Local Councillor elections in Sierra Leone.

The Electoral Commission's engagement platforms were also used to draw a nationwide election campaign calendars for political parties and candidates contesting the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council elections in June 2023.

Village Head Elections

Pursuant to Section 33 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991) and Sections 68, 93, and (106 to 109) of the Public Elections Act 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022), the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) conducted Village Head Elections (VHE) on Saturday 28th October 2023 in the Western Area Rural District, in accordance with the relevant Electoral legal framework.

The elections for Heads of Villages in the Western Area Rural District (WARD-C) were as a result of the end of terms of the substantive holders of the 121 villages in accordance with the relevant electoral legal framework. Polls were conducted in Eighty –nine (89) villages and were generally considered peaceful with few isolated incidents. Thirty-two (32) villages were uncontested, and the candidates were duly elected.

Stakeholders Engagement

Series of engagements were held with electoral stakeholders. This includes stakeholders meeting in every zone where stakeholders were thoroughly briefed about the entire electoral process. A sustained electoral /voter education campaign was also rolled out using both traditional and modern methods of sensitization. Town Criers and Village Electoral Education Committees (VEECs) were recruited and deployed at the various communities.

Confirmation and Placement

Prior to the conduct of the VHE voters were confirmed and placed in all 194 Voter Registration Centres from 21st to 25th September,2023. This exercise provided the opportunity to facilitate transfer of voters to appropriate centres.

Nomination of candidates

The nomination process occurred between October 4th and 7th, 2023, where candidates from 121 villages presented themselves at nomination centres. For the Western Area Rural District (WARD-C), encompassing 121 villages, a total of 305 nominations were submitted to the Commission. Following the nominations, two candidates withdrew, resulting in 271 candidates competing across 89 villages.

Electoral Campaigns

Campaign timetables were developed for every village by the ECSL in collaboration with the candidates contesting the elections. Copies of the twelve days of campaign period were evenly distributed amongst the Candidates bearing signatures of the candidates, ECSL and the security sector.

Electoral Petitions

The Commission received a total of 45 petitions from candidates who participated in the Village Head Elections (VHE). The petitions were reviewed and 42 were dismissed for lack of sufficient evidence for the results to be overturned for a possible re-run. The two rerun elections whose petitions were upheld were Bonga Wharf and No.2 River. These two elections were later held on the 11th November 2023.

Tallying of Result

The tallying of results for the VHE was conducted from 30th October to 2nd November 2023. The first results for the 85 villages were declared on the 3rd November 2023. The two rerun elections for Bonga Wharf and No.2 River were declared on the 15th of November 2023 at the ECSL conference room together with Sussex Kingtom and Samuel Town.

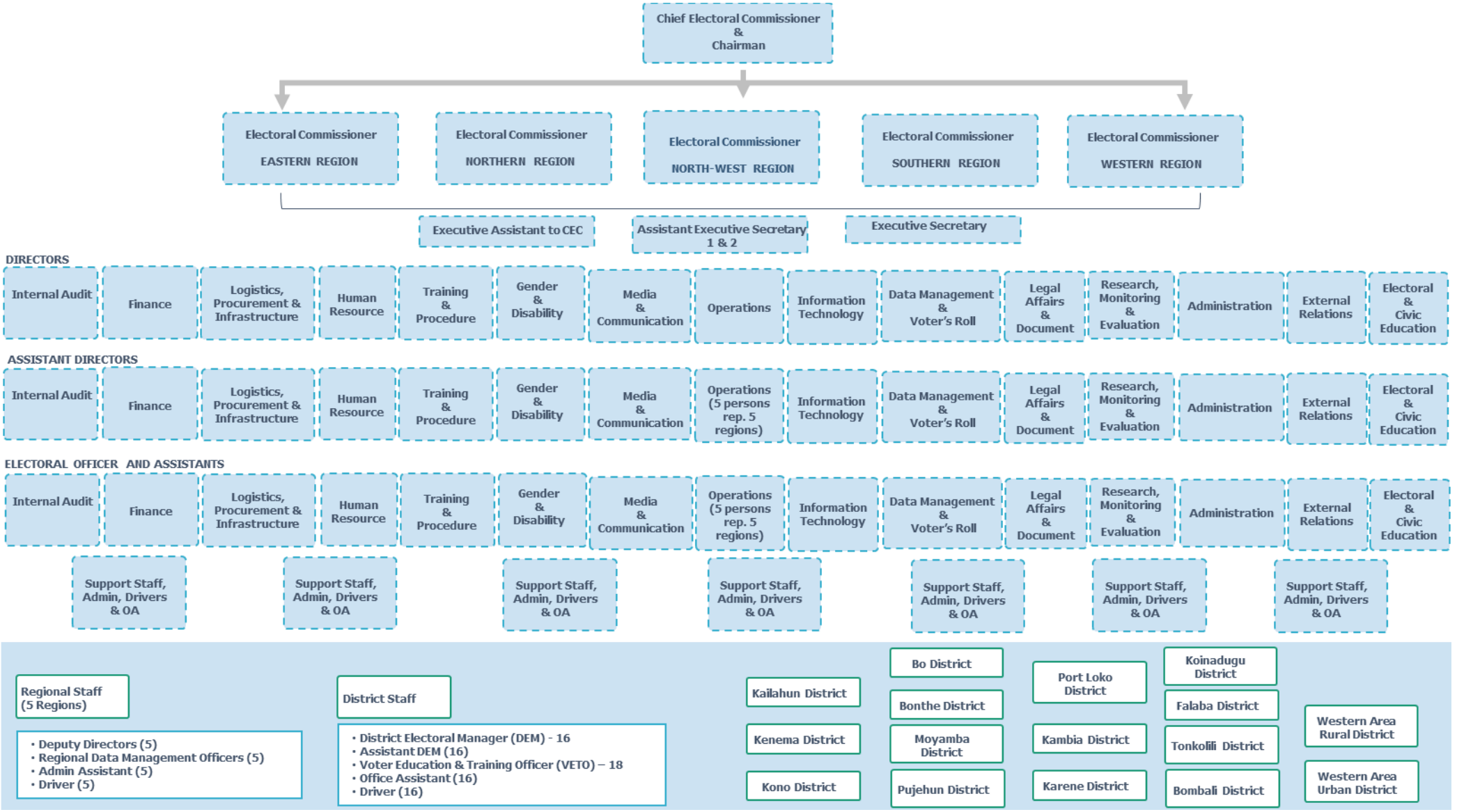
ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

ECSL	Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
APC	All People's Congress
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EOM	Election Observation Mission
CEC	Chief Electoral Commissioner
EU	European Union
FPTP	First Past The Post
GPS	Geographical Positioning System
ICB	International Competitive Bidding
MP	Member of Parliament
NCD	National Council for Democracy
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
NEST	National Sustainability Trust Fund
NEW	National Election Watch
NMJD	National Movement for Justice and Development
ONS	Office of National Security
PCMP	Paramount Chief Member of Parliament
PEA	Public Elections Act
PPLC	Political Party Liaison Committee
PPRC	Political Parties Regulation Commission
PR	Proportional Representation
PRDB	Proportional Representation District Block
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PMDC	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
EC & MG	Elections Conflict and Mediation Group
ID	Identity Document

ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
VHE	Village Head Election
VEECs	Village Electoral Education Committees
WEECs	Ward Electoral Education Committee
LEECs	Locality Electoral Committees
PC	Paramount Chief
PLV	Provisional Voter's List
NASSIT	National Social Security and Insurance Trust
NCD	National Council for Democracy
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
PCMP	Political Party Monitoring Program
PRDB	Proportional Representation District Block
EC & MG	Elections Conflict and Mediation Group
ID	Identity Document

ANNEX 2: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE ELECTORALCOMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE



ANNEX 3: MANAGEMENT TEAM

NO.	NAME	TITLE
1.	William A. Davies	Executive Secretary
2.	Mohamed Turay	Assistant Executive Secretary - Operations
3.	Gladys N. John	Assistant Executive Secretary - Support
4.	Alex Pat Labib Saffa	Executive Asst. to CEC & Chairman
5.	Gibrilla Murray Jusu	Director of Training & Procedures - HQ
6.	Aiah E. Sam	Director of Internal Audit - HQ
7.	Raymond A.N. George	Director of Media and Communication - HQ
8.	Josephine Jenneh Koroma	Director of Human Resources and Capacity Development – HQ
9.	Mbekay S. Amara	Director of Info. Comm. & Tech. – HQ
10.	Agnes Tarawally	Director of Finance
11.	Albert Massaquoi	Director of External Relations - HQ
12.	Philip Fara Kargbo Esq	Director of Research, Monitoring & Evaluation - HQ
13.	Aiah Quiwa	Director of Admin - HQ
14.	Paul Damba	Director of Operations - HQ
15.	Sheku Loleh	Director of Procurement and Logistics - HQ
16.	Fatorma Fah-Bundeh Esq	Director of Legal Affairs - HQ
17.	Momoh M. Kanneh	Director of Electoral Education - HQ
18.	Christiana O'Reilly	Director of Gender & Disability – HQ
19.	Jusufu Henry Swaray Jr.	Director of Data Management and Voter Roll – HQ
20.	John Paul Simbo	Deputy Director – Ethics Unit - HQ

ANNEX 4: ADDRESSES OF ECSL OFFICES NATIONWIDE

REGION	DISTRICT	ADDRESSES
NATIONAL HEAD QUARTERS	Western Urban	O.A.U. Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown
EASTERN	Kailahun	O.A.U. Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown
	Kenema	GEL Compound, Mbelebu Section, Kailahun
	Kono	59 Wahmann Abu Road, by SLTU Office
NORTHERN	Bombali	Azzolini Highway, Makeni City
	Falaba	Mongo Town
	Koinadugu	158A Main Makeni Road-One Mile, Kabala
	Tonkolili	15 Boys School Road, Magburaka Town
NORTH- WEST	Kambia	District Council Area, Kambia 2, Kambia
	Karene	Kamalo Highway, Kamakwie Town
	Port Loko	Port Loko Road, Gbinti (Close to the Round About)
SOUTHERN	Bo	11 Shebureh Street, Off Sewa Road
	Bonthe	144 Bo Road, Mattru Jong, Bonthe Mainland
		13/13A Claffin Lane, Bonthe Island
	Moyamba	8 Kpangbavie Street, Moyamba Town
	Pujehun	8 Sesay Street, Fernandopo, Pujehun Town
WESTERN	Western Rural	Chukuma Johnson Drive, Waterloo
	Western Urban	Murray Town Junction, Freetown

ANNEX 5: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

SECTION 32 (2)

The members of the Electoral Commission shall be a Chief Electoral Commissioner, who shall be the **Chairman**, and **four (4)** other members who shall be known as Electoral Commissioners.

01

AMENDMENT

The members of the Electoral Commission shall be a Chief Electoral Commissioner, who shall be the **Chairman** and **five (5)** other members who shall be appoint for each region, who shall be known as Electoral Commissioners.

Section 32(8)

A member of the Electoral Commission may be removed from office by the President for inability to discharge the functions of his office (whether arising from infirmity of mind or body or any other cause) or for **misbehaviour.**

02

AMENDMENT

A member of the Electoral Commission may be removed from office by the President for inability to discharge the functions of his office (whether arising from infirmity of mind or body or any other cause) or for **'gross misconduct'.**

CI No. 57 of 2017

The issue is with the ±25% Population Deviation Range which references Section 38(3&6) of the Constitution. It is considered to be too large. Recommendation was in favor of reducing same.

03

PROPOSAL:
To reduce the Population Boundary Delimitation Deviation Range from ±25% to ±20%.

AMENDMENT

The Population Boundary Delimitation Deviation Range has been reduced from ±25% to ±20%.

Section 76(1)(a)

No person shall be qualified for election as a Member of Parliament— if he is a naturalized citizen of Sierra Leone or is a citizen of a country other than Sierra Leone having become such a citizen voluntarily or is under a declaration of allegiance to such a country.

04

AMENDMENT

To provide for a naturalized citizen of Sierra Leone (dual citizen) … to be eligible to contest Parliamentary but not presidential elections.

(The supreme court ruled in David Forna AND Dr. Kandeh K. Yumkellah, NEC and others, that persons with dual citizenship are eligible to contest parliamentary but not presidential elections)

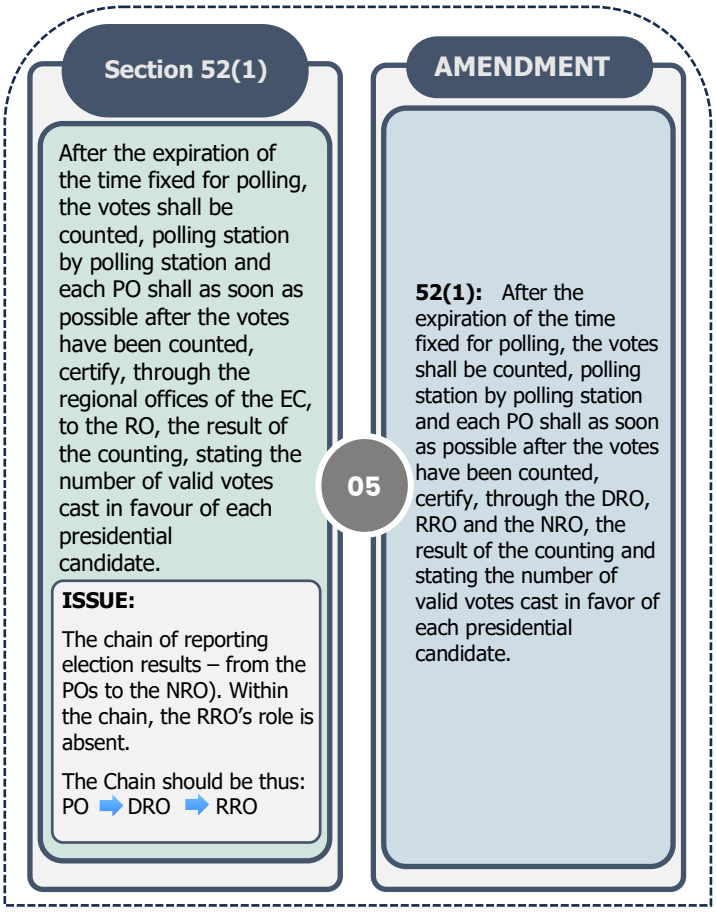
ANNEX 6: STATUTORY AMENDMENTS OF THE PUBLIC ELECTIONS ACTS, 2012

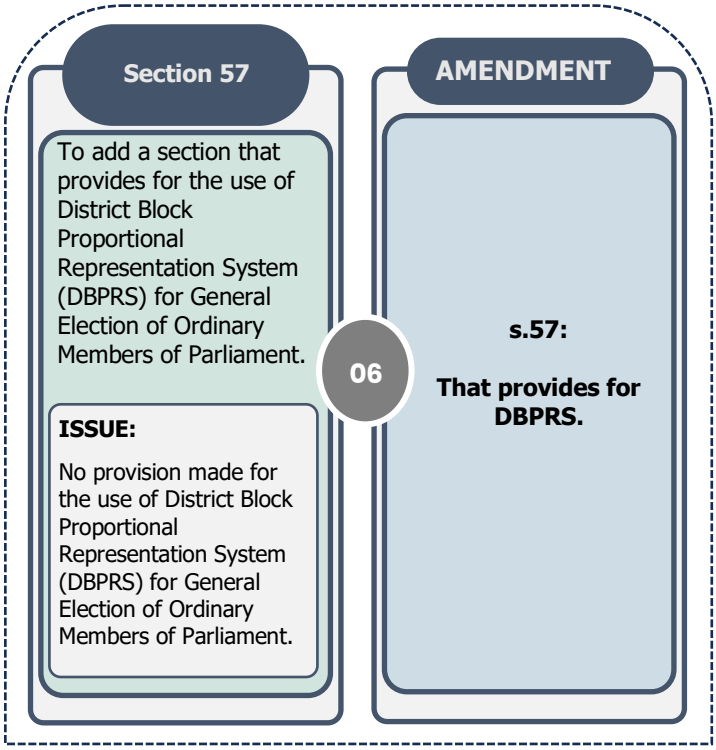
Section 1	AMENDMENT
• Regional Returning Officer; • District Returning Officer; • Polling Centre; • Registration Centre; and • Polling Centre Manager **ISSUE:** To include in the Interpretation Section of the Bill 2022	01 • Regional Returning Officer; • District Returning Officer; • Polling Centre; • Registration Centre; • Polling Centre Manager; • Polling Agent; and • Polling Station.

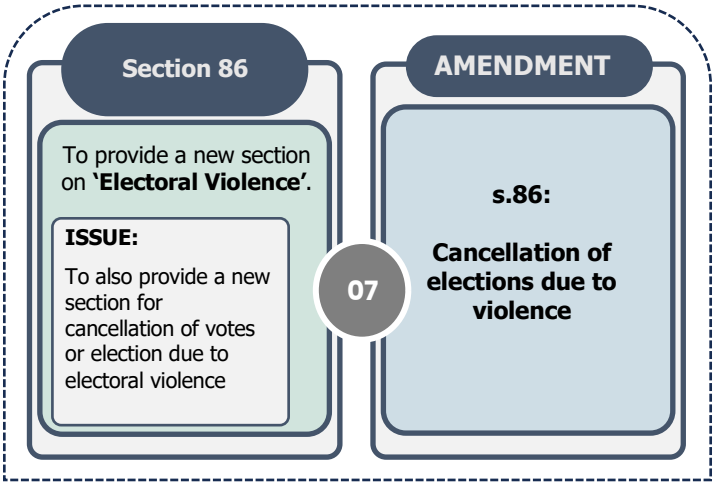
Section 1	
To provide for the use of the National Identification Number (NIN) to the Register of Voters. **ISSUE:** NIN not provided for in the PEA 2012.	02

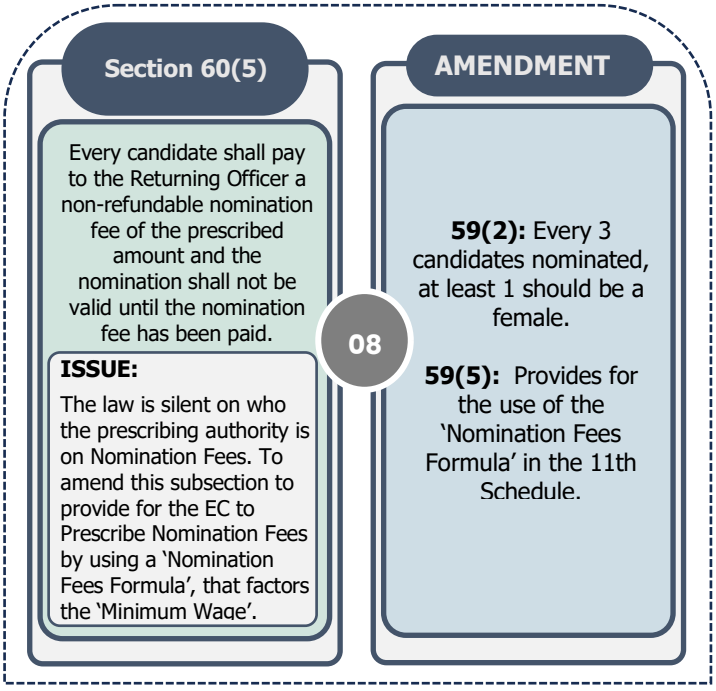
Section 40(1)	AMENDMENT
Where a voter who is registered in one ward becomes ordinarily resident in another ward, he may apply to the Registration Officer of the ward in which he currently resides for his name to be transferred to the Register of Voters for that ward. **ISSUE:** The deadline for the transfer of registered voters from one Ward to another. **Aki-Sawyerr vs NEC (2018); and** **De'souza George vs NEC (2018).**	03 **39(3):** Where the Registration Officer is satisfied with the applicant's application, the transfer of the applicant's name to another Register of Voters shall be done within – **(a)** 3 months from the date of receipt of the application in the case of a General and Presidential election. **(b) 21 days from the date of receipt of the application in the case of a bye-elections. (removed)**

Section 46(1)	AMENDMENT
A Presidential candidate shall not be entitled to take part in a Presidential election unless he has paid to the Returning Officer a non-refundable election fee of such amount as may be prescribed. **ISSUE:** The prescribing authority for Nomination Fees was not stated in the Act. Also, there was no standardized method of computing such fees through **'Nomination Fees Formula'**.	04 **45(1) provides for the 'Nomination Fees Formula'.** • **PRESIDENT** *Minimum wage* **X** *12 Months* **X** *5 years* • **MPS and PCMPs** *Minimum wage* **X** *6 Months* • **MAYOR OR CHAIRPERSON** *Minimum wage* X *3 Months* • **COUNCILOR Minimum wage** • **VILLAGE HEAD Half of Minimum wage**


Section 52(1)
After the expiration of the time fixed for polling, the votes shall be counted, polling station by polling station and each PO shall as soon as possible after the votes have been counted, certify, through the regional offices of the EC, to the RO, the result of the counting, stating the number of valid votes cast in favour of each presidential candidate.
ISSUE:
The chain of reporting election results – from the POs to the NRO). Within the chain, the RRO's role is absent.
The Chain should be thus: PO ➡ DRO ➡ RRO
05
AMENDMENT
52(1): After the expiration of the time fixed for polling, the votes shall be counted, polling station by polling station and each PO shall as soon as possible after the votes have been counted, certify, through the DRO, RRO and the NRO, the result of the counting and stating the number of valid votes cast in favor of each presidential candidate.


Section 57
To add a section that provides for the use of District Block Proportional Representation System (DBPRS) for General Election of Ordinary Members of Parliament.
ISSUE:
No provision made for the use of District Block Proportional Representation System (DBPRS) for General Election of Ordinary Members of Parliament.
06
AMENDMENT
s.57:
That provides for DBPRS.


Section 86
To provide a new section on 'Electoral Violence'.
ISSUE:
To also provide a new section for cancellation of votes or election due to electoral violence
07
AMENDMENT
s.86:
Cancellation of elections due to violence


Section 60(5)
Every candidate shall pay to the Returning Officer a non-refundable nomination fee of the prescribed amount and the nomination shall not be valid until the nomination fee has been paid.
ISSUE:
The law is silent on who the prescribing authority is on Nomination Fees. To amend this subsection to provide for the EC to Prescribe Nomination Fees by using a 'Nomination Fees Formula', that factors the 'Minimum Wage'.
08
AMENDMENT
59(2): Every 3 candidates nominated, at least 1 should be a female.
59(5): Provides for the use of the 'Nomination Fees Formula' in the 11th Schedule.

SECTIONS	AMENDMENT
SECTION 109 – 113 To provide for Head of Villages and Town Elections	**SECTION 109 – 113** Heads of Villages and Towns and how they are elected.
SECTION 110 Nomination Fee as per 11th Schedule of this Bill. Minimum Wage	**SECTION 111** Qualifications to become a Head of Village or Town: **(a)** citizen and a voter. **(b)** is not less than 30 years of age. **(c)** has resided in the village or town for not less than 5 years immediately before seeking to be elected as a head; and **(d)** has paid all taxes and rates in the Western Area Rural District as required by law.
SECTION 112 Tenure of office of head of Village or Town is 4 years.	**SECTION 112** Regulation for elections of Head of Village or Town

09

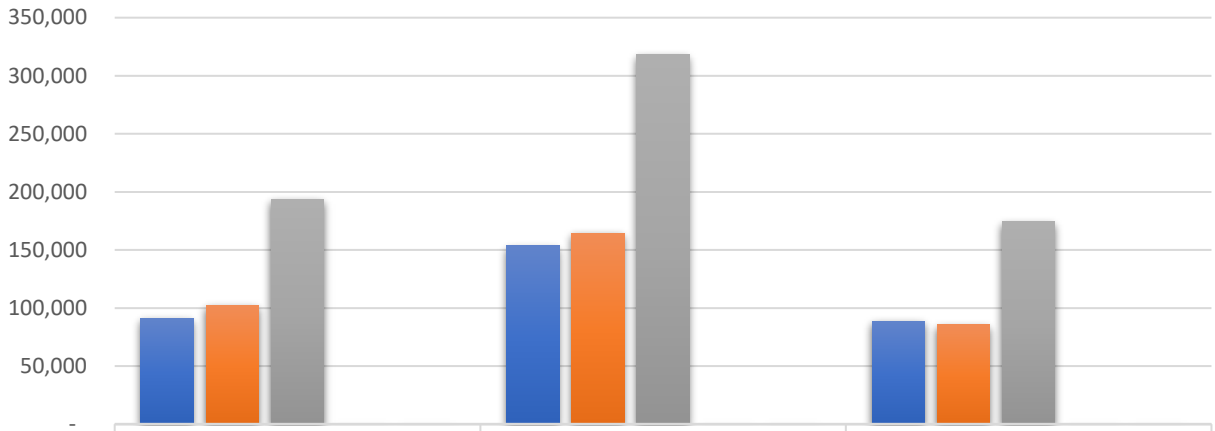
PART XIII (Sections 138–147)	AMENDMENT
This Part deals with **'Election Petitions and Civil Proceedings'**. **ISSUE:** This part only considered Parliamentary Elections. It does not capture Presidential and Local Council elections. To amend these sections to provide for Presidential and Local Council Election Petition Cases.	**Part XIV (Sections 148–157).** These sections have accordingly been moved to Part XIV.

10

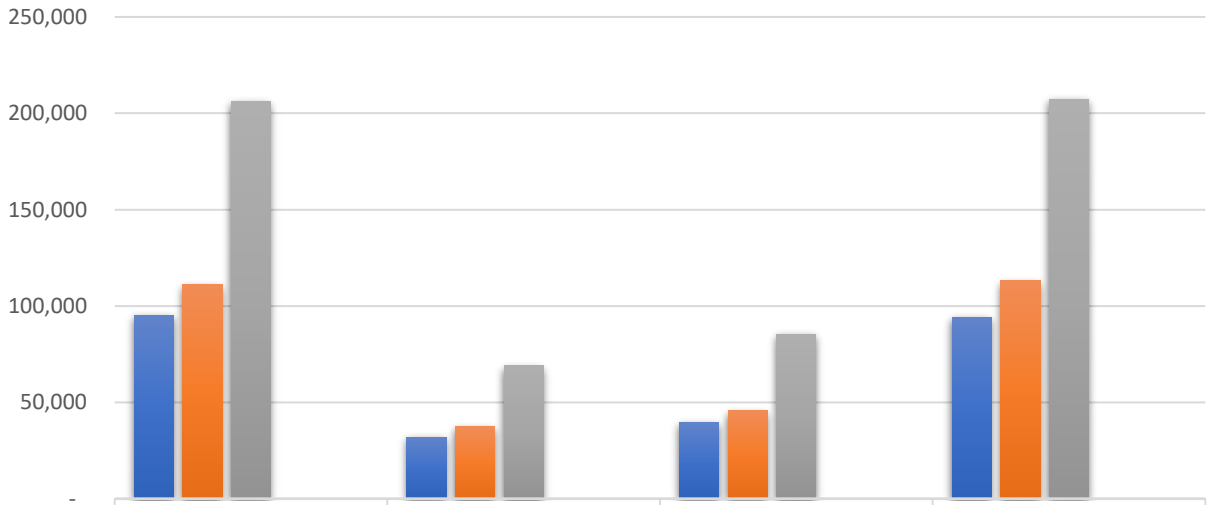
NEST FUND	AMENDMENT
ISSUE: The Act did not provide for a Elections Financing mechanism by the state. To provide for a National Elections Sustainability and Trust (NEST) Fund, to be managed by the ECSL for	**ISSUE:** The EC's staff are not provided for in terms of their protections and safety in course of their duty. To provide for staff protections.
Amendment: 167 There is hereby established a fund to be known as the 'National Elections Sustainability and Trust Fund which shall be managed by the EC for the financing of public elections	**Amendment: 174(2)(b)** Notwithstanding the generality of subsection (1), Regulations to be made by the EC may include Regulation to provide for – (b) The safety and security of its staff in the performance of their duties.

STAFF'S CONDITIONS OF SERVICE
ISSUE: EC's staffs are not provided for conditions of service commensurate to the nature, importance and riskiness of their job.
Amendment: Has been provided for in the Bill.

ANNEX 7: BAR CHART SHOWING VOTER REGISTRATION BY REGION

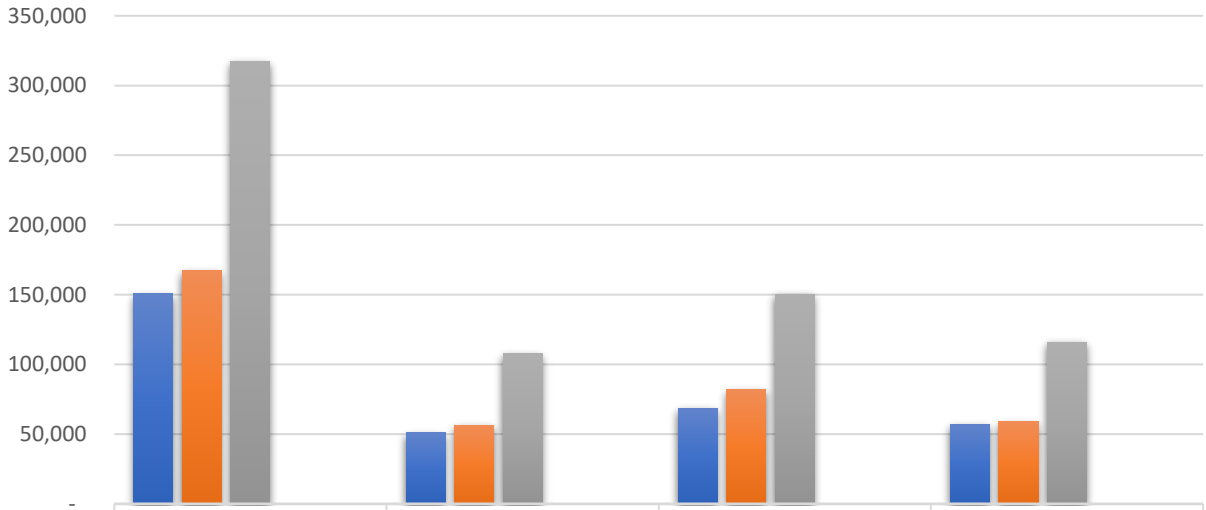


	Kailahun	Kenema	Kono
Number of Male	91,340	153,426	88,724
Number of Female	102,238	164,552	85,481
Total	193,578	317,978	174,205
% Male	47.19	48.25	50.93
% Female	52.81	51.75	49.07



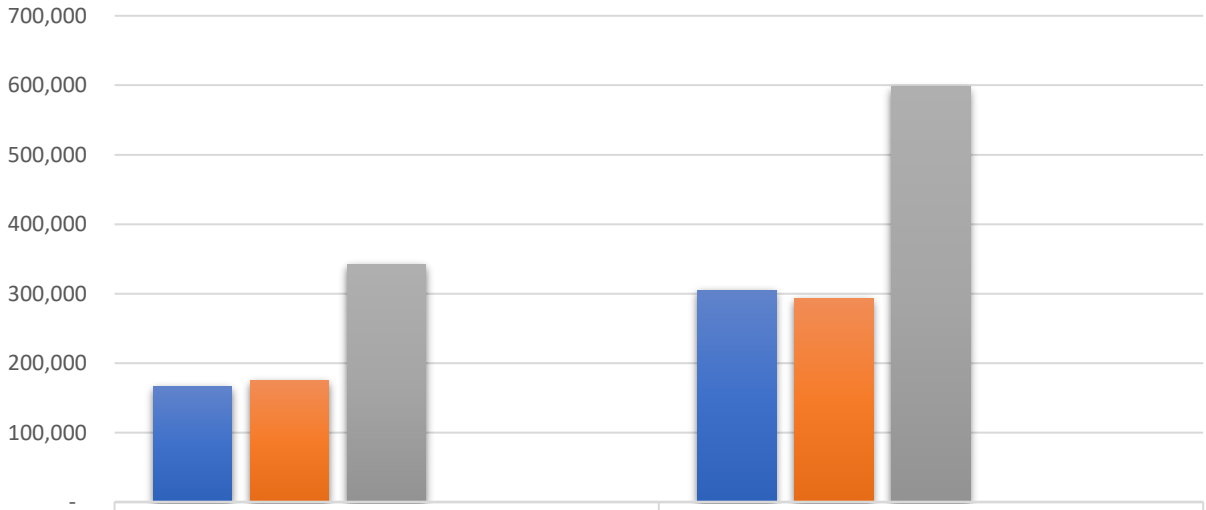
	Bombali	Falaba	Koinadugu	Tonkolili
Number of Male	95,222	31,844	39,561	94,272
Number of Female	111,028	37,284	45,697	113,070
Total	206,250	69,128	85,258	207,342
% Male	46.17	46.07	46.40	45.47
% Female	53.83	53.93	53.60	54.53

SOUTH



	Bo	Bonthe	Moyamba	Pujehun
Number of Male	150,563	51,007	68,374	56,968
Number of Female	167,022	56,525	81,836	58,821
Total	317,585	107,532	150,210	115,789
% Male	47.41	47.43	45.52	49.20
% Female	52.59	52.57	54.48	50.80

WEST



	Western Area Rural	Western Area Urban
Number of Male	166,243	304,891
Number of Female	175,521	293,131
Total	341,764	598,022
% Male	48.64	50.98
% Female	51.36	49.02

ANNEX 8: SAMPLE BALLOT PAPERS

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
TONKOLILI DISTRICT
000000
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Bangura John Ahmed
IND
BOOK
Conteh, Alpha Jonathan
IND
POT
Kamara, Foday S.
IND
UMBRELLA
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SAMPLE

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
PORT LOKO DISTRICT
000000
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Fofanah, Osman
IND
Kabba, Mohamed
IND
Koroma, Abdul Rahman
IND
National Grand Coalition
NGC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SAMPLE

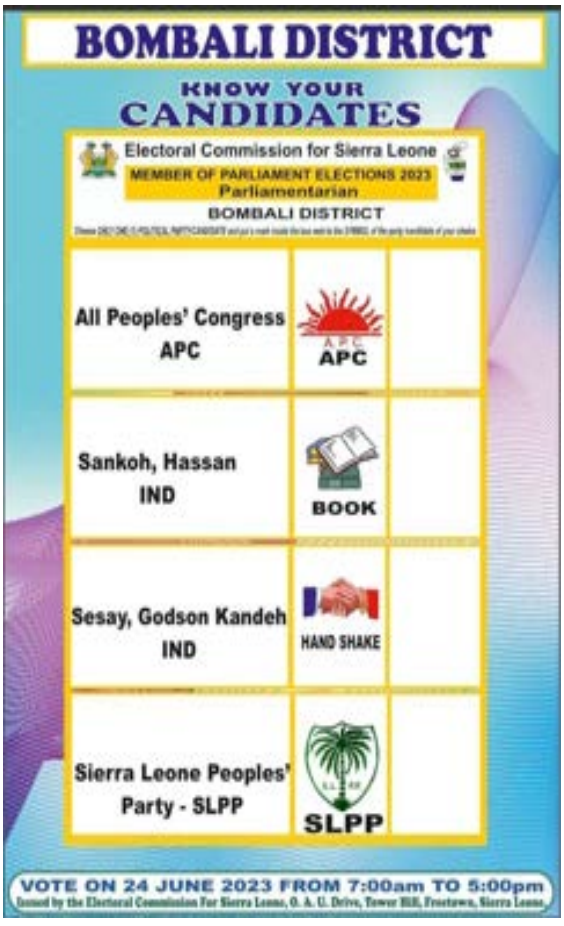
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
BO DISTRICT
000000
All Peoples' Congress - APC
APC
National Unity Reconciliation Party
NURP
Peoples' Movement for
Democratic Change - PMDC
PMDC
Saccoh, Lansana - IND
LADDER
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP
Sinnie, Patrick Fouad - IND
HUSK RICE
SAMPLE

MOYAMBA DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
MOYAMBA DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Bendu, Charles Roy
IND
HUSK RICE
National Grand Coalition
NGC
Peoples' Movement for
Democratic Change - PMDC
PMDC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KAILAHUN DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
KAILAHUN DISTRICT
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

MOYAMBA DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
MOYAMBA DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Bendu, Charles Roy
IND
HUSK RICE
National Grand Coalition
NGC
Peoples' Movement for
Democratic Change - PMDC
PMDC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KOINADUGU DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
KOINADUGU DISTRICT
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Marah, Kaifala
IND
HUSK RICE
National Democratic Alliance
NDA
NDA
National Grand Coalition
NGC
NGC
Republic National Independent
Party - ReNIP
ReNIP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm


BOMBALI DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
BOMBALI DISTRICT
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Sankoh, Hassan
IND
BOOK
Sesay, Godson Kandeh
IND
HAND SHAKE
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

PUJEHUN DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
PUJEHUN DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
Choose ONLY ONE (1) POLITICAL PARTY and put a mark inside the box next to the SYMBOL of the party of your choice
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Peoples' Movement for
Democratic Change - PMDC
PMDC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

FALABA DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
FALABA DISTRICT
Choose ONLY ONE (1) POLITICAL PARTY and put a mark inside the box next to the SYMBOL of the party of your choice
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
National Democratic
Alliance - NDA
NDA
National Grand Coalition
- NGC
NGC
Republic National
Independent Party - ReNIP
ReNIP
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

BONTHE DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
BONTHE DISTRICT
Choose ONLY ONE (1) POLITICAL PARTY and put a mark inside the box next to the SYMBOL of the party of your choice
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KAMBIA DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
KAMBIA DISTRICT
Choose ONLY ONE (1) POLITICAL PARTY and put a mark inside the box next to the SYMBOL of the party of your choice
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
National Democratic Alliance
NDA
NDA
National Grand Coalition
NGC
NGC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KENEMA DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
KENEMA DISTRICT
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Conteh, Alusine - IND
HOUSE
Mattia, Peter - IND
HAND SHAKE
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KARENE DISTRICT
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
KARENE DISTRICT
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Revolutionary United
Front Party - RUFP
RUFP
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

WESTERN AREA RURAL DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
WESTERN AREA RURAL DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Kallon, Jenneh Grace
IND
BOOK
Kamara, Abdulai Driscoll Gent
IND
TRACTOR
National Grand Coalition
NGC
NGC
Peoples' Liberation Party
PLP
PLP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

WESTERN AREA URBAN DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2023
Parliamentarian
WESTERN AREA URBAN DISTRICT PARLIAMENTARY
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Cole, Dennis Desmond Fredrich
IND
BANANA
Kanu, Alie Sani
IND
KEY
Kpaka, Abdul
IND
EYE
National Grand Coalition
NGC
NGC
Peoples' Democratic Party
PDP
PDP
Richards, Chiny
IND
Sesay Ahmed Sanousi
IND
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
Weekes, Thomas Christian
IND
FISH
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Mayor Election
MAKENI CITY COUNCIL
000000
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Mayor
MAKENI CITY COUNCIL
000000
KABIA
Ramata
UNPP
KAMARA
Abdul Rahman
ADP
KAMARA
Abu Bakarr
APC
KAMARA
Amadu Amadu
SLPP
KAMARA
Fatmata Alimatu
UDM
KOROMA
Alhaji Bunde
PLP
SAMPLE

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
000000
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
000000
BANGURA
Amara
UDM
CONTEH
Bornoh
PLP
DABOR
Alie
SLPP
SISAY
Mohamed M. B.
APC
SAMPLE

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
MAKENI CITY COUNCIL
000000
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
MAKENI CITY COUNCIL
000000
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Citizen's Democratic Party
CDP
CDP
Peoples' Liberation Party
PLP
PLP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
SAMPLE

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
000000
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
000000
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Alliance Democratic Party
ADP
ADP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
SAMPLE

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
Chairperson
FOFANAH
Musa Komoh
LARKOH
Fatmata
SESAY
SESAY
Ahmed Mamade
SESAY
Yabom
SAMPLE

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
Chairperson
BARRIE
Mohamed Dainkeh
COLE
Eugene Ayo
HOLLAND-COLE
KAMARA
Abdulai B. G.
KAMARA
KARGBO
Sulaiman Samba
KOROMA
Mariama
TIPSON
Phebian
SAMPLE

PUJEHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
Councillor
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Massaquoi, Jusu
IND
UMBRELLA
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP

BONTHE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
Councillor
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP

PORT LOKO DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
Councillor
All Peoples' Congress
APC
National Grand Coalition
NGC
ADP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP

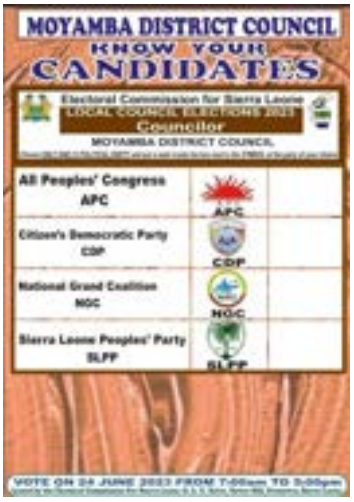
FREETOWN CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
Councillor
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Peoples' Democratic Party
PDP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP

WESTERN AREA RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

PORT LOKO CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
PORT LOKO CITY COUNCIL
KAMARA
Ibrahim
SLPP
KAMARA
Thigidakay D.
FISH
TARAWALIE
Alie B.
APC
TARAWALLIE
Salamatu I.
ADP
TURAY
Mariatu S
NDA

BONTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
Councillor
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Sierra Leone Peoples'
Party - SLPP
SLPP

BO CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
BO CITY COUNCIL
DUMBUYA Abdulai Sankoh
APC
FATOMA Zainab
NURP
MUSA Kebbie
SLPP
MAI Ramatu
PMDC
KAMBASU Glory Phoebe
ReNIP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm


MOYAMBA DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
MOYAMBA DISTRICT COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Citizen's Democratic Party
CDP
CDP
National Grand Coalition
NGC
NGC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

WESTERN AREA RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
WESTERN AREA RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Kargbo, Alie Abu
IND
BDDR
Peoples' Democratic Party
PDP
PDP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KOINADUGU DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
KOINADUGU DISTRICT COUNCIL
FABIEH
PLP
JALLOH
NDA
KARGBO
CDP
KAMARA
APC
SLPP
MANSARAY
ReNIP
NGC
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KAILAHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
KAILAHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
LAMIE
Sahr Ahmed
SLPP
LENGOR
Morie Sam
RUFP
NGOBEH
Jusu Jaka
APC
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

BO CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
BO CITY COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
- SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

FREETOWN CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
APC
CONTEH
USM
KAMARA
RUFP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

MOYAMBA DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
MOYAMBA DISTRICT COUNCIL
JEMBEH
CDP
JOMBLA
Jimmy Hinga
UMBRELLA
KORPOI
APC
MBOGBA
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

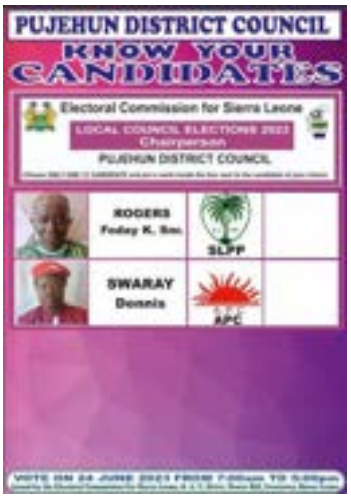
BONTHE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Mayor Election
BONTHE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
NDIMAWA
Fanny Nevna
APC
ROBINSON
Mohamed M.
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

PORT LOKO CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Mayor Election
PORT LOKO CITY COUNCIL
KAMARA Ibrahim
SLPP
KAMARA Thigidakay S.
FISH
TARAMALIE Alie B.
APC
TARAWALLIE Salamatu I.
ADP
TURAY Marlieta S
NDA
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KAILAHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
KAILAHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress APC
APC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party - SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

PORT LOKO DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
PORT LOKO DISTRICT COUNCIL
KABBA Lamin
PLP
KAMARA Ibrahim
NDA
SACCOH Sheku Tejan
APC
SESAY Kaibba
PDP
SUKKH Fatmata Mbomboy
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

BO DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
BO DISTRICT COUNCIL
AMADU, Patrick
IND
UMBRELLA
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
MUSTAPHA, Septimus Amara
IND
HAND SHAKE
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party - SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm


PUJEHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
PUJEHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
ROGERS Foday K. Snr.
SLPP
SWARAY Dennis
APC
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KOIDU-NEW SEMBEHUN CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
BONGAY Aminata
UNPP
BONGA Sahr
NURF
KABANDA William Braham
APC
SAM Komba
SLPP
SOH Mohamed Peredjor
NDA
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

BO DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
BO DISTRICT COUNCIL
HINDOWA Victor Kerseh
SLPP
KARGBO Salley Marion A.
APC
SALLIAH Foday Morie
RUFP
SHERIFF Mohamed Mambu
PMDC
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KARENE DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
KARENE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MBAYOH Sahr
RUFP
SACCOH Theresa
SLPP
TURAY Abdul Kondeh
APC
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

PORT LOKO CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councillor
PORT LOKO CITY COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
APC
Alliance Democratic Party
ADP
ADP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councilor
BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Alliance Democratic Party
ADP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KENEMA DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
KENEMA DISTRICT COUNCIL
FARMA
Morie Momoh
ADP
SELLU
George
APC
SESAY
Mohamed Amadu
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

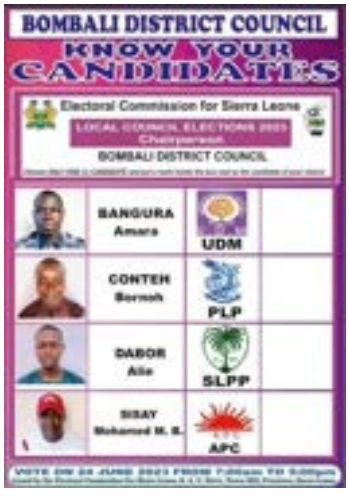
TONKOLILI DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
TONKOLILI DISTRICT COUNCIL
FOFANAH
Musa Kemoh
LAMKOH
Fatmata
SESAY
Alusine Abdulai
SESAY
Amed Mamadu
SESAY
Yaboni
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KONO DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councilor
KONO DISTRICT COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Peoples' Movement for
Democratic Change - PMDC
PMDC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

FALABA DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councilor
FALABA DISTRICT COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
National Democratic Alliance
NDA
National Grand Coalition
- NGC
NGC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KENEMA DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councilor
KENEMA DISTRICT COUNCIL
All Peoples' Congress
APC
SAMA, Mohamed S. K. Harding
IND
HUSK RICE
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

KENEMA CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
KENEMA CITY COUNCIL
SAIO
Thomas Korima
SLPP
BUCKARIE
Mohamadu Bah
BucNDP
FOFANAH
Aminatu
NUPP
KAMARA
Hawa
UDM
KAMARA
Bockarie
ADP
SHAW
Abdul Karim
NDA
TARNOH
Emmanuel
APC
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

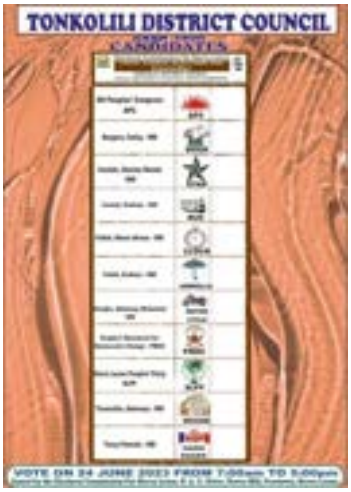

BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Chairperson
BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL
BANGURA
Amara
UDM
CONTEH
Bornoh
PLP
DABOR
Alie
SLPP
SISAY
Mohamed M. B.
APC
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

MAKENI CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Mayor Election
MAKENI CITY COUNCIL
KABIA
Kamalu
KAMARA
Abdul Rahman
ADP
KAMARA
Abu Bakarr
APC
KAMARA
Amadu Amadu
SLPP
KAMARA
Fatmata Alimatu
UDM
KOROMA
Alhaji Bondu
PLP
VOTE ON 24 JUNE 2023 FROM 7:00am TO 5:00pm

MAKENI CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councilor
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Citizen's Democratic Party
CDP
Peoples' Liberation Party
PLP
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP

FALABA DISTRICT COUNCIL
KAMARA
KARGBO
SESAY
TURAY
TURAY
MARAH

KONO DISTRICT COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
KONO DISTRICT COUNCIL
GBONDO
PMDC
MBAWA
APC
SHEKU
SLPP
YAMBA
NDA


TONKOLILI DISTRICT COUNCIL

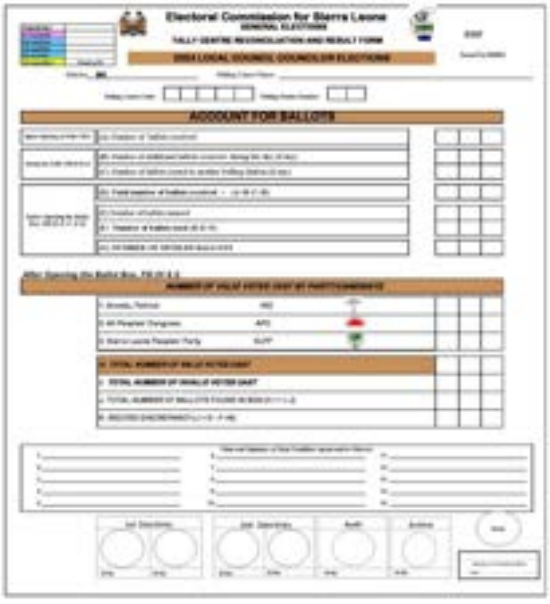
KOIDU-NEW SEMBEHUN CITY COUNCIL
KNOW YOUR
CANDIDATES
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2023
Councilor
All Peoples' Congress
APC
Peoples' Movement for
Democratic Change - PMDC
PMDC
Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SLPP
SLPP

ANNEX 9: SAMPLE RESULT AND RECONCILIATION FORM (RRF)

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
GENERAL ELECTIONS
TALLY CENTRE RECONCILIATION AND RESULT FORM
2023 LOCAL COUNCIL COUNCILLOR ELECTIONS
ACCOUNT FOR BALLOTS

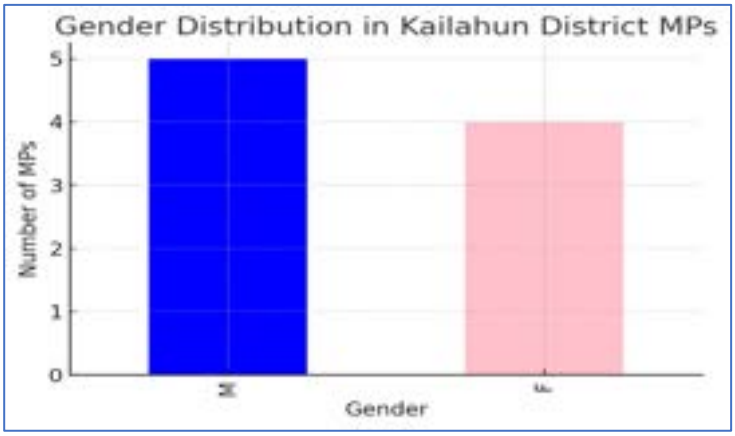
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
ACCOUNT FOR BALLOTS

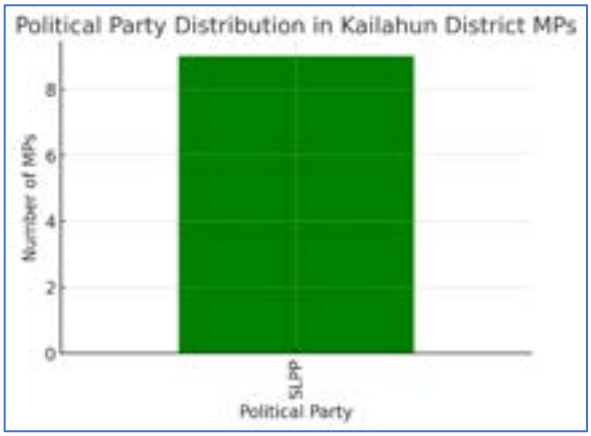
Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
ACCOUNT FOR BALLOTS


Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
ACCOUNT FOR BALLOTS

ANNEX 10: ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTIONS – ANALYSIS AND VISUALIZATION MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (MPS)

Kailahun District

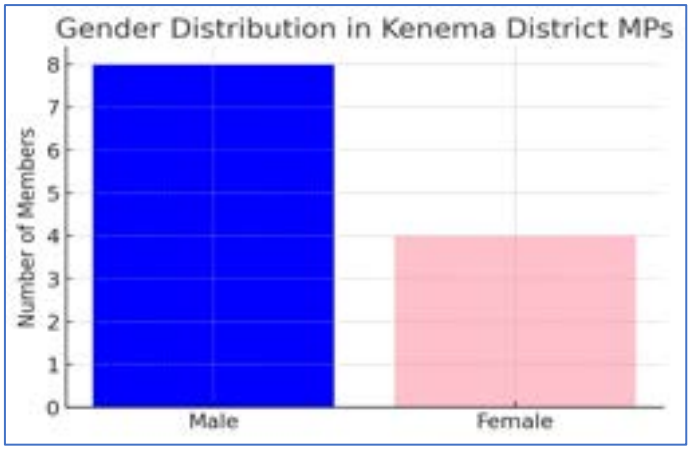


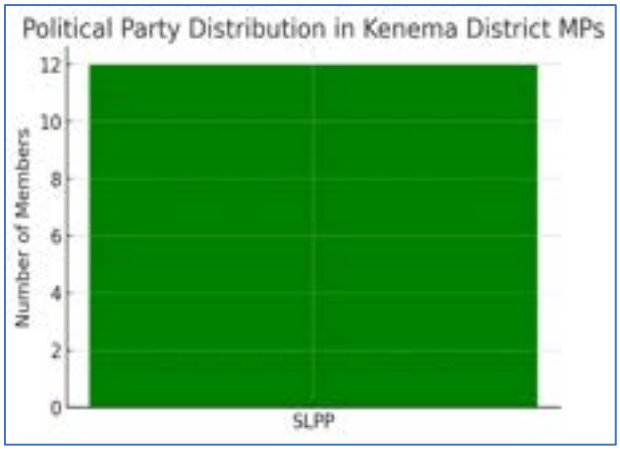


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: There are 5 male (M) and 4 female (F) MPs in the Kailahun District. This showcases a relatively balanced gender representation among the elected MPs within this district, with females representing nearly half of the MPs.
- **Political Party Distribution**: All MPs from Kailahun District are from the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). This indicates a unanimous political representation from SLPP in this particular district, suggesting strong support for the party within Kailahun.

Kenema District

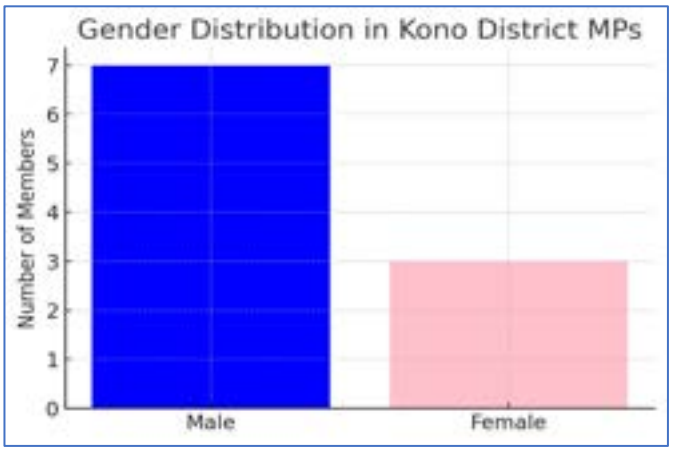


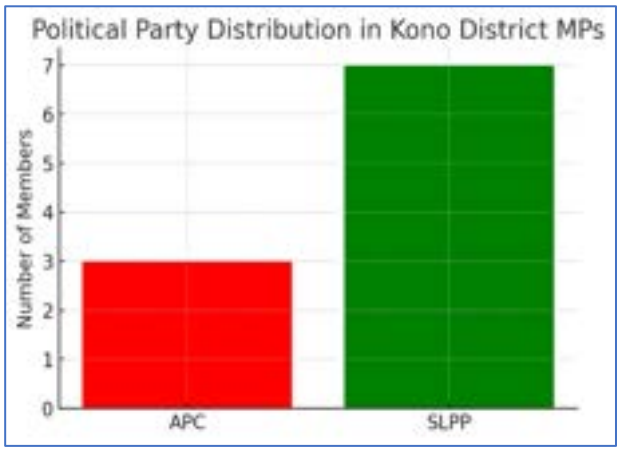


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: This bar chart shows the gender distribution with 8 male MPs and 4 female MPs, indicating a male-dominant representation but also recognizing the significant contribution of female MPs within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart demonstrates the unanimous representation of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) with all 12 seats held by its members. This uniform political alignment underlines the SLPP's dominance in the Kenema District.

Kono District

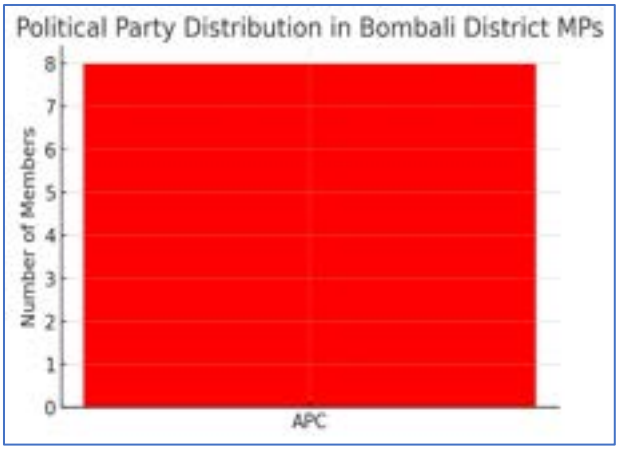




ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The bar chart reveals a gender distribution with 7 male MPs and 3 female MPs. This shows a male-dominated representation, similar to other districts, but also underscores the presence and influence of female MPs within the districts.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) has a majority with 7 members, while the All-People's Congress (APC) is represented by 3 members. This distribution indicates a strong SLPP presence in the Kono District, yet with notable representation from the APC, suggesting a politically diverse district with active participation from both major political parties.

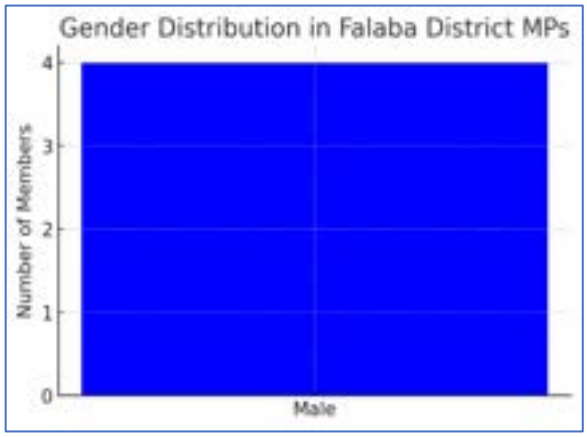
Bombali District

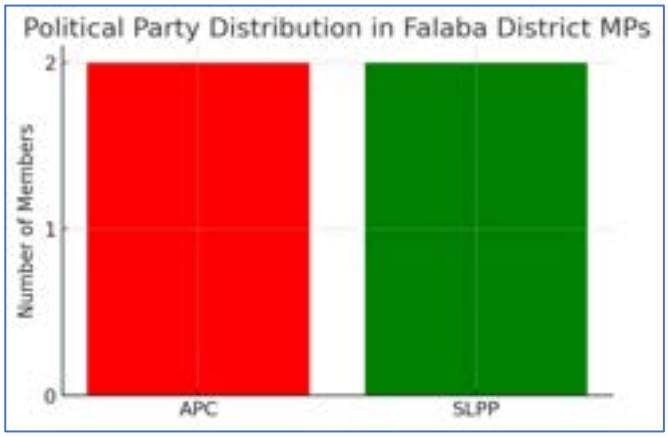


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: the gender distribution, showing 6 male and 2 female MPs, indicating a male-dominated representation but also the crucial presence of female MPs within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart displays unanimous representation by the All People's Congress (APC), showcasing the APC's strong presence and support within the Bombali District.

Falaba District

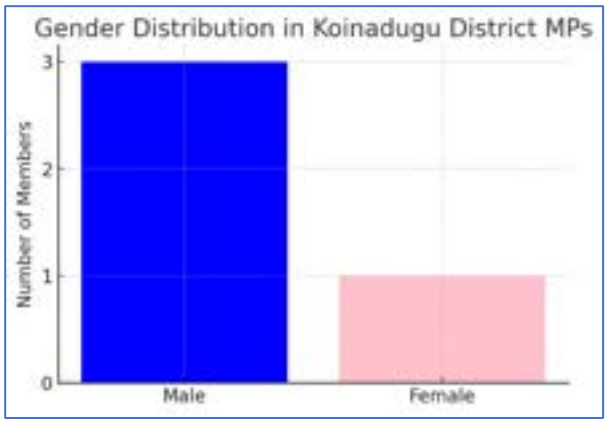


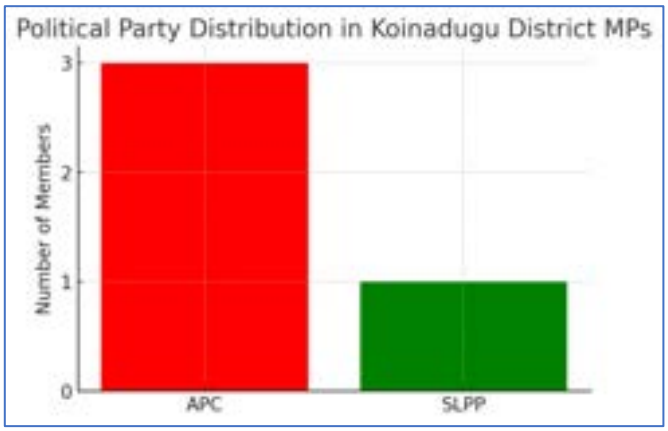


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution, indicating that all 4 members are male. This highlights the absence of female representation within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart illustrates an even political party distribution with 2 members affiliated with the APC and 2 members with the SLPP. This demonstrates a balanced political representation within the Falaba District, indicating active participation from both major political parties.

Koinadugu District

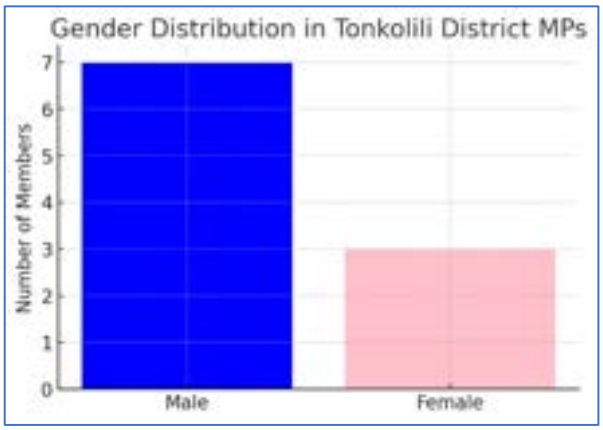


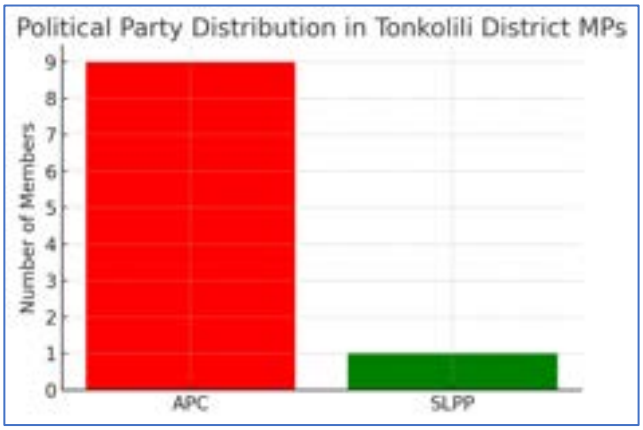


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution, with 3 male and 1 female MPs. The visualization emphasizes the gender disparity within the district's parliamentary representation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart illustrates the political party distribution, with the APC represented by 3 members and the SLPP by 1 member. This highlights the APC's dominance in the district, alongside the presence of the SLPP.

Tonkolili District

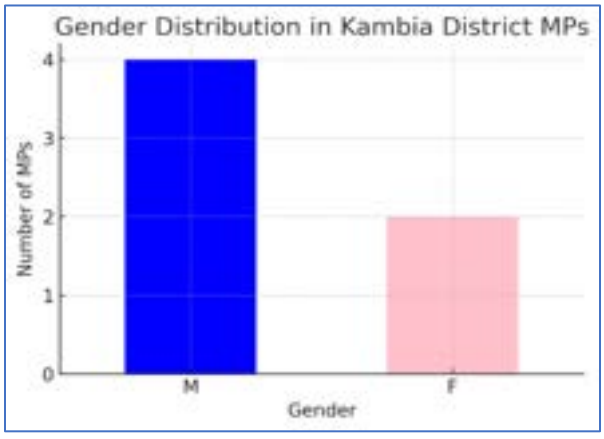


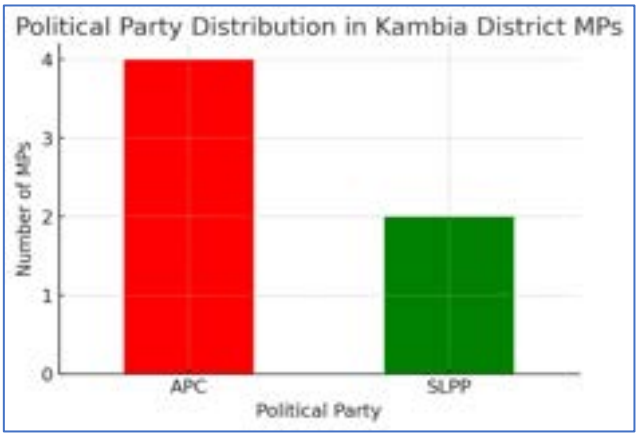


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: the gender distribution, showing 7 male and 3 female MPs. It highlights the male dominance in representation but also points to the inclusion of women in the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart illustrates the political party distribution, with the APC having a significant majority of 9 members, while the SLPP is represented by a single member. This demonstrates the APC's strong presence in the district, with minimal representation from the SLPP.

Kambia District

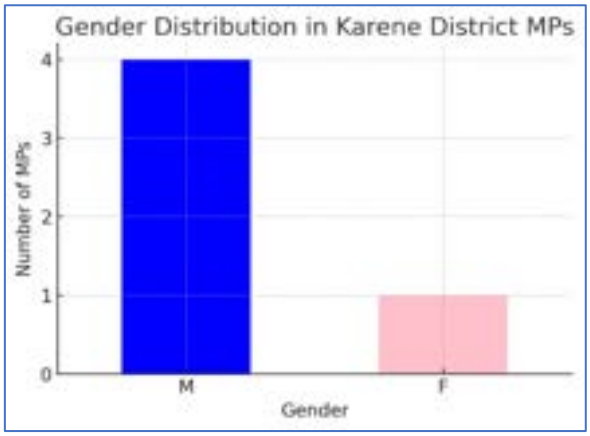


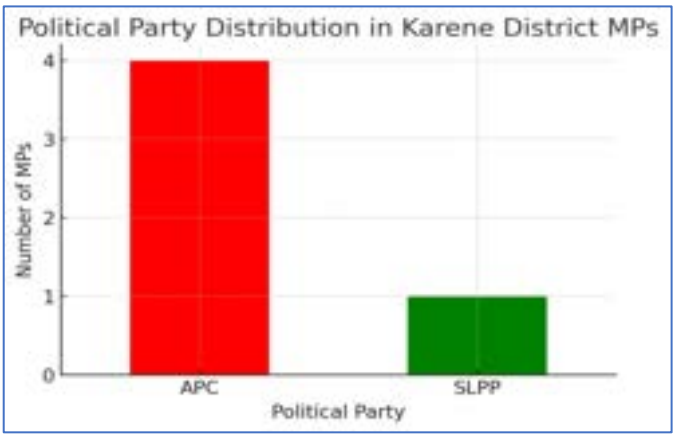


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution shows 4 male MPs and 2 female MPs, indicating a higher male representation but also the presence of female voices in the district's parliamentary representation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The political landscape in the Kambia District sees a division with 4 MPs affiliated with the All People's Congress (APC) and 2 with the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). This indicates a predominance of the APC in the district, though the SLPP also holds a significant presence.

Karene District

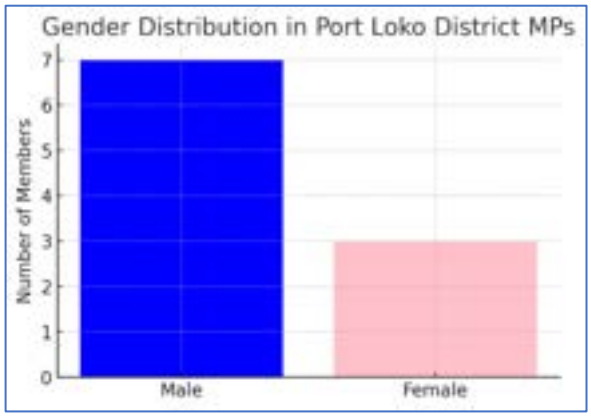


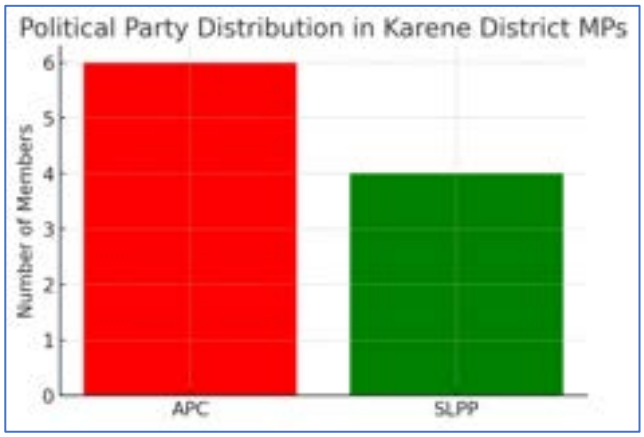


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The composition in Karene District displays 4 male MPs alongside 1 female MP. This reveals a predominant male representation, yet importantly includes a female perspective within the district's parliamentary group. The presence of a female MP underscores the district's strides towards gender inclusivity in political representation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: In the political arena of Karene District, there's a clear leaning towards the All People's Congress (APC), represented by 4 MPs. The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) secures a foothold with 1 MP. This composition suggests a strong preference for the APC among the district's constituents, albeit with room for political diversity as shown by the SLPP's representation.

Port Loko District

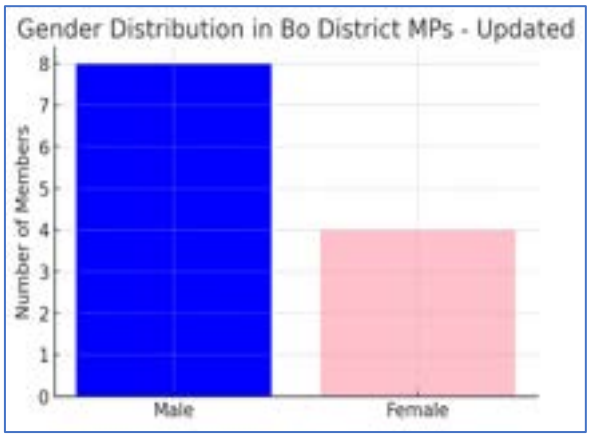


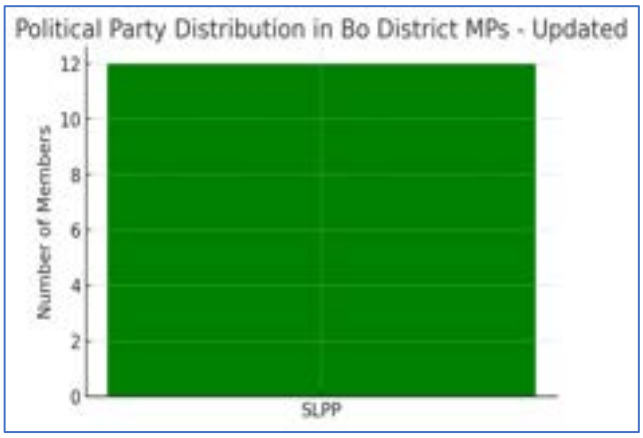


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The Port Loko District parliamentary representation consists of 7 males and 3 females. This indicates a male-dominant representation but also signifies the important role that female MPs play within the district's parliamentary landscape. The inclusion of female MPs highlights an effort towards gender inclusivity, reflecting the diverse perspectives and voices that are essential for comprehensive governance.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The All People's Congress (APC) has a stronger presence in the Port Loko District, with 6 MPs representing the party. Meanwhile, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) has secured 4 seats. This distribution showcases the APC's dominance in the district, yet with significant competition from the SLPP, illustrating a politically vibrant district with active participation from the two major political forces in the country.

Bo District

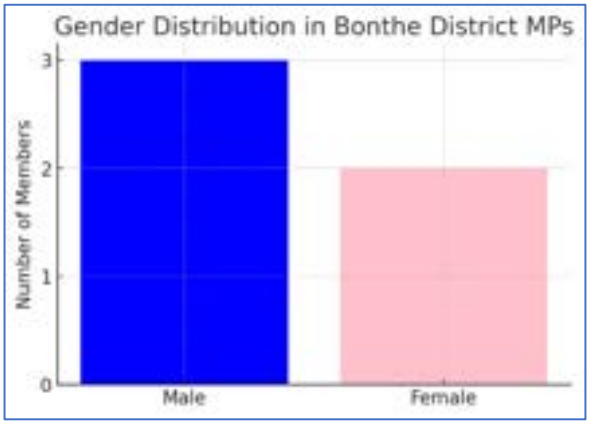




ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The bar chart shows the representation of 8 male and 4 female MPs, highlighting ongoing gender disparity but also indicating the presence and importance of female representation within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: With the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) holding all 12 seats, this bar chart illustrates the unanimous political alignment within the Bo District, showcasing the SLPP's dominant influence in this area.

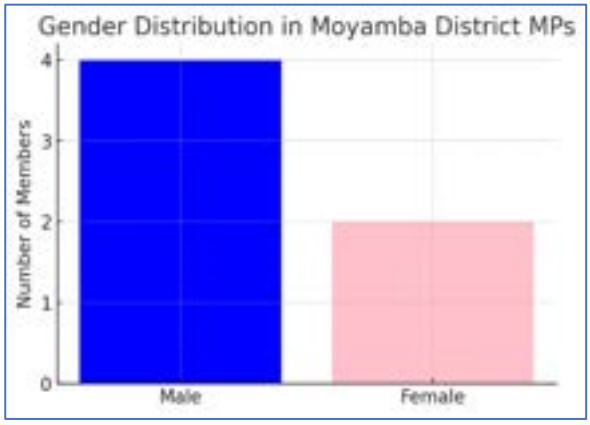
Bonthe District

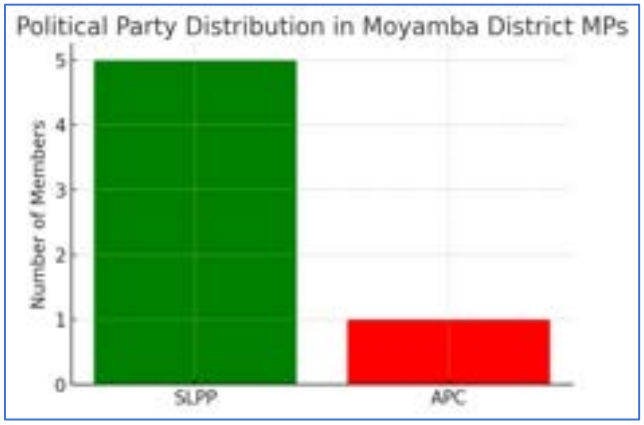


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution, showing 3 male MPs and 2 female MPs. It emphasizes a more balanced gender representation within the district's parliamentary delegation compared to many other districts.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart demonstrates the political party distribution, with all 5 members affiliated with the SLPP. This illustrates the SLPP's exclusive representation in the Bonthe District, indicating a strong political consensus or support for the SLPP within this district.

Moyamba District

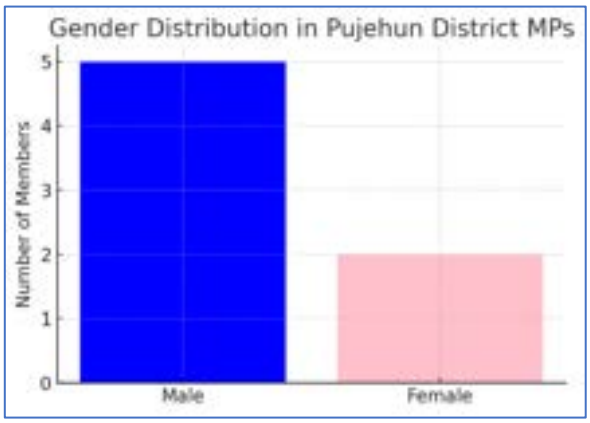


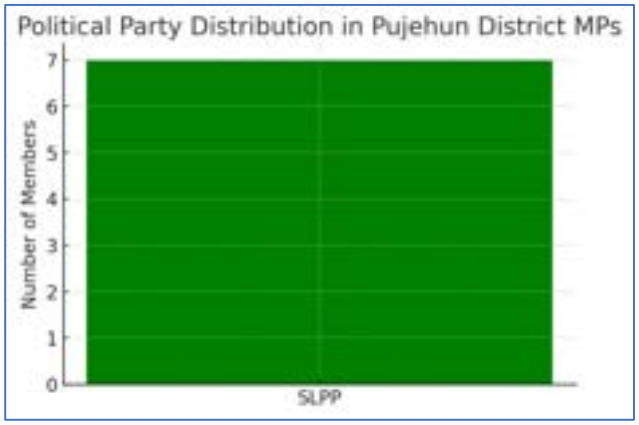


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution, showing 4 male MPs and 2 female MPs. It highlights a gender imbalance but also indicates the presence of female representation within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart illustrates the political party distribution, with the majority of members (5) affiliated with the SLPP and a single member affiliated with the APC. This demonstrates the SLPP's dominance in the Moyamba District, along with some representation from the APC.

Pujehun District

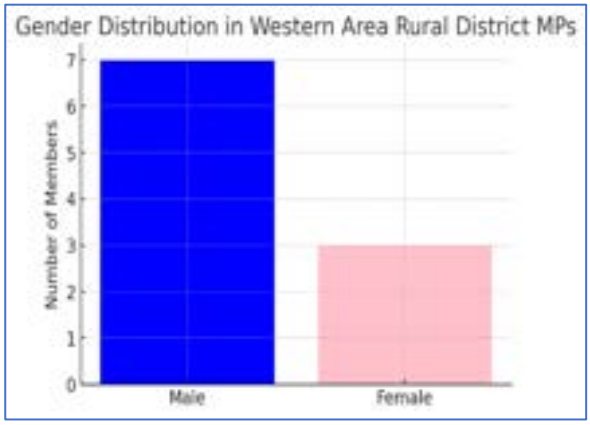


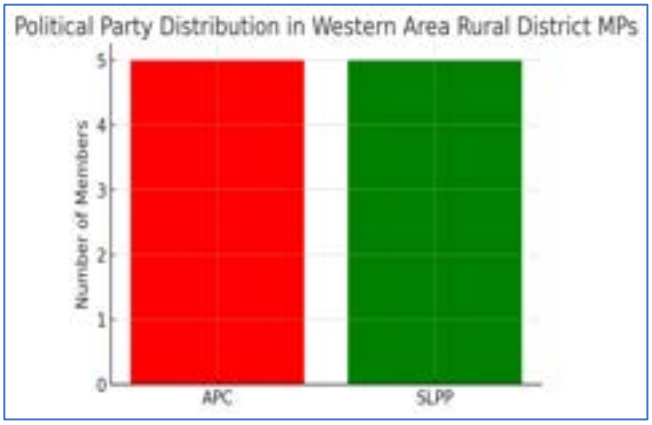


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution, with 5 male MPs and 2 female MPs. It illustrates a male-dominant representation while also acknowledging the presence of female MPs within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart displays the political party distribution, with all 7 members affiliated with the SLPP. This indicates the SLPP's exclusive representation in the Pujehun District, reflecting a strong political consensus or support for the SLPP within this district.

Western Area Rural District

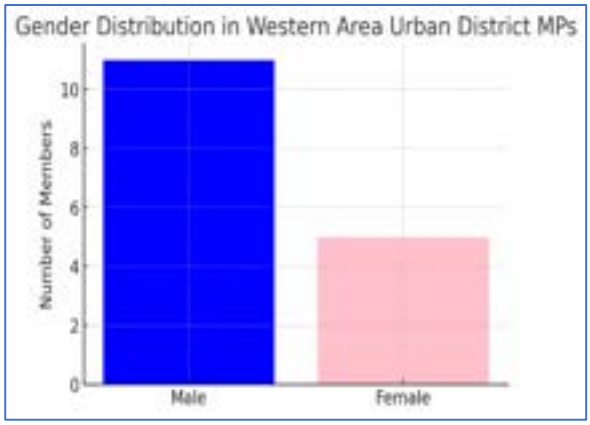


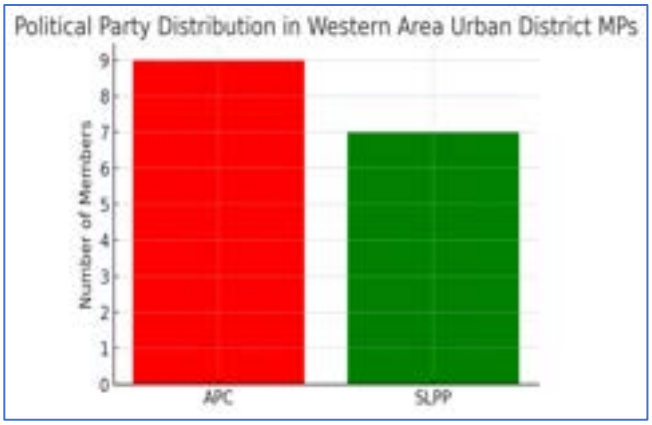


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution, with 7 male MPs and 3 female MPs. It highlights the male dominance in representation but also acknowledges the presence of female MPs within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart illustrates an evenly split political party distribution, with 5 members affiliated with the APC and 5 with the SLPP. This demonstrates a balanced political landscape in the Western Area Rural District, reflecting active participation and representation from both major political parties.

Western Area Urban District

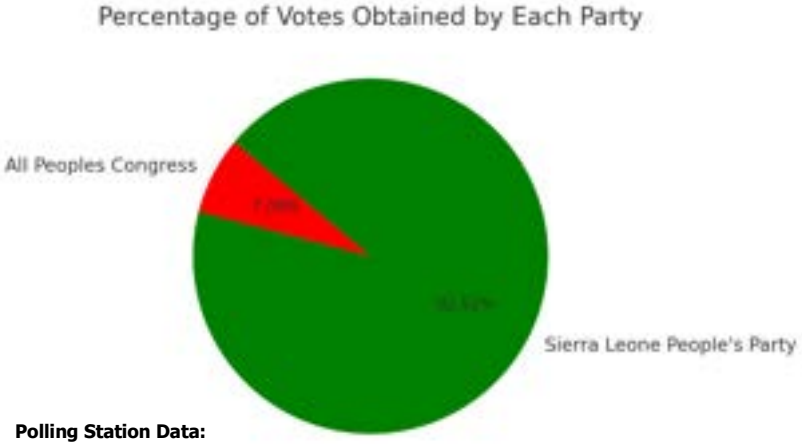


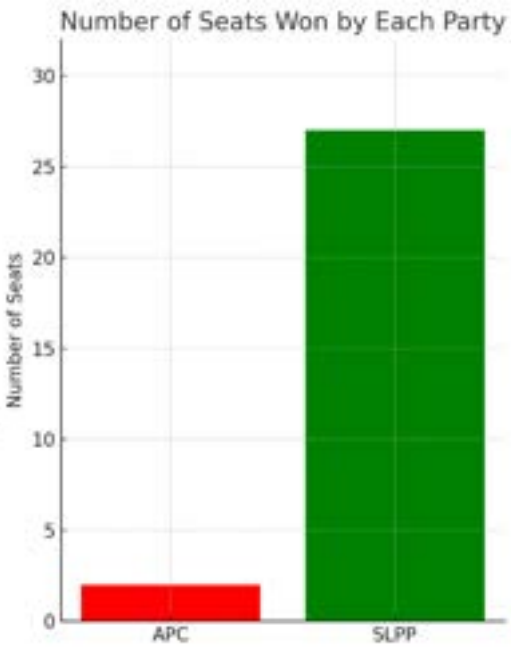


ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Gender Distribution**: The gender distribution, with 11 male MPs and 5 female MPs. It underscores the male-dominant representation while also highlighting the presence of female MPs within the district's parliamentary delegation.
- **Political Party Distribution**: The bar chart illustrates the political party distribution, with 9 members affiliated with the APC and 7 with the SLPP. This shows a slightly greater representation of the APC in the district, but with significant representation from the SLPP, indicating a politically diverse and competitive landscape.

Kailahun District





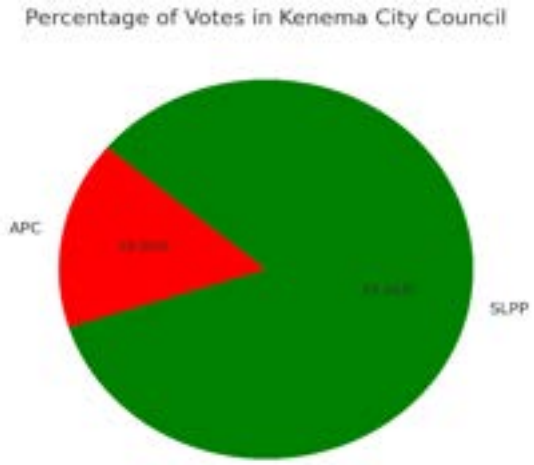
Polling Station Data:

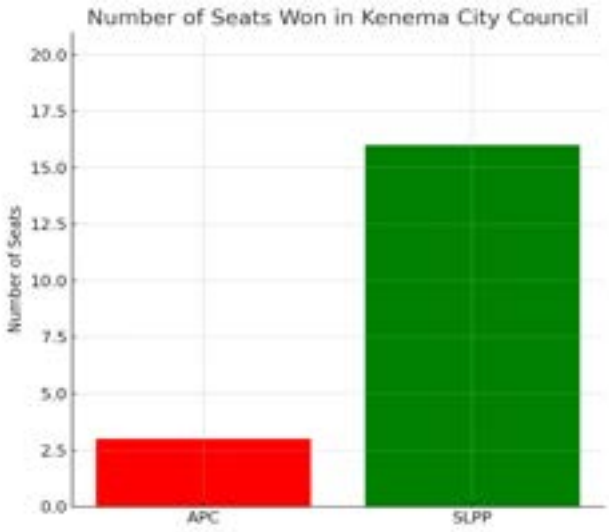
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 620 out of 679, accounting for 91.31% of all stations**.**
- **Total Votes Cast:** 159,281.
- **Voter Turnout:** 82.81%.
- **Invalid Votes:** 210, which is 0.13% of the votes cast.

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the overwhelming majority of votes obtained by the SLPP compared to the APC, with the SLPP securing 92.92% of the votes.
- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart illustrates the number of council seats won in the Kailahun District, with the SLPP securing 27 seats and the APC winning 2 seats.

Kenema City





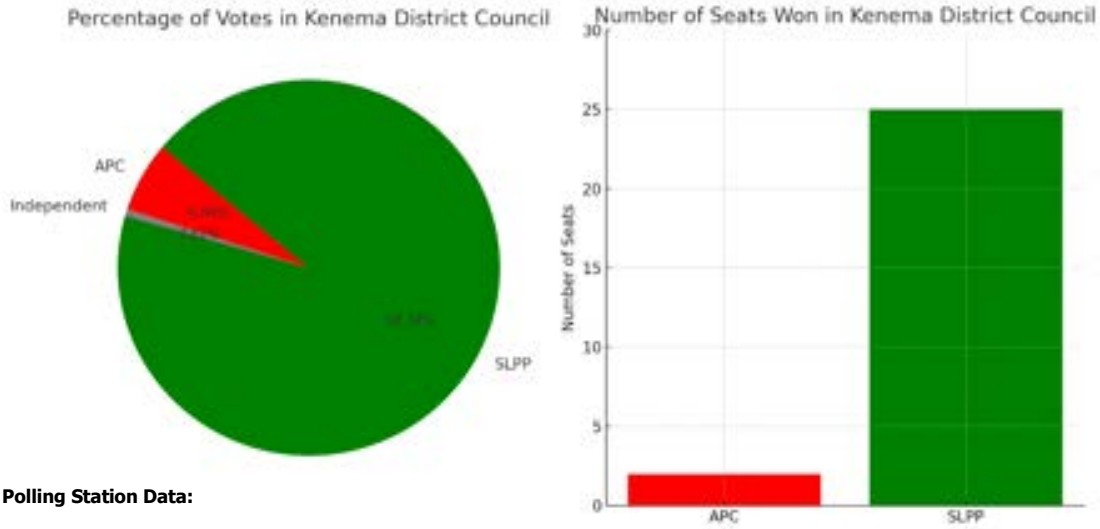
Polling Station Data:

- **Polling Stations Reported:** 393 out of 395, accounting for 99.49% of all stations**.**
- **Total Votes Cast:** 76,764.
- **Voter Turnout:** 82.54%.
- **Invalid Votes:** 504, which is 0.65% of the votes cast.

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the overwhelming majority of votes obtained by the SLPP compared to the APC, with the SLPP securing 92.92% of the votes.
- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart illustrates the number of council seats won in the Kailahun District, with the SLPP securing 27 seats and the APC winning 2 seats.

Kenema District



Polling Station Data:

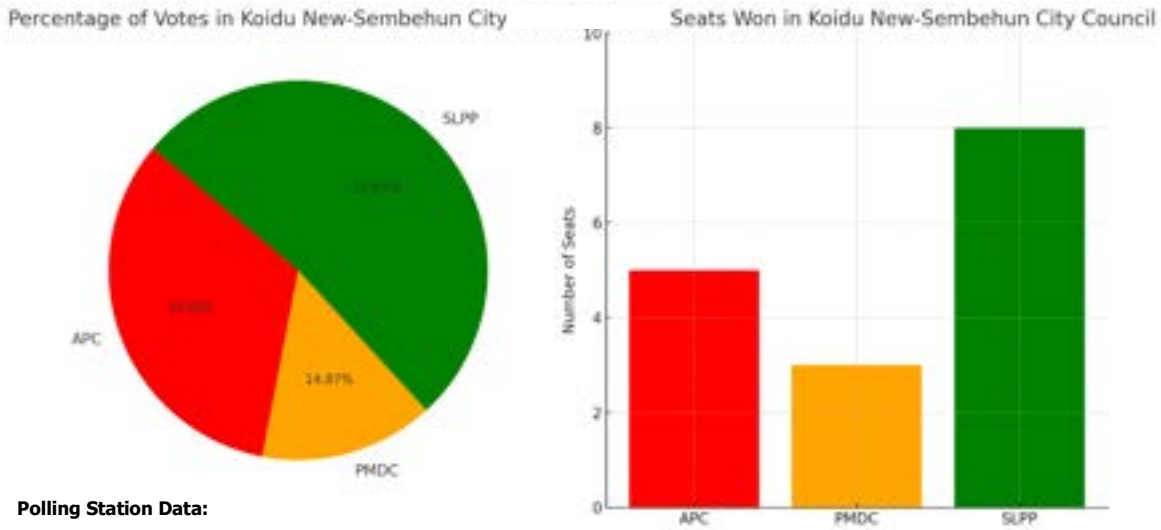
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 713 out of 732, accounting for 97.40% of all stations.
- **Total Votes Cast:** 167,398.
- **Voter Turnout:** 81.42%.
- **Invalid Votes:** 571, representing 0.34% of the votes cast.

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the vote distribution among the All Peoples Congress (APC), an Independent candidate, and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP has an overwhelming majority with 93.34% of the votes, the APC has 6.04%, and the independent candidate received 0.62%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar shows SLPP winning 25 seats and the APC securing 2 seats. The Independent candidate, not meeting the minimum vote percentage threshold, did not win any seats and is thus not included in this chart.

Koidu New-Sembehun City Council



Polling Station Data:

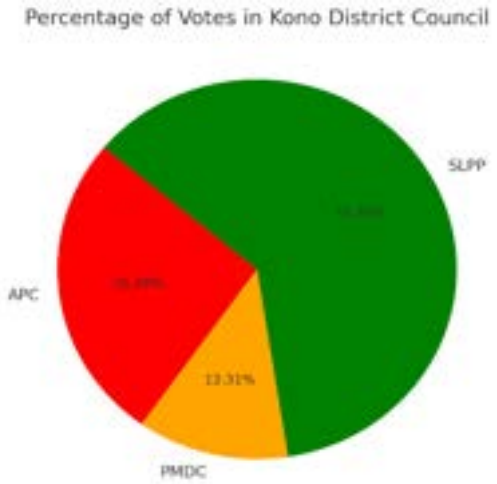
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 227 out of 228, accounting for 99.56% of all stations.
- **Total Votes Cast:** 45,281.
- **Voter Turnout:** 68.65%.
- **Invalid Votes:** 41, representing 0.09% of the votes cast.

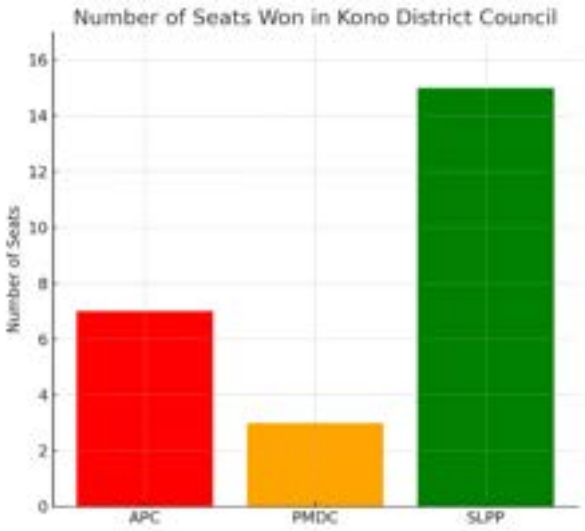
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), the People's Movement For Democratic Change (PMDC), and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads with 52.07% of the votes, followed by the APC with 33.06%, and the PMDC with 14.87%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart shows the distribution of council seats won, with the SLPP securing the most seats (8), followed by the APC (5), and the PMDC (3).

Kono District





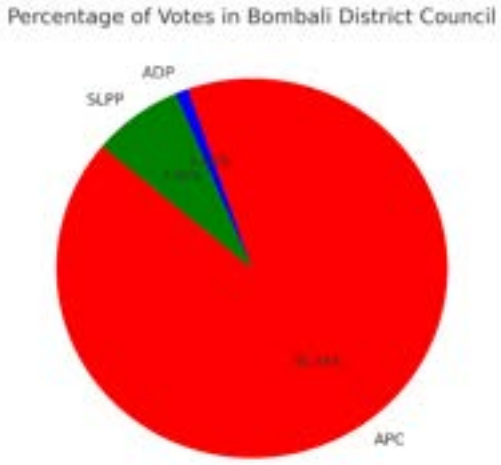
Polling Station Data:

- **Polling Stations Reported:** 388 out of 388 (100.00%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 74,262
- **Voter Turnout:** 70.56%
- **Invalid Votes:** 567 (0.76% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), the People's Movement For Democratic Change (PMDC), and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads with 61.40% of the votes, followed by the APC with 26.29%, and the PMDC with 12.31%.
- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart illustrates the number of council seats won, with the SLPP securing the most seats (15), followed by the APC (7), and the PMDC (3).

Bombali District



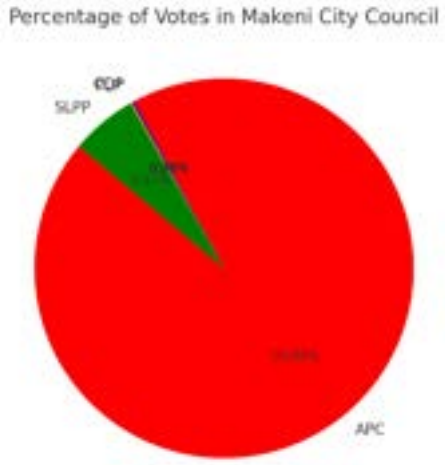
Polling Station Data:

- **Polling Stations Reported:** 469 out of 480 (97.70%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 97,315
- **Voter Turnout:** 72.15%
- **Invalid Votes:** 108 (0.11% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart displays the vote distribution among the All Peoples Congress (APC), Alliance Democratic Party (ADP), and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC leads overwhelmingly with 91.44% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 7.50%, and the ADP with 1.06%.
- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart shows the distribution of council seats won, with the APC securing 19 seats and the SLPP winning 2 seats. The ADP did not win any seats and is therefore not represented in this chart.

Makeni City Council



Polling Station Data:

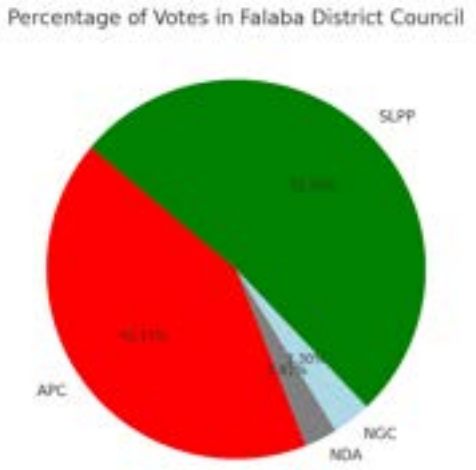
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 237 out of 241 (98.34%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 49,531
- **Voter Turnout:** 69.26%
- **Invalid Votes:** 89 (0.17% of votes cast)

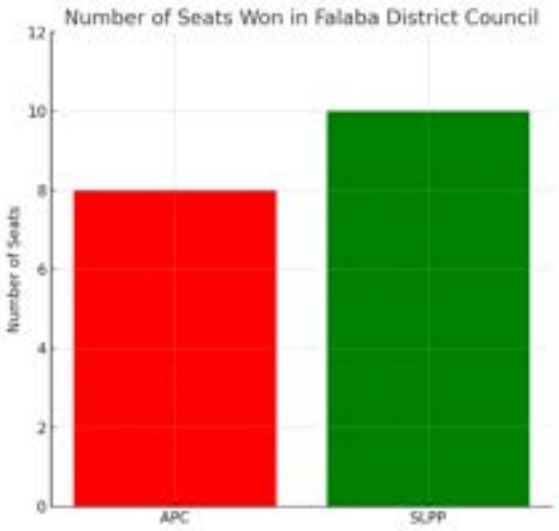
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), Citizen's Democratic Party (CDP), Peace and Liberation Party (PLP), and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC leads overwhelmingly with 93.88% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 5.67%. The CDP and PLP obtained only 0.36% and 0.09% of the votes, respectively.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart focuses on the number of council seats won, highlighting the APC's significant majority with 14 seats, compared to the SLPP, which secured just 1 seat. The CDP and PLP did not win any seats and are therefore not included in this chart.

Falaba District Council





Polling Station Data:

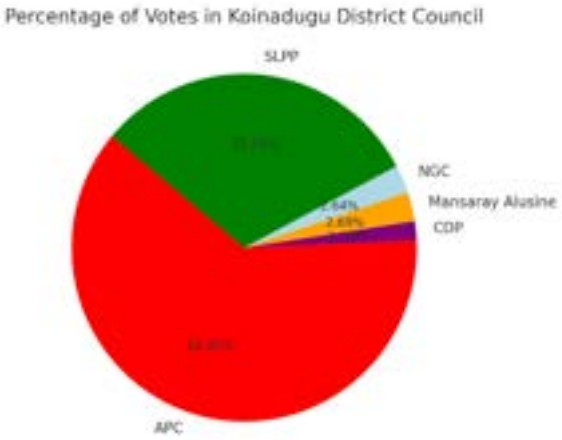
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 234 out of 250 (92%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 38,384
- **Voter Turnout:** 55.49%
- **Invalid Votes:** 247 (0.71% of votes cast)

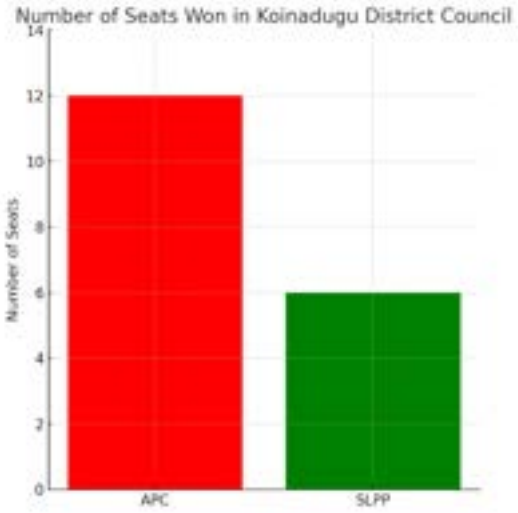
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), National Democratic Alliance (NDA), National Grand Coalition (NGC), and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads with 51.78% of the votes, followed by the APC with 42.11%. The NDA and NGC received smaller shares of 2.81% and 3.30%, respectively.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart focuses on the distribution of council seats won, with the SLPP securing 10 seats and the APC obtaining 8 seats. The NDA and NGC, due to not meeting the minimum vote percentage threshold, did not win any seats and are therefore not represented in this chart.

Koinadugu District





Polling Station Data:

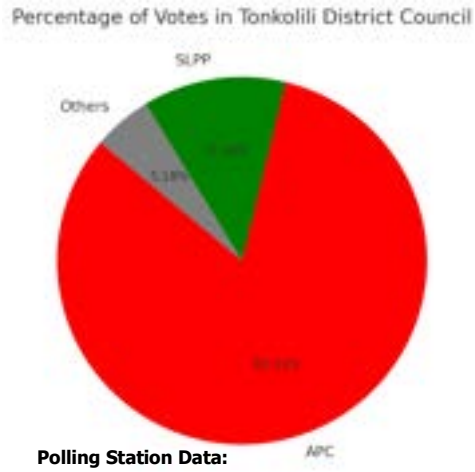
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 284 out of 309 (80.25%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 53,061
- **Voter Turnout:** 62.27%
- **Invalid Votes:** 325 (0.61% of votes cast)

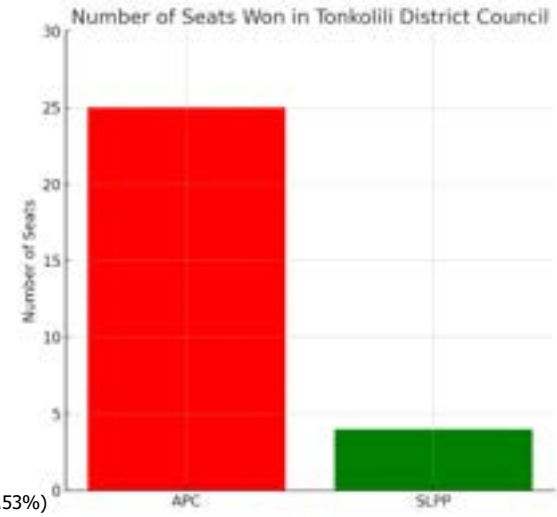
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), Citizen's Democratic Party (CDP), independent candidate Mansaray Alusine, National Grand Coalition (NGC), and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC leads with 61.81% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 31.11%. The CDP, Mansaray Alusine, and NGC received significantly smaller shares of the vote.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart focuses on the distribution of council seats won, highlighting the APC's majority with 12 seats and the SLPP with 6 seats. The CDP, Mansaray Alusine, and NGC did not win any seats and are therefore not included in this chart.

Tonkolili District





Polling Station Data:

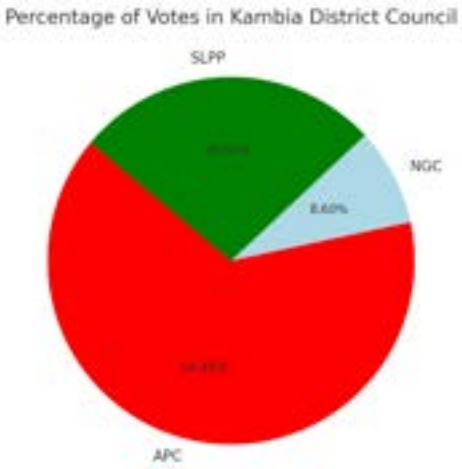
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 711 out of 729 (97.53%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 150,121
- **Voter Turnout:** 72.33%
- **Invalid Votes:** 721 (0.48% of votes cast)

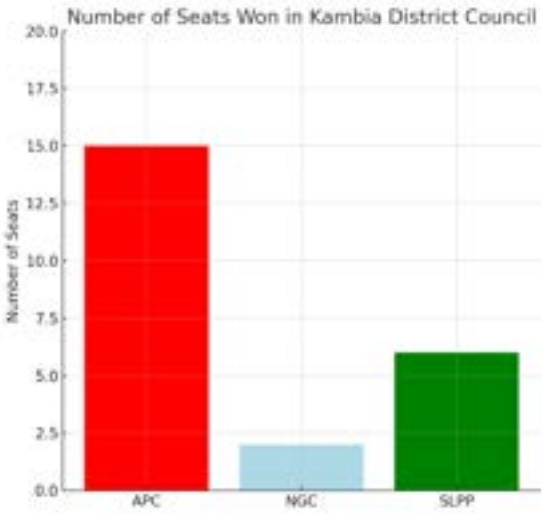
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), and all other entities combined under "Others." The APC leads significantly with 82.34% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 12.49%, and the combined "Others" category covering the remaining percentage.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart focuses on the distribution of council seats won, with the APC securing a dominant majority of 25 seats compared to the SLPP, which won 4 seats.

Kambia District





Polling Station Data:

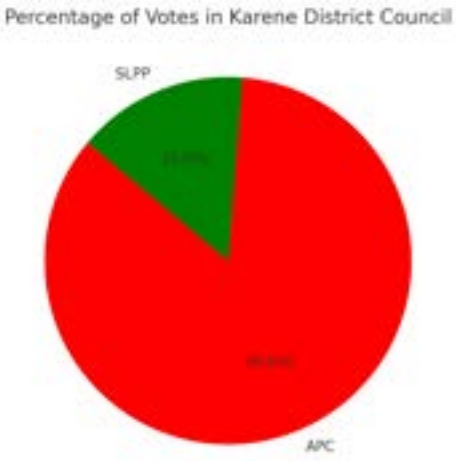
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 540 out of 547 (98.72%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 71,953
- **Voter Turnout:** 47.13%
- **Invalid Votes:** 377 (0.52% of votes cast)

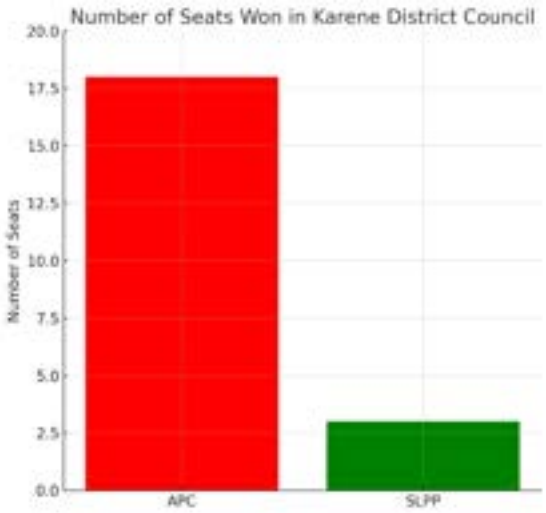
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), National Grand Coalition (NGC), and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC leads with a significant majority, having 64.48% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 26.92%, and the NGC with 8.60%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart highlights the distribution of council seats won by each party. The APC secured the majority with 15 seats, the SLPP obtained 6 seats, and the NGC won 2 seats.

Karene District





Polling Station Data:

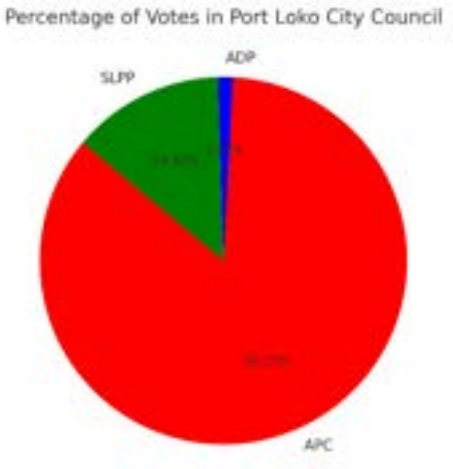
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 357 out of 359 (99.44%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 74,347
- **Voter Turnout:** 74.12%
- **Invalid Votes:** 349 (0.46% of votes cast)

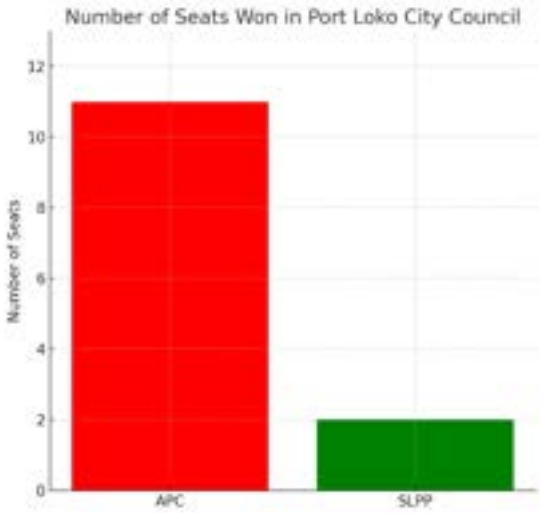
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes between the All Peoples Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC has a commanding lead with 84.84% of the votes, while the SLPP has 15.16%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart displays the distribution of council seats won by each party. The APC secured a significant majority with 18 seats, and the SLPP obtained 3 seats.

Port Loko City





Polling Station Data:

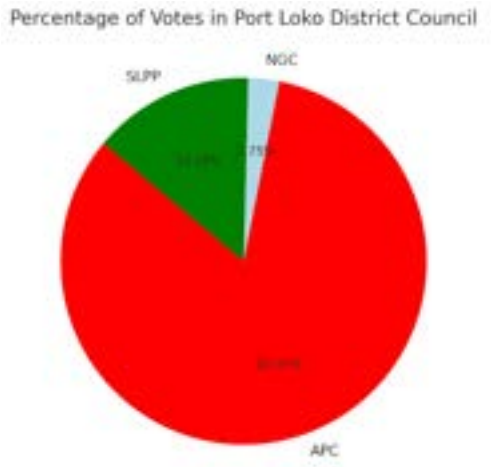
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 73 out of 78 (93.58%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 15,563
- **Voter Turnout:** 73.10%
- **Invalid Votes:** 73 (0.46% of votes cast)

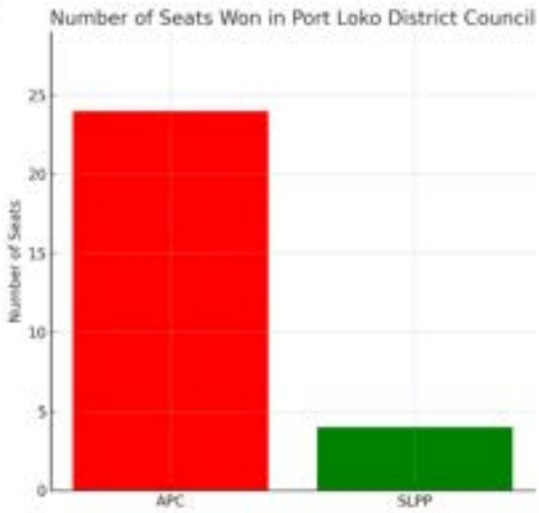
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes between the All Peoples Congress (APC), Alliance Democratic Party (ADP), and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC leads with a significant majority, having 85.27% of the votes, while the SLPP has 13.40%, and the ADP only 1.33%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart displays the distribution of council seats won by each party. The APC secured a dominant majority with 11 seats, and the SLPP obtained 2 seats. The ADP did not meet the threshold for winning any seats and is not included in this chart.

Port Loko District





Polling Station Data:

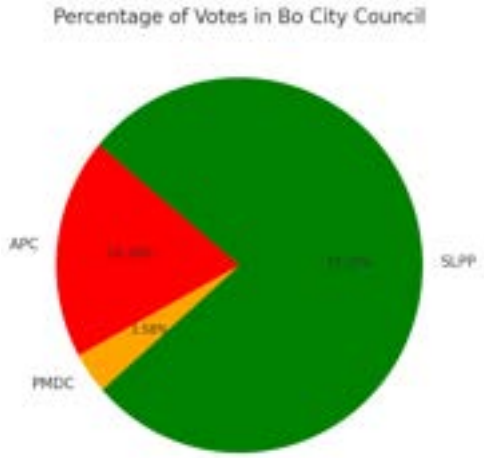
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 751 out of 758 (99.00%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 154,358
- **Voter Turnout:** 71.55%
- **Invalid Votes:** 53 (0.03% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart vividly shows the vote distribution, with the APC securing 82.97% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 14.28%, and the NGC with 2.75%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart details the seats won, highlighting that the APC won a significant majority with 24 seats, while the SLPP secured 4 seats.

Bo City Council



Polling Station Data:

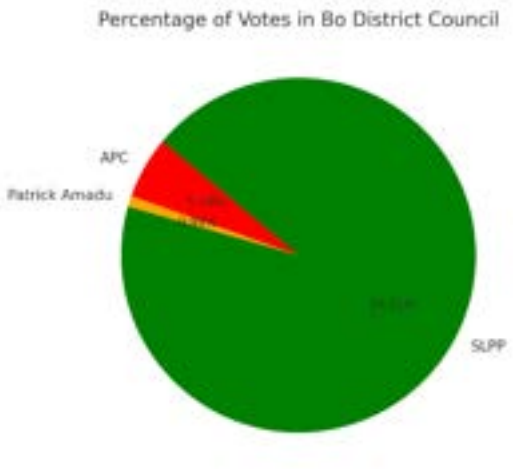
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 384 out of 387 (99.22%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 63,175
- **Voter Turnout:** 55.58%
- **Invalid Votes:** 406 (0.64% of votes cast)

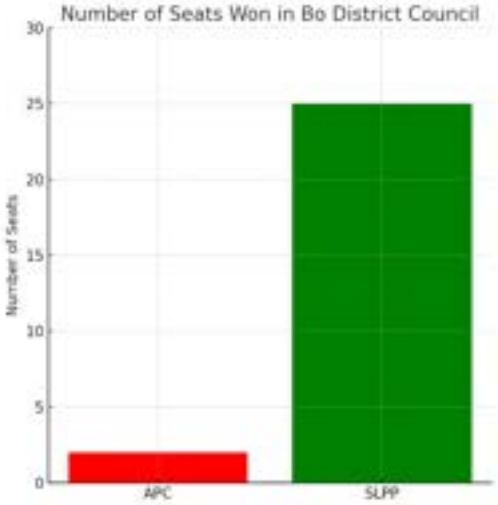
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), and Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads with a significant majority, having 77.32% of the votes, followed by the APC with 19.10%, and the PMDC with 3.58%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart displays the distribution of council seats won by each party. The SLPP secured a dominant majority with 14 seats, and the APC obtained 4 seats. The PMDC did not win any seats and is thus not included in this chart.

Bo District





Polling Station Data:

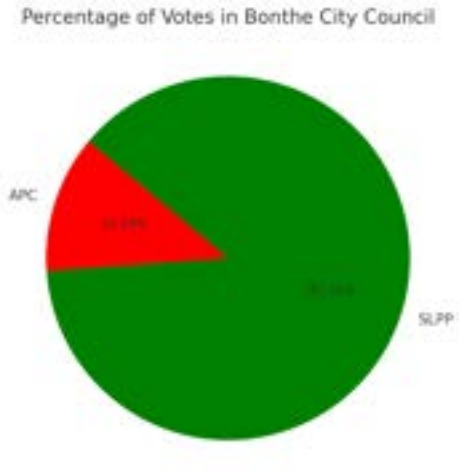
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 702 out of 719 (97.64%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 125,971
- **Voter Turnout:** 61.88%
- **Invalid Votes:** 410 (0.32% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), independent candidate Patrick Amadu, and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads with a significant majority, having 93.31% of the votes, followed by the APC with 5.70%, and Patrick Amadu with 0.99%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart displays the distribution of council seats won by each party. The SLPP secured a dominant majority with 25 seats, and the APC obtained 2 seats. Patrick Amadu did not win any seats and is thus not included in this chart.

Bonthe City Council



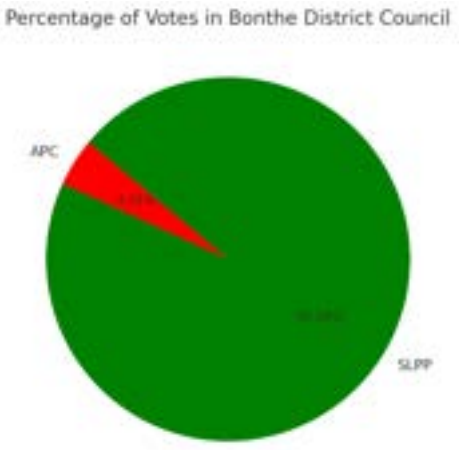
Polling Station Data:

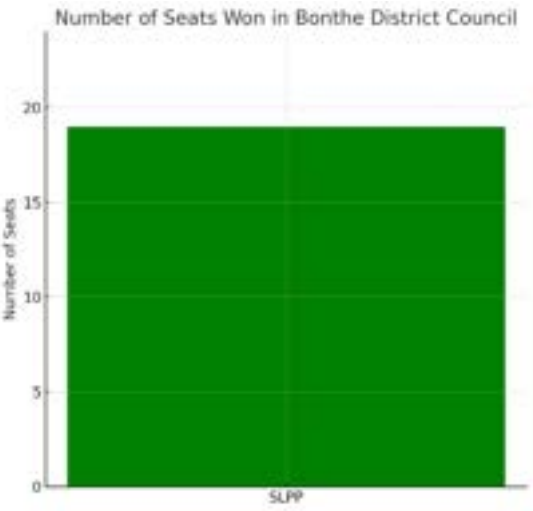
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 18 out of 18 (100.00%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 3,661
- **Voter Turnout:** 99.29%
- **Invalid Votes:** 51 (1.39% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes between the All Peoples Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads with a significant majority, having 87.76% of the votes, while the APC has 12.24%.
- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart shows the distribution of council seats won by each party. The SLPP secured the majority with 10 seats, and the APC obtained 1 seat.

Bonthe District





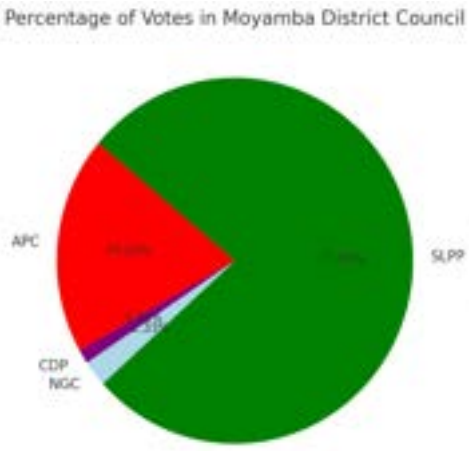
Polling Station Data:

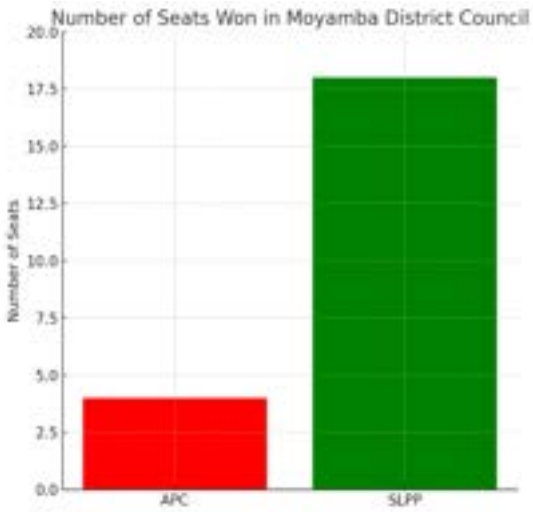
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 366 out of 366 (100.00%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 81,424
- **Voter Turnout:** 79.29%
- **Invalid Votes:** 384 (0.47% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes between the All Peoples Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads overwhelmingly with 95.69% of the votes, while the APC has 4.31%.
- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart displays that the SLPP won all 19 seats in the council. The APC, having not met the minimum vote percentage threshold, did not win any seats and is not represented in this chart.

Moyamba District





Polling Station Data:

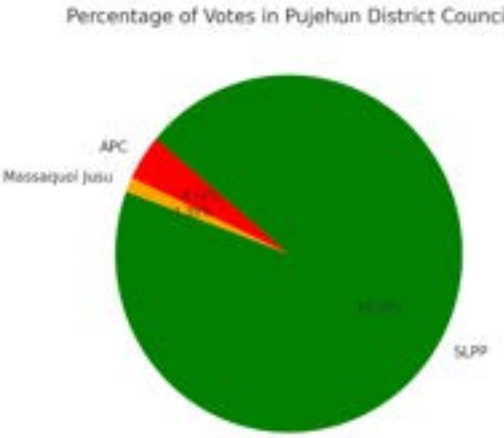
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 534 out of 537 (99.44%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 112,682
- **Voter Turnout:** 74.92%
- **Invalid Votes:** 535 (0.47% of votes cast)

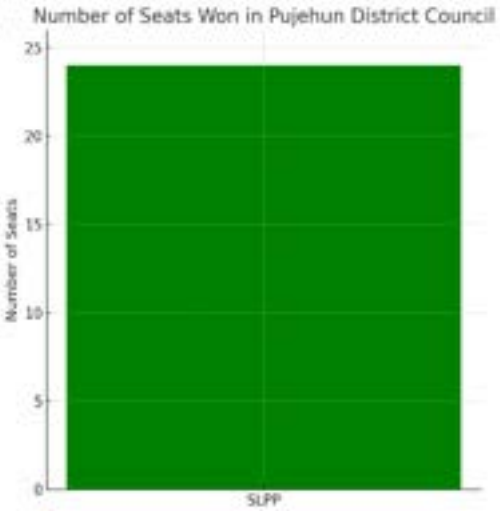
ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the vote distribution among the All Peoples Congress (APC), Citizens Democratic Party (CDP), National Grand Coalition (NGC), and Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads with a substantial majority of 77.15% of the votes, followed by the APC with 19.26%. The CDP and NGC received smaller portions of the vote share.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart details the council seats distribution, with the SLPP winning 18 seats and the APC securing 4 seats. The CDP and NGC did not win any seats and thus are not represented in the seat count.

Pujehun District





Polling Station Data:

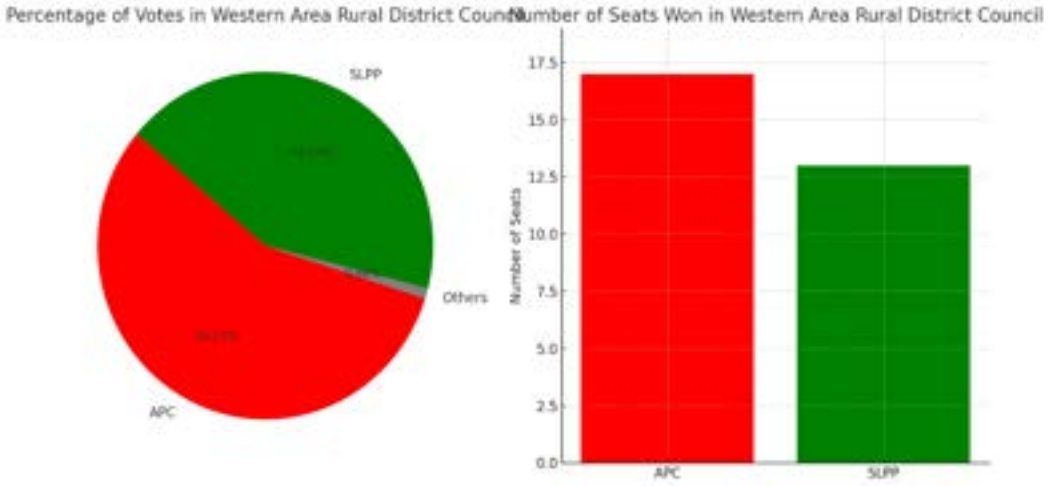
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 411 out of 422 (97.39%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 101,426
- **Voter Turnout:** 87.49%
- **Invalid Votes:** 832 (0.82% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart illustrates the distribution of valid votes among the All Peoples Congress (APC), independent candidate Massaquoi Jusu, and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The SLPP leads overwhelmingly with 94.53% of the votes, while the APC and Massaquoi Jusu have significantly smaller shares of 4.12% and 1.35%, respectively.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart displays that the SLPP won all 24 seats in the council, showcasing their dominant performance in the elections.

Western Area Rural District



Polling Station Data:

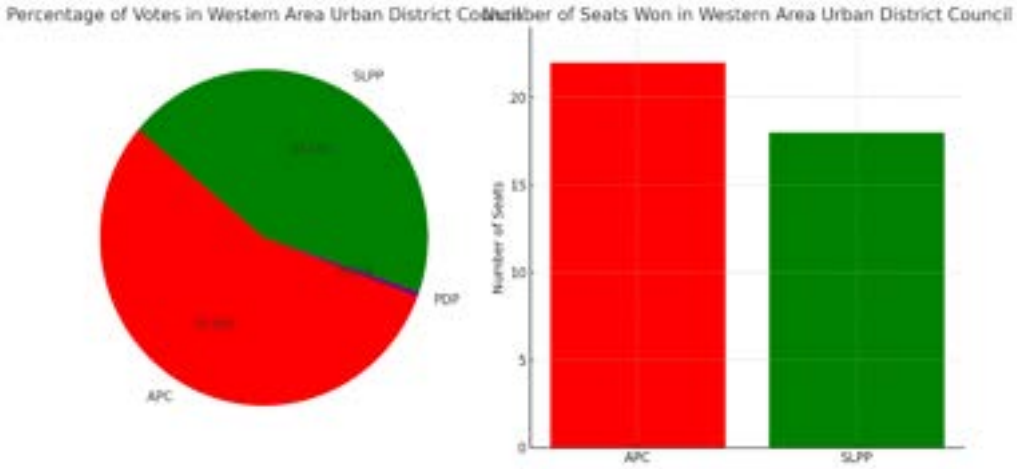
- **Polling Stations Reported:** 1,135 out of 1,161 (97.76%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 306,021
- **Voter Turnout:** 89.51%
- **Invalid Votes:** 1,150 (0.37% of votes cast

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the vote distribution among the All Peoples Congress (APC), Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), and combined "Others" (including independent candidate Kargbo, Alie Abu, and the People's Democratic Party). The APC leads with 56.17% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 42.85%, and "Others" with a combined total of 0.98%.

- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart illustrates the council seats won, with the APC securing 17 seats and the SLPP obtaining 13 seats, showcasing a competitive but clear lead by the APC in terms of council seats.

Western Area Urban District



Polling Station Data:

- **Polling Stations Reported:** 2,018 out of 2,049 (98.48%)
- **Total Votes Cast:** 545,508
- **Voter Turnout:** 91.17%
- **Invalid Votes:** 1,741 (0.31% of votes cast)

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS:

- **Percentage of Votes Obtained by Each Party**: The pie chart shows the vote distribution among the All Peoples Congress (APC), People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The APC leads with 55.35% of the votes, followed by the SLPP with 44.15%, and the PDP with a minor share of 0.50%.
-
- **Number of Seats Won by Each Party**: The bar chart illustrates the council seats won, with the APC securing 17 seats and the SLPP obtaining 13 seats, showcasing a competitive but clear lead by the APC in terms of council seats.

ANNEX 11: PRS – SEAT CALCULATION (Twelfth Schedule – Section 58)

Eleventh Schedule (Sections 46 (1), 60(5), 105, 106, 110)

PUBLIC ELECTIONS ACT, 2022

NOMINATION FEE FORMULAE

OFFICE	FORMULAE
President	Minimum wage X 12 months X 5 years
Member of Parliament	Minimum wage X 6 months
Paramount Chief Member of Parliament	Minimum wage X 6 months
Mayor or Chairman	Minimum wage X 3 months
Councillor	Minimum wage
Village Head	Half of minimum wage

ANNEX 12: Twelfth Schedule (Section 58)

FORMULA FOR ALLOCATING SEATS UNDER THE DISTRICT BLOCK REPRESENTATION SYSTEM

1. The basis of allocating seats to political parties under the District Block Representation system will be the total number of valid votes cast in each District, hereinafter referred to as the total District votes. The total District votes will be obtained by adding up the valid votes from the polling stations in the district.
2. In this explanatory note the example used is that six political parties, named A, B, C, D, E AND F completed for a total of six seats in a particular district hereinafter referred to as district seats and that the total District votes were 172,885.
3. The total number of valid votes cast for each political party separately hereinafter referred to as the party votes will be ascertained. Let us assume that the votes obtained by the six parties are as in the table below.

PARTY A	PARTY B	PARTY C	PARTY D	PARTY E	PARTY F	TOTAL DISTRICT VOTES
6,501	12,430	18,505	38,916	44,969	51,565	172,885

It is to be noted that when the party votes are added up, they should always give the same total as the total District votes.

4. In each District the number of votes that a political party requires to be allocated one seat will be determined by dividing the total District votes by the district seats. The number of votes so determined will hereafter be referred to as the threshold or quota of votes. The threshold or quota of votes can be obtained in two ways –
   (c) As a percentage of the total District votes: to get the percentage divide 100% (representing 100 of the district votes) by the district seats. In this example if we divide 100% by 6 (the number of seats being competed for by the political parties) the results will be 16.66% as the threshold or quota of votes. Expressed as a percentage the threshold or quota of votes can easily be determined for each district before the elections, as soon as the total number of seats for each District is known.
   (d) As actual votes: in this case, divide the total District votes by the district seat. In this example, if we divide 172,885 votes (being the total District votes) by 6 (being the number of District seats) the results will be 28,814 votes as the threshold or quota of votes. This can be done only after the elections, when the total District votes are known.

   It is to be noted however that in both instances the result is the same as 28,814 votes representing 16.66% of 172,885 votes.

5. Any political party whose share of the total District votes is less than the threshold or quota of votes fails to win a seat and therefore, drops out of any further calculations for purposes of the allocation of seats. The table below shows the status of the six parties in this regard.

PARTY A	PARTY B	PARTY C	PARTY D	PARTY E	PARTY F	TOTAL DISTRICT VOTES	THRESHOLD
6,501	12,430	18,505	38,916	44,969	51,564	72,885	28,814
3.76%	7.18%	10.70%	22.50%	26.01%	29.82%	100%	16.66%

   It can be seen from the table that each of Parties A, B and C did not obtain the required quota of 28,814 votes or 16.66% of the total District votes; and therefore, fails to win any seat.

6. The remaining parties D, E and F will thus be allocated the six District seats in accordance with their percentage shares of the total District votes. For this purpose, their percentage shares will be treated as ratios in relation to one and another, thus giving the equation.

   22.50; 26.01; 29.82=6.

   The equation is to be worked out in the following way.

   Add up the ratios: i.e 22.50+26.01 +29.82 =78.33. So, the equation becomes 78.33=6.

   The results for the 3 parties will be –

   D (22.50 × 6 ÷ 78.33) =1.72

   E (26.01 × 6 ÷78.33) =1.99

   F (29.82 × 6 ÷ 78.33) =2.28

7. Seats will first be allocated to the parties without taking any decimal fractions into consideration. In this example, the allocation will be:

   D:1 seat
   E: 1 seat
   F: 2 seats

8. The number of seats so allocated will then be added up (1+1 +2=4) and the total subtracted from the district seats (6-4=2) The resultant (2) represents the seat that remains to be allocated.

9. Any number of remaining seats will be allocated to the parties in the following manner:

The party with the highest decimal fraction (E with. 99)gets the 1st of the remaining seats.
The party with the next highest fraction (D with .72) gets the 2nd of the remaining seats.
The process continues in descending order until all the remaining seats have been allocated.

10. In this example, since 2 seats remained to be allocated, party F with a decimal fraction of .28 gets no additional seats. So, the final allocation of seats to the political parties will be:

D (1+1) =2
E (1+1) =2
F (2+0) =2

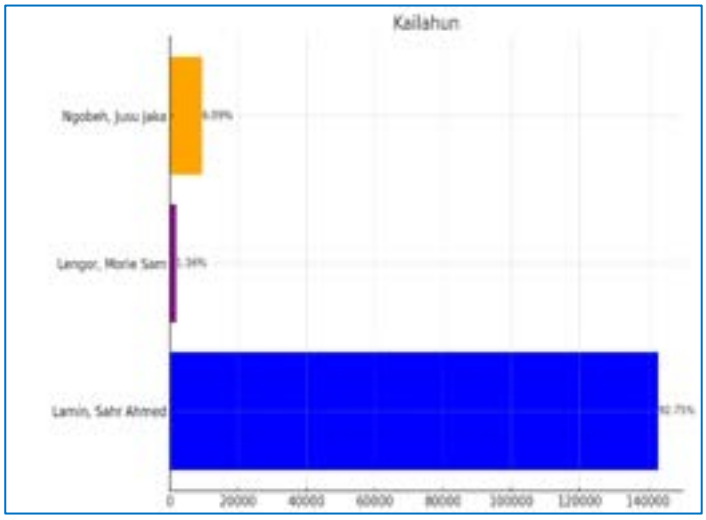
11. In case there is only one seat remaining to be allocated, and 2 or more parties have the same decimal fractions, the seats will be allocated to the party with the highest elective vote. The elective votes for each of the parties concerned will be obtained by dividing the total party votes (being the total number of votes cast for each party separately) by the number of seats already allocated to the party plus one (the sum being the number of seats the party will obtain overall if one or more seats is to be allocated to it). This scenario is illustrated in the table below, in which three parties are assumed to have competed for six District seats, with a tie (0.4) in the decimal fractions.

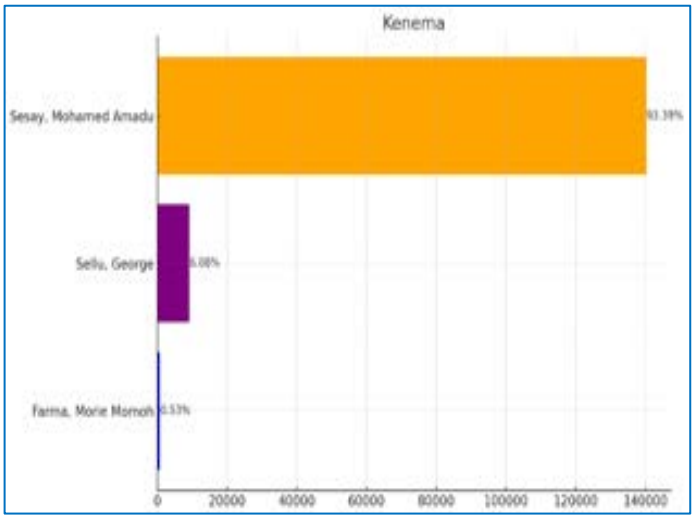
	TOTAL VOTES	RATIO	FIRST ALLOCATION	ELECTIVE VOTES IF PLUS 1 SEAT	RANK	FIRST ALLOCATION PLUS	FINAL SEATS
PARTY A	87,7224	2.4	2	29,241 (87,729 ÷ 3)	1st	2+1	3
PARTY B	80,399	2.2	2			2+0	2
PARTY C	51,165	1.4	1	25,583 (51,165 ÷2)	2nd	1+0	1
DISTRICT	219,288	6	5(1)			5+1	6

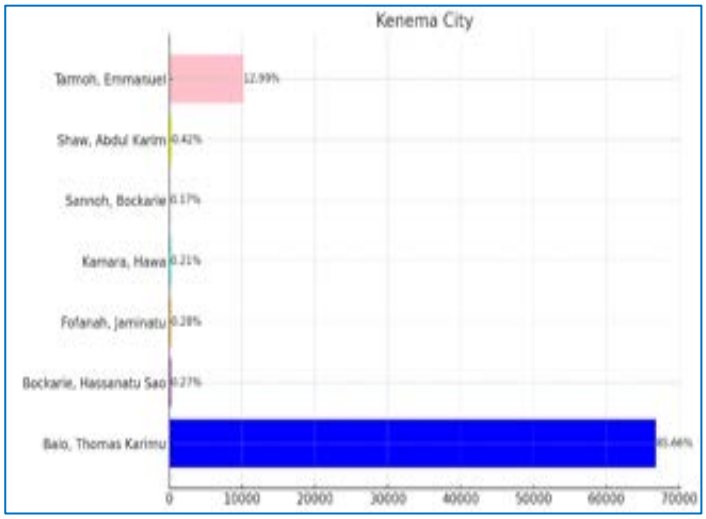
ANNEX 13: ELECTIONS STATISTICS

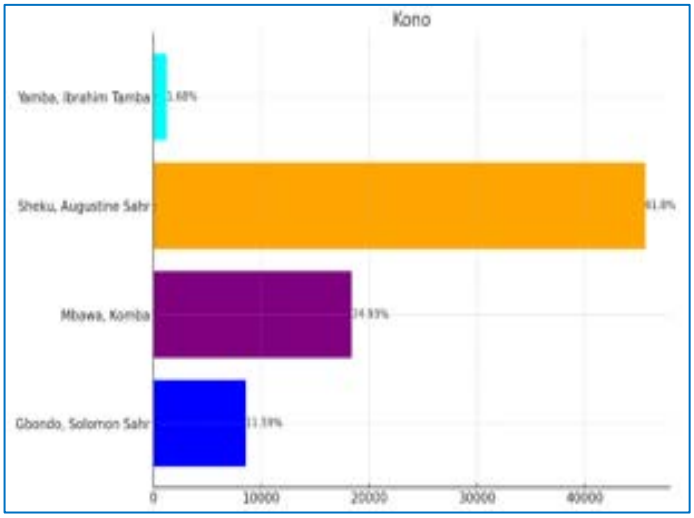
Valid Votes Obtained by Each Party or Independent Candidate Across Different Districts.

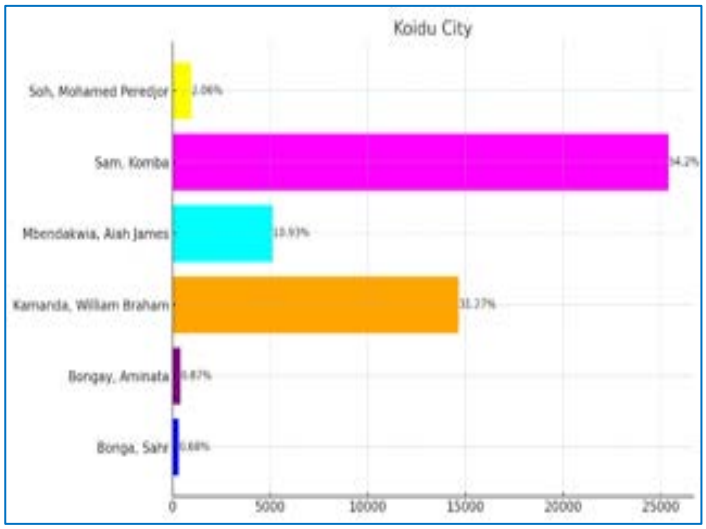
Eastern Region



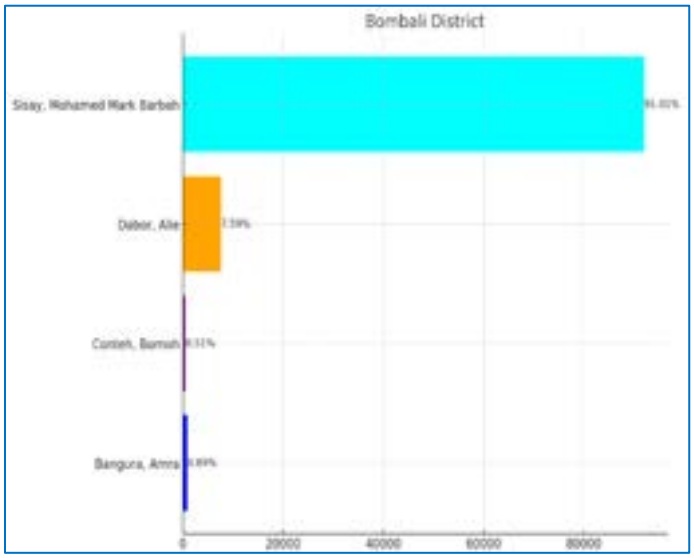


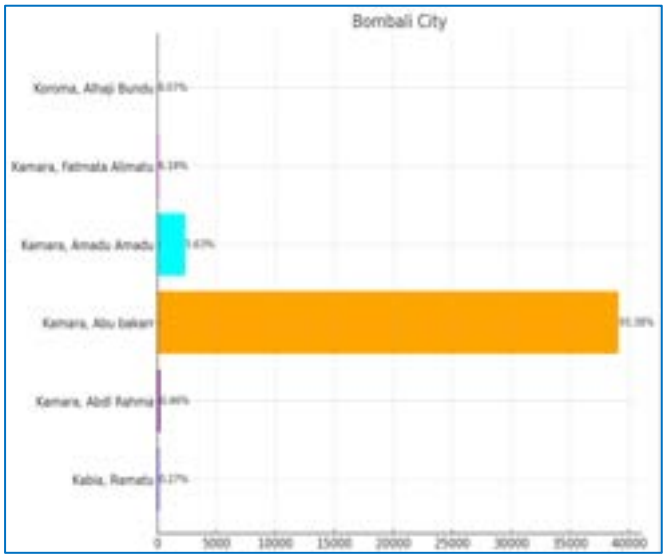


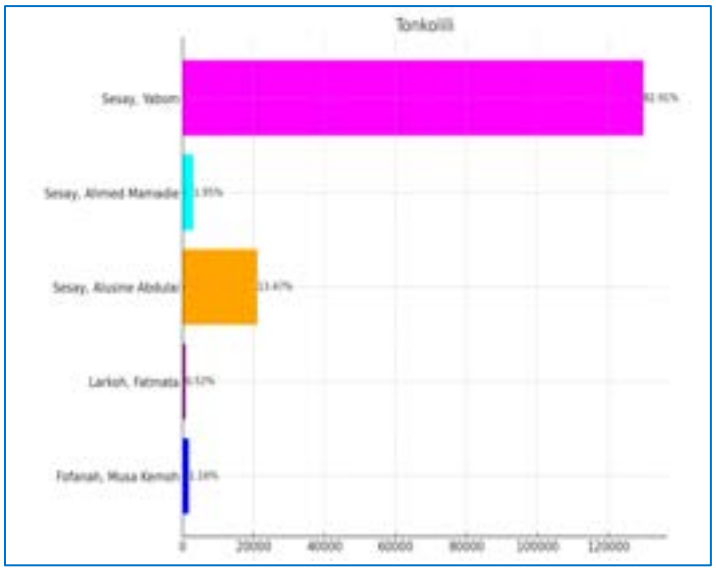




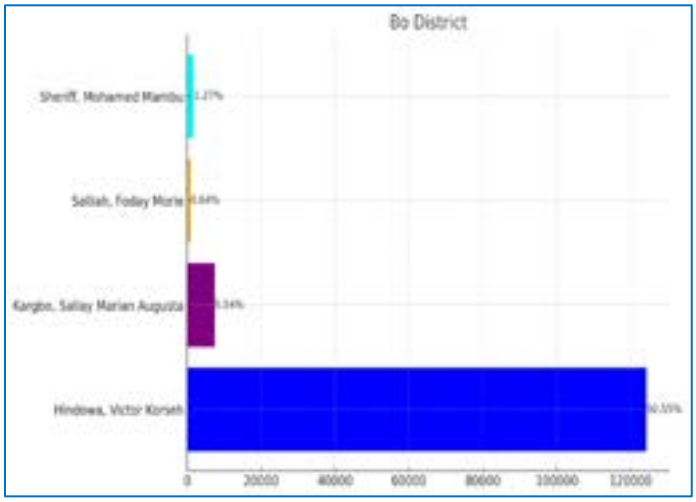
Northern Region

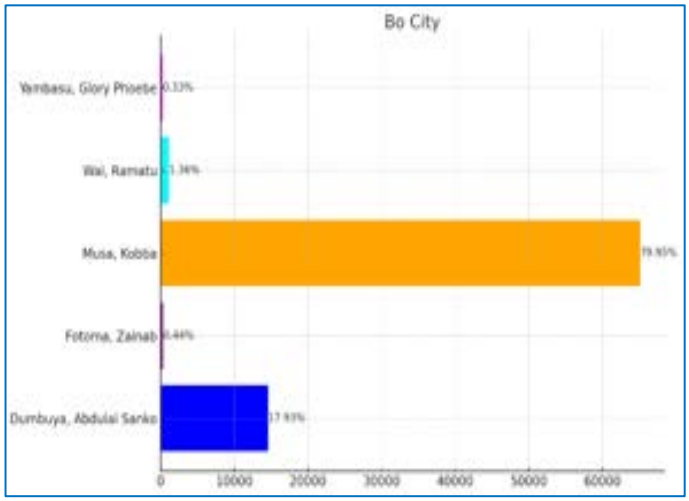


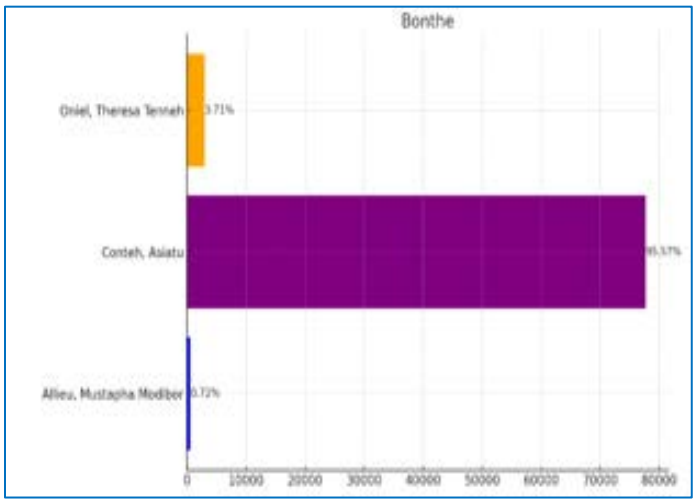


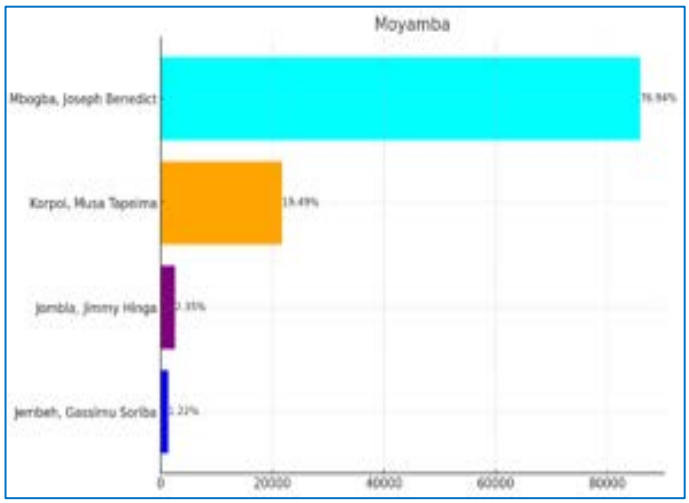


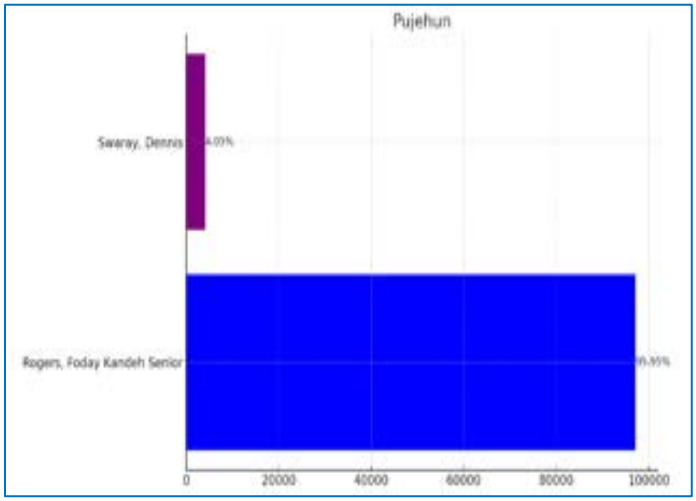
Southern Region



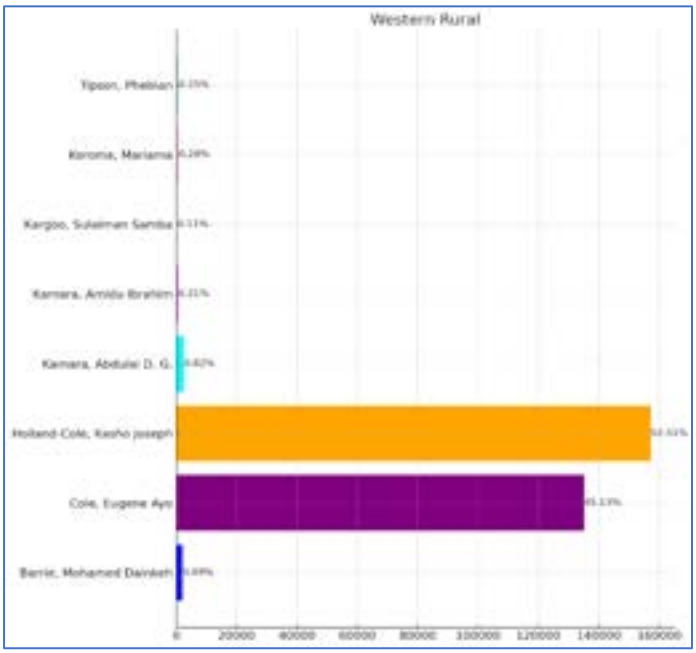


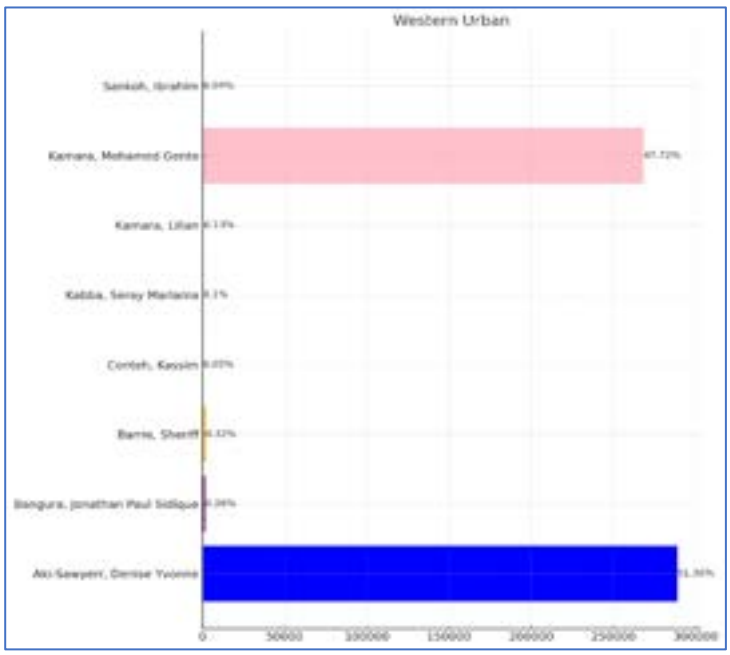






Western Region





ANNEX 14: GENDER ANALYSIS

ELECTED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

No	District	Gender	Number of Elected Members of Parliament	Percentage
1	KAILAHUN	Male	6	60%
		Female	4	40%
Total			**10**	**100%**
2	KENEMA	Male	8	67%
		Female	4	33%
Total			**12**	**100%**
3	KONO	Male	7	70%
		Female	3	30%
Total			**10**	**100%**
4	BOMBALI	Male	6	75%
		Female	2	25%
Total			**8**	**100%**
5	FALABA	Male	4	100%
		Female	0	0%
Total			**4**	**100%**
6	KOINADUGU	Male	3	75%
		Female	1	25%
Total			**4**	**100%**
7	TONKOLILI	Male	7	70%
		Female	3	30%
Total			**10**	**100%**
8	KAMBIA	Male	4	67%
		Female	2	33%
Total			**6**	**100%**
9	KARENE	Male	4	80%
		Female	1	20%
Total			**5**	**100%**
10	PORT LOKO	Male	7	70%
		Female	3	30%
Total			**10**	**100%**
11	BO	Male	8	67%
		Female	4	33%
Total			**12**	**100%**
12	BONTHE	Male	3	60%
		Female	2	40%
Total			**5**	**100%**
13	MOYAMBA	Male	4	67%
		Female	2	33%
Total			**6**	**100%**
14	PUJEHUN	Male	5	71%
		Female	2	29%
Total			**7**	**100%**
15	WESTERN AREA RURAL	Male	7	70%
		Female	3	30%
Total			**10**	**100%**
16	WESTERN AREA URBAN	Male	11	69%
		Female	5	31%
Total			**16**	**100%**

Summary Analysis

Location	Gender	Number of Elected Members of Parliament	Percentage
National (Country Wide)	Male	94	70%
	Female	41	30%
TOTAL		**135**	**100%**

CHAIRPERSONS OF DISTRICT COUNCILS

No	District Council	Gender	Number of District Chairpersons Elected
1	KAILAHUN	Male	1
2	KENEMA	Male	1
3	KONO	Male	1
4	BOMBALI	Male	1
5	FALABA	Male	1
6	KOINADUGU	Male	1
7	TONKOLILI	Female	1
8	KAMBIA	Male	1
9	KARENE	Male	1
10	PORT LOKO	Male	1
11	BO	Male	1
12	BONTHE	Female	1
13	MOYAMBA	Male	1
14	PUJEHUN	Male	1
15	WESTERN AREA RURAL	Male	1
Total			**15**

Summary Analysis

Description	Number	Percentage
Number of Elected Male District Chairpersons	13	87%
Number of Elected Female District Chairpersons	2	13%
Total	**15**	**100%**

MAYORS OF CITY COUNCILS AND MUNICIPALITY

No	City Council	Gender	Number of Elected Mayors
1	KENEMA	Male	1
2	KOIDU, NEW SEMBEHUN	Male	1
3	MAKENI	Male	1
4	PORT LOKO	Male	1
5	BO	Male	1
6	BONTHE MUNICIPALITY	Male	1
7	FREETOWN	Female	1
Total			**7**

Summary Analysis

Description	Number	Percentage
Number of Elected Mayors (Male)	6	86%
Number of Elected Mayoress (Female)	1	14%
Total	**7**	**100%**

ELECTED COUNCILLORS OF DISTRICT AND CITY COUNCILS

NO	Locality	Gender	Number of Elected Councilors	Percentage
1	KAILAHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	19	66%
		Female	10	34%
Total			**29**	**100%**
2	KENEMA DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	11	58%
		Female	8	42%
Total			**19**	**100%**
3	KONO DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	18	72%
		Female	7	28%
Total			**25**	**100%**
4	BOMBALI DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	16	76%
		Female	5	24%
Total			**21**	**100%**
5	FALABA DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	14	78%
		Female	4	22%
Total			**18**	**100%**
6	KOINADUGU DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	12	67%
		Female	6	33%
Total			**18**	**100%**
7	TONKOLILI DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	19	66%
		Female	10	34%
Total			**29**	**100%**
8	KAMBIA DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	15	65%
		Female	8	35%
Total			**23**	**100%**
9	KARENE DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	14	67%
		Female	7	33%
Total			**21**	**100%**
10	PORT LOKO DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	21	75%
		Female	7	25%
Total			**28**	**100%**
11	BO DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	19	70%
		Female	8	30%
Total			**27**	**100%**
12	BONTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	13	68%
		Female	6	32%
Total			**19**	**100%**
13	MOYAMBA DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	14	64%
		Female	8	36%
Total			**22**	**100%**
14	PUJEHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	16	67%
		Female	8	33%
Total			**24**	**100%**
15	WESTERN AREA RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL	Male	19	63%
		Female	11	37%
Total			**30**	**100%**
16	FREETOWN CITY COUNCIL	Male	26	65%
		Female	14	35%
Total			**40**	**100%**
17	PORT LOKO CITY COUNCIL	Male	8	62%
		Female	5	38%
Total			**13**	**100%**
18	BO CITY COUNCIL	Male	10	56%
		Female	8	44%
Total			**18**	**100%**
19	BONTHE MUNICIPALITY	Male	7	64%
		Female	4	36%
Total			**11**	**100%**

20	MAKENI CITY COUNCIL	Male	9	60%
		Female	6	40%
Total			**15**	**100%**
21	KOIDU, NEW SEMBEHUN	Male	11	69%
		Female	5	31%
Total			**16**	**100%**
22	KENEMA CITY COUNCIL	Male	18	67%
		Female	9	33%
Total			**27**	**100%**

Summary Analysis

Description	Number	Percentage
Total number of Male Councillors	329	67%
Total number of Female Councillors	164	33%
Total	**493**	**100%**

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone

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West Africa

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ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC) PARTY

APC TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

ANALYSIS OF THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS

The All Peoples Congress (APC) Party independently conducted two levels of analysis on the 2023 presidential election results: the 60% of polling stations and 100% announced by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) on 26 and 27 June 2023 respectively; and our in-house analysis of 70.2% (8,303) Results Reconciliation Forms (RRFs) collected by polling agents across the country. First level analysis showed gross statistical inconsistencies and irregularities in the results announced by ECSL, on the one hand, and the second level in-house analysis of 70.2% RRFs provided by the APC Tally Centre, on the other hand, showed that the APC presidential candidate Dr. Samura Mathew Wilson Kamara had a commanding lead of 57.15% in the first round of the elections, while Dr. Julius Maada Bio scored just under 40% of the valid votes. In meeting the principle of transparent reporting on elections results, the ECSL is free to prove otherwise, and the APC is open to independent verification of the RRFs.

The detailed analysis provided below is followed by recommendations focusing on:

1) Elections results, and
2) Derelictions of the ECSL.

LEVEL ONE ANALYSIS - 2023 PRESIDENTIAL RESULTS ANNOUNCED BY THE ECSL

Our analysis of the 2023 presidential results announced by the ECSL, in comparison with other independently gathered data and data from previous elections, revealed several statistical inconsistencies and discrepancies, and raised major concerns that necessitate further clarifications.

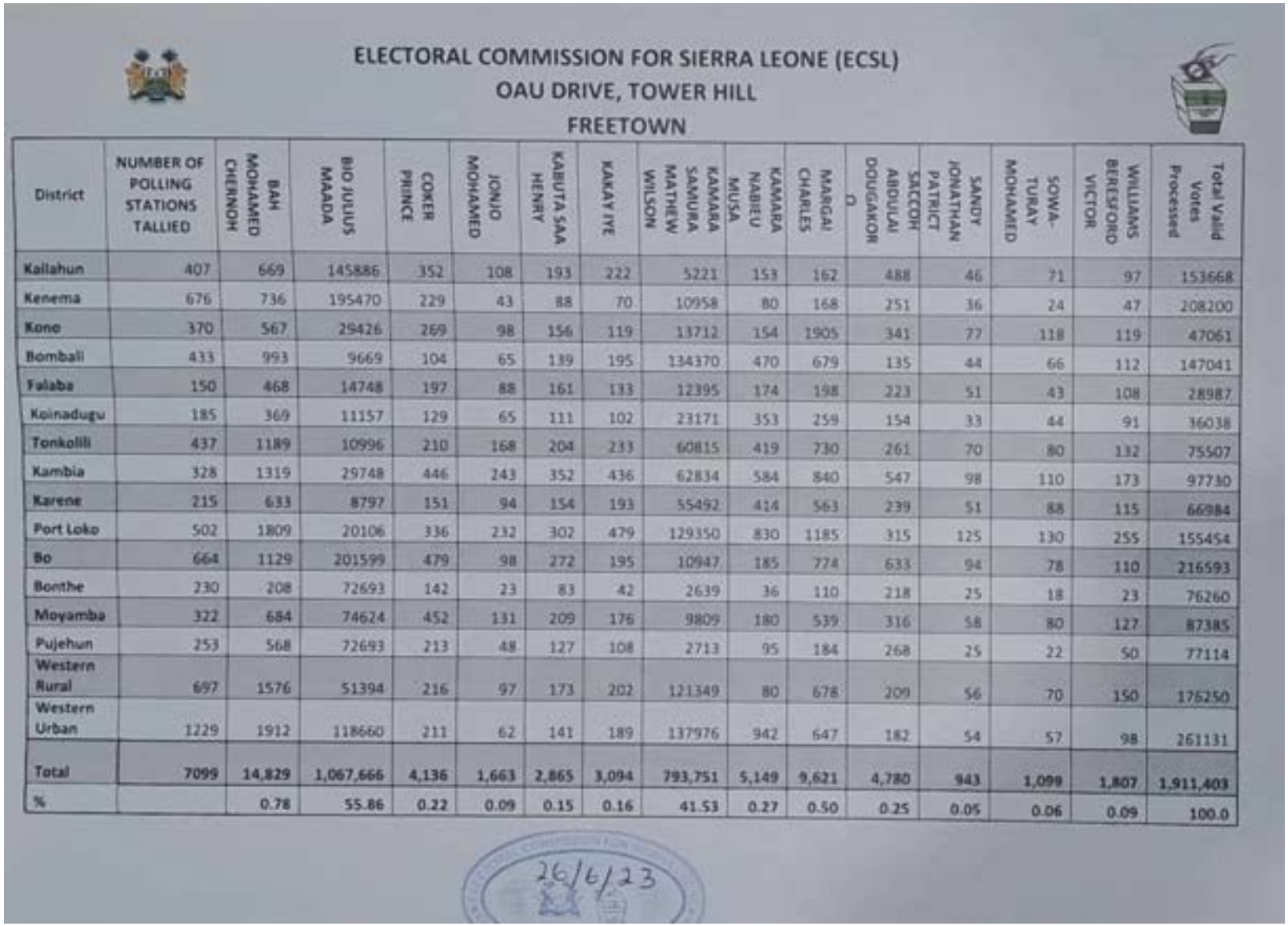
The ECSL announced partial presidential results representing 60% of polling stations on the 26th of June 2023. These partial results released constituted 7,099 polling stations (Table 1). However, it is clear from the 60% of Polling Stations results announced that, in eight districts, the average valid vote per station reported exceeded the 300 voters per polling station as shown in Table 2 below.

These districts, with over 300 valid votes on average per polling station exhibit significant voter irregularities and electoral malpractices that potentially influenced the outcome of the election results. Unfortunately, the ECSL failed to evoke Section 84 of the Public Elections Act of 2022 which states: "Where the votes cast at an election at a polling station exceed the number of registered voters in a polling station, the result of the election for that polling

station shall be declared null and void by the Electoral Commission". Therefore, the polling stations in the districts of Kailahun, Kenema, Bombali, Karene, Port Loko, Bo, Bonthe, and Pujehun, where the number of valid votes cast exceeded the number of registered voters (300 voters per Station), must have their results declared null and void, and fresh elections held in those stations. This is a gross misconduct in the electoral process and undermines democracy.

Furthermore, in the summary of the statements of results published by the ECSL on the 27th June 2023, the total invalid votes recorded by the ECSL for 11,712 polling stations processed by the Commission for the whole country, representing 98.98% of all polling stations is 10,883. This represents an invalid vote percentage of 0.39%.

Table 1: Valid Votes Obtained by Presidential Candidates in ECSL Announced Results (60% Polling Stations)



ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL
FREETOWN

District	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS TALLIED	BAH MOHAMED CHERNOH	BIO JULIUS MAADA	COKER PRINCE	JONJO MOHAMED	KABUTA SAA HENRY	KAKAY IYE	KAMARA SAMURA MATHEW WILSON	KAMARA MUSA NABIEU	KAMARA CHARLES	SACCOH ABDULAI DOUGAKOR O	SANDY JONATHAN PATRICT	SOWA-TURAY MOHAMED	WILLIAMS BERESFORD VICTOR	Total Valid Votes Processed
Kailahun	407	669	145886	352	108	193	222	5221	153	162	488	46	71	97	153668
Kenema	676	736	195470	229	43	88	70	10958	80	168	251	36	24	47	208200
Kono	370	567	29426	269	98	156	119	13712	154	1905	341	77	118	119	47061
Bombali	433	993	9669	104	65	139	195	134370	470	679	135	44	66	112	147041
Falaba	150	468	14748	197	88	161	133	12395	174	198	223	51	43	108	28987
Koinadugu	185	369	11157	129	65	111	102	23171	353	259	154	33	44	91	36038
Tonkolili	437	1189	10996	210	168	204	233	60815	419	730	261	70	80	132	75507
Kambia	328	1319	29748	446	243	352	436	62834	584	840	547	98	110	173	97730
Karene	215	633	8797	151	94	154	193	55492	414	563	239	51	88	115	66984
Port Loko	502	1809	20106	336	232	302	479	129350	830	1185	315	125	130	255	155454
Bo	664	1129	201599	479	98	272	195	10947	185	774	633	94	78	110	216593
Bonthe	230	208	72693	142	23	83	42	2639	36	110	218	25	18	23	76260
Moyamba	322	684	74624	452	131	209	176	9809	180	539	316	58	80	127	87385
Pujehun	253	568	72693	213	48	127	108	2713	95	184	268	25	22	50	77114
Western Rural	697	1576	51394	216	97	173	202	121349	80	678	209	56	70	150	176250
Western Urban	1229	1912	118660	211	62	141	189	137976	942	647	182	54	57	98	261131
Total	**7099**	**14,829**	**1,067,666**	**4,136**	**1,663**	**2,865**	**3,094**	**793,751**	**5,149**	**9,621**	**4,780**	**943**	**1,099**	**1,807**	**1,911,403**
%		0.78	55.86	0.22	0.09	0.15	0.16	41.53	0.27	0.50	0.25	0.05	0.06	0.09	100.0

26/6/23

Table 2: Analysis of ECSL's 60% Polling Stations Results showing districts with over-voting

DISTRICT	REGISTERED VOTERS	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS TALLIED	TOTAL VALID VOTES PROCESSED (ECSL)	AVERAGE VOTE TALLIED PER POLLING STATION
Kailahun	192,333	407	153,668	377.56
Kenema	318,306	676	208,200	307.99
Kono	174,036	370	47,061	127.19
Bombali	206,380	433	147,041	339.59
Falaba	69,170	150	28,987	193.25
Koinadugu	85,209	185	36,038	194.8
Tonkolili	207,525	437	75,507	172.78
Kambia	152,642	328	97,730	297.96
Karene	100,296	215	66,984	311.55
Port Loko	237,021	502	155,454	309.67
Bo	317,216	664	216,593	326.19
Bonthe	107,645	230	76,260	331.57
Moyamba	150,402	322	87,385	271.38
Pujehun	115,925	253	77,114	304.80
Western Area Rural	341,870	697	176,250	252.87
Western Area Urban	598,282	1229	261,131	212.47
Total	**3,374,258**	**7,098**	**1,911,403**	

This is not only inconsistent with the PRVT data from the National Elections Watch (NEW), which estimated invalid votes to be between 4.5% and 5.7%, but also deviates significantly from historical trends. In 2007, invalid votes accounted for 7.3% of total votes, while in 2012 and 2018, the rates were 4.7% and 5.2%, respectively. Table 3 shows the number of valid votes obtained by each Presidential candidate in the final results announced by ECSL for the 2023 Presidential elections.

We draw attention to Tables 2 and 4, which show inconsistencies in the voter turnout between the 60% and 100% of results announce

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Table 3: Valid Votes Obtained by Presidential Candidates in Total (98.98%) ECSL's Announced Results

DISTRICT	CHERNOR MOHAMED BAH	JULIUS MAADA BIO	PRINCE COKER	MOHAMED JONJO	KABUTA SAA HENRY	KAKAY IYE	NABIEU MUSA KAMARA	WILSON MATHEW SAMURA KAMARA	CHARLES MARGAI	DOUGAKORO ABDULAI SACCOH	PATRICK JONATHAN SANDY	MOHAMED TURAY SOWA	VICTOR BERESFORD WILLIAMS	TOTAL VALID VOTES PROCESSED (ECSL)
	NDA	**SLPP**	**PDP**	**CDP**	**UNPP**	**ADP**	**PLP**	**APC**	**PMDC**	**RUFP**	**NURP**	**UDP**	**ReNIP**	
Kailahun	841	172477	469	121	235	262	174	8842	194	624	57	82	115	184493
Kenema	2221	276163	674	156	331	212	234	21038	357	696	91	96	161	302430
Kono	1523	80222	717	261	459	375	394	33202	6059	945	219	351	385	125112
Bombali	1075	10584	121	79	156	219	519	144358	754	149	49	75	124	158262
Falaba	593	38064	242	114	201	164	218	14939	245	261	58	53	140	55292
Koinadugu	624	17465	217	111	181	183	385	34678	434	257	60	76	139	54810
Tonkolili	2201	19580	359	325	352	461	804	129915	1427	404	112	165	256	156361
Kambia	1345	40580	457	248	366	479	596	64564	894	562	101	112	183	110487
Karene	653	9020	155	98	160	198	431	61395	582	246	53	94	119	73204
Port Loko	1969	27241	383	245	325	519	933	138923	1312	348	139	140	280	172757
Bo	1176	261865	587	115	340	238	226	23112	871	769	106	95	126	289626
Bonthe	514	98445	161	26	91	49	45	2815	114	234	28	20	30	102572
Moyamba	1139	109258	648	188	313	300	336	19740	758	462	98	118	210	133568
Pujehun	589	102068	221	51	131	112	99	2845	193	287	30	24	51	106701
Western Area Rural	2220	126507	263	121	213	263	234	157173	807	260	68	84	173	288386
Western Area Urban	2937	177393	307	108	205	302	2089	290723	1011	292	100	80	200	475747
Total	**21,620**	**1,566,932**	**5,981**	**2,367**	**4,059**	**4,336**	**7,717**	**1,148,262**	**16,012**	**6,796**	**1,369**	**1,665**	**2,692**	**2,789,808**
Percentages %	0.77%	**56.17%**	0.21%	0.08%	0.15%	0.16%	0.28%	**41.16%**	0.57%	0.24%	0.05%	0.06%	0.10%	

Based on the previously declared 60% ECSL results, and the final results announced, **Table 4** below is derived by subtracting the 60% from the 100% ECSL announced results. It is evident that the remaining so-called 40% was actually 38.98% of polling stations. Those in Kono district have an average of 317 votes per polling station, which clearly exceeds the threshold of 300 votes per station. Therefore section 84 of the Public Elections Act of 2022 should have been applied. **Table 4** further provides an average district-wise breakdown of the results by polling station for the remaining 40%.

Table 4: ECSL's 40% Polling Stations Results showing average valid votes per station by district

DISTRICT	REGISTERED VOTERS	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS TALLIED	TOTAL VALID VOTES PROCESSED (ECSL)	AVERAGE VOTE TALLIED PER POLLING STATION
Kailahun	192,333	272	30,825	113
Kenema	318,306	451	94,230	209
Kono	174,036	246	78,051	317
Bombali	206,380	288	11,221	39
Falaba	69,170	100	26,305	263
Koinadugu	85,209	124	18,772	151
Tonkolili	207,525	292	80,854	277
Kambia	152,642	219	12,757	58
Karene	100,296	144	6,220	43
Port Loko	237,021	334	17,303	52
Bo	317,216	442	73,033	165
Bonthe	107,645	154	26,312	171
Moyamba	150,402	215	46,183	215
Pujehun	115,925	169	29,587	175
Western Area Rural	341,870	464	112,136	242
Western Area Urban	598,282	820	214,616	262
Total	**3,374,258**	**4,734**	**878,405**	

Analysis of data based on the 60% of polling stations as published by ECSL on the 26th of June 2023, by Mr. Christopher A.A. Jones, ECSL's Deputy Director of Media and Communication through the official ECSL Political Parties (PPLC) WhatsApp forum, indicates that the percentage of valid votes reported with respect to the total number of registered voters exceeds 60% in nine out of the sixteen districts. Consequently, the percentage of votes pending for these districts is less compared to the other seven districts.

Based on the figures provided, the total possible number of votes pending in the eastern region (Kailahun, Kenema, and Kono) cannot exceed 275,746. Likewise, the southern region (Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba, and Pujehun) cannot exceed 233,836. These two regions, which are traditionally the strongholds of the SLPP should have a combined total of 509,582 pending.

On the other hand, the APC strongholds of the Northeast region (Bombali, Falaba, Koinadugu, and Tonkolili), Northwest region (Kambia, Karene, and Portloko) and Western region (Western Rural and Western Urban) have a total of 280,711, 169,791 and 502,771 respectively. These three regions have a combined total of 953,273 pending. Based on these figures that are pending, it is evident that the APC clearly holds a significant advantage over the SLPP for the remaining 40% of results pending.

Below is a detailed analysis of the 60% and 100% of polling stations announced by the ECSL on the 26th and 27th June 2023 in some of the districts:

Kailahun District:

- Analysis reveals a decline in average votes tallied for 378 votes per polling station for the initial 60% data to 113 votes per polling station for the remaining 40% data, indicating a potential decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average votes per polling station for the remaining 40% is notably lower at 113 votes.

Kenema District:

- Average votes tallied decreased from 309 votes per polling station for the initial 60% data to 209 votes per polling station for the remaining 40% data, suggesting a decrease in voter turnout or participation rate.
- The average votes per polling station for the remaining 40% is significantly lower at 209 votes.

Kono District:

- Average vote tallies increased from 127 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 317 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), indicating a significant increase in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is notably higher at 317 votes.

Bombali District:

- Average vote tallies declined from 340 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 39 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), indicating a substantial decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is significantly lower at 39 votes.

Kambia District:

- Average vote tallies decreased from 298 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 58 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), showing a decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is notably lower at 58 votes.

Karene District:

- Average vote tallies decreased from 312 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 43 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), indicating a significant decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is considerably lower at 43 votes.

Port Loko District:

- Average vote tallies declined from 310 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 52 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), suggesting a substantial decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is significantly lower at 52 votes.

Bo District:

- Average vote tallies decreased from 326 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 165 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), indicating a decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is notably lower at 165 votes.

Bonthe District:

- Average vote tallies decreased from 332 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 171 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), indicating a notable decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is significantly lower at 171 votes.

Pujehun District:

- Average vote tallies decreased from 305 votes per polling station (initial 60% data) to 175 votes per polling station (remaining 40% data), indicating a significant decrease in voter turnout or participation rates.
- The average vote per polling station for the remaining 40% is notably lower at 175 votes.

These disparities in average votes tallied within the same districts indicate gross irregularities at unprecedented scale in data collection, counting and reporting processes

that undermine the credibility of the results as announced by ECSL. It is crucial to ensure the integrity of the voting process and address any discrepancies promptly in order to maintain public trust in the electoral system.

Such blatant manipulation of election results makes a mockery of democracy and undermines the right of citizens to elect their leaders. It is imperative to build a systemic deterrent to prevent further subversion of democracy and irretrievable damage to the country's socio-political and economic fabric that could ultimately lead to civil unrest.

In light of these observations, in a letter dated 10 June 2024, we requested the ECSL to provide detailed clarifications on the following points. The ECSL refused to respond:

- The methodology used by the ECSL to calculate and report the number of invalid votes.
- Disaggregated results by polling stations to determine the specific stations that recorded over 300 voter turnouts.
- Any discrepancies or anomalies identified during the tabulation process, and how they were addressed.
- Explanation for non-adherence to sections 51, 52, 84, 88, 92, 93 and 120 of the Public Elections Act 2022.

We believe that addressing the above concerns transparently would have shown credibility on the part of the ECSL and the 2023 electoral process as a whole. It is imperative that all stakeholders, including the electorate, have full confidence in the results and the processes employed to achieve them.

It must be made clear that after several attempts for clarifications, the ECSL was unable to provide any justification to support that the final results announced for the 2023 Presidential elections are accurate. All of the above exhibit significant electoral irregularities and malpractices that influenced the outcome of the elections results infavour of the SLPP. The results have not been the true reflection of the will of the people.

LEVEL TWO IN-HOUSE ANALYSIS OF 70.2% RRFs TALLIED FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The party's Tally Center processed **8,303 RRFs out of 11,832** (**See Table 5** below)**.** This data represents a significant portion of the electorate and provides a robust foundation for a comprehensive analysis of the voting patterns, voter turnout, and potential irregularities that may have influenced the electoral outcomes. The analysis of these RRFs provides an understanding of the electoral landscape and gauging the level of support for the APC, as well as the party's position regarding the outcome of the **June 2023 general elections**.

1. **RRFs processing rate, voter turnout, valid & invalid votes and regional variations**
   (1) **Processing Rates**:

   a. The APC's tally center processed results from 8,303 out of 11,832 polling stations, accounting for 70.2% of all stations.

   b. Districts like Koinadugu, Bombali, and Tonkolili had processing rates above 80%, indicating effective monitoring and data collection efforts by our party agents.

   c. In Bonthe and Pujehun districts only 3.13% and 10.43% of RRFs were respectively processed. This was as a result of the lack of access to polling stations by our party agents on polling day on account of violence perpetrated by pro SLPP supporters in the full view of the security forces.

Table 5 – ECSL's Results Reconciliation Forms (RRFs) Tallied by the APC Party

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS PROCESSED	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS PENDING	% STATIONS PROCESSED	REGISTERED VOTERS	**TOTAL MAXIMUM NUMBER OF VOTERS IN STATIONS PROCESSED	TOTAL VOTES CAST	APPROX % VOTER TURNOUT	TOTAL VALID VOTES	% VALID VOTES	TOTAL INVALID VOTES	% INVALID VOTES
Kailahun	679	355	324	52.28%	192,333	106,500	79,407	74.56%	**76946**	96.90%	2461	**3.10%**
Kenema	1127	734	393	65.13%	318,306	220,200	167,511	76.07%	**162914**	97.26%	4597	**2.74%**
Kono	616	461	155	74.84%	174,036	138,300	95,778	69.25%	**89480**	93.42%	6298	**6.58%**
Bombali	721	650	71	90.15%	206,380	195,000	146,384	75.07%	**141052**	96.36%	5332	**3.64%**
Falaba	250	230	20	92.00%	69,170	69,000	40,981	59.39%	**37412**	91.29%	3569	**8.71%**
Koinadugu	309	297	12	96.12%	85,209	89,100	58,813	66.01%	**54823**	93.22%	3990	**6.78%**
Tonkolili	729	643	86	88.20%	207,525	192,900	143,316	74.30%	**137566**	95.99%	5750	**4.01%**
Kambia	547	357	190	65.27%	152,642	107,100	71,588	66.84%	**66351**	92.68%	5237	**7.32%**
Karene	359	325	34	90.53%	100,296	97,500	72,876	74.74%	**69330**	95.13%	3546	**4.87%**
Port Loko	836	773	63	92.46%	237,021	231,900	166,759	71.91%	**158442**	95.01%	8317	**4.99%**
Bo	1106	579	527	52.35%	317,216	173,700	128,926	74.22%	**124967**	96.93%	3959	**3.07%**
Bonthe	384	12	372	3.13%	107,645	3,600	2,884	80.11%	**2788**	96.67%	96	**3.33%**
Moyamba	537	324	213	60.34%	150,402	97,200	68,965	70.95%	**65015**	94.27%	3950	**5.73%**
Pujehun	422	44	378	10.43%	115,925	13,200	9,505	72.01%	**9257**	97.39%	248	**2.61%**
Western Area Rural	1161	971	190	83.63%	341,870	291,300	220,243	75.61%	**209151**	94.96%	11092	**5.04%**
Western AreaUrban	2049	1548	501	75.55%	598,282	464,400	365,469	78.70%	**350095**	95.79%	15374	**4.21%**
TOTAL	**11832**	**8303**	**3529**		**3,374,258**	**2,490,900**	**1,839,405**	**73.84%**	**1,755,589**	**95.44%**	**83816**	**4.56%**

Table 6, Valid Votes Obtained by Presidential Candidates Based on 70.2% RRFs Processed by the APC

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS	NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS PROCESSED	CHERNOR MOHAMED BAH	JULIUS MAADA BIO	PRINCE COKER	MOHAMED JONJO	KABUTA SAA HENRY	KAKAY IYE	NABIEU MUSA KAMARA	WILSON MATHEW SAMURA KAMARA	CHARLES MARGAI	DOUGAKORO ABDULAI SACCOH	PATRICK JONATHAN SANDY	MOHAMED TURAY SOWA	VICTOR BERESFORD WILLIAMS	TOTAL VALID VOTES PROCESSED
			NDA	SLPP	PDP	CDP	UNPP	ADP	PLP	APC	PMDC	RUFP	NURP	UDM	ReNIP	
Kailahun	679	355	526	68,787	290	79	136	127	171	6,141	158	336	64	55	76	76,946
Kenema	1,127	734	1,106	143,622	461	106	225	130	151	16,142	295	442	69	58	107	162,914
Kono	616	461	1,175	53,534	515	176	345	262	301	27,585	4,272	660	152	244	259	89,480
Bombali	721	650	984	9,733	114	68	136	203	482	128,294	668	129	44	65	132	141,052
Falaba	250	230	570	18,762	216	108	186	169	208	16,410	267	267	51	57	141	37,412
Koinadugu	309	297	607	17,538	199	98	327	176	315	34,628	415	252	58	69	141	54,823
Tonkolili	729	643	1,434	17,203	319	257	259	310	469	115,811	885	249	99	121	150	137,566
Kambia	547	357	935	18,739	266	164	232	251	384	44,281	497	350	56	71	125	66,351
Karene	359	325	595	8,441	166	94	151	191	390	58,297	539	218	52	85	111	69,330
Port Loko	836	773	1,866	20,877	349	258	319	686	903	131,130	1,197	318	133	139	267	158,442
Bo	1,106	579	659	105,147	311	62	172	132	144	17,164	587	407	61	48	73	124,967
Bonthe	384	12	15	2,603	12	2	4	2	2	113	8	23	1	0	3	2,788
Moyamba	537	324	722	47,183	411	117	193	198	233	14,904	539	259	71	64	121	65,015
Pujehun	422	44	37	8,375	31	2	15	8	4	717	31	31	1	3	2	9,257
Western Area Rural	1,161	971	2,129	59,273	307	112	205	246	528	145,239	586	234	60	69	163	209,151
Western Area Urban	2,049	1,548	2,010	98,847	258	103	365	443	585	246,403	592	226	64	67	132	350,095
TOTAL	**11,832**	**8,303**	**15,370**	**698,664**	**4,225**	**1,806**	**3,270**	**3,534**	**5,270**	**1,003,259**	**11,536**	**4,401**	**1,036**	**1,215**	**2,003**	**1,755,589**
Percent		**70.17%**	**0.88%**	**39.80%**	**0.24%**	**0.10%**	**0.19%**	**0.20%**	**0.30%**	**57.15%**	**0.66%**	**0.25%**	**0.06%**	**0.07%**	**0.11%**	**100.00%**

2. Detailed analysis of the Presidential Elections Results

2.1. Total Valid Votes

a. The total valid votes processed is 1,755,589, with various candidates receiving votes across the country.

2.2. Top Performing Candidates:

a. **Wilson Matthew Samura Kamara (APC)**: With 1,003,259 votes secured the highest number of votes, leading by 57.15% of the total valid votes processed. This implies a significant support for the APC party and Kamara's candidacy.

b. **Julius Maada Bio (SLPP)**: Julius Maada Bio received the second-highest number of votes with 698,664 votes, constituting around 39.80% of the total valid votes processed.

c. **Chernor Mohamed Bah (NDA)**: received 15,370 votes, representing approximately 0.88% of the total valid votes processed.

d. **Other Candidates:** The ten (10) other candidates including Prince Coker (PDP), Kabuta Saa Henry (CDP), and Nabieu Musa Kamara (PLP), among others got only 38,296 votes or about 2.18%.

DERELICTIONS OF ECSL

1. **Discrepancies in Reported Results:**

   The June 24, 2023, general elections in Sierra Leone have been marred with significant procedural failures on the part of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL). These failures as listed below have compromised the integrity of the electoral process and raised serious concerns about the legitimacy of the election results. Here we have synthesized findings from multiple sources, including the National Elections Watch (NEW), the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), and The Carter Center, to provide a comprehensive analysis of ECSL's procedural shortcomings.

2. **Key Procedural Failures**

(1) Brazen reluctance of the ECSL to cooperate with the Tripartite Committee in its examination of elections – the ECSL delayed the Committee's work for a prolonged period and failed to cooperate when required.

(2) **Non-Compliance with Legal Frameworks**

a. Public Elections Act, 2022: The ECSL failed to adhere to several key provisions of this act, undermining the electoral process's transparency and credibility.

b. Section 51: Declaration of Election Results - ECSL did not declare results transparently and those declared were full of discrepancies.

c. Section 84: Cancellation Due to Over-Voting: ECSL did not enforce this law, allowing questionable results from over-voted polling stations to be included in the final tally and which significantly impacted the overall results.
d. Section 88: Counting Officer's Duties: The ECSL did not ensure that counting officers accurately and transparently reported votes, undermining the credibility of elections results.
e. Section 92: Certification of Result by District Returning Officer: ECSL failed to consistently obtain these certifications, raising questions about the authenticity and accuracy of the reported outcomes.
f. Sections 52 and 93: The ECSL failed to comply with the requirement of publishing the results announced through the gazette and any other means they may choose. The ECSL also failed to upload the said results by polling stations on their website as stated in their declaration of Presidential results on 27 June 2023.

(3) Lack of Transparency and Accountability

a. **Results Tabulation:** The ECSL's tabulation process was marked by significant limitations in transparency and accessibility.
    - Observers from The Carter Center reported that they were too far from the workspace to accurately assess procedures and were not allowed to approach staff to ask questions in some centers. Party agents were also not allowed to monitor the tallying process.
    - The EU EOM noted a lack of transparency in the reception of sensitive materials and the early stages of tabulation in regional tally centers.
b. **Publication of Results:** The ECSL failed to publish disaggregated results by polling stations on its website contrary to their statement of 27 June 2023 in the announcement of the elections results, compromising the transparency of the results management process.
    - According to NEW, this lack of publication has undermined the credibility of the election results.

(4) Statistical Inconsistencies and Manipulation

a. **Invalid Votes**: The ECSL reported only 0.39% invalid votes, a figure starkly inconsistent with historical data and independent observations.
    - NEW's analysis estimated rejected ballots between 4.5% and 5.7%, indicating a significant discrepancy with ECSL’s.

b. **Voter Turnout:** The ECSL reported inflated voter turnout percentages, particularly in SLPP strongholds.
    - The EU EOM highlighted significant statistical inconsistencies, such as a 75% decrease in average valid votes per polling station in Karene and a 31% increase in Kono between the first and second batches of presidential results.

c. **Handling of Election Materials**
    - **Ballot Boxes and Seals**: The Carter Center observed broken seals and open ballot boxes in three of the five tally centers they monitored.
    - In two tally centers, ballot boxes appeared to have been opened after arrival, raising concerns about the integrity of the ballots.

d. **Use of Technology and Data Management**
    - **Results Tabulation Application:** Despite procuring a controversial results tabulation application, the ECSL did not utilize it during the tabulation process.
    - Observers from The Carter Center noted the absence of projectors to display data entry or results at tally centers, contrary to ECSL's stated plans, which would have contributed to transparency.

(5) Observations by Election Observer Missions

a. **National Elections Watch (NEW)**
    - **PRVT Methodology:** NEW used the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology to independently assess the election day processes and verify the accuracy of official results announced by ECSL.
    - **Findings:** NEW reported significant discrepancies in voter turnout, rejected ballots, and candidate vote shares, challenging the ECSL's official results.

b. **European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM)**
    - Transparency and Statistical Inconsistencies: The EU EOM reported a lack of transparency in the early stages of tabulation and significant statistical inconsistencies in the results announced by the ECSL.
    - **High Turnout and Low Invalid Ballots:** The EU EOM found unusually high voter turnout and low invalid ballots in several districts, raising concerns about the credibility of the results.

c. **The Carter Center**

- **Tabulation Process:** The Carter Center highlighted limitations in transparency and accessibility during the tabulation process and noted significant security concerns with election materials.
- **Handling of Results Forms:** The Carter Center observed a double-blind data entry process, but flagged results forms were not reviewed during their observation period, raising concerns about the thoroughness of the process.

(6) Evidence from APC's Results Reconciliation Forms RRFs from polling stations

From evidence derived from the All People's Congress (APC) Results Reconciliation Forms (RRFs) for the June 24, 2023, general elections in Sierra Leone. The RRFs, collected from over 70% of polling stations nationwide, provide compelling evidence of substantial discrepancies and irregularities in the official results announced by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL). This RRF analysis demonstrates that Dr. Samura Mathew Wilson Kamara held a commanding lead of 57.15% against Julius Maada Bio with 39.80%. This commanding lead made it impossible for Maada Bio to have secured over 55% of the valid votes. It is therefore impracticable to have won by 56.1% on the first ballot as declared by ECSL.

(7) Collection and Analysis of RRFs

The APC meticulously collected RRFs from 8,303 polling stations across the country, representing 70.17% of the total polling stations. These forms were signed by ECSL officials and political party agents, including those from the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). The analysis focused on verifying the accuracy of the data recorded on the RRFs and comparing it with the results announced by the ECSL.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above analyses, it is clear that the elections results announced by the ECSL for the June 24th, 2023 Multitier Elections is marred with several electoral derelictions, electoral fraud, and blatant non-compliance with relevant legal provisions in the Public Elections Act 2022 and does not reflect the will of the people of Sierra Leone. To this end, the APC hereby recommends the following:

1. **Rerun of the June 2023 Multitier Elections**

   The analysis of ECSL's results announced for 60% and 100% of polling stations is a clear show of statistical inconsistencies and electoral fraud on the part of the ECSL. The discrepancies identified undermined the credibility of the announced results. This was compounded by the commission's refusal to provide the 2023 presidential results for independent verification before and during the October 2023 Bintumani dialogue, and on the request of the Tripartite Committee. In addition, analysis of the 70.2% of RRFs received from the ECSL by the APC, showed that Dr Samura Kamara **held a commanding lead of 57.15%** against Julius Maada Bio with 39.80%. This commanding lead made it impossible for Julius Maada Bio to have secured over 55% of the valid votes. It is therefore impracticable to have won by 56.1% on the first ballot as declared by ECSL.

   In view of these, the APC Tripartite Committee recommends **a rerun of the June 24 2023 multitier elections with immediate effect to be facilitated by the ECOWAS Commission.** It is only fair that an objective position is taken on the issue of unresolved elections results.

2. **Immediate resignation of ECSL leadership**

One of the key objectives of setting up the ERC is to ensure accountability. Giving the several electoral malpractices committed during the June 2023 elections, the APC recommends the immediate resignation or removal of the following ECSL leadership to enable a fresh team to implement the proposed reforms, conduct the rerun, and manage the upcoming electoral cycle.

The following should immediately resign:

(1) The Chairman, Chief Electoral Commissioner (CEC)
(2) Electoral Commissioners (North East, North West, South, East and Western Area)
(3) The Executive Secretary
(4) Director of Operations, 2023 elections
(5) Deputy Director of Operations, 2023 elections
(6) Director of Legal Affairs

(7) Director of Data Management and Voters Roll
(8) Deputy Assistant Director Data Management and Voters Roll (directly in charge of the tallying of elections results)
(9) Director of Logistics
(10) ICT Consultant
(11) Electoral Officers Data Management and Voters Roll (In charge of all Regional Tally Centers)
(12) District Elections Managers (DEMs) during the 2023 elections where overvoting took place: Kailahun, Kenema, Kono, Bo, Bonthe, Pujehun, Bombali, Port Loko, and Karene Districts.

a. Set up a tribunal to investigate electoral wrongdoings, and those found wanting will be prosecuted to restore confidence in the institution again.
b. the above set of officials be banned from holding public office in the future including electoral responsibilities.

3. Reconstituting the new ECSL Leadership

(1) Prior to the resignation of the commissioners, and in the period 10 July to 22 July 2024, the APC and the Government of Sierra Leone shall work jointly to appoint an Interim Chairman and a caretaker team to commence the reforms, and manage the implementation of the new elections cycle.
(2) The Chairman could be seconded from the pool of ECOWAS elections experts.
(3) The APC and Government during the same period 10 July to 22 July 2024, shall:

a. draw up the terms of reference for the caretaker team with a clear exit plan and a date that will coincide with the legislation of the appointment of Commissioners as proposed by the Tripartite Committee; and
b. during the interregnum of the caretaker team, Parliament shall legislate the proposed method of appointment through which the substantive Commissioners and senior staff will be appointed.

(4) Pursuant to reforming the ECSL, we recommend an independent forensic audit of ECSL's ICT infrastructure and results management system by an independent international audit firm within two (2) months. The report should be submitted to the interim ECSL leadership, and shared with political parties. This should be done with the aim of making the institution a more accountable and transparent principal electoral management body.

4. **Increased** levels APC participation on new appointments: The APC will propose a model for participation and a role for mediators and moral guarantors throughout the period of the implementation of the ERC recommendations. This is based on the lack of commitment demonstrated by the Government since the

Agreement for National Unity was signed in October 2023, as not much has been achieved since then.

5. The APC further demands its participation in the appointment of the new Chairman of the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC).

6. **ELECTIONS SECURITY AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

   Further to the several security breaches and the abuse of human rights by the security services before, during and after the elections, we recommend as follows:

   (1) That the Government commissions a tribunal to investigate the deaths which occurred as a result of elections violence, and make appropriate recommendations including payment of compensation to the families of the victims;

   (2) We demand compensation for all those whose homes were burnt and vandalized, and those displaced from their homes must be resettled and adequately compensated;

   (3) Reports of all ongoing investigations conducted by the security forces on killings, arson and elections violence be produced by 31 July 2024 to inform next steps.

   (4) Recommend the immediate resignation of heads of the following institutions because of their complicity in the 2023 elections:

      i. Office of National Security
      ii. The Sierra Leone Police
      iii. National Civil Registration Authority
      iv. Statistics Sierra Leone

7. **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE**

   Parties to the Tripartite Committee in collaboration with moral guarantors to monitor and report on the implementation of the Tripartite Committee Recommendations.

Building on an Electoral Reform Agenda

National Election Watch (NEW) 2023 Electoral Cycle Report

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ACRONYMS

AfEONet)	Africa Election Observers Network
APC	All Peoples' Congress
APPA	All political Parties Association
APPWA	All Political Parties Women Association
AU	African Union
BD	Boundary Delimitation
CEC	Chief Electoral Commissioner
CCYA	Centre for the Coordination of Youth Activities
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Elections Observers (CODEO)
C4C	Coalition for Change
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
COPP	Consortium of Progressive Political Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Citizens Situation Room
CCSL	Council of Churches in Sierra Leone
CR	Civil Registration
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
DEM	District Election Manager
DEMMOs	District Elections Materials Movement Observers
DVRC	Distribution of Voter Registration Card
ECC	Elections Coordinating Committee
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECSL	Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
E-Day	Election Day
E-HORN	East and Horn of Africa
ELOG	Election Observer Group
EOM	Elections Observer Mission
EON	Election Observer Network
EPSAO	ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture and Operations
EMB	Election Management Bodies
ESN-SA	Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa
EU	European Union
EUEOM,	European Union Elections Observation Mission
FPTP	First Past The Post
FTV	First Time Voter
GENDEM	Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICPNC	Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion
IESPC	Integrated Election Security Planning Committee
IMC	Independent Media Commission
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IRI	International Republican Institute
IRN	Independent Radio Network
JLSC	Judicial and Legal Service Commission
LTOs	Long Term Observers
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MTND	Medium Term National Development Plan

NCD	**National Commission for Democracy**
NDA	**National Democratic Alliance**
NDI	**National Democratic Institute**
NCRA	**National Civil Registration Authority**
NEC	**National Electoral Commission**
NEW	**National Election Watch**
NIN	**National Identification Number**
NGC	**National Grand Coalition**
NSR	**National Situation Room**
NTF	**National Task Force**
NURP	**National Unity and Reconciliation Party**
NPD	**National Progressive Democrat**
ONS	**Office of National Security**
PC	**Paramount Chief**
PCMP	**Paramount Chief Member of Parliament**
PEA	**Public Elections Act**
PPA	**Political parties' Act**
PPLC	**Political Parties Liaison Committee**
POA	**Public Order Act**
PPRC	**Political Parties Regulation Commission**
PR	**Proportional Representation**
PRVT	**Public Sector Reform Unit**
PSRU	**Process and Results Verification for Transparency**
PVR	**Provisional Voter Register**
PVL	**Provisional Voter List**
PVT	**Parallel Vote Tabulation**
PWD	**Person With Disability**
RRF	**Result Reconciliation Form**
RSLAF	**Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces**
SLAJ	**Sierra Leone Association of Journalists**
SLBA	**Sierra Leone Bar Association**
SLLC	**Sierra Leone Labour Congress**
SLP	**Sierra Leone Police**
SLPP	**Sierra Leone's Peoples Party**
SMC	**Strategic Management Committee**
TCC	**The Carter Center**
UP	**Unity Party**
USAID	**United States Agency for International Development**
VIU	**Voter Identification Unit**
VRA	**Voter Registration Assessment**
VRC	**Voter Registration Card**
VR	**Voter Registration**
VVK	**Voter Verification Kit**
WADEMOS	**West African Democracy Solidarity Network**
WAEON	**West Africa Election Observers Network**
WEMMOs	**Ward Elections Materials Movement Observers**

FORWARD

This report is a comprehensive account of NEW's findings of its engagements and observations for the 2023 electoral cycle in Sierra Leone. Building on our 23-year-long experience of post-conflict democracy building and election observation, NEW has moved from just keeping eyes on the ballots to ensuring free and transparent electoral activities and processes. After every general election, we publish our findings and encourage all stakeholders to commit to seeing democracy, politics, and elections as a work in progress through an agenda for peace and national unity. This report, therefore, presents the successes and shortcomings that characterized the 2018-2023 electoral landscape. The journey towards truly representative governance is not without challenges. As NEW reports on past trends, NEW notes that we have a unique opportunity as a nation to develop a collective approach for inclusive and transparent elections in the future.

The NEW team is encouraged by the positive strides made in repealing Part V of the Public Order Act, the passing of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Law, and changes in the electoral laws and institutional mechanisms by the ECSL to promote an inclusive electoral process.

NEW recognizes the collaborative efforts by all stakeholders to make this happen. Such learnings must be sustained and integrated for future democratic processes. NEW values our partnership and collaboration with the ECSL, PPRC and all domestic and international democracy institutions and promoters in Sierra Leone; let us all continue to channel our collective energies to building the foundations of free and credible elections. NEW also wants to express our sincere thanks to the international community, our donor partners, technical support institutions and other Election observation Groups in the region and globally. Together, we are building a world of citizens' rights and voices.

I want to specifically recognize all the 450 organizations registered member organizations of NEW and the over 6000 Sierra Leoneans who, against all odds, kept their eyes on the votes on polling day; we have once more made history. In the cause of our work, NEW came under tremendous attacks at various stages in the 2023 electoral cycle. As I reflect, I am encouraged that civil society has always been pivotal in the history of peace and democratic renewal in our beloved country. The journey towards fair and transparent elections is not without challenges; overcoming these obstacles determines the growth of a genuinely representative democracy. I call on all NEW member organizations to see this as a turning point to muster our collective drive towards democratic progress and, as a nation, institute tenets of openness and safeguards for electoral integrity.

As you read through these pages, let us keep sight of the broader purpose that unites us: pursuing a more just, equitable and progressive society. Special efforts must be made to absolve the Sierra Leone police from sectional policing, continuing its post-conflict reform agenda as 'a force for good', position the judiciary as a beacon of hope in our democracy and allow political parties and all actors to play by the rules of the game with decency and integrity. Democratic elections go beyond counting and winning votes; it is the responsibility of all of us to secure peace and promote unity, opening our nation to limitless opportunities through respect for the rule of law and nation-building.

I therefore urged all Sierra Leoneans to say 'YES To Electoral Reforms' and channel our collective energies to strengthening the foundations of democracy through elections. I encourage all stakeholders to sustain the momentum on the Independent Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review. Let us embrace electoral reform activities beyond its life span. Together, we are responsible for strengthening collaborative Electoral Reform processes and designing constitutional safeguards for transparent and inclusive elections.

We must safeguard the individual and collective freedoms that democracies seek to protect.

Marcella Samba-Sesay

Chairperson

ABOUT NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH (NEW)

National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of over 450 national and international civil society and non-governmental organizations established in 2002. It was established primarily to observe and monitor the fairness, transparency and credibility of public elections in Sierra Leone. It works towards increased public confidence in the legitimacy of the election results. In the spirit of volunteerism and neutrality, NEW has observed polling since 2002. In 2007 and 2012, NEW monitored the entire electoral cycle process and introduced the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT). In 2018, NEW fielded more than 12,190 observers in various categories. In 2023, NEW observed the entire electoral cycle, filled 5,000 stationed observers and reintroduced the Processes and Result Verification for Transparency (PRVT) with the deployment of 750 PRVT observers.

The coalition operates through a decentralized structure, at the head of which is the Chairperson and Strategic Management Committee (SMC). The rest of the structure consists of the Regional Coordinators, District Coordinators, District Teams, and Chiefdom Focal Persons. Coordination and programmatic activities are channelled through the National Secretariat. Since its establishment, NEW's work has led to increased civil society visibility, enhanced participation in electoral processes, and increased transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

In its professional operations, NEW is affiliated with several regional and global election observation networks including the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GENDEM), Africa Election Observers Network (AfEONeT), West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON), West Africa Democracy Solidarity (WADEMOS) Network and partners with sister organizations and networks in the Africa sub-region observing elections such as the East and Horn of Africa (E-Horn), YIAGA Africa, Coalition of Domestic Elections Observers (CODEO) Ghana, Election Observer Group (ELOG) Kenya and the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC) in Liberia. As a coalition over the years, NEW has prided itself on eight core values, guiding its work since the coalition was established.

In the discharge of its function, NEW is guided by the following Principles and Core Values:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Election Watch (NEW) has been observing elections in Sierra Leone since 2002. After the 2018 elections, cumulatively, the four international and one national observation missions made a total of one hundred and eleven (111) recommendations, bordering on a wide range of electoral issues, including the electoral legal framework, election campaign environment and financing, security, electoral offences, petitions, and electoral processes, among others. The ECSL and other electoral stakeholders organized a conference on the 18th and 19th of October 2018 to discuss the different EOM recommendations, aiming to consolidate them into thematic areas and identify priorities for reform.

The EMBs and other stakeholders accepted 103 of the 111 EOM recommendations and established a National Task Force (NTF)—with a secretariat at ECSL—to implement them. NEW not only observed the process but was also the main civil society representative in some of the structures created to implement the accepted recommendations.

With funding from the International Republican Institute (IRI), NEW commissioned a legal review to assess the status of the post-2018 legal reform agenda in line with the accepted recommendations. The review concluded that about 70% of the 103 recommendations were either fully or partly implemented, while 30% of the recommendations were not implemented. Notable areas of democratic progress before the 2023 electoral cycle included the repeal of Part V of the 1965 Public Order Act which once criminalized free speech and freedom of expression in Sierra Leone; the release of the White Paper on the Constitutional Review Process in 2022, and the adoption of progressive electoral and gender laws. Institutional reforms were also recorded by Elections Management Bodies (EMB), with the Gender Unit of the ECSL transformed into a Gender Directorate and the PPRC's staffing expanded.

Some of the other priority recommendations from the review that were implemented included an additional reduction in the nomination fees of candidates, provision of powers to the PPRC to regulate campaign financing, effectively regulate the activities of political parties, and intervention in intra-party dispute resolution. Among those not implemented include the publication of

disaggregated election results by polling stations by the ECSL; the appointment of ECSL commissioners and other critical leaders of state institutions; instituting mechanisms to address discrepancies between the share of inhabitants and registered voters within electoral units; enhancing the independence of the state broadcaster; and several other recommendations bordering on constitutional review, including changing the law that prohibits naturalized and dual citizens from contesting for parliamentary and presidential elections. NEW noted that while significant and bold progress was made with the adoption of the POA, IMC, PEA, PPRC and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Acts to implement the 103 EOM recommendations, the division between the two leading political parties, the lack of a dedicated programme of support to mobilize political parties to be actively involved in the legal reform process, the lack of political will to review the 1991 Constitution, and delays in the legal reform processes, limited the scope and extent of the implementation of the EOMs recommendations.

Approach to Observing and Monitoring the 2023 Elections and Key Preparatory Activities

For the 2023 election, NEW adopted an 'Electoral Cycle Approach to Election Observation, as espoused in its 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. The plan sets out the coalition's overarching elections observation in line with NEW's vision, which states that the ***'outcome of all public elections and electoral processes should be reflective of the true will and aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone'***. Furthermore, to effectively engage with the 2023 electoral cycle activities and draw from the NEW strategic plan, NEW undertook preparatory actions to position itself for robust and professional interaction to deliver on the set-out goals across the electoral cycle.

Through a project titled "Enhancing Domestic Electoral Observer Organizations and Citizens' Participation in Democratic Governance Reforms Leading to the 2022 and 2023 Electoral Cycle", which was implemented from 8th May 2020 to 31st March 2022, NEW was able to undertake key activities. The project allowed NEW to strengthen its internal democracy and management systems and processes. Additionally, through the project, the coalition supported, created awareness, advocated and lobbied for the decentralization policy and the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census. NEW also undertook civic education programmes on electoral legal reforms and increased citizens' knowledge of the work of EMBs and electoral processes to make informed choices and participate positively. The coalition's positions on the above policy and governance reform processes were presented to key stakeholders from a citizens' perspective through position papers and stakeholder engagements. Learning and adapting from several years of experience and engagement with regional and global partners, NEW was inspired to develop new observation approaches and methodologies to enhance its work and effectively deliver on its mandate. Drawing from this learning and adaption, NEW adopted a 100% election-day polling centre deployment and 50% deployment in polling stations. A polling centre is a cluster of polling stations, while a polling station is one voting unit. In addition to the 100% polling centre and 50% polling station deployment, NEW also deployed the Process and Result Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology, previously known as the Parallel Voter Tabulation (PVT). Together with NEW's Long-Term Observers (LTOs) and roving incident reporters and supervisors, the two approaches provided vital information that fed into NEW's Citizen Situation Room hosted at the New Brookfields Hotel in Freetown. These various observation processes informed NEW observation findings, which are detailed below.

The 2023 Elections- Findings on Electoral Cycle Activities

The 2023 electoral cycle, while peaceful relative to other elections, was fraught with many challenges that unavoidably undermined key stakeholders' confidence and trust in the process. There were questionable actions taken by both the government and the ECSL, which, from the onset, indicated that the outcome of the 2023 elections would be contested. Among some of these actions were the lack of consensus on the appointment of Commissioners of ECSL and the Chair of the PPRC, the unprecedented 2021 midterm census,

the late introduction of the PR system, and the general sense of secrecy and lack of clarity in the processes of the ECSL ahead of the elections. We note that these challenges were not unique to the Government and EMBs. Within the civic space, for instance, NEW observed the deterioration in the effectiveness of some civil society organizations in the electoral process, with some becoming outrightly partisan, an action that furthermore undermined the trust of the public in groups that they previously looked up to, to defend their voices and freedoms. Coupled with this, NEW and other well-meaning organizations and citizens were denied access to information at several stages in the electoral process. There were also critical aspects of the elections, both administrative and programmatic, that were shrouded in secrecy. This was of concern to NEW, but repeated requests for information were not granted. In addition, the early voting process for the Hajj Pilgrims was shrouded in secrecy, with the information provided very late and not well communicated to the public, limited clarity on the early voter's list, and the lack of transparency around the procurement and printing of ballot papers for early voters.

NEW observed 45 bye and re-run elections between 2018 and the 2023 elections, and they were mainly clouded with violence, political interference, vote buying and other irregularities. The Mid-Term Census further exacerbated the situation, the Boundary Delimitation Process, and the shift to the District Block Proportional Representation System – all actions questioned by the main opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) and even some development partners, especially on their relevance and timeliness. The APC even contested the PR system in court and asked their supporters to boycott the mid-term census.

NEW observed the voter registration, exhibition of the provisional voter register, and Voter Identification card distribution. While NCRA and the ECSL did the best they could to have a smooth voter registration process, there were technical challenges with the electronic equipment for data capture; there was a lack of uniformity in the application of the rules in some voter registration centres, where ECSL staff insisted on citizens having the NCRA registration slip, while in others, the focus was on other forms of identification such as a passport or birth certificate. NEW also observed an indiscriminate application of the provision of citizens' certification by local authorities in the absence of documentary proof of identification. The campaign period was also fraught with some violence and intimidation and the use of hate speeches, especially by supporters of the two main political parties. For instance, an opposition member was killed during an attack on the headquarters of the APC by security forces. These incidents further heightened the tension and divide in the country.

On election day, there were challenges in some areas of the country, with the transportation of polling materials, opening of some polling stations on time, inadequate voting materials, and malfunctioning equipment. The post-voting period, especially the tallying of the results, was problematic, as is detailed in this report, which led to an outcome that did not reflect the votes cast.

Key PRVT Findings

Based on the official results recorded on the RRF for the presidential election (RRF#1) at a statistically representative valid sample of 750 polling stations from across the five regions and 16 districts of Sierra Leone, NEW observed and recorded that the official final presidential results announced by the ECSL are inconsistent with PRVT data. The PRVT data clearly shows that no candidate met the threshold in the first round and that there should be a runoff election between the candidate of the SLPP and that of the APC. For the June 2023 Presidential election, NEW's PRVT data indicates that the official results announced by ECSL are statistically incorrect, mathematically inaccurate and do not reflect the votes cast.

The PRVT concludes that:

1. Voter turnout was 77.3% with a margin of error of +/- 1.7% (between 75.6% and 79%) while ECSL's official turnout is four percentage points higher than the upper limit of the margin of error at 83.0%.
2. Rejected or invalid ballots were 5.1% with a margin of error of +/- 0.6% (between 4.5% and 5.7%).

A. The PRVT's estimate is consistent with past elections. In 2018, rejected ballots for the first round were 5.2%, 4.7% in 2012, and 7.3% in 2007.
B. ECSL's rejected ballot rate of 0.4% represents a significant departure from the trend in Sierra Leonean elections over time.

1. The results announced for the top two candidates are statistically impossible and no candidate should have met the constitutional threshold of 55% to avoid a runoff.
   A. NEW's PRVY data indicates that the candidate of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) should have received 50.4 % of the vote with a margin of error of +/-2.7% (between 47.7% and 53.1%) of the vote, while:
      - ECSL's official result is 56.1%, which is three percentage points higher than the upper limit of the PRVT range.
      - The candidate of the APC has received 46.5% of the vote with a margin of error of +/- 2.7% (between 43.8% and 49.2%), while ECSL's official result is 41.2%, 2.6 percentage points lower than the lower limit of the PRVT range.

The following findings were derived from an analysis of official election results for the parliamentary and presidential elections as published by the ECSL:

There are a total of 3,374,258 registered voters across 16 districts in Sierra Leone. Official results show roughly 83% turnout rates for the presidential and parliamentary elections (2,800,691 ballots cast for the presidential and 2,789,939 for the parliamentary).

Attacks on NEW

Following the release of findings from NEW, the coalition received death threats and threats of physical violence over the phone from unknown numbers starting on 28th June 2023. Additionally, the leadership of NEW was also subject to attacks on WhatsApp and Facebook by party operatives. As a result of these threats, members of the NEW leadership fled Sierra Leone. On their way out, they were temporarily prevented from leaving by immigration authorities and the SLP at the Freetown International Airport.

Recommendations

This section of the report proffers a set of recommendations targeting specific actors. NEW also identified a few recommendations as 'Priority' (P) recommendations for which the coalition will immediately engage the relevant stakeholders for implementation. The recommendations include specific calls for the protection of citizen observers of electoral processes; adopting a definitive position on the type of electoral system to be used for future elections; conduct of credible Population and Housing Census in 2025, with the results published to the benchmarks and guidelines for the census to correct the anomalies of previous censuses; establish (by law) a cross party governance board to act as an inclusive platform for dialogue between the government and the opposition; Setting up of an apolitical technical committee of experts to lead the vetting and assessment of appointees as heads of key state institutions, especially EMBs; Revisiting of the PR system, with an alternative that works best for Sierra Leone; Create a publicly available digital version of the voter register and make provisions for citizens to request for amendment to their personal details with relevant supping documents; ECSL should efficiently and accurately disaggregate and publish voter registration and voting data for analysis across different categories of voters from women, to fist time voter, and PWDs; PPRC should ensure that political parties have guidelines in their constitutions that provide the election of 30% of women; the security sector should ensure the safety of all electoral staff, observers and journalists during the voting and tallying processes; Political parties should review their constitutions and policies to allow for the meaningful implementation of the provisions of GEWE and PPA Acts on the nomination of women in parliament. The aim is for political parties to prioritize the nomination of women at the top of the list. The full details of the recommendation for each actor are provided in the main body of the report below.

INTRODUCTION

For the 2023 electoral cycle, National Election Watch (NEW) undertook a comprehensive electoral cycle approach, observing and or monitoring all stages and activities of the electoral process in Sierra Leone. The work of NEW was aided by a collaborative partnership with the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), guaranteeing NEW assurance of unfettered access to the electioneering processes. However, NEW's experience, though holistic, reform-minded and integrity-driven, was seriously challenged by external factors and financial and logistical constraints. However, learning and adapting from several years of experience and engagement with regional and global partners, NEW was inspired to develop new observation approaches and methodologies to deal with the contextual challenges, enhance its work and effectively deliver on its mandate. Drawing from this learning and adaption, NEW adopted a 100% election-day polling centre deployment and 50% deployment in polling stations. A polling centre is a cluster of polling stations, while a polling station is one voting unit. In addition to the 100% polling centre and 50% polling station deployment, NEW also deployed the Process and Result Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology, previously known as the Parallel Voter Tabulation (PVT). Together with NEW's Long-Term Observers (LTOs) and roving incident reporters and supervisors, the two approaches provided vital information that fed into NEW's Citizen Satiation Room hosted at the New Brookfield Hotel in Freetown. These various observation processes, infirmed NEW observation findings detailed below.

Efforts to suppress NEW's independent monitoring of various stages of the electoral process, notably through a precipitous decline in access to information, demonstrated that critical players in the democratic space were avoidant of independent, fair and genuine perspectives. This stifled the country's progressive democratic culture and inclusive and credible electoral engagements. As such, NEW encountered multiple threats and intimidation from different quarters while doing its work. This instilled fear in its observers and staff, which resulted in the evacuation of the network's leadership from the country after the elections.

These challenging circumstances by no means limited NEW's aspiration to achieve its goals of observing, monitoring and strengthening the electoral process in partnership with Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and other stakeholders for free, fair and credible elections in Sierra Leone. The coalition was determined to

continue its tradition of independent, non-partisan domestic election observation, to contribute to the promotion of democracy and the strengthening of peace-building efforts in the country. Acting in the public eye ensured that the outcome of all elections and electoral processes reflected the true will of the people of Sierra Leone. Thus, NEW engaged the electoral process from the beginning with its post-2018 election activities through an electoral cycle-wide observation of elections and the electoral process from 2018 to 2023.

In its functions, NEW collaborated and interrogated governance and electoral reform processes, undertook advocacy actions to promote Electoral Legal Reforms and made recommendations to EMBs to improve electoral systems and processes. The coalition also issued statements, released publications and made advocacy visits to state institutions to discuss the 2018 Elections Observer Missions' (EOM) recommendations and other electoral and governance matters. Additionally, the coalition observed all 45 bye and re-run elections from 2018 to 2013. Despite its shortcomings, it also released an independent position on the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census.

While not opposed to the midterm census as a national development strategy, NEW was concerned that the data from the census could form the basis for the allocation of parliamentary and local council seats outside the tradition of each boundary delimitation serving two electoral cycles. Considering the criticisms on the approach of the midterm census, both from political parties and development partners, NEW took a clear and consistent position that the census was not an immediate development priority and that the circumstance under which it was designed (with limited stakeholder consultation), had the potential to inflame ethno-regional and political divisions. Furthermore, NEW observed and made recommendations on the Civil Registration and Confirmation Process (C&R) from which data for the Voter Registration was extracted. The coalition also shared an analysis paper on the Decentralization Policy with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), parliament and other stakeholders as part of its wider governance reform advocacy work.

Coupled with the above, NEW undertook a systematic observation and assessment of the 2022 Voter Registration processes, including data capture, Exhibition of the Provisional Voter Register, adjudication of objection on the Voter Register, and the distribution of the Voter Identification Cards. However, it is worth noting that the lack of timely access to the voter list limited NEW's ability to comprehensively evaluate the accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of the register. Despite this, NEW embarked on civic and voter education on the registration process targeting corporate institutions and the working class and also observed the nomination of candidates and the campaign period through our Long-Term Observation (LTO) Strategy that enhanced the mapping of conflict flashpoints.

Furthermore, NEW observed the Early Voting process of Muslim pilgrims and deployed 5000 observers on Election Day (E-Day) through a strategic observation model prioritizing mega polling centres, hot spots, hard-to-reach areas, and centres in border-crossing communities. A robust incident reporting strategy with a well-coordinated "Citizens' Situation Room" (CSR) was also set up at the NEW Brookfields Hotel in Freetown.

Critically, a PRVT process with 750 observers was deployed to statistically random sample polling stations, with an outcome recording a 99.9% success delivery rate. The findings of the PRVT were published, and NEW continued to observe the post-election activities, including the contested outcome of the election results announced by ECSL. Like in previous elections, NEW used technology to capture data and analyze results, deploying the PRVT tool to assess the electoral processes of voting impartially, counting and tallying results as part of its approach to promoting integrity in the electoral process. The tool was also used to evaluate the accuracy and integrity of the results as announced by the ECSL. The PRVT methodology has been employed in election observation in various countries worldwide. Most recently, it was used by civil society observer groups in Nigeria, Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe and Liberia. It has always proved an accurate and valuable tool in Election Day

(E-Day) data capture and results analysis.[1]

Through detailed analysis of the electoral process and the results, NEW concluded that a run-off election was required to formally declare the winner of the elections, drawing from data from the PRVT tool, which indicated that no candidate secured the 55% constitutional threshold to be declared the winner on the first ballot. However, the ECSL declared the incumbent SLPP candidate as the winner of the 2023 elections, with over 56% of the valid votes cast. International Elections Observation Missions (EOMs) such as the EU Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) and the Carter Center (TCC) also raised similar concerns regarding the transparency and statistical inaccuracies in the tallying and declaration of the final votes by the ECSL.

During the 2023 electoral cycle, NEW was a member of the EOM Taskforce represented in all six thematic areas (Electoral Legal Reform and Processes, Electoral Offences, Electoral and Political Processes, Election Security, the Role of the Media in Elections and Electoral Funding) that the EOM recommendations were divided into. It was also part of the Elections Steering Committee and Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC) and attended meetings both at national and district levels; and is a member of the ECSL Stakeholders Forum and a member of the Integrated Elections Security Planning Committee (IESPC). NEW's strategic objective for E-Day was to ensure accurate observation of the polling process and to report all findings transparently and accountable. Below is a categorization of the coalition's 2023 observation strategy:

Electoral Activity	No of Observers Deployed	No of Supervisors Deployed	Comments
Voter Registration (VR) Exercise	**363**	**44**	NEW observed 10% (363) of the 3,630 Registration Centres of the ECSL's Voter Registration (VR) Exercise, held from the 3rd of September –to the 4th of October 2022.
Adjudication	**2**	**N/A**	The observers deployed changed shifts, with the first person observing from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm and the other from 3:00 pm to 10:00 pm daily right through the process
Exhibition (Voter Registration Assessment)	**180**	**36**	The VRA exercise was conducted three days out of the five days slated for the Voter Register Exhibition by the ECSL.
Distribution of Voter Identity Cards	**363**	**44**	NEW recruited 10% observers of the 3,630 centres - (363 centres for NEW) to observe the Distribution of Voter Registration Cards (DVRC). Observers were deployed to observe the 1st and 5th day of the DVRC.

[1] See: https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/prvt-methodology/ (Accessed on 20 December, 2023).

Electoral Activity	No of Observers Deployed	No of Supervisors Deployed	Comments
District Election Material Movement Observers (DEMMOs)	**17**	-	
WARD Election Material Movement Observers (DEMMOs)	**448**	-	
Election Day/Polling Day	**5,750**	**321**	NEW deployed 5,000 station observers in 50% of total polling stations established and 750 PRVT observers.
Data Entry Clerks in the Citizen Situation Room (CSR)	**20**	-	
Incident Reporters	**23**	-	NEW moved reports on incidents from polling stations to relevant authorities for timely intervention and for this purpose NEW deployed one observer per district, five deployed at the national secretariat representing each region and one national incident coordinator.
Regional Tally Center Observers	**10**	-	Two Tally Centre Observers were deployed to each centre in the five Regions.
Paramount Chieftaincy Elections	**21**	-	

NEW wishes to acknowledge the MoU signed with the ECSL but notes the challenges faced by the Commission as the electoral cycle activities unfolded primarily during the voter registration process when NEW could not access data needed for the Voter Registration Assessment (VRA). Despite these challenges, the ECSL remains a critical partner of NEW and, until recently, has exhibited openness to engagement and discussion on findings from observation of the various electoral activities and emerging issues led by NEW.

NEW congratulates all Sierra Leonean citizens who turned out in their numbers to vote on Polling Day and ensured a peaceful E-Day process despite the odds of the late opening of polls and delays in the deployment of electoral materials, especially in the Western Area.

This report (developed through technical support from International IDEA) is a detailed analysis of the 2023 electoral cycle based on NEW's activities since the end of the 2018 elections. NEW also engaged its district team members and national structure for post-election reflection sessions that fostered a nuanced examination of the 2023 electoral processes and the observations of the staff and those deployed by the organization. The report provides policy recommendations for future elections, focusing on the increased participation of youth, women, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

2. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS: POST-2018 ELECTIONS

Before the 2023 elections, Sierra Leone successfully conducted four presidential and general elections that saw political power change from a governing political party to the opposition on two occasions, in 2007 and 2018. By 2015, the country was considered a developing nation, with significant investment made by succeeding governments and their development partners in the post-war reformation process that ensued in 2002. Notable areas of democratic progress before the 2023 electoral cycle included the repeal of Part V of the 1965 Public Order Act, which once criminalized free speech and freedom of expression in Sierra Leone; the release of the White Paper on the Constitutional Review Process in 2022, and the adoption of laws, some of which are examined in the section legal framework section below.

Internal institutional reforms were also recorded, with the Gender Unit of the ECSL transformed into a Gender Directorate and the PPRC's staffing expanded. While notable democratic progress has been made, several challenges pointing to democratic backsliding have emerged. The country experienced critical issues concerning the lack of trust in key public institutions, especially the ECSL, the SLP, and the Judiciary. Political intolerance, growing elections-related violence leading to the destruction and burning of election materials, impunity relating to election malpractices during bye-elections, the rise in fake news, hate-speech and hate crime resulting in burning of public properties, extreme violence including deaths of civilians and security officers (especially in Makeni, Lunsar, Tombo and Freetown). These undermined the rule of law and social cohesion in the country and threatened the conduct of peaceful, credible and accountable elections in 2023.

Furthermore, the post-2018 and the 2023 electoral context nurtured a divisive society, with clear apprehensions by citizens for a meaningful engagement and a peaceful electoral outcome. Incidents such as the forceful installation of a speaker of Parliament devoid of due process; the removal of 10 opposition Members of Parliament (MP) with the presiding judge replacing most of them without a re-run election denying the electorates the opportunity to choose their representatives; and the arbitrary removal of public officials with the security of tenure from their duties, gravely undermined trust not just

between the two major political parties, but it further eroded the confidence of the public in state institutions. Within such circumstances, the Government of Sierra Leone, has not been able to mobilize the key stakeholders for political governance and progress. Even when the government wanted to introduce an infrastructure for peace during the Bintumani III conference in 2019, the main opposition, the All Peoples Congress Party (APC), did not participate.

During the observation of bye and re-run elections, NEW's findings indicated incidents of violence, political intolerance, gross indiscipline by political party stalwarts and public officials, carting away of election materials and burning of ballot boxes, and the deliberate change of election figures by ECSL staff. In some instances, the violence perpetrated resulted in the death of innocent persons, as was in Tonko Limba, ward 196 in Kambia district and Constituency 010 Kailahun district. These were worrying trends for elections and politics in a post-conflict context.

Noting these challenges, NEW designed a civil society election observation strategy to support free, fair, credible and accountable general elections in 2023. The strategy plan was intended acting providing for the deployment of observers in 100% of the polling stations established by the ECSL; employing of the use of the PRVT to capture and transmit data on E-Day in real-time, undertaking a problem-solving mechanism by moving information about incidents from polling stations to relevant election stakeholders with the authority for intervention to ensure that such incidences did not adversely affect the outcome of the elections. As indicated above, this strategy was adjusted due to the limited available funds. Instead of 100% coverage, NEW limited its observation to 50%, focusing on hard-to-reach communities, potential hotspots, mega polling centres and communities around the borders of Liberia and Guinea.

2.1. Reform Agenda Post 2018 Elections

Ahead of the March 2018 local, parliamentary, and presidential elections, the ECSL accredited national and international EOMs to observe the polls in fulfilment of the Commission's commitment to international best practices for transparent and credible elections. Some of the accredited missions included The Carter Center (TCC), the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the EUEOM and NEW. Cumulatively, the four international and one national observation missions made a total of one hundred and eleven (111) recommendations, bordering on a wide range of electoral issues, including the electoral legal framework, election campaign environment and financing, security, electoral offences, petitions, and electoral processes, among others. The ECSL and other electoral stakeholders organized a conference on the 18th and 19th of October 2018 to discuss the different EOM recommendations, aiming to consolidate them into thematic areas and identify priorities for reform.

The EMBs and other stakeholders accepted 103 of the 111 EOM recommendations and established a National Task Force (NTF)—with a secretariat at ECSL—to implement them. NEW not only observed the process but was also the main civil society representative in some of the structures created to implement the accepted recommendations.

With funding from the International Republican Institute (IRI), NEW commissioned a legal review to assess the status of the post-2018 legal reform agenda in line with the accepted recommendations. The review concluded that about 70% of the 103 recommendations were either fully or partly implemented, while 30% were not implemented. Some of the fully implemented recommendations included the repeal of the POA and the development and adoption of laws that strengthen the democratization process that the country has embarked on in the last two decades.

Some of the other priority recommendations from the review that were implemented included, the provision for the registration of eligible voters in the diaspora, reduction in the nomination fees of candidates, provision of powers to the PPRC to regulate campaign financing, effectively regulate the activities of political parties, and intervene in intra-party dispute resolution. Among those not implemented include the publication of

disaggregated election results by polling stations by the ECSL; the appointment of ECSL commissioners and other critical leaders of state institutions; instituting mechanisms to address discrepancies between the share of inhabitants and registered voters within electoral units; enhancing the independence of the state broadcaster; and several other recommendations bordering on constitutional review, including changing the law that prohibits naturalized and dual citizens from contesting for parliamentary and presidential elections. NEW noted that while significant and bold progress was made with the adoption of the POA, IMC, PEA, PPRC and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Acts to implement the 103 EOM recommendations, the division between the two leading political parties, the lack of a dedicated programme of support to mobilize political parties to be actively involved in the legal reform process, the lack of political will to review the 1991 Constitution, and delays in the legal reform processes, limited the scope and extent of the implementation of the EOMs recommendations.

2.2. The Legal Framework that Governed the Electioneering Process

The provision of the 1991 Constitution governed Sierra Leone's 2023 elections, the 2022 PEA and the PPA of 2023. These principal legal instruments were complimented by a host of new legal provisions including the Public Order Act of 2020 (which repealed the infamous part five of the Public Order Act of 1965), the Cybersecurity and Cyber Crimes Act of 2021 which introduced significant new restrictions on freedom of expression online, and the 2022 GEWE Act, which advances protections for women's rights, including a 30% affirmative quota for women's participation in politics for appointed positions (including cabinet, ministry, and ambassador roles) and elected positions (including parliamentary and local council seats).

Foremost among the new electoral laws is the enactment of the PEA 2022, which paved the way for adopting the District Block Proportional Representation System under the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2001. With the re-introduction of the district block proportional representation system, amendments to some provisions in the PEA of 2012 were inevitable. The PPA of 2023 transformed the previous PPRC into a regulatory commission with powers and mandate to regulate and sanction political parties and independent candidates for violations of the election code of conduct. Notable new provisions in both the PEA and PPA were the numerical increase of the Electoral Commission; the possibility of voting outside Sierra Leone; usage of National Identification Number (NIN) as proof of eligibility to be registered as a voter; the introduction of a polling centre manager who is to be responsible for supervising the conduct of the polling process at a polling centre; certification of results from centre to district returning officer; the mandatory provision for every political party to nominate a woman in every three nominations; cancellation of votes due to over-voting in a polling station; cancellation of votes due to violence in a polling station; provision for the election of village or town head; establishment of a National Elections Trust Fund; the introduction of a Code of Conduct for Political Parties; and the creation of an Elections Offences and Petitions Division of the High Court.

NEW observed that while the legal reform was apt and far-reaching, the reform process took place too close to the elections. This left little or no time for political parties and civil society actors to properly digest and understand the provision and their effective popularization and implementation before the elections.

3. APPROACH TO OBSERVING AND MONITORING THE 2023 ELECTIONS AND KEY PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

This section presents the approaches used by NEW to prepare for the 2023 elections, and also to observe and monitor the process.

3.1. The Guiding Framework for NEW's Elections Observation Work

For the 2023 election, NEW adopted an 'Electoral Cycle Approach to Election Observation, as espoused in its 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.[2] The plan sets out the coalition's overarching elections observation framework as espoused in its vision: the 'outcome of all public elections and electoral processes should be reflective of the true will and aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone'. Therefore, NEW's role is to promote integrity in elections and electoral processes through independent observation and reporting of observation findings. This approach suggests that NEW would observe all significant activities and processes in the electoral cycle, including re-runs and bye-elections. It also included other significant activities such as Mid-Term Population and Housing Census, Boundary Delimitation, Voter Registration and its associated components, Nominations and Campaigns, PCMP Elections, Early voting, Election-day and the immediate post-election activities. This strategy was informed by an electoral cycle approach which uses a set of observation models including LTOs, District Elections Materials Movement Observers (DEMMOs) and Ward Elections Materials Movement Observers (WEMMOs), PRVT, stationed observers at polling centres and engagements with stakeholders around the electoral cycle.

3.2. NEW's Preparedness for Elections Observation Work in 2023

To effectively engage with the 2023 electoral cycle activities and draw from the NEW strategic plan, NEW undertook preparatory actions to position itself for robust and professional interaction to deliver on the set-out goals across the electoral cycle.

Through the project "Enhancing Domestic Electoral Observer Organizations and Citizens' Participation in Democratic Governance Reforms Leading to the 2022 and 2023 Electoral Cycle", which was implemented from 8th May 2020 to 31st March 2022, NEW could undertake key activities. The project strengthened NEW's internal democracy and management systems

[2] See NEW 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

and processes. This included the establishment of a media and communications department for advocacy and engagement, the development of a five-year Strategic Plan and Communications Strategy, the provision of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) support to NEW's district offices to allow activity implementation and compliance with COVID-19 prevention guidelines. The project supported the strengthening of the Strategic Management Committee (SMC) and the Regional and District teams to contribute to the work of the coalition through training effectively, provision of gadgets (computers, modem and accessories) to aid their work and the development of systems and processes for decision making.
In addition to the above, the coalition supported, created awareness, advocated and lobbied for the decentralization policy and the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census through the project. NEW also undertook civic education programmes on electoral legal reforms and increased citizens' knowledge of the work of EMBs and electoral processes to make informed choices and participate positively. The coalition's positions on the above policy and governance reform processes were presented to key stakeholders from a citizens' perspective through position papers and stakeholder engagements.

3.3. Ownership of the NEW Observation Strategy by Members of the Coalition

NEW engaged the heads of its 450-member organization, represented mainly by their staff in NEW activities, to understand and own the election observation strategy, the NEW Code of Conduct, and the revised electoral laws. This engagement revitalized civil society's role in observing the elections with a reasonable spread of representation across Sierra Leone's 17 administrative and political districts. NEW established engagement platforms between CSOs and government institutions on election peace and security.

3.4. Training for Specific Electoral Cycle Activities

Observing and monitoring electoral cycle activities requires critical skills and competence to avert costly mistakes. Against this background, in the 2023 elections, NEW provided targeted training for specific electoral cycle activities for observers, local community members and other stakeholders. These training sessions preceded every activity to be observed. The details of these trainings are mentioned in the relevant sections of this report.

3.5. NEW's Observation Strategy for the 2023 Elections

The NEW Observation Strategy for the 2023 elections was consistent with its mission, vision, and priorities in its five-year strategic plan. NEW's vision is to see a governance and electoral context in which the outcome of all elections reflects the actual will of the voters. The observation strategy delineated a clear roadmap that was committed to observing various stages and processes of the elections. The most crucial element of NEW's election observation strategy was that it built on NEW's experience of observing previous elections in Sierra Leone since 2002 but with particular reference to the 2007, 2012 and 2018 elections. The PVT was deployed in those elections through a statistically representative random sampling of polling stations to ensure independent verification of the election results. NEW ensured the effective use of technology to enhance the electoral process's transparency and integrity.

Phase I: Pre-election Observation: This included the observation of all electoral activities and processes before E-Day and was divided into two sub-components:

- Short Term Activity-Based Observers: This set of observers observed voter registration, exhibition of the voter register (using the voter registration assessment methodology)[3] And the distribution of voter ID cards. Like all its recruitment processes, these observers were recruited from NEW member organizations that subscribe to the

[3] SA process through which NEW assesses the quality of the voter register using the List-People and People-List framework. The aim was verifying the existence of registrants and omission of would-be registrants on the provisional register.

- NEW code of conduct and core values.

- Deployment of Long-Term Observers: This category of observers was deployed to observe the nominations, campaigns and the general pre- and immediate post-election environment. The long-term observation primarily focused on documenting electoral violence, warning signs, mediation efforts and response actions, voter education, and EMB preparation. 34 observers were deployed in all 17 districts across the country as LTOs. NDI supported the technical and infrastructural delivery of the LTO activities through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding.

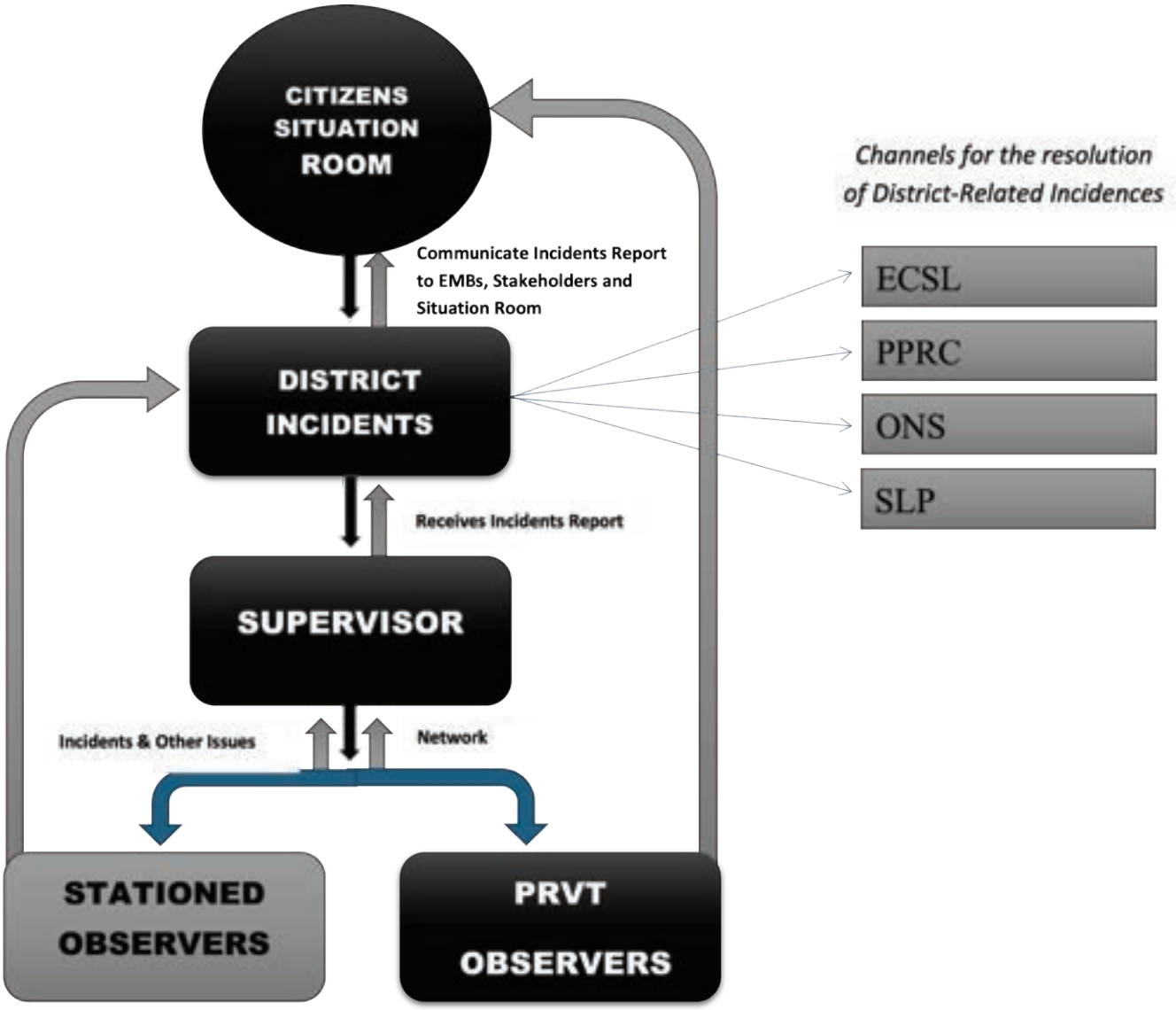
- Deployment of Election Materials Movement Observers: In addition to categories one and two above, there was a third stratum of observers whose observation role straddles pre- and post-election day observation. Their role was to follow the movement of sensitive election materials and observe that the deployment and retrieval were done according to the prescribed ECSL guidelines.

Phase II: This included the observation of all electoral activities and processes before E-Day and was divided into two sub-components:

- Election Day Observation: The most visible part of NEW's election observation work was done in this segment. On E-Day, NEW deployed 100% in all polling centres nationwide. Relative to the previous elections, in which NEW had a 100% deployment to every polling station, in the 2023 election, NEW observers were deployed 100% in all polling centres and 50% across the 11,832 polling stations nationwide. However, NEW deployed more than one observer in mega centres, hard-to-reach locations, election violence hot spots, and centres close to the Guinean and Liberian borders. NEW deployed senior category of observers, including the supervisors, incident reporters and roving teams, comprising members of the SMC, NEW Secretariat staff and heads of member organizations.

    - Supervisors: This category of observers played a supervisory role in the stationed observers while also observing the general environment outside the polling centre. They consisted of members of the SMC of NEW and heads of member organizations.
    - Incident Reporters: NEW recruited, trained, and deployed 17 district-level incident reporters (one in each district) across five national–level incident reports. Their job was to receive and collate incidents reported from the districts through a regional approach. A national incident reporter also served as the liaison to several EMBs and stakeholders and escalated incidents reported for action.
    - Roving Teams: This category of observers provides oversight on the work of the supervisors and is critical in the problem-solving mechanism of the observation strategy.
    - Tally Centre Observers: These were deployed across the country's five regions where ECSL established collation points to tally the results. A total of 10 tally centre observers (two per regional collation centre) were deployed across the county. This category of observers was responsible for observing the collation process to ascertain whether the tallying was done in compliance with the stipulated guidelines and best practices.
    - The Citizens' Situation Room (CSR): The CSR was hosted at the New Brookfields Hotel in Freetown and was the most prominent citizens' hub with a high international presence during the elections. It was a coordination hub for synthesizing data from the field and escalating incidents for action. It asserted itself as a decision-making platform for NEW's communication to the Sierra Leonean public and the international community. The functionality of the CSR was enhanced by several supportive sub-units such as data entry clerks, technical support teams, and analysts (international and national), including political, gender, legal, media and communication, to support the command and decision-making centre.

NEWs Election Day Operational Flow of Communication



4. Findings on Electoral Cycle Activities

This section of the report summarizes the findings across the different electoral activities and processes observed by NEW. A total of ten thematic activities, including post-2018 Bye Elections, Mid-Term Housing and Population Census, Boundary Delimitation, Voter Registration, Electoral Systems, Nomination and Campaigns, PCMP Elections, Early Voting, Election, Tallying and the Immediate Post-Election Context. In each category, NEW analyses the legal framework, the observation approach, activities and strategies, adherence to legal provisions and established practices, and the observed incidents, obstructions and deviation.

4.1 Bye and Re-Run Elections

The First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system and the contested nature of some of the 2018 parliamentary elections meant that post-2018, there were bound to be bye-elections across various categories to fill in vacancies. NEW observed 45 Bye and Re-run elections per NEW's electoral cycle-observation methodology. Among these were the re-run elections in Constituency 110 in the Western Area, Constituency 010 in Kailahun District, Ward 196 in Tonko Limba in the Kambia District, Ward 308 in Bonthe District, and District Council Chairperson elections in Koinadugu.

a. **Legal Framework:** The legal basis for conducting bye elections in Sierra Leone is provided for by section 33 of the constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No.6 of 1991), pursuant to section 39(1) of the said section, Sections 69(1), 70(1) of the PEA of 2012 (Act No. 4 of 2012), and section 10(1) of the Local Government Act of 2004 (Act No. 1 of 2004).

   Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies: The approach used by NEW for all bye and re-run elections followed the same recruitment, training and deployment patterns of stationed observers and supervisors. Unlike bye-elections before 2018, mostly observed by NEW members' residents in their communities, post-2018 bye-elections required additional support from the NEW secretariat and the SMC. This was because most of the bye-elections were highly contested and, in some cases, with controversial outcomes. On this basis, NEW undertook a pre-election observation assessment to gauge citizens' perceptions in the electoral context, identify early warning

signs, and share findings with EMBs and the security sector to help reduce tension before and after polling day. Of the 45 bye and re-run elections observed, NEW deployed station observers in each polling station in 13 elections considered to be highly contested. Five of these 13 elections were the post-2018 re-run elections, following an error made by ECSL on the correct number of candidates to be nominated for the elections. They include Wards 235 and 232 in Port Loko City Council, Wards 121 and 123 in Makeni City Council, and Ward 308 in Bonthe City Council. NEW only deployed observers at the polling centre level for the other bye and re-run elections.

c. **Conduct of the exercise, adherence to the law, good practice and principles:** Of the 45 post-2018 elections observed by NEW, 37 were bye-elections (parliamentary and local council inclusive), and eight were re-run elections. NEW observed that, of the eight re-run elections, three were consistent with the provision of the law for the conduct of elections, and five lacked clarity on the legal basis for their conduct. For instance, in Wards 235 and 232 in Port Loko City Council, Wards 121 and 123 in Makeni City Council, and Ward 308 in Bonthe City Council, there was under and over-subscription of candidates in these wards, resulting in a re-run of these elections without a clear legal basis for doing so. In other areas (such as Koindu New Sembehun City Council) where over-subscription of candidates occurred, NEW's observers were informed that the affected candidate was compensated.

d. **Incidents, Obstructions and Deviations:** As already noted in the analysis above, NEW observed a total of 45 bye and re-run elections between 2018 and the 2023 elections. In almost all these elections observed by NEW, there were significant incidents, obstructions and deviations that affected the quality and credibility of the results. These incidents, obstructions and deviations are categorized into the following themes:

   i. Violence: This was a common trait observed by NEW in most elections. The nature of the violence in the re-run and bye-elections ranged from thuggery, fighting and destruction of electoral materials, private property and burning of sensitive election materials. Some of the prominent elections with violence were Ward 196 in Tonko Limba, Kambia district, where a 14-year-old boy was shot and killed by unknown persons, Constituency 010 in Kailahun District, where a boy between ages 18 to 20 years, who happened to be the nephew of the independent candidate was killed in Gbahama Village, on Tuesday 17th February 2021[4]. In Constituency 110 in the Western Area, there was physical destruction of ballot boxes by political party thugs, with a known government minister seen in the possession of a ballot box, against ECSL's regulations. All of these incidents of violence occurred in the full view of state security officers, with no arrest made by the police. The desperation to win and the heightened tension that comes with it led to a cancellation of the first re-run elections in Ward 196 and Constituency 110, warranting a second re-run and, in the process, a waste of valuable state resources.

   A group from the Jalloh clan, including aspirants and candidates for the PC election 2021 in Sambaia Chiefdom, declared their support for the APC candidate on 7th June 2022 in a meeting at the Bendugu Court Barray. The APC supporters then went around the town, jubilating the event with a declaration of support for their candidate. In the course of their jubilation, supporters of the APC apprehended a young man, accusing him of spying on them and then beating him mercilessly. The supporters of APC, as alleged, then went on the rampage and vandalized the house of the candidate of the SLPP and the house of the uncle of the SLPP candidate. It was further alleged that the supporters of the APC carted away a generator and destroyed other properties, burnt two new motorbikes and also burnt the

[4] See NEW's website on https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/press/

billboard of the SLPP candidate. On their side, the APC alleged that one of their supporters was wounded on the head with a machete, and some houses of their supporters were burnt during the violence.

ii. Irregularities and vote buying: The nature of irregularities and violation of electoral procedures were especially brazen and pervasive in two re-runs and bye-elections. For instance, in Ward 196 in Tonko Limba, NEW observed ballot stuffing and voting with pre-marked and unreconciled ballot papers during the counting process and using two different ballot papers for the same elections. In addition, NEW observed that the computer at the tally centre for the Tonko Limba re-run election rejected several Results Reconciliation Forms (RRFs), which led to an incomplete reconciliation process. However, NEW further observed that the results were announced with heavy security presence the following morning.

    In the district council elections in Koinadugu district on the 2nd October 2021, NEW observed that the election was marred by widespread political intimidation, thuggery and suspension of the tally process. It was suspended due to discrepancies in result entry into the tally sheet. Representatives of the APC party detected discrepancies from centre code 6096, in which the actual results in the RRF were APC -101 and SLPP 69 votes. However, the figures entered into the Tally Sheet were APC-101 and SLPP 169. This was verified by ECSL, and the actual figures were inputted. NEW observed that the ECSL staff who inputted the wrong results was replaced, but NEW is not aware of any further action taken against him. A second wrong result input was also observed by NEW in Sewaia, also detected by APC party agents; the ECSL was trying to resolve the second discrepancy when an argument ensued between the APC and SLPP party agents at the tally centre, leading to the suspension of the tallying process. In addition to the irregularities, NEW observed that in polling centre 08056, Station 3, Kagbonkoh, two voters were caught with pre-marked and stamped ballot papers in favour of the SLPP. When interrogated by the police, they admitted that the ballot papers were given to them on the eve of the elections, with the sum of SLL 20,000 (old Leones) per ballot to cast them on polling day illicitly.

iii. Political Interference and Intimidation: In addition to violence and vote buying, NEW observed that the post-2018 bye and re-run elections were characterized by the unwarranted presence of high-profile state authorities and executive members of political parties who are not ordinarily resident in the ward or constituencies the elections were conducted. This led to subtle influence, political intimidation, and chaos in the polling centres. In particular, NEW noted the clash between the SLP and the convoy of the APC presidential candidate, who was making his way into Sambaia Bendugu for an APC rally while the Vice President was coming out of the exact location. Such standoffs were not only a recipe for violence; they were emblematic of state and political interference of high-profile individuals in electoral processes. NEW observed a similar incident in Port Loko during a bye-election in Ward 076, Centre Code 10190, where a sitting MP representing constituency 114 in Calaba Town in the Western Area was arrested and manhandled by the police when he refused to vacate the polling environment, considering that the ECSL did not accredit him.

    Interference in the electoral process was also prevalent among traditional rulers. For instance, in the bye-election in Constituency 010 in Kailahun district, NEW observed that the Paramount Chief (PC) of Peje Bongre Chiefdom publicly associated with the SLPP campaign activities. The SLPP held a public gathering in Mamboma Village Court Barray, where the PC resides. The PC was

seen at the high table of dignitaries during the meeting on the date scheduled for the independent candidate to campaign. The ECSL intervened by asking the leadership of the SLPP to respect the campaign calendar, and the police were alerted to take action.

4.2 Mid-Term Population and Housing Census

a. Legal Framework

NEW notes the provision of Part II, Section 2 of the Census Act of 2002, that the President may, from time to time, on the advice of the minister, by order to make statutory instruments, direct a census be taken of the population of Sierra Leone. Pursuant to this provision, a statutory instrument titled "The Census Order 2021, The Census Act No.14 of 2002, Statutory Instrument No.4 of 2021" was laid on the table of the well of Parliament on 19th April 2021 by the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice. Following the 21-day maturation period, the instrument was presented to the President, who proclaimed a midterm census in July 2020. The legal basis for the mid-term census was drawn from these legal instruments.

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

The activities of the 2021 midterm census (and, indeed, censuses generally) fall slightly outside NEW's traditional elections' observation work. However, NEW understands the significance of a credible housing and population census for voter registration, boundary delimitation and public service delivery, and as such, deems the process critical. The coalition also noted the concerns the SLPP and civil society raised about the credibility of the 2015 census and the need to address the anomalies that plagued the process. Thus, the coalition took a proactive step to engage with the processes of the midterm census through assessment, stakeholder engagements, position papers and media outreach. The gap analysis focused on assessing the legal basis, contextual readiness (especially the timeliness of the census amid a global health pandemic), foundational documents and previous practices regarding the census. Among the issues raised in the assessment were the 10-year practice of population and housing censuses (a census in 2015 and, therefore, 2025 for the next round), the implication of conducting a census over the fight against COVID-19, the lack of inclusivity (both civil society and political groups) befitting democratic governance process, the timeliness of the data and impact in the delivery of the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MT-NDP).

Based on this analysis, NEW published a set of press statements in the form of position papers, urging the government, among other things, to provide clarity over the process with justification on the relevance of the midterm census while enabling the space for broader conversation and value addition. In a more targeted manner, NEW engaged with the leadership of Statistics- Sierra Leone on the implications of the proposed midterm census on elections and governance processes broadly and the need for inclusivity of all shades of opinion. Through the PPLC platform, NEW updated ECSL, political parties and other stakeholders on NEW's assessment and position on the proposed mid-term census, highlighting its potential consequences on the 2023 elections. At the citizenry level, NEW used the data from its assessment and position papers to inform its engagement with the media and the public on the census.

c. Assessment, Engagement Position Papers (Public Statement and Media Engagement)

The ECSL allocated seats per district following a compromise between the 2015 census data and the 2021 midterm census data. A mean between the two-census data per district determined the number of seats per district. The formula for allocating seats to each district is provided in the 2022 Regulations.[5] This was due to the long-standing disagreement between the two leading political parties on the two-census data and the delineation of constituency boundaries. During the delineation of the boundaries for the 2018 election, the SLPP rejected the data of the 2015 census, arguing that the data was falsified with artificially increased populations in the districts and regions in the then-ruling APC party strongholds to boost seat allocation, while

[5] See: https://sierralii.gov.sl/akn/sl/act/si/2022/14/eng@2022-11-16/source.pdf (Accessed on 22 December, 2023).

the population in districts known to be traditionally supportive of the SLPP were reduced. When the SLPP won the 2018 elections, it announced an unprecedented midterm census, despite criticisms by civil society, withdrawal of donor funding,[6] There was also an outright boycott of the process by the opposition, who argued that the SLPP wanted to gerrymander through population reallocation.[7] When the data from the midterm census indicated, for instance, that the population of Freetown had reduced by over half from its 2015 population, it was not difficult for the opposition and civil society observers to affirm the claim that the midterm census intended to redraw the electoral boundaries of Sierra Leone in favour of the ruling SLPP. NEW was among the few voices opposed to the midterm census but also called on the Government of Sierra Leone and the ECSL not to use the data generated from the midterm census for boundary delimitation.[8]

d. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

Despite the concerns raised by citizens and political and international development partners, the government conducted the census after the process was postponed twice: the first was from 4th December 2020 to 19th April 2021 and later to 4th May 2021. NEW observed that the disagreement associated with the declaration and the processes leading to the midterm census led to a physical standoff among MPs when the instruments were laid in parliament and a subsequent boycott of the main opposition, the APC party. NEW observed that while the census had a legal basis in the Census Act of 2002, mobilizing diverse interests for national ownership and consensus building was lacking. In the final analysis, NEW noted that the outcome of the midterm census did not reflect the actual population dynamics of the country. For instance, the Western Area Urban, which had a population of 1,055,964 in the 2015 census, dropped to 606,701, representing a 43% drop. This is especially striking, given the accepted fact that Freetown continues to see an influx of new settlements almost daily. When the figures of the midterm census (606,701) are compared to the voter registration of the western area – urban for both 2017 (606,939) and 2022 (598,022), it is still inconceivable that the population of the western area is almost the same as the number of registrants (18 and above) in the region for both 2017 and 2022.

e. Incidents, Obstructions and Deviations

For the Mid-term Population and Housing census, civil society groups such as NEW, political parties and international organizations questioned the timeliness of the implementation. They noted that a Mid-term Population census was unprecedented in Sierra Leone. In addition, opposition political parties called on their supporters to boycott the census, which led to the arrest of prominent opposition figures. Also, the World Bank in a letter to the Sierra Leone Ministry of Finance, the World Bank informed the government of Sierra Leone about its withdrawal of funding for the Mid-term Population and Housing Census, noting that "the government has failed to meet the necessary conditions for the funds to be disbursed."[9] The World Bank had earlier communicated to the government that its funds could only be disbursed upon completing several critical actions, including evaluating the pilot census, the field operation plan for the enumeration, and ensuring enumerators are adequately trained. Among the significant deviations in the process was that the President had proclaimed the midterm census and announced a date for the census before the statutory instruments were laid before parliament. Although the instruments were later developed and laid to parliament, they were done retrospectively, leading to a fight among MPs in the well and the tearing of the said statutory instruments.

[6] See: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/world-bank-backs-out-funding-sierra-leone-census-2021-12-09/ (Accessed on 2 January, 2024).

[7] See: https://sierraloaded.sl/news/apc-rejects-mid-term-census/ (Accessed on 2 January, 2024).

[8] See: https://politicosl.com/articles/new-calls-cancellation-sierra-leone-census-data (Accessed on 2 January, 2024).

[9] See the letter provided to the ECSL by the World Bank on the census.

4.3. Boundary Delimitation

a. Legal Framework

In a press release dated 2nd August 2022, the ECSL announced that it will conduct a Boundary Delimitation for the 2023 elections, pursuant to section 38 of the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991) and other provisions such as the Constitutional Instruments (Amendment No.2 of 2008); the Wards (Boundary Delimitation) Regulation 2008; the Public Elections Act 2012; the Local Government Act 2004; the provinces (Amendment) Act 2017 and the Eight Establishment Orders 2017. The ECSL established a Boundary Delimitation Technical Committee with defined Terms of Reference (ToRs). In the press release, ECSL committed to collaborating with Statistics-Sierra Leone for technical and operational assistance by providing population statistics data and expertise for the BD process. In addition to collaborating with Statistics- Sierra Leone, ECSL committed to organizing nation-wide engagement during the Boundary Delimitation (BD) process, leading to the development of a Ward Boundary Delimitation Report to parliament for approval, as provided for in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. Clearly, the ECSL drew the legal basis for the BD process from the 1991 constitution and other supportive legal statutes. While noting that ECSL's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan made no provision for BD, there were provisions for externalities and changes in the context of this nature.

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

Following a press release from the ECSL update provided at the PPCL meeting, NEW was informed that the Commission was planning a BD process and had undertaken initial activities, including setting up a BD committee. However, the planned BD process was halted by the Commission through a press statement dated 21st October 2022, which stated that following the directive from the President that the 2023 election will be conducted using the District Block PR system. NEW could not ascertain the stage at which the BD was, before it was halted. NEW did not observe the initial stage of the BD process.

c. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

Unlike the 2017 BD exercise, the 2022 boundary delimitation lacked inclusive participation, transparency and accountability. The 2017 BD exercise had active citizens' engagements in the process, with setting up a boundary delimitation monitoring committee at the national and district level, with representation from election stakeholders, democratic institutions, and civil society, and with the public informed at each stage. Additionally, in 2017, NEW was allowed to undertake a parallel boundary delimitation exercise utilizing the expertise of Statistics- Sierra Leone and provided with the data sheets used by the Electoral Commission. The outcome of the Parallel BD undertaken by NEW and that done by the commission had similar results. Such participatory and collaborative processes enabled the public to accept the outcome. The decision to use the District Block PR system and subsequently halting the BD process in the 2023 elections was not inclusive, participatory, transparent, and consultative, making the entire process divisive, controversial and lacking national ownership.

d. Incidents, Obstructions and Deviations

NEW notes that while Section 38(4) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone provides that boundaries shall last for a minimum of five years and a maximum of seven, the practice since 2007 has been that boundaries serve two electoral cycles following the 10 years in the conduct of Population and Housing Census.[10] In addition, NEW also notes that while the Commission made

[10] For instance, the 2004 Housing and Population Census was used to determine the boundaries in 2007, which were used in the 2012 elections. Subsequently, the 2015 census was the basis for the 2017 boundaries used in the 2018 elections, with the expectation that the 2023 elections will be conducted using the BD of 2017.

provision to respond to contextual externalities (such as the outcomes of the midterm census), there was no activity related to boundary delimitation in the ECSL's strategic plan. Due to the contestation among political parties and the public on the 2015 and 2021 midterm population and housing censuses, the Electoral Commission unprecedentedly used the mean of both data to determine the allocation of seats per district and council.

4.4 Voter Registration, Exhibition of Provisional Voters Register and Voter Cards Distribution Exhibition

a. The Legal Framework

The ECSL, under Section 33 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No.6 of 1991) and Section 24 of the Public Election Act 2012 (Act No.4 of 2012), conducted Voter Registration for June 24 2023, general elections from 3rd September to 4th October 2022. In this same section, subsection 1 states that Voter Registration should span 15 days. The ECSL, in compliance with this section, conducted the Voter Registration in two phases, dividing the total number of 3,630 registration centres established and conducting the first phase of the registration in 1,815 centres from 3rd to 17th September 2022. The second phase of voter registration was conducted in the remaining 1,815 centres from 20th September to 4th October 2022. Due to challenges in the first phase of the registration of voters, the Commission under Section 169 (The Electoral Commission may, where the circumstances so require, by order, enlarge or reduce the time as specified in this act for the giving of notice or the doing of an act or thing) of the PEA 2022 (Act No.17 2022) extended Voter Registration exercise for two days from 7th to 8th October 2022, to address the challenges encountered in the first phase.

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

NEW observed the entire Voter Registration process undertaken by the ECSL, including data capture, adjudication, and exhibition of Provisional Voter List (PVL) inquiry, in which NEW Conducted a Voter Register Assessment (VRA) and distributed voter cards. The following strategy informed NEW's observation approach:

I. Voter Registration

A credible voter register is a critical step in the conduct of transparent, inclusive, and credible elections. This can best be achieved when citizens observe the voter registration process to ensure all eligible voters are captured in the voter register, and those not supposed to be in the register are eliminated. NEW observed the voter registration process ahead of the June 2023 general elections. This was done through an observation methodology that ensures that observers are deployed in at least 10% (363) of the 3,630 Registration Centres of the ECSL's Voter Registration (VR) Exercise held from 3rd September to 4th October 2022. A total of 363 observers and 44 Supervisors were recruited, trained and deployed, and they observed the two (2) phases of the VR exercise. A total of 182 observers and 22 supervisors were deployed and observed the first and last days of the 1st phase of the VR, constituting 50% of the total 363 centres observed by NEW. The remaining 50% of 182 observers and 22 Supervisors were deployed and observed the first and last days of the 2nd phase of the VR. NEW released three (3) Press Statements on the Voter Registration Exercise. The first two statements consisting of findings were issued on the first and last days of the first phase of the exercise, and the third on the last day of the second phase, delivering on the outputs of the VR exercise.

Following the completion of the registration process, the support provided by the EU enabled NEW to conduct a Voter Registration Assessment (VRA) across the country. NEW assessed the validity and authenticity of the published voter register. To do so, NEW held a training of trainers (ToT) workshop for ten persons drawn from the Strategic Management Committee on 21st November 2022 at the Coalition's Secretariat in Freetown. The trainers trained 180

surveyors/enumerators and 36 supervisors on 24th November 2022 at five regional clusters. The enumerators were deployed to the constituencies to undertake the Voter Registration Assessment during the Voter Register Exhibition for three days out of the five days slated for the exercise. In all, 7,200 eligible voters were interviewed in all 132 constituencies. The Kobo Collect tool captured data from the surveyors in real-time. The data collection tools were programmed into the Kobo collect platform, and surveyors had them uploaded to data-capturing devices for real-time reporting.

a. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

The Voter Registration Exercise

According to the PEA 2022, the VR period was slated for 15 days, and it started on schedule and was done in two phases; the first phase was from the 3rd to 17th September 2022, and the second phase was from 20th September to 4th October 2022. As a result of the challenges relating to equipment malfunctioning and the system not capturing first-time voters, the registration process was extended for two days for phase one, from the 7th to the 8th of October 2022.

On the first day of the exercise, NEW observed enthusiastic registrants who came out to the centres in their numbers. The VVK and VIU kits used for the registration and data capture were mostly functional in all Registration Centres observed. The exercise was mostly manned by young people and was gender-inclusive. Some Phase One Centres did not open on Day One of the Voter Registration Exercise, primarily due to late deployment of Registration Materials. In five districts (Karene, Kambia, Port Loko, Pujehun and Kenema), Registration Materials arrived at the district headquarters towns on the eve (2nd September) of the Registration exercise. They were required to be distributed further to the Registration Centres in the localities. This posed challenges for Registration Centres to open on time. In Karene, the vehicle distributing the materials to the centres within the district got stuck in the mud, further delaying the distribution of materials to some centres. In six districts, materials arrived in the early hours of the first day of Registration (3rd September) when materials were supposed to have already been in the Centres. This was evident in Bo, Moyamba, Kono, Bombali, Falaba, and Bonthe Island. In Bonthe Mainland, the situation became compounded when the main bridge at Bumpeh linking the district got broken, and an alternative route had to be taken.

In Tonkolili, the first batch of materials was delivered on September 2nd 2022, and the second batch was delivered on September 3rd 2022. In Koinadugu, whilst materials arrived as early as September 1st, deployment to centres in far-off localities was delayed. Therefore, centres accounting for up to 70 miles from Kabala, i.e. St. Ballia and Mange, did not open on the first day due to distribution delays.

Of the 473 centres observed, 4 % of VVK and 3.4 % of VIU kits were faulty. In centres where the kits malfunctioned, registrants waited long hours in queues. The VIU 820 kit, which is to capture new registrants, was either not available or not functioning.

There were a few instances where the biometric features of registrants, especially the aged, farmers and fishermen, could not be captured by the device. Additionally, NEW observed that the registration staff did not follow a uniform procedure to address this challenge. NEW noted the high turnout of the aged to register and said that they were given preference to register.

NEW observed instances where First Time Voters (FTVs) data could not be captured on the initial days of the registration process until the system was re-programmed to enable their registration. Centres were not easily accessible by PWDs; others were relocated with no signage to show the new location of the Centre. This was the case for Registration Centre Code 4154, Kay Street Junction in Makeni; this Centre was relocated to Mansaray Street with no indication to show

where the relocated centre was. In other cases, centres were unsuitably located making it difficult for registrants to access. For example, Centre Code 6050, FAWE Vocational Institute Kabala, was located on top of a hill, making accessibility difficult for the aged and PWDs on wheelchairs. In addition, Centre Code 4055 Baptist Primary School, Makeni, was located in a narrow stairway, with limited space to accommodate the registration exercise. NEW noted that three Local Councils (Kenema, Bo and Port Loko) declared lockdowns in their localities, including school children, traders and office workers, to maximize voter registration turnout. Several registrants spotted errors in their details, especially their names, for which the procedures do not permit corrections by the ECSL. Some registrants in this category opted for fresh registration instead.

NEW also observed incidents where names of registrants carrying the NCRA Slip were not found in the VVK and, in some cases, were asked to re-register as new applicants. Electricity to charge the equipment was a challenge, and there were instances where the exercise had to be put on hold to recharge the devices. Solar-powered generators can only retain power for a limited period. In some instances, the ECSL staff had to pay to charge for the solar-powered generator at mobile company towers. NEW observed community intervention to salvage the power challenge with generators and extension cables from their homes. However, it steered undue tension among political party stalwarts who argued over whose fuel or generator should be accepted by the ECSL.

In addition, NEW observed the following:

Technical challenges with the electronic equipment for data capture; lack of uniformity in the application of the rules in some centres, ECSL staff insisting on citizens having the NCRA registration slip, while in others, the focus was on other forms of identification such as a passport or birth certificate. NEW also observed an indiscriminate application of the provision of citizens' certification by local authorities in the absence of documentary proof of identification. For example, the ECSL staff sometimes countered the certification of traditional rulers and community elders. However, this was not the case in the Western Area, and it was difficult for citizens to access birth certificates. NEW equally observed that there were multiple forms of birth certificates that are legitimate in the country and falsified birth certificates were also presented by some people. ECSL staff, in some instances, were unable to decipher the authenticity of the documents, leading to the non-registration of specific individuals.

Campaigning within and in the immediate vicinities of registration centres by political party stalwarts in the guise of Voter Registration Education was experienced. There were instances where political party functionaries kept trooping into some Registration Centres and, in certain cases, usurped ECSL's role by giving instructions, directing and interrogating registrants. There were also situations whereby political party functionaries ferried registrants to the centres and demanded they should be given priority to register. All of these issues obstructed the registration process.

In Constituency 060 Ward 200 Centre 08091, Children's Welfare Primary School Fonkoya, and Ward 201 Centre 08100 Movement of Faith Primary School, Kaniya, three party agents from the APC were arrested by the security of the Ambassador of Sierra Leone to Guinea, who is also the SLPP District Chairman for Kambia, and handed over to the Kambia Police. These three-party agents have been released through the intervention of human rights activists in Kambia.

NEW also observed that some political party stalwarts are campaigning in the guise of Voter Registration Education. This is in breach of the Public Elections Act of 2012, which forbids campaigning before the ECSL officially declares the Campaign period. In addition, the warning of the PPRC chair re-echoed in the PPRC News brief of 30th August was being violated.

II. Exhibition of Provisional Voter List

a. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

The Exhibition of Provisional Voter List (PVL) was on 24th to 28th November 2022. As earlier mentioned, NEW deployed a VRA strategy to observe this exercise. The journal, which is a hard copy of the PVL, was available in all centres and helped registrants verify their details even where they could not find their names displayed.

b. Incidents, Obstructions and Deviations

Key observations from this exercise on the first and second days were as follows: The PVL was not displayed in every centre; registrants,, however, verified their details through the journal on the first day; there were also no photos for new registrants; there were centres where NEW observed the registers displayed on the bare floor; in other centres, the register was not reflective of what was in the journal; and some centres had an incomplete list of registrants with ECSL promising to deliver the full PVL the following day.

It was also observed that data was missing in several centres visited across the country. For instance, In Port Loko, 365 data were missing in 11 centres; in Falaba, centre code 5033, out of 668 registrants captured, only 38 names were displayed; in Bo, Centre code 11084, out of 1,374 registrants, only 579 names on the PVL were displayed; in Moyamba, 1, 252 registrants in five centres were not found; in Kailahun 590 registrants' data were misplaced in 6 centres including the details of the NEW District Coordinator in Kailahun. In Tonkolili, there were missing data; in Pujehun, 282 data were missing in two centres; in Bonthe Island, 595 data were missing from seven centres; in Koinadugu, 629 data were missing in four centres, including the name of the Paramount Chief; and in this same centre, most surnames that start with M, S, and T on to Z were missing. Several centres visited reported the omission of registrants' details on the PVL. For example, middle name, father's or mother's name, and village name or address. NEW observers in Bonthe Mainland, Tonkolili, Western Area reported this. Inclusion forms that were supposed to capture registrants' omitted details were unavailable in most centres visited on the first and second days. Inclusion forms were made available in some centres two days after the exercise. In other centres, even on the third day, no inclusion form was available; for instance, in Western Urban, there were 12 inclusion cases in five centres, but those centres were without inclusion forms. However, correction forms to rectify misspelt names and other details were available in all centres visited. Generally, the awareness level of the exercise was low, with low turnouts and no political party agents present in all centres observed by NEW.

NEW communicated the findings to ECSL and other key stakeholders, such as the NCRA, for remedial actions during this exercise.

III. Distribution of Voter Cards

a. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

The ECSL distributed Voter Registration Cards (VRC) across the country from 7th to 16th April 2023, after an initial postponement from 17th March 2023. Despite the delay, the public welcomed the distribution with enthusiasm.

ECSL's staff were present in all centres, with a balance of male and female officials; the APC party deployed in 53.61% of the distribution centres, SLPP deployed in 52.67% of centres, and other political parties were deployed in 3.76% of centres observed. ECSL officials enforced the rules by not allowing party agents without accreditations to access the VRC distribution Centres. Citizens voluntarily assisted ECSL in maintaining order at distribution centres.

b. Incidents, Obstructions and Deviations

There were nationwide concerns over the poor quality of the cards, especially the quality and visibility of some photos on the voter cards, with concerns that it might affect voter identification. Key observations from

319 centres NEW visited are as follows: The SLP were deployed in 25% of the centres observed, and the centres with huge turnout had limited security presence.

NEW observed 0.04% mismatch cases of registrants' details, 0.12% of no Photo Cases and 0.11% of registrants whose details were completely missing on the register. There were nationwide concerns over the poor quality of the voter cards, and NEW noted that the procurement process for the voter cards was shrouded in secrecy.

4.5. The Electoral System

a. Legal Framework

The President on the 21st October 2022, under Section 38(A) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991) as amended in 2001, referencing Sub-Section 3 of Section 38 "The President may, after consultation with the Electoral Commission, direct that such election shall be conducted based on the existing districts in a manner to be known as the District Block Representation system instead of constituencies", directed that the June 2023 Parliamentary and Local Council Elections be conducted based on the District Block Proportional Representative system. This directive was considered by the opposition and some public sectors to be unconstitutional, quoting from "38A. (1) Where, under any law for the time being in force, a date for a general election of Members of Parliament has been appointed. Still, constituencies have not been established under subsection (3) of section 38 for such an election; the President may, after consultation with the Electoral Commission, direct that such election shall be conducted based on the existing districts in a manner to be known as the district block representation system instead of constituencies". The opposition took the matter to the Supreme Court, and the ruling favoured having the elections conducted in the District Block Proportional Representation system.

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

NEW's approach to introducing the PR system in the 2023 elections was one of interrogating the process and embarking on public engagement. On 26th October 2022, in response to a press release announcing that the election will be conducted on the District Block System, NEW expressed disbelief on the timeliness, lack of prior engagement on the citizenry, low knowledge on how the PR works and how it would impact on elections. NEW then through an open letter to the ECSL published the following questions for clarifications:

- Were the political parties and other stakeholders consulted before reaching the decision to halt the Boundary Delimitation exercise and introducing the PR for the 2023 elections?
- What is the legal basis for the change of the electoral system?
- Are the 2017 boundaries (which have a minimum of five and a maximum of seven years) dissolved?
- What informed the dissolution?
- Does the provision of section 38A cover Local Council elections? If not, what law will guide PR for the Local Council elections?
- What data will inform the allocation of parliamentary seats and wards per district?
- How will the proposed PR cater for independent candidates?

Though the open letter was not responded to, at a subsequent PPLC meeting, the Commission explained the questions raised in the open letter. In addition to the open letter, NEW engaged the public through media, NEW on the invitation from the Select Committee on Political and Public Affairs in Parliament, presented its position in an open dialogue on the PR system on November 1st 2022. NEW reiterated questions earlier raised in the open letter to the ECSL and encouraged the Parliamentary Committee to work with other stakeholders to address the concerns noting the implications for the change of an electoral system months to the elections.

c. Incidents, Obstructions and Deviations

Sierra Leone's default electoral system is the constituency-based First–Past–the–Post (FPTP),[11] in which each constituency returns one elected Member of Parliament (MP). Section 38(1) of the 1991 Constitution states that "Sierra Leone shall be divided into such constituencies to elect the Members of Parliament' as determined, and as prescribed in paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 74 of the 1991 Constitution." However, in 1996, as the country prepared for its first multi-party elections in over three decades, the then-military regime[12] Issued a decree for elections to be conducted using a Proportional Representation (PR) system, with the whole country as a multi-member constituency. This was justified by security challenges across the country and the electoral commission's inability to draw the boundaries provided in Sub-Sections 1 and 2 of Section 38 in the 1991 Constitution.

Ahead of the second democratic elections (and the first after the end of the civil), a new clause was introduced under Section 38 called 38(A), which makes provision for elections to be conducted using a district block proportional representation, where a date for a general election of Members of Parliament has been appointed but constituencies have not been established under Subsection (3) of Section 38 for such election. To do so, the President may, after consultation with the Electoral Commission, direct that such an election be conducted based on the existing districts in a manner to be known as the district block representation system instead of constituencies. The PR electoral system is a fallback option when constituencies are not readily available. The President decided to conduct the 2023 elections using a PR system without broad stakeholder consultations, leading to accusations by the opposition, the broader civil society and the Sierra Leonean public of changing the electoral system close to elections. The validity and legality of the President's directives to the ECSL were challenged in the Supreme Court by the main opposition, APC, for which the Supreme Court ruled ahead of the elections.[13] It remains unclear in the judgment of the Supreme Court and within ECSL if subsequent elections will be conducted using the PR system or the default constituency-based FPTP system.

The ECSL allocated seats per district following a compromise between the 2015 census data and the 2021 Midterm Census data. A mean between the two census data per district was the determinant for the number of seats per district. The formula for allocating seats to each district is provided in the 2022 Regulations.[14] This was due to the long-standing disagreement between the two leading political parties on the two-census data and the delineation of constituency boundaries. During the delineation of the boundaries for the 2018 election, the SLPP rejected the data of the 2015 census, arguing that the data was falsified with artificially increased populations in the districts and regions in the then-ruling APC party strongholds to boost seat allocation, while the population in districts known to be traditionally supportive of the SLPP were reduced. When the SLPP won the 2018 elections, it announced an unprecedented midterm census despite criticism from the opposition and civil society and the withdrawal of donor funding.[15] There was also an outright boycott of the midterm census by the opposition, who argued that the SLPP wanted to gerrymander through population reallocation.[16] When the data from the midterm census indicated, for instance, that the population of Freetown had reduced by over half from that indicated by the 2015 census results, it was not difficult for the opposition and civil society observers to affirm the claim that the midterm census intended to redraw the electoral boundaries of Sierra Leone in favour of the ruling SLPP.

[11]Section 38 (2) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

[12]The National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) took power in a military coup in 1992.

[13]See: https://www.judiciary.gov.sl/?p=1328 (Accessed on 22 December, 2023).

[14]See: https://sierralii.gov.sl/akn/sl/act/si/2022/14/eng@2022-11-16/source.pdf (Accessed on 22 December, 2023).

[15]See: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/world-bank-backs-out-funding-sierra-leone-census-2021-12-09/ (Accessed on 2 January, 2024).

[16]See: https://sierraloaded.sl/news/apc-rejects-mid-term-census/ (Accessed on 2 January, 2024).

NEW was among the voices opposed to the midterm census but also called on the Government of Sierra Leone and the ECSL not to use the data generated from that census for boundary delimitation.[17]

Following the Supreme Court's dismissal of the APC's case on the legality of the PR, options for the opposition were limited. The choice was either to boycott the elections or participate in the prevailing situation. Subsequently, the 14 political parties certified by the PPRC to contest the elections and independent candidates (for Parliament and Local Councils) were required to submit candidates that were twice the number of seats to the ECSL for each district, while respecting the provisions of the GEWE Act 2023 and PEA Act of 2022 on the gender quota which requires that for every three nominated candidates, one must be a woman. Based on the population of each district (taking from the mean estimate from the 2015 and 2021 census data), the number of parliamentary seats varied from four in districts such as Koinadugu and Falaba to twelve seats in Bo, thirteen in Kenema and sixteen in the Western Area-Urban. NEW observed that the ECSL merger between the 2015 and 2021 censuses was the best way forward in the prevailing disagreements on the two-census data. With this merger of the two-census data, districts in the APC stronghold either lost a seat or remained the same as the 2016 allocation of seats. However, in the SLPP strongholds, some districts gained as many as three seats, but others remained the same.

The Western Urban district, also deemed a stronghold of the APC party, was the hardest hit, losing nine seats. The use of any one of the two-census data alone would have created an alarming disparity in the allocation of seats to the districts. In addition, NEW also observed that the threshold of 11.9 % to win a seat in each district for parliament and 4.9 % for a local council was determined solely by the ECSL with no stakeholder engagement and input. The formula used by the ECSL for the threshold for Parliament noted the number of districts divided by the number of seats in Parliament multiplied by one hundred. The same formula was used for the allocation of Local Council seats. By the use of this formula, the argument that the district block proportional system was an opportunity for smaller political parties to gain seats in the Parliament as well as councils was defeated, with only the APC and the SLPP meeting the threshold and therefore a two-party rather than a multi-party parliament and 14 out of 16 districts saw no other party in the councils. Subsequently, the high threshold for winning a parliamentary seat and the late introduction of the PR system, along with poor public awareness, meant that the 6th Parliament of Sierra Leone has limited plural voices, with all ordinarily elected MPs coming from the two leading political parties, the APC and the SLPP with no independent candidate as opposed to the previous Parliament.

4.6 Campaign Conduct

a. Legal Framework

PPRC was established in December 2005 by the Political Parties Act of 2002 (as amended in 2022) and under sections 34 and 35 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. The Commission18 is responsible for registering and regulating political parties and monitoring their accountability to their members and the electorate of Sierra Leone. It is also responsible for receiving financial statements and reports on the sources of income, audited accounts, assets, and liabilities of each registered political party, and it could take appropriate disciplinary action to ensure compliance. In the enforcement of this authority of the Commission, three political parties, namely the C4C, Unity Party (UP) and Nation Progressive Democrats (NPD), were disqualified from contesting the elections for failure to meet the criteria set by the Commission. As per the provisions of Section 34(1) of the Constitution, the Commission consists of four members appointed by the President. It includes a Chairman of the Commission, who shall be a person who has

[17]See: https://politicosl.com/articles/new-calls-cancellation-sierra-leone-census-data (Accessed on [2] January, [2024]).

[18] Until the PPA of [2022], the changed its name from registration to regulation, the Commission was known as the Political Parties Registration Commission.

held judicial office or is qualified to be appointed a Judge of the Superior Court of Judicature nominated by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission (JLSC); the Chief Electoral Commissioner of the ECSL, a legal practitioner nominated by the Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA); and a member nominated by the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC).

Under section 154 of the PEA, 2022 (Act No17 of 2022) and after consultations with registered political parties and candidates contesting the June election, the ECSL declared the period for campaigns from Tuesday 23rd May to Thursday 22nd June 2023 (from 7 am to 5 pm each day). This was preceded by PPRC regulations for campaigns published on 12th April 2023, which included Moving in rowdy processions, trading of obscenity and public insults against political opponents; the destruction of campaign materials of political opponents, as a semblance of opposing party supporters, members and sympathizers that are likely to disrupt the campaign party's activities; attacks on persons and properties of political opponents and other members of the public; among others.

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

As part of its 2023 Election Observation Strategy, NEW embarked on LTO of the pre-and post-election environment of the June 24, 2023, Elections. The objectives of this intervention were to:

- Assess the conditions that may impact the inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability of the 2023 electoral process;
- Document all election-related events before and after the June 24, 2023 elections in objectively inform the citizens of Sierra Leone and other interested stakeholders;
- Use the information provided by the NEW LTOs to alert relevant stakeholders and advocate for appropriate interventions.
- Use the observations made by LTOs to advocate for electoral reforms after the June 24 Elections;
- Capture emerging issues that have the potential to negatively affect the electoral environment and processes and engage the relevant authorities to mitigate those effects;
- Enhance confidence in the electoral process through the highlighting and Commending of the best practices in the run-up to the election;
- Identify and highlight hotspots ahead of Election Day;
- Publicize all election-related developments to deter electoral malpractices and
- To encourage citizen participation in the political processes.

NEW recruited, trained and deployed 34 LTOs, two per district, for 3 months (May-July). The LTOs were recruited from NEW's district structures across the country. Training and deployment of LTOs were conducted on the 3rd and 4th of May 2023 in three locations, i.e. Bo, Makeni and Waterloo. These observers were trained and provided with checklists to collect data on the election's environment noting incidents, the work of EMBs and other election stakeholders. Data collected from these observers will help to map out potential hotspot areas ahead of the June elections. In addition to the LTOs, five Zonal Coordinators (one per region) were recruited, trained and deployed at NEW's Secretariat to support the LTOs in the field. The primary responsibility of the Zonal Coordinators is to coordinate the day-to-day work of the LTOs by collating daily and weekly reports, cross-validating reported incidents and generating a national report. The data capture, transmission, and analysis were done using Apollo software.

c. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

An executive secretary supports the work of the Commission, the administrative head of the Commission, and seven directorates, including Mediation and Programmes, Finance, Human Resources, and Audit. Relative to its counterpart, the ECSL, the PPRC is smaller and, until late 2021, had a

staff of less than 30 with three regional offices plus its headquarters in Freetown. However, following a capacity and systems review done by the Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU) in 2021, recommendations were made for the creation of seven directors from the heads of departments who used to be officers, the recruitment of 30 new staff, the creation of one additional regional office in the northwestern regional city of Port Loko, and the transformation of the Office of the Registrar to that of an Executive Secretary putting the office at par with its ECSL counterpart. At the time of the elections, PPRC had just over 50 staff, with seven directorates supervised by an Executive Secretary.

At the time of the 2023 elections, the PPRC was fully constituted with all four commissioners in office, including the chair of the Commission appointed in April 2019 following the death of the substantive Chairman in 2016. The opposition mainly criticized the chair's appointment, which described him as a 'Card Carrying Member' of the SLPP and, therefore, not neutral and independent. During his confirmation hearing in Parliament, MPs from the opposition APC party staged a walkout to protest his appointment and confirmation. Following his appointment, one of the first challenges the chair was confronted with was settling the longstanding division within the All-Political Parties Association (APPA) and other affiliate bodies, including the youth and women factions. NEW observed that despite the questions around the neutrality and independence of the Chair of PPRC, the commission has recorded a more favourable public perception of neutrality and engagement across the board, and political parties (despite their ongoing criticisms) consider the PPRC to be much more institutionally firm and fairer.[19]

NEW observed that on several occasions during the electoral cycle, the PPRC has been firm in implementing its policies and decision-making process across the board, regardless of the offender. In February 2023, for instance, following a clash of supporters of the APC and SLPP in Calaba Town, in the east of the capital city, Freetown, the PPRC concluded after its investigation that it was supporters of the SLPP that provoked the incident when they made inciting remarks against the APC supporters who were waiting to welcome the motorcade of their newly elected presidential candidate who was travelling from Makeni to Freetown. In a press statement, the PPRC sternly warned the ruling party to desist from such provocative acts or face the total penalty of the law.[20]

Similarly, after the election of their party standard bearer, the main opposition APC party celebrated and sang provocative songs against the ruling SLPP party, especially the First Lady of Sierra Leone. The Commission warned the APC party sternly to desist from such provocative actions. On another occasion the PPRC, pursuant to Section 39(2)(b) of the Political Parties Act 2022, find the main opposition APC, the sum of NLE 120,000/00 (One Hundred and Twenty Thousand new Leones) payable into the Consolidated Fund, within two weeks from date herein and furnish the Commission with evidence of such payment, for contravening of Section 39(1)(c&d) of the Political Parties Act 2022, adding that persistent infringement of that provision of the Act by his Party is not only a breach of the law but also borders on the peace and social cohesion of the state.[21] Section 39(2)(b) of the Political Parties Act 2022 gives power to the Commission, in contravention of this provision, to warn after the first offence, fine on a second offence, suspend on the third offence and deregister if the party continues to violate the provision.

In addition to the stern position of the PPRC on issues of campaign violations, some of the major successes of the PPRC include the mediation of the impasse within the main

[19] See: Press Release by the PPRC dated [23] February [2023], titled "Alleged Physical Attacks on Members/Supporters of The All Peoples Congress Party Including its National Secretary General by Security Personnel".

[20] See: https://sierraloaded.sl/news/pprc-warns-slpp/ (Accessed on [27] December, [2023]).

[21] See: https://thecalabashnewspaper.com/for-violation-of-its-act-pprc-fines-apc-le[120]m-warns-apc-slpp/ (Accessed on [27] December, [2023]). Reference PPRC press statement instead

opposition APC, including dealing with petitions from its members on its lower-level elections, observation of the lower level and national delegate conferences for all political parties and the enactment of the 2022 PPA which provided additional powers to the PPRC for broader political party regulation, including political parties and candidate campaign financing. Regardless of this progress, NEW observed the criticisms of PPRC by mostly opposition parties in its fairness in adjudicating inter and intra-party disputes and the decision to certify 14 out of the 17 registered political parties to contest the June 2023 elections.

4.7. Civic and Voter Education

LTOs observed voter education efforts during May, most commonly led by ECSL, CSOs and political parties. Before the start of the campaign, NEW LTOs reported that civic and voter education efforts were underway in 14 districts except for Koinadugu and Moyamba districts. These civic and voter education initiatives were often led by ECSL, CSOs and political parties, followed by women's and youth groups and, to a lesser extent, faith-based organizations. In the first week of the campaign, LTOs observed voter and civic education efforts in all districts except Moyamba, with an increase in the number of LTOs reporting activities led by women's and youth groups, CSOs, and political parties. 16 observers in 11 districts reported that the ECSL led voter education activities in their area during the first week of campaigning. Meanwhile, 20 observers in 13 districts noted that political parties were also organizing such activities.

In the first week of the campaign, 22 LTOs observed voter education activities explicitly targeting women, 20 LTOs observed education efforts targeting youth, and 17 observed education efforts targeting voters with disabilities.

i. Campaigns

A total of 27 LTOs in 10 districts reported no incidents of physical violence, intimidation, or harassment. This trend continued during the first week of the campaign.

NEW LTOs observed a total of 91 campaign events across all districts between the start of the campaign on May 22 and the end of May, including 31 events hosted by the SLPP, 29 events hosted by the APC, and 31 events hosted by other parties. 78% of these events promoted presidential candidates, 67% promoted parliamentary candidates, and 76% promoted candidates for local council.

ii. Respect for the Campaign Calendar

All of the reported campaign events complied with the campaign calendar. LTOs reported that the campaign calendar was respected in their respective districts in May.

iii. Topics Covered in Campaign Messages

All of the 91 campaign events observed included messages focused on multiple topics. Youth unemployment was the most common topic and was discussed at 68% of events. Campaign messages focused on the economy and education were each featured at 60% of campaign events observed, and gender equality was covered at 53% of the events. A total of 41% of campaign events included a focus on human rights, while 30% discussed social services. The least commonly discussed topics were security (20% of events) and natural resources (18% of events); 18% of events also included other topics.

iv. Distribution of money and other form of inducements to supporters

At 44 % of campaign events observed, LTOs reported no distribution of goods or money to supporters.

v. Presence of security officials and event locations

Security officials were present at 73% of campaign events observed, while 27% of events had no security presence. SLP officials were most commonly present, while RSLAF were present at 33% of events and other security officials were at 8%. Approximately 89% of campaign events occurred at

designated locations, while 11% ended up as street rallies.

a. Incidents, Obstructions and Deviations

NEW noted the use of hate speech, harassment, intimidation, online bullying, the proliferation of inflammatory audios on WhatsApp and Facebook, unregulated media shows and other forms of physical violence as key features spanning the electoral cycle.

i. Use of Hate speech

During May, 14 LTOs across nine districts reported the use of hate speech by parties, candidates, and/or their supporters. This was mainly concentrated in the North and Southern regions. Of these, five observers reported instances of hate speech focused on regional politics, while 10 observers reported the use of hate speech focused on ethnic identity or tribalism.

ii. Physical Violence, Intimidation, or Harassment

Before the campaigns, seven LTOs in six districts reported nine isolated incidents of violence, including:

- In Peri Foindu Chiefdom, Pujehun district, a fight allegedly ensued between supporters of Massa Kpakra, a parliamentary candidate from the APC, the town chief and other residents. The Town Chief, Lahai Kallon, and Massa Kpakra were reportedly sprayed with acid in the course of the fight by an unknown individual. The police intervened to calm the situation and further investigate the incident, and several supporters of Massa Kpakra were arrested.
- On 9 May in Mongo chiefdom, Falaba district, an intra-party disagreement resulted in violence when SLPP supporters objected that a female parliamentarian candidate from outside the constituency was proposed for the party's list. The police intervened to calm the situation, but no arrests were made.
- On 28 May, in the same chiefdom, violence ensued when an SLPP supporter in an unmarked vehicle accused an APC supporter of taking a picture of him. There was then a scuffle between supporters of the two parties, and the APC candidate's campaign materials and property were vandalized. Senior members of the SLPP arrived on the scene with armed police.

iii. Destruction of Election Campaign Materials and Property

While NEW acknowledges that destruction of campaign materials has been widespread throughout the country, during May, LTOs reported eight incidents of destruction of campaign materials in seven districts. For example, in Blama Town, Kenema district, SLPP and APC campaign materials were destroyed on 13th May. A similar incident occurred on 22nd May in Mile 91 Yoni Chiefdom, Tonkolili District, when unknown people tore an SLPP presidential candidate's banner, and their supporters retaliated by destroying the banners for the APC presidential candidate. The SLP and the military intervened, using tear gas and made arrests of perpetrators to cool down the situation. Curfew was passed later in the day till the morning of 24th May 2023. On 30th May in Kono district, Sandamanda area, Koidu City, unknown persons set the house of former APC cabinet minister Diana Konomani ablaze. In Western Area Urban, one of the vehicles of the APC Mayoral Candidate, Yvonne Aki Sawyer, was forcefully taken away and allegedly vandalized by a man called "Arata." The arrest was made, and the vehicle was later released to Aki-Sawyer. The perpetrator was also allegedly released.

iv. Distribution of Goods or Money to Supporters & Presence of Individuals who appeared to be under the Influence of Drugs

At 56% of events, multiple goods and/or cash types were distributed. Foodstuffs were

distributed at 40% of events, clothing at 38%, cash at 16%, and other items at 3%. At 88% of events observed, LTOs reported that no individuals appeared to be under the influence of drugs.

v. Use of state vehicles at campaign events

At 86% of events, LTOs reported that no state vehicles were used, while 14% of events included the use of state vehicles.

4.8 Early Voting

a. Legal Framework

Under section 33 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) and sections 7, 42 and 171 of the PEA 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022) and the Public Elections (Early Voting) regulation, 2023 (No.3 of 2023), the ECSL informed the public that Early Voting will be conducted for Presidential elections on 15th June 2023, starting from 7 am to 5 am. The elections were conducted for Muslim pilgrims who were registered voters to exercise their Franchise before leaving for the holy land of Mecca.

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

NEW used its existing LTO structures to observe the Early Voting in its various districts. A total of 34 observers were deployed, and NEW's 17 district coordinators supervised the LTO on E-Day. In addition to the supervisors, five Zonal Coordinators based in the Secretariat supported collecting and collating data from the field.

c. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

NEW acknowledged that discussions on early voting for pilgrims were done at various stakeholder meetings with civil society, political parties, and other international organizations and that polls would only be limited to the presidential election.

d. Incidents, Obstructions and deviations

NEW raised concerns on the following issues:

- **Late Notification about the Early Voting:** Information on the date for the early voting was communicated at a PPLC meeting held in Freetown on 14th June 2023, less than 24 hours before the commencement of polls on 15th June 2023. It was followed by a press statement released to the public on the 14th of June, although it was dated 13th June 2023. Findings from our observers indicated that some voters were turned away because their names were not on the Voters' List. This was mainly due to the lack of engagement with the pilgrims on the details and processes of the Early Voting by the ECSL, which, as a result, led to low voter turnout.

- **Non-Clarity on the Early Voter List:** Section 4 of the Public Election (Early Voting) Regulations 2023 provides for an early voter list. NEW observed that the list was not exhibited and that the number of early voting voters disaggregated by district was not available. Best practice dictates that all voter lists should be made public before an election. On 15 June 2023, NEW issued a press release indicating that discussions on early voting for pilgrims were done at various stakeholder meetings with civil society, political parties, and other international organizations. Early polling would only be limited to the presidential election. However, NEW was concerned about the late notification of the Early Voting Information. The date for the early voting was communicated at a PPLC meeting held in Freetown on 14th June 2023, less than 24 hours before the commencement of polls on 5th June 2023. It was followed by a press statement by the ECSL dated 13th June 2023. Findings from NEW's observers indicated that some voters were turned away because their names were not on the Voters' List. Additionally, non-clarity on the Early Voter List Section 4 of the Public Election (Early Voting) Regulations of

- 2023 provided for an early voters list. NEW observed that early voter lists were not exhibited, and the number of voters for early voting disaggregated by district was unavailable. Best practice dictates that all voters' lists should be made public before an election.

- **Lack of transparency around the procurement and printing of ballot papers:** The ECSL confirmed that ballot papers for early voting were printed in Sierra Leone. They had earlier informed a PPLC meeting that ballot papers printed in South Africa would arrive in Sierra Leone on Saturday, 17th June 2023. This means that ballot papers for the June 2023 elections were printed in two different countries and potentially by two different companies. NEW was thus concerned about the protection, custody, verifiability, transparency and accountability around producing ballot papers printed in two countries for the same elections.

To address the concerns, NEW recommended the following:

  - ECSL make available information for public consumption on the service provider that printed the ballot papers for the early voting in Sierra Leone and how many were printed for the voting exercise.
  - There should be consistency in managing all electoral processes to increase trust and public confidence.
  - ECSL should ensure timely information for every stage of the electoral process to allow adequate preparation by election stakeholders and effective participation.
  - The ECSL should fully comply with all legal provisions related to early voting.

It was expected that the ECSL would take the right steps to address the concerns, which eventually turned out not to be the case.

4.9. PCMP Elections

a. Legal Framework

Under sections 33, 72 and 74 (1) (a) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) and pursuant to sections 98 to 101 of the PEA 2022 (Act No. 17 2022), the ECSL published date for the nomination and polling day for the Paramount Chief Member of Parliament (PCMP).

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

NEW deployed 45 observers in the five election locations and five supervisors who monitored the stationed observers. NEW used its deployed LTOs in the field to observe the PCMP elections at the various chiefdom headquarters towns where polls were conducted. LTOs were provided with checklists to capture findings from the field on E-Day. The district coordinators, who served as supervisors and roving teams, monitored the stationed observers across centres.

c. Conduct of the Exercise, Adherence to the Law, Good Practice and Principles

The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) conducted Paramount Chieftaincy Elections on 20th May 2023 in five districts, i.e. Pujehun, Bonthe, Bombali, Falaba and Kambia. NEW observed the nomination of candidates from 30th March to 1st April 2023. Nominations were conducted for the 14 districts across the country; nine districts went unopposed, and five contested the elections. The PCMP elections were largely with a high voter turnout in almost all the districts
.

d. Incidents, Obstructions and deviations

The PCMP election went on as planned except for Bombali Shebora Chiefdom, which was postponed to the 22nd May 2023 due to an incorrect Voter List supplied on 20th May.

4.10. Voting Day: Counting and Announcement of Results

This section of the report presents all election observation findings by the NEW. It collates all findings released for Election Day (E-Day) on the 24th of June, 2023, in Sierra Leone.

a. Legal Framework

Under section 33, 42(2)(e) and 38A (as amended) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 (Act No.6 of 1991) and according to section 7 and 68 (1) of the PEA 2022 (Act No.17 2022), the ECSL conducted Presidential election on June 24th 2023. Under section 38A of the 1991 Constitution (as amended), pursuant to section 92 of the PEA 2022, the ECSL declared the number of seats won by political parties for Members of Parliament.

b. Observation Approach, Activities and Strategies

NEW's Election Observation Strategy provided a strategic guiding framework and methodological approach on how the coalition should observe the June 24th 2023, elections in Sierra Leone.

NEW's vision was to see a governance and electoral context in which the outcome of all elections reflected the actual will of the voters. As a civil society election observation coalition, NEW's mandate is to observe and report accurately and independently on elections and electoral processes while advocating for electoral legal reforms consistent with international best practices.

To fulfil our vision and mission, NEW observed and reported on all stages of Election Day (E-Day). A significant component of NEW's methodology in the 2023 elections was deployment to 100% polling centres nationwide. A 100% deployment to centres meant at least one observer per polling centre across the 3,360 centres across Sierra Leone. Essentially, NEW observers covered 50% of the polling stations nationwide. Approximately 6,000 observers were deployed nationwide. This approach was implemented through the following interventions:

Incident Reporters: NEW recruited, trained and deployed incident reporting observers on E-Day. The incident reporting mechanism involved moving information on incidents from all polling stations observed to the Citizens Situation Room (CSR). The information was verified by the 23 district-level incident reporters and directed to the relevant authorities for their intervention by the national-level incident reporters. This was to ensure that such incidents do not adversely affect the outcome of the elections.

Tally Centre Observers: NEW trained and deployed two observers each in all Regional Tally Centers and at the national level.

Communication, Coordination and Monitoring: The secretariat team and Strategic Committee members (SMC) coordinated the coalition's work in Freetown through the CSR located at New Brook Fields Hotel. NEW updated the public through regular press statements and conferences before and after the elections. NEW also collaborated with other Election Observer Missions (EOMs) and was supported by a network of partners, including International IDEA and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

The communication component constituted the following;

- NEW Observers trained to collect SMS data from polling stations.
- Generate Statistical and Analytical data for NEW Electoral Final Report on elections observation activities

As previously indicated above, NEW's established Citizen's Situation Room (CSR) at the New Brookfields Hotel in Freetown served as the nerve Centre of its observation efforts and attracted over 1,000 visitors from local institutions and international organizations. All PRVT information from the field was received by the CSR and collated for easy analysis supported with empirical evidence. NEW issued regular public statements through press releases that informed the coalition's election analysis.

5. NEW'S PRVT Methodology

For Sierra Leone's 24 June 2023 elections, NEW employed the PRVT, an advanced and proven election monitoring methodology that allowed the coalition to independently and impartially assess the quality of voting and counting on election day and the accuracy of official results of the presidential elections announced by the ECSL.

The PRVT methodology is routinely used by citizen election observation organizations worldwide. More than 35 PRVTs have been conducted for national elections in 10 African countries, including recent elections in Nigeria (2023), Kenya (2022), and Côte d'Ivoire (2020). This is not the first PRVT in Sierra Leone; NEW has employed the exact same methodology in 2007 and 2012 and for both the first and second round of Presidential elections in 2018.

5.1. PRVT Methodology for the 2023 Elections

For the 2023 elections, NEW trained and deployed 6,000 observers nationwide, covering every polling centre. Of these observers, 750 were specially trained and deployed to a statistically representative sample of polling stations across all five regions and 16 districts in Sierra Leone using the PRVT methodology.

The PRVT methodology involved deploying observers to a random, statistically representative sample of polling stations. On election day, PRVT observers stayed at their polling stations all day, observing the setup and opening, voting, counting, and closing processes. Throughout the day, they transmitted their observations on the process at the end of the day, the official results for their assigned polling station, as documented on the RRF.

Because observers are deployed to a statistically representative sample of polling stations, the PRVT provides independent and impartial projections of the official results. While only the ECSL declares the outcome of elections, the PRVT is based on the official results as announced by ECSL polling officials. If the official results are consistent with the PRVT projections, as they were for both the first and second rounds of the presidential election in 2018, then it gives greater confidence that the results, as announced by the ECSL, reflect the ballots cast at polling stations. However, when the

official results are inconsistent with the PRVT projections, as for the 2023 presidential election, it provides evidence that the results do not reflect the votes cast at polling stations.

5.1.1. Representative Sample

For 2023, the PVRT employed a statistically representative random sample of 750 polling stations with 213,164 registered voters. The size of the PRVT sample was determined to ensure that it included sampled polling stations in all five regions and all 16 districts of the country. The sample size is similar to those used for PRVTs in other African countries. It is larger than the sample size for the PRVTs for the presidential elections 2018 that verified the outcomes of those elections.

In 2018, the PRVT sample size was 506 polling stations, while in 2023, it was increased to 750 to provide additional precision and confidence. NEW increased the sample size for 2023 to reduce the margin of error for PRVT projections. Increasing the sample size for a PRVT from 1500 to 2000 or 1000 to 6000 would not have a significant impact on the margin of error and may render rigorous observer recruitment, training and data verification challenging. However, increasing the sample size from 506 to 750 kept a reasonable number of observers while allowing for increased precision in PRVT projections.

The quality of PRVT projection does not depend on the percentage of polling stations covered but on how the sample is drawn. Polling stations must be drawn randomly, and the sample must be geographically representative. NEW's sample adhered to both of these requirements.

NEW drew its representative sample of 750 polling stations using interval sampling, a form of random statistical sampling. To ensure geographical representativeness, the PRVT sample was drawn using stratification. This means including in the sample of polling stations the same percentage of polling stations for every region and district as the percentage of polling stations in the complete list of 11,832 polling stations. For example, there are a total of 1,106 polling stations in Bo District. These 1,106 polling stations represent 9.3% of all 11,832 polling stations in Sierra Leone. The NEW PRVT sample included 70 polling stations in Bo District, which is 9.3% of the total 750 polling stations in the sample. Since these percentages are approximately equal, the sample does not overrepresent or underrepresent Bo district in terms of assessing the quality of election day processes and projecting the results. As Table 1 below shows, for every district, the percentage of sampled polling stations closely matches the percentage of total polling stations, and therefore, the sample is geographically representative.

Districts	Total Polling Stations	% Total PS	Sample PS	% Sample PS	Variance
Bo	1,106	9.3%	70	9.3%	0.0%
Bombali	721	6.1%	46	6.1%	0.0%
Bonthe	884	3.2%	25	3.3%	0.1%
Falaba	250	2.1%	16	2.1%	0.0%
Kailahun	679	5.7%	43	5.7%	0.0%
Kambia	547	4.6%	35	4.7%	0.1%
Karene	359	3.0%	23	3.1%	0.1%
Kenema	1,127	9.5%	71	9.5%	0.0%
Koinadugu	309	2.6%	19	2.5%	-0.1%
Kono	616	5.2%	39	5.2%	0.0%
Moyamba	537	4.5%	34	4.5%	0.0%
Port Loko	836	7.1%	53	7.1%	0.0%
Pujehun	422	3.6%	26	3.5%	-0.1%
Tonkolili	729	6.2%	46	6.1%	-0.1%
WA – Rural	1,161	9.8%	74	9.9%	0.1%
WA – Urban	2,049	17.3%	130	17.3%	0.0%
Total	11,832	100%	750		

Once the number of polling stations per district was determined using stratification, each district's polling stations were selected randomly to prevent any possible bias.

5.1.2. PRVT Observer Recruitment and Training

NEW recruited PRVT observers from its member organizations across the country. Seventeen verification teams drawn from NEW's SMC and individuals from the coalition's broader civil society member organizations were sent to all districts across the country (Bonthe District divided into Mainland and Island) to physically locate the sample points/polling centres and verify the recruited observers. The verification teams assessed network coverage and accessibility of the sampled polling stations and ensured that recruited PRVT observers were independent and nonpartisan, without any known preference for any political party or candidate, region, ethnic group or person.

Observers were required to reside near the sampled polling station where they observed and needed to know how to read and write in English to understand key election documents and observation tools.

A rigorous two-day Training of Trainers workshop was conducted for the PRVT trainers at NEW's Secretariat. Trainers were drawn from the cohort of NEW member organization leaders who made up the verification teams. PRVT observers underwent a rigorous full-day training on the NEW PRVT methodology, ECSL election day procedures, the observation checklist, and NEW's reporting strategy, including how to send reports to the NEW Citizen Situation Room via coded SMS. Before election day, NEW carried out two national simulation exercises to test observers' understanding of the PRVT checklist and NEW's reporting systems. During the first simulation, observers were required to deploy to their assigned polling stations.

5.1.3. PRVT Data Collection

On Election Day, trained PRVT observers deployed to the statistical sample of polling stations, where they examined crucial aspects of voting and counting at assigned locations, reporting on strengths and irregularities that affected the quality of the election. After observing the counting of ballots, PRVT observers also recorded the number of ballots cast and the votes for each candidate in the presidential election as announced by the polling officials and recorded by officials on RRF #1. Of note, PRVT observers reported whether party agents agreed with the official results announced by the polling officials. PRVT observers did not count any ballots. Instead, they observed the process and reported on it and its official results.

PRVTs use technology to assess what is happening with the election in near-real time. At specific times during the day, observers sent their observation information to the NEW Situation Room via coded SMS. SMS reports were transmitted via an SMS gateway to a specialized database. NEW then carefully verified the reported observations, analysed aggregate data, and distilled findings into observation statements, providing accurate characterization of elections and confident verification of official election results.

NEW conducted rigorous data verification procedures, using logical checks to identify and correct any inconsistencies in PRVT data submitted via SMS. NEW had three observers who reported data for more than one polling station, failed to report results data, or reported figures that were not possible, so all three were excluded from the results projection, and results projections were announced based on 747 of 750 observers' data. The integrity of the sample was not impacted by excluding these three observers' data, and there is no way that their data could have changed the ultimate finding that no candidate reached the 55% threshold. NEW followed a similar practice in 2018 when the PRVT verified official results for the first and second rounds of presidential elections. This is a common practice for citizen observer groups implementing PRVTs to exclude any data from their results projections that are illogical. As noted above, excluding several sample points does not negatively impact the integrity of the overall sample, and PRVT projections remain accurate.

5.1.4. Margin of Error

The margins of error for the PRVT's projections are the window within which the actual results for all polling stations for the presidential election must fall. The official turnout rate, vote shares for each candidate, or the rate of invalid ballots must fall within the PRVT's margin of error for these results. The margin of error is not a quality measurement and does not indicate the degree of "mistakes'' in the data. Instead, it is a technical term used by statisticians to describe a measurement of precision. A smaller margin of error means a more precise estimate. The margin of error is determined by three key factors: the confidence interval, the sample size (750 polling stations), and the degree of homogeneity or variance of the data

received (i.e. the variance in vote shares between candidates or, rather, the differences in voting patterns in sampled polling stations). NEW used a confidence interval of 95%, a standard confidence interval in social science research. A lower confidence interval, such as 90%, would have a smaller margin of error, while a 99% confidence interval would have a larger margin. Even at a 99% confidence interval, the PRVT showed that no candidate would have reached the constitutional threshold of 55% of valid votes cast in the first round of the elections to avoid a runoff.

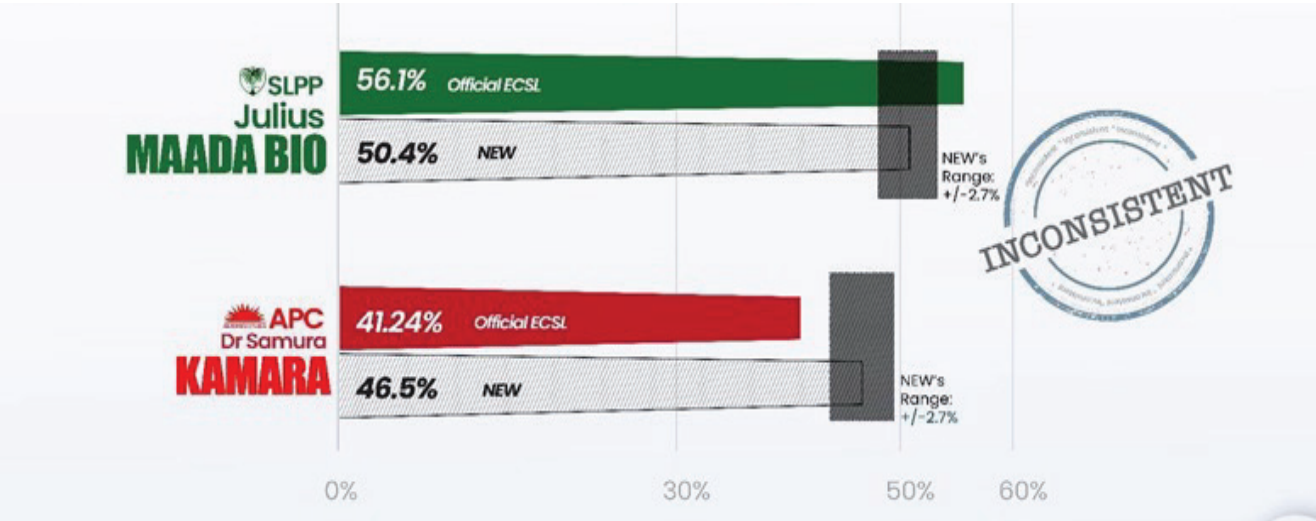
5.2. Key PRVT Findings

On the basis of the official results recorded on the RRF for the presidential election (RRF #1) at a statistically representative valid sample of 750 polling stations from across the five regions and 16 districts of Sierra Leone, NEW observed and recorded that the official final presidential results announced by the ECSL are inconsistent with PRVT data. The PRVT data clearly shows that no candidate met the threshold in the first round and that there should be a runoff election between the candidate of the SLPP and that of the APC.

For June 2023 Presidential election, NEW's PRVT data indicates that the official results announced by ECSL are statistically incorrect, mathematically inaccurate and does not reflect the actual votes cast.

The PRVT concludes that:

1. Voter turnout was 77.3% with a margin of error of +/- 1.7% (between 75.6% and 79%) while ECSL's official turnout is four percentage points higher than the upper limit of the margin of error at 83.0%.
2. Rejected, or invalid, ballots were 5.1% with a margin of error of +/- 0.6% (between 4.5% and 5.7%).
   - The PRVT's estimate is consistent with past elections. In 2018, the number of rejected ballots for the first round was 5.2%, 4.7% in 2012, and 7.3% in 2007.
   - ECSL's rejected ballot rate of 0.4% represents a significant departure from the trend in Sierra Leonean elections over time.
3. The results announced for the top two candidates are statistically impossible, and no candidate should have met the constitutional threshold of 55% to avoid a runoff.
   - The candidate of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) should receive 50.4 % of the vote with a margin of error of +/-2.7% (between 47.7% and 53.1%) of the vote, while:
     - ECSL's official result is 56.1%, which is three percentage points higher than the upper limit of the PRVT range.
     - The candidate of the APC should receive 46.5% of the vote with a margin of error of +/- 2.7% (between 43.8% and 49.2%), while ECSL's official result is 41.2%, 2.6 percentage points lower than the lower limit of the PRVT range.



5.3. PRVT Communication

Throughout the 2023 electoral cycle, NEW engaged the media, EMBs, Political Parties, other civil society organizations and the public on its observation methodology and findings. NEW launched its 2023 Elections Observation Strategy on 19 May 2023 in a ceremony attended by a wide range of election stakeholders and members of the international community. NEW invited the Chief Election Commissioner to launch the strategy, and the Commissioner for the Eastern Region represented him. Ahead of election day, NEW hosted a breakfast event with media representatives on Friday, 23rd June, to explain and answer questions about the PRVT and officially launch its PRVT Situation Room.

NEW also held a series of press conferences - on 23rd June to release the pre-election statement, on 24th June to issue the mid-day statement, and on 25th June to issue the preliminary statement - to ensure the timely communication of observation findings with the public. Before, during, and after election day, NEW hosted visitors to its PRVT Situation Room, including representatives from the media, civil society, the diplomatic community, and international election observation missions. All these statements listed in this report can be found on NEW's website.

6. Pre-Election Statements

The coalition issued several press statements indicating its observation and initial recommendation on major pre-election and election activities. The content of these press statements is summarized in this section, while the press statements themselves are attached as annexes to this report.

a. Pre-Election Statements Issued by NEW on 23rd June 2023

As Sierra Leone Votes on Saturday, June 24, New Deploys Observers Nationwide

On the eve of the elections on 23rd June 2023, new published a press statement to inform the public bout is preparedness to observe the elections, including the recruitment, training and deployment of observers the over 5,000 polling centres across the country supported by Long-term observers, the deployment of the PRVT methodology and other support mechanisms. It called on citizens to go out peacefully to cast their ballots. It congratulated the PPRC, the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC), for working hard to resolve the standoff between the ECSL and the main opposition, the APC party. NEW noted the tense of the elections as observed by its long-term observers and called on political parties to exercise restraint and respect the rule of law. It concluded that it observed the arrival at Lungi International Airport and distribution to ECSL district warehouses of sensitive election materials, including ballot papers. It asked the ECSL to continue to make itself available to political parties and members of the public to answer critical questions on the electoral process.

b. New Mid-Day Situational Report-24th June 2023

Election Day Begins with Late Opening of Polling Stations and Missing Materials in Some Areas

On Election Day, NEW released a press statement on its observation of the opening process of polling stations across the country, noting the late opening of polling stations and missing election materials in some stations. NEW observed 12 critical incident reports across the country, including:

- Late opening of polling centres as a result of incomplete or unavailable sensitive materials;
- Missing data of voters: where names and details of voters with voter cards or slips are not found in the register;
- Unavailability of validation stamps in polling stations
- The police arrested a man for having ballot papers at a polling centre in Makeni.

NEW concluded by calling on the ECSL to respond to centres that have not opened. Equally, it calls on the ESCL to resolve issues of voters with IDs whose names were not on the register. It committed to continuing to observe the voting, closing and counting, and results processes and keeping the public periodically informed on the key observations and findings.

C. Preliminary Statement 25th June 2023

Sierra Leoneans returned to the polls yesterday for the 24th June 2023 presidential, parliamentary and local council elections.

Following its pre-election and election-day statements, NEW issued a preliminary statement regarding its initial finding of its observation on 25th June 2024, a day after the election. In the statement, NEW noted that despite the tense political environment that preceded voting day and the logistical challenges associated with deployment and voting, with few critical exceptions, the elections were generally peaceful across the country. NEW commends the resilience of the Sierra Leoneans in their determination to participate in electoral processes and exercise their right to vote. Among its key findings on the opening process, NEW noted the following:

- Polling stations were set up to allow both observers and party agents to observe the process.
- In 88% of polling stations, NEW observers reported queues outside their polling stations at 6:30 am. In 75% of polling stations, observers reported that there were no campaign materials present within 400 yards of the 56% of polling stations had at least 7 polling officials present. 96% had at least one woman polling official. Additionally, in 23% of polling stations the presiding officers were women.

During the voting process, NEW observed the following:

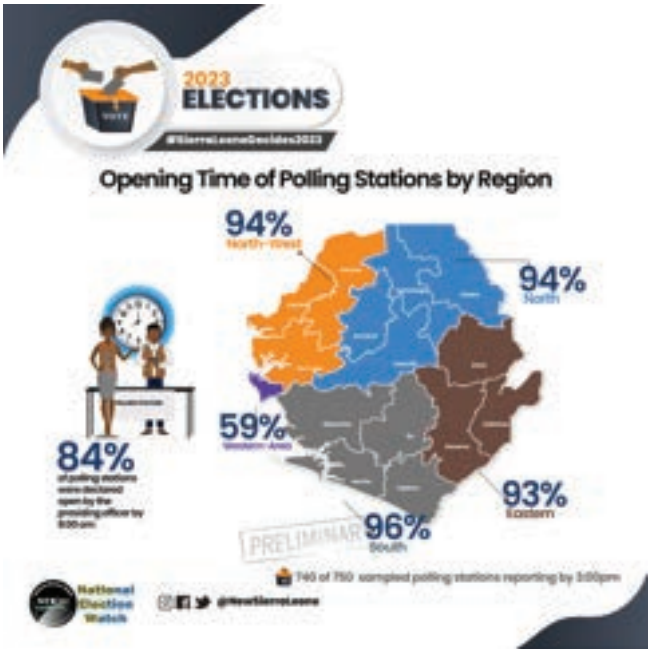
- NEW observers report that at 81% of polling stations, polling officials consistently checked voters' fingers for indelible ink. In 95% of polling stations, voters were consistently marked with indelible ink after voting.
- In 97% of polling stations, voters on the voter register but without voter ID cards were allowed to vote. Where these voters were allowed to vote:
- In 73% of polling stations, voters were permitted to cast ballots after comparing their photo and details from the voter register;

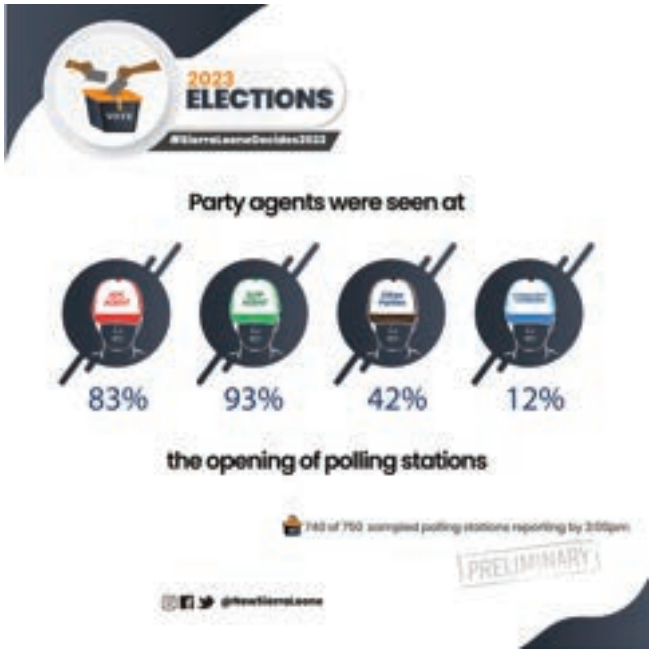
On counting votes, NEW noted that despite the late opening of polling stations in some areas, closing and counting procedures were largely followed across the country. The closing and counting processes were observed by party agents and observers, noting these significant findings:

- In nearly all polling stations, voters in the queue at 5:00 PM were allowed to vote.
- NEW observers reported that nationally, 90% of polling stations closed by 6:00 pm and 10% after 6:00 pm, and the counting process commenced. Of those polling stations that closed after 6:00 PM, 16% were in the Eastern Region, 10% in the Northern Region, 8% in the North West Region, 8% in the Southern Region, and 58 % were in the Western Area.

NEW concluded that the logistical challenges affected voting and disenfranchised some citizens, especially in the Western Area and some parts of the northern region where the logistical challenges were more profound. NEW recommended that the ECSL release election data promptly, including polling station-level results, in an analyzable format to build citizens' confidence in the results tabulation process under Open Election Data principles. To the security

forces, the statement calls on the Office of National Security (ONS) and the SLP to continue to exercise professionalism and restraint in securing the results tabulation process and asks Sierra Leoneans to be calm and patient while awaiting the official announcement of results by ECSL, as mandated by the law.





7. Tabulation of Results

For the 2023 elections, NEW deployed observers in all the regional tally centres. A total of 10 Tally Centre Observers, two for each centre, were recruited, trained and deployed across the six regional tally centres. The deployment of Tally Centre Observers in the 2023 elections allowed observers and party agents to access the centres to observe the tally process. However, unlike other previous elections, NEW observers were not allowed to observe the inputting of the figures in the database fully. The Tallying procedures were not explained to observers and party agents to allow for a proper understanding of how the process was to be conducted. In the South region, for instance, NEW observed that printouts were given to observers and party agents of what ECSL tally staff claimed to be the data inputted into the database. This was not the case in other regions, as no printouts were given to observers and party agents. In the North, party agents of both the APC and SLPP objected to the non-transparency of the tallying process and requested that the results be projected. The ECSL tallying team insisted that projection will not be done and the observers and party agents will not be allowed in the tallying room as this is not the standard procedure for the tallying of results.

NEW observers reported that the setup of all five regional tallying centres lacked transparency; as they could not see the data inputted in the computer. The collation process was grossly undermined, making it impossible for observers and as party agents to verify the results received and inputted. In all tally centres, NEW observed that the tallying staff did not respond to questions raised by observers and party agents; they stated they were waiting for instructions from the data operations manager at the ECSL headquarters. NEW noted that the previous best practice by ECSL of projecting tallying in all bye-elections was abandoned during the 2023 elections

NEW observers reported incidents of violence in Lunsar township, in which a Ward Coordinator was beaten and his car destroyed, such that the ballot boxes were not at that time transported to the tallying centre for timely voting. Other Observers and party agents present were: EU-EOM, British High Commission, ECOWAS, US Embassy, The Carter Center, AU, ONS, West Africa Youth Network for Peace Education and Economic Development – Sierra Leone (WAYNPEED-SL), EON, CCSL, PPRC, the Media, APC, NDA, NGC, SLPP and APPWA.

Overall, NEW observed that the tallying process in all regions failed to meet international benchmarks of openness and clarity. Observers at tallying centres did not know the status of results inputted and tallied when 60% of presidential results were announced by the National Returning Officer. NEW tally centre observers reported that they only knew about the 60% presidential results announced when they heard citizens jubilating outside the centres.

7.1. Partial Election Results Released by ECSL: 27th June 2023

On 27 June 2023, the ECSL announced partial results based on 60% of polling stations in each district but not 60% of the total votes cast because polling stations vary in size. For example:

- In Kailahun, the valid votes cast in the 60% of polling stations announced represented 80% of the registered voters in the district;
- In Bombali, the valid votes cast in the 60% of polling stations announced represented 71% of registered voters in the district;
- In Port Loko, the valid votes cast in the 60% of polling stations announced represented 66% of registered voters in the district;
- In Bonthe, the valid votes cast in the 60% of polling stations announced represented 71% of registered voters in the district, and
- In Western Area Urban, the valid votes cast in the 60% of polling stations announced represented 44% of registered voters in the district.

Based on our PRVT findings and the ECSL data announced then, NEW was of the conviction that the counting was done some amount of with integrity and that the final results were going to reflect the votes cast by Sierra Leoneans.

7.2. Analysis of Official Results Released by the ECSL

As a component of our comprehensive observation strategy for the 2023 elections, NEW undertook an analysis of official results released by the ECSL to complement direct observation of pre-election and election-day processes and the PRVT. In comparing the parliamentary election results announced by ECSL to district-level presidential election results circulated immediately after the final presidential election results announcement on Tuesday, 27th June 2023, NEW noted significant inconsistencies in turnout and vote shares between the presidential and parliamentary election in multiple districts, which required further clarity from the ECSL.

The analysis further strengthens our PRVT findings, which indicate that the official results announced for the presidential election do not align with the true ballots cast at polling stations. NEW reiterated its call for ECSL to release all polling station-level results to increase transparency and allow for further independent analysis.

The following findings were derived from an analysis of official election results for the parliamentary and presidential elections as published by the ECSL:

Turnout: There are a total of 3,374,258 registered voters across 16 districts in Sierra Leone. Official results show roughly 83% turnout rates for the presidential and parliamentary elections (2,800,691 ballots cast for the presidential and 2,789,939 for the parliamentary). While overall turnout was relatively stable between the 2018 and 2023 elections within districts, the turnout rates varied between the two elections. For example:

- In four districts, one district in the northern region (Falaba) and three districts in the southern region, (Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba), turnout was significantly lower in the parliamentary election as compared to the presidential: Falaba (23.8% lower for

- parliamentary), Bo (13.7% lower), Bonthe (15.4% lower), Moyamba (17.1% lower).
- In the Western Area, 47,200 voters in Western Area Rural and 78,805 voters in Western Area Urban cast ballots in the parliamentary election but not vote in the presidential elections (representing 13.8% and 13.2% of registered voters respectively, in the two districts).

Region	Districts	RV	Parliamentary Turnout (Ballots cast)	Parliamentary Turnout (% of RV)	Presidential Turnout (Ballots cast)	Presidential Turnout (% of RV)	Difference in Ballots Cast between Parliamentary and Presidential Elections	Difference in turnout rates between Parliamentary and Presidential Elections
East	Bo	192,333	179,095	93.1%	185,168	96.3%	-6,073	-3.2%
East	Bombali	318,306	286,754	90.1%	303,551	95.4%	-16,797	-5.3%
East	Bonthe	174,036	124,129	71.3%	125,719	72.2%	-1,590	-0.9%
North	Falaba	206,380	154,111	74.7%	158,928	77.0%	-4,817	-2.3%
North	Kailahun	69,170	39,018	56.4%	55,483	80.2%	-16,465	-23.8%
North	Kambia	85,209	53,273	62.5%	55,010	64.6%	-1,737	-2.0%
North	Karene	207,525	156,214	75.3%	156,700	75.5%	-486	-0.2%
Northwest	Kenema	152,642	103,393	67.7%	111,030	72.7%	-7,637	-5.0%
Northwest	Koinadugu	100,296	75,490	75.3%	73,553	73.3%	1,937	1.9%
Northwest	Kono	237,021	170,035	71.7%	173,582	73.2%	-3,547	-1.5%
South	Moyamba	317,216	247,368	78.0%	290,713	91.6%	-43,345	-13.7%
South	Port Loko	107,645	86,411	80.3%	102,936	95.6%	-16,525	-15.4%
South	Pujehun	150,402	108,392	72.1%	134,102	89.2%	-25,710	-17.1%
South	Tonkolili	115,925	113,156	97.6%	107,121	92.4%	6,035	5.2%
West	WA – Rural	341,870	336,664	98.5%	289,464	84.7%	47,200	13.8%
West	WA – Urban	598,282	556,436	93.0%	477,631	79.8%	78,805	13.2%

Vote Shares: The results in some districts are characterized by large differences in voting patterns between the presidential and parliamentary elections.

- In Falaba, APC received a significantly higher percentage of the vote share in the parliamentary election (43%) as compared to the presidential (27%). Conversely, SLPP received a lower vote share in parliamentary election (51%) as compared to the presidential election (67%).

In Karene and Port Loko, APC received a significantly lower percentage of the vote in the parliamentary election (72% and 60%, respectively) as compared to the presidential election (84 % and 80%, respectively). Conversely, SLPP received a higher percentage of the vote in the parliamentary election (26% and 36%, respectively), as compared to the presidential election. This is uncharacteristic of the voting patter in Sierra Leone in which most voters tend to vote for the same party for President and Parliament.

Region	Districts	APC votes in Parl. Election	APC Vote Share in Parl. Election	Parliamentary Turnout (% of RV)	Presidential Turnout (Ballots cast)	Presidential Turnout (% of RV)	Difference in Ballots Cast between Parliamentary and Presidential Elections	Difference in turnout rates between Parliamentary and Presidential Elections
East	Bo	6,813	3.8%	93.1%	185,168	96.3%	-6,073	-3.2%
East	Bombali	11,541	4.0%	90.1%	303,551	95.4%	-16,797	-5.3%
East	Bonthe	32,067	25.9%	71.3%	125,719	72.2%	-1,590	-0.9%
North	Falaba	140,566	91.6%	74.7%	158,928	77.0%	-4,817	-2.3%
North	Kailahun	16,666	43.0%	56.4%	55,483	80.2%	-16,465	-23.8%
North	Kambia	33,127	62.5%	62.5%	55,010	64.6%	-1,737	-2.0%
North	Karene	125,015	80.4%	75.3%	156,700	75.5%	-486	-0.2%
Northwest	Kenema	57,970	56.4%	67.7%	111,030	72.7%	-7,637	-5.0%
Northwest	Koinadugu	54,058	72.0%	75.3%	73,553	73.3%	1,937	1.9%
Northwest	Kono	101,142	59.8%	71.7%	173,582	73.2%	-3,547	-1.5%
South	Moyamba	24,148	9.8%	78.0%	290,713	91.6%	-43,345	-13.7%
South	Port Loko	4,154	4.8%	80.3%	102,936	95.6%	-16,525	-15.4%
South	Pujehun	18,825	17.5%	72.1%	134,102	89.2%	-25,710	-17.1%
South	Tonkolili	4,961	4.4%	97.6%	107,121	92.4%	6,035	5.2%
West	WA – Rural	175,410	52.3%	98.5%	289,464	84.7%	47,200	13.8%
West	WA – Urban	307,479	55.4%	93.0%	477,631	79.8%	78,805	13.2%

Invalid ballots were fairly consistent across districts in both elections, with rates of invalid ballots that are inconsistent with historical trends. Rates of invalid ballots in official results released by the ECSL were approximately 0.4% for both the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Rates of invalid ballots have historically been higher in parliamentary elections, with 7.4% in 2018 and 7.3% in 2007. As noted previously, the official results for the presidential election also indicated a rate of 0.4% invalid ballots. This is more than 10 times lower than the PRVT projection and the rate of invalid ballots for previous presidential elections. The PRVT demonstrated that the rate of invalid ballots for this election was 4.8% with a margin of error of +/- 0.4%, in line with previous first round presidential elections (5.2% in 2018, 4.7% in 2012, and 7.3% in 2007).

8. Cardinal Issues in the 2023 Elections

This section of the report presents critical issues that are related to the 2023 elections including the approach to electoral and political parties' administration, the experiences of women, youth and PwDs.

8.1. Electoral and Political Parties' Administration

Principally, two institutions are responsible for electoral and political parties' administration, both of which account for the effective and efficient management and oversight of electoral processes in Sierra Leone. They include the ECSL and the PPRC. For the purposes of this report, we have separated electoral administration, led by ECSL, from political parties' administration and oversight, led by the PPRC.

8.1.1. Electoral Administration

The ECSL, previously the National Electoral Commission (NEC), is a creation of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No 6 of 1991). It was established as a permanent and independent electoral administration institution with powers to create regulatory and administrative policies for the conduct of elections and referenda, registration of eligible voter and candidates for elections and demarcation of constituency boundaries for the purpose of elections. The Commission is composed of a chairman, who doubles as the Chief Electoral Commissioner and National Returning Officer, and five commissioners appointed for a five-year term, each responsible for a different region, namely the East, North, South, West, and for the first time, Northwest. The constitution provides that all commissioners are appointed by the President in consultation with leaders of all political parties, and approved by parliament. NEW observed that the 'consultation' provision of the law has either been misinterpreted and/or not fully adhered to, by successive governments without meaningful consultation with members of the opposition to agree on a candidate before appointment. Regrettably, NEW observed the appointment process of Commissioners was largely one of 'informing', rather than 'consulting', as provided by law. Subsequently, the appointment of Commissioners has been contentious, disputed and sometimes, it has

led to acrimony and division across parties and state institutions, such as the APC's rejection of the appointment and approval of Mr. Mohamed Konneh as Chairman and Chief Electoral Commissioner in July 2020. This perennial problem is, in part, due to the lack of independent institutions for the appointment of critical public sector and democratic governance institutions, such as the ECSL, the Sierra Leone Police, the Judiciary, and PPRC, with reduced executive control and discretion over the appointment process.

While being 'credible' and 'proven integrity' are criteria for the appointment of ECSL Commissioners, there is yet to be an established system for measuring credibility and integrity, or even a merit-based process that ensures minimum qualification and experience. In effect, the Presidency can appoint anyone as commissioner of ECSL, whether or not the appointee has the requisite qualifications and experience to deliver on the role. In addition, the 2023 PEA makes provision for the removal of ECSL commissioners, which is inconsistent with the provisions of the 1991 constitution on the removal of Commissioners. Knowing that the constitution takes precedence over an act of parliament, there is a need to bring coherence in the legal provisions between the PEA and the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone.

Ahead of the 2023 elections, the existing board of commissioners was not only increased from five to six, but all existing commissioners of the ECSL were appointed between April 2019 and March 2023, giving the commission a completely different set of Commissioners from those who conducted the 2018 elections. This was a process that critics believed gave the ruling party the opportunity to determine the composition and leadership of the Commission. NEW observed the controversies associated with the appointment of all current six commissioners, and the expansion of the administrative and professional directorates of ECSL from 10 in 2018 to 15 directorates at the time of the elections. NEW noted that in addition to the board of commissioners, the work of ECSL was led by a Secretariat headed by an Executive Secretary, and 17 District Election Managers (DEMs). Following the development of the Commission's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, NEW observed the appointment of two assistants to the Executive Secretary and the redeployment of the DEMs and directors of the 15 directorates. Opposition parties condemned the staff deployment, noting that nearly all of the 15 Directors and 17 DEMs were from the south-east, a perceived traditional stronghold of the ruling SLPP. Subsequently, while the ruling SLPP expressed trust and confidence in the ECSL, the main opposition party, APC considered the ECSL to be biased and instrumentalized by the SLPP. In spite of the changes and accompanying criticisms by political parties, NEW observed, following several years of interaction, that the ECSL has the appropriate technical and administrative structures and personnel to deliver on its mandate, and at the time of the elections, all 15 directors, 17 DEMs and 6 commissioners were in post. In addition, NEW observed that unlike previous elections that either had funding challenges or were largely dependent on donor funding, in the 2023 elections, ECSL received adequate and timely funding from the consolidated fund for the roll-out of its activities. However, the availability of funds did not prevent the printing of sub-standard Voter Identification cards, delays in their procurement and arrival, and omissions in the delivery of sensitive materials needed on voting day, leading to extremely late commencement of voting in some polling stations. Despite these challenges and criticisms, NEW observed that the ECSL recruited and trained about 91,300 temporary election staff to support election day activities. NEW observed that ECSL, (though at a limited scaled), took deliberate action to recruit women and persons with disability PWDs to work as ad-hoc staff for the commission on election day. NEW observers noted that while in some polling stations the staff were professional and followed established opening, voting, counting and closing procedures, in several other polling stations this was not the case. Among the major challenges observed by NEW on election day, were the late delivery of voting materials, omissions and misplacement of voters from the voter register, inconsistencies in the application of the set-out procedures, late opening of polling stations, and inconsistencies in the application of the opening, polling, counting and closing procedures.

8.1.2. Political Parties' Administration and Oversight

Established in December 2005, by the Political Parties Act of 2002, (as amended in 2022), and in accordance with Sections 34 and 35 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone; the PPRC is charged with the responsibility of registering and regulating political parties and monitoring their accountability to their

members and to the electorate of Sierra Leone. It also has the responsibility, among other things, to receive the financial statement reports on the sources of income, the audited accounts, assets, and liabilities of each registered political party and could take appropriate disciplinary action to ensure compliance. As per the provisions of Section 34(1) of the Constitution, the Commission consists of four members appointed by the President. It includes a Chairman of the Commission, who shall be a person who has held Judicial office or is qualified to be appointed a Judge of the Superior Court of Judicature nominated by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission (JLSC); the Chief Electoral Commissioner of the ECSL, a legal practitioner nominated by the Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA); and a member nominated by the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC).

The work of the Commission is supported by an Executive Secretary, the administrative head of the Commission, and seven directorates ranging from Mediation and Programmes, to Finance, Human Resources and Audit. Relative to its counterpart, the ECSL, the PPRC is smaller and, until late 2021, had a staff of less than 30 with three regional offices plus its headquarters in Freetown. However, following a capacity and systems review done by the Public Sector Reform Unit in 2021, recommendations were made for the creation of seven directors from the heads of departments who used to be officers, the recruitment of 30 new staff, the creation of one additional regional office in the northwestern regional city of Port Loko, and the transformation of the Office of the Registrar to that of an Executive Secretary putting the office at par with its ECSL counterpart. At the time of the elections, PPRC had just over 50 staff, with seven directorates supervised by an Executive Secretary.

At the time of the 2023 elections, all four Commissioners of the PPRC were in place, including the chair of the Commission appointed by President Bio in April 2019 following the death of the substantive Chairman in 2016. Before his appointment to PPRC, Lawyer Abdulai Bangura was appointed Deputy Attorney General and Minister of Justice under the 2018 first cabinet of President Bio. The opposition criticized his appointment, who described him as a 'Card Carrying Member' of the SLPP and, therefore, not neutral and independent. During his confirmation hearing in Parliament, MPs from the opposition APC party staged a walkout to protest his appointment and confirmation. Following his appointment, one of the first challenges Chairman Bangura faced was settling the longstanding division within the All-Political Parties Association (APPA) and other affiliate bodies, including the youth and women factions. NEW observed that despite the valid questions around the neutrality and independence of its chair, the PPRC has a more favourable public perception than its counterpart, the ECSL, and political parties (despite their ongoing criticisms) consider the PPRC to be much more institutionally firm and fairer than the ECSL.

NEW observed that in several occasions during the electoral cycle, the PPRC has been firm in the implementation of its policies and decision-making process across the board, regardless of the offender. In February 2023, for instance, following a clash of supporters of the APC and SLPP in Calaba Town, in the east of the capital city, Freetown, the PPRC concluded after its investigation that it was supporters of the SLPP that provoked the incident when they made inciting remarks against the APC supporters who were waiting to welcome the motorcade of their newly elected presidential candidate who was travelling from Makeni to Freetown. In a press statement, the PPRC sternly warned the ruling party to desist from such provocative acts or face the total penalty of the law. In a similar vein, the PPRC, pursuant to Section 39(2)(b) of the Political Parties Act 2022, fined the main opposition APC the sum of NLE120,000/00 (One Hundred and Twenty Thousand new Leones) payable into the Consolidated Fund, within two weeks from date herein and furnish the Commission with evidence of such payment, for contravening of Section 39(1)(c&d) of the Political Parties Act 2022, adding that persistent infringement of that provision of the Act by his Party is not only a breach of the law, but also borders on the peace and social cohesion of the state.

In addition to the stern position of the PPRC on issues of campaign violations, some of the significant successes of the PPRC include the mediation of the impasse within the main opposition, including dealing with petitions from its members on its lower level elections, observation of the lower level and national delegate conferences for all political parties and the enactment of the 2022 PPA which provided additional powers to the PPRC for broader political party regulation, including political parties and candidate camping financing. Regardless of this progress, NEW observes the criticisms on PPRC by mostly opposition parties in its fairness in adjudicating inter and intra-party disputes and the decision to certify 14 out of the 17 registered

political parties to contest the June 2023 elections.

8.2. Participation and Representation of Women

The GEWE Act (2022) and the Public Elections Act 2022 provided a favourable environment for women's representation in the 2023 elections. The GEWE Act is unprecedented in terms of a candidate's nomination and provided that for every three nominations, one must be a woman. A total of 52% of women registered to vote; however, only one female presidential candidate contested the elections, with five women in the presidential race as running mates. Women constitute 32% of all candidates nominated for parliament, and 29 female candidates contested as independent candidates. Among the elected candidates in parliament, 30.37% are women, of which one is a Paramount Chief member of parliament. For Local Councils, two women (Freetown and Bonthe) were elected as Mayors, and out of the 493 councillors, 195 women won council seats.

NEW observed during the elections that most of the polling station stations preferred older women, lactating and pregnant women. The ECSL also made sure women were recruited and deployed at the Polling Officer level both during voter registration and on polling day. To enhance its approach to gender mainstreaming, NEW made intentional efforts to ensure the representation of women among observers and at the data centre.

Some of the challenges identified by NEW's observers include the fact that high candidature fees are a barrier to women's participation. Most of the women who wanted to participate in the lower-level elections were poor and could not afford to pay the fees. This caused them not to present themselves as candidates. Furthermore, there was rampant violence against women, including cyber-attacks, online bullying, intimidation and harassment. Such experiences have been causing women to stay off politics over the years, and it was very persistent during the 2023 elections. Finally, while the existing laws guarantee the nomination of women, it does not guarantee them the positions, so given the patriarchal nature of the Sierra Leonean society, women most women were disadvantaged because of their gender.

8.3 Participation of Youth

It was observed that many young people registered to vote, which was positive because they make up most of the population of Sierra Leone. During the campaigns and engagements with First-Time Voters (FTV), they also had huge expectations from the electioneering process and turned in their numbers to vote. Some CSOs were active in engaging youth in non-violent elections. For instance, the Centre for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) and other youth-focused organizations identified and trained peace ambassadors nationwide, preaching peace and cohesion. Such engagements were critical to the process, as there was tension in every district of the country among the main political parties.

Several challenges were observed in youth participation and in putting youth issues on the parties' agenda. These challenges included the following:

- There was limited voter education that targeted young people; this left them with more questions than answers on the process and even undermined the willingness on the part of some to participate.
- FTVs had challenges during registration because most computers could not capture their data. However, this was later addressed.
- There were limited funds to engage political parties in their manifestos and demand the inclusion of youth-related issues.
- Youth debates were conducted, but there were financial challenges in 2023 for the National Presidential Debate.

- Some positions meant for young people in political parties were held by older people, thereby disenfranchising the youth.

Despite the listed challenges, young people were very active during the process, and their turnout helped to maintain the momentum of the elections. They were also seen trying to protect their votes in several country districts, which occasionally led to skirmishes with security forces.

8.4. Persons with Disabilities

NEW concluded from its observations that investment in the meaningful participation of people with disability was limited. This was the case both at the national level and the party levels. Political parties did not take any reasonable steps in prioritizing or mainstreaming PwDs in their planning and preparations for the elections and supporting their elections in party positions or in the respective positions contested in the elections. It became apparent that while the Act supports the protection and protection of the rights and welfare of PwDs and an existing commission for PwDs, there is still a limited shift from theory to practice. Thus, they are not included in governance as they should be, and their voices and aspirations were not fully integrated into the parties' manifesto. There was also no effective monitoring system by the PPRC before the elections to ensure that parties mainstreamed PwDs into the electoral process as they should.

8.5. The Role and Conduct of the Media

The media was very divided and conflicted during the 2023 electoral cycle. However, that has mostly been the case in the country's history. The traditional media houses provided more airtime to the candidates they were most comfortable with, which was also observed with community radio stations. Additionally, male candidates had more time on air than female candidates due to their ability to fund media activities or access such houses.

NEW observed that the intimidation by security actors of institutions and individuals critical of the government undermined the ability of some journalists to be objective. Thus, the media was largely uncertain of what may happen if a report was made unfavourable to the government. NEW also observed that very few journalists had the skills and knowledge to undertake real-time election reporting and how to conduct themselves as journalists ethically. The lack of professionalism and integrity on the part of some journalists and media houses also contributed to the tension experienced in the country.

Social media became an outlet for information and a space for expression of view regardless of the nature of the news. Thus, it became a toxic space with attacks and counter-attacks by bloggers of the main political parties. Hate speeches and false news were traded from various quarters, which heightened the country's tension. It also affected the potential for meaningful dialogue and constructive engagements among the political actors. Thus, by the time the country went to the polls, there were heightened levels of mis/disinformation, hate-speech and verbal abuse both online and offline.

8.6 The Role and Conduct of the Security Sector

Elections Security is coordinated by the Office of National Security (ONS), with the SLP taking primacy in the operations. The ONS launched two dedicated elections secretariat on the 11th of May, 2023: the National Situation Room (NSR) and the Integrated Elections Security Planning Committee (IESPC). These platforms consulted with relevant stakeholders, including NEW, with the aim of providing credible information on the elections and addressing issues of violence. The security architecture and planning for the elections through these committees were technically robust for handling the traditional spaces around the elections. However, the circumstances with threats emanating from

social media, including verbal attacks, cyberbullying, and inflammatory language, rendered the elections very tense and intimidating. The security sector's strategy, therefore, had limited scope to address these emerging forms of violence online and on social media, exposing frontline stakeholders to extreme aggression.

NEW observed heinous crimes perpetrated throughout the electoral cycle for which the security sector had done very little to address those challenges. For example, during the bye-elections in Sambaia Bendugu, houses were vandalized, and properties were destroyed, including the burning of motorcycles. Both the violence during the movement of the opposition flag bearer into Sambaia Bendugu happened right in the presence of the SLP. After the 8th of May 2023, in Pujehun, where Massa emerged as the APC party candidate who was awarded the symbol to contest the parliamentary elections, staged a celebration of her victory at her residence. During the celebration, the Town Chief questioned where she got permission to celebrate. There was a confrontation between her supporters and some young men in the community where acid was sprayed on her person, and the perpetrator was never identified. NEW observed that the perpetrators were never prosecuted.

On 25th June 2023, the headquarters of the main opposition, the APC, was attacked by security actors, with live ammunition used, resulting in the death of Hawa Dumbuya, 64, a nurse and party volunteer, who was shot in the head. This incident, among others, further undermined the public's confidence in the security sector, with opposition members convinced that the government instrumentalized the force.

The ONS equally became a threat to freedom of expression and association. Before the June 24th general elections, ONS had made a public statement prohibiting any person or institution from announcing election results, stating that it was the sole responsibility of the ECSL. This statement, though correct, was perceived as an intimidation to discourage organizations, especially election observers, from making public their findings. The statement furthered that a breach of that decision would result in the prosecution of the person or institution.

In addition, a press statement from ONS of 29th June 2023, quoting Section 93 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act no.6 of 1991, denounced a publication of presidential election data captured by the PRVT methodology used by NEW. It accused NEW of committing an election offence. In the same press statement, the joint press statement signed by (6) development partners stating the lack of transparency in the election's tabulation process was equally condemned and considered erroneous and misleading. These became an attempt to shrink the already contracted civic space and rid the elections of independent analyses and accountability.

8.7. Role and Conduct of Political Parties and the Impact on the Elections Environment

There were 17 registered Political Parties for the 2023 elections. Part of Sierra Leone's democratic success was the formation of the APPA, to which all registered political parties belong. APPA was a multi-party-political space created to restore and sustain multi-party democracy in Sierra Leone; however, in 2023, this political party assemblage disintegrated into three factions. The APPA, Political Parties outside Parliament and the Consortium of Progressive Political Parties. As mentioned, APPA was formed for collective action and engagement of all political parties to influence policies and to promote national cohesion and peace consolidation in the general governance of the country. Some of the political parties, however, claimed that the leadership of APPA was more pro-government and other than pursuing the objectives for which the association was formed. These political parties dissociated themselves from the association and formed the Consortium of Progressive Political Parties (CoPPP). Like with the APPA, the

CoPPP, too, could not survive the test of time. Individual interests became paramount to the consortium's interests, and some members opted out of CoPPP. This resulted in counter and confusing statements, making political parties' contributions to democratic progress chaotic.

The All-Political Party Women's Association (APPWA) organized itself and launched its strategic plan, but its influence in mobilizing, organizing and supporting women's political aspirations was minimal. APPYA were not so visible in the 2023 elections. Access to resources or subsidies from the state to run political party affairs was lacking. This limited the capacity of many political parties to engage meaningfully and constructively. Survival, for the most part, became the driver of their actions. Adherence to policies and guidelines instituted by the PPRC or compliance with their party constitution became challenging. Delegate conferences were either delayed, denied or manipulated. Inter and intra-party tensions led to violence in some instances. Most of the 17 political parties lacked internal democratic systems. Despite these lapses, it is worthy of note that there were confident political party leaders who raised national political and economic concerns: NURP, the NGC and the UP, for example, were among those who raised such concerns.

It is essential to state that political party capacity building avenues were lacking. Most political party leaders had limited or no knowledge of how the PR system works and its implications for the survival of the growing political parties. They were made to believe that introducing the PR system would allow smaller political parties to secure seats in parliament. Whilst NEW was trying to enlighten political parties and engage with the ECSL during PPLC meetings and other forums, representatives of these smaller political parties verbally attacked NEW members that they were trying to undermine their chances to go to parliament. For the 2023 elections, 3 political parties were disqualified from contesting. The PPRC claimed that these political parties did not meet the criteria set for political parties to participate in the elections, including having an office space in every region and complying with the provisions of their party constitutions to conduct lower-level elections to culminate into their national delegate conference. However, This position was challenged vehemently by some of the disqualified political parties to get them out of the race.

Finally, the main opposition was also fraught with internal challenges that left it less prepared for national elections. These challenges stemmed from factors such as how its presidential candidate was hand-picked in 2017 and contestations as to who is qualified to be a leader of the party. Since the party adopted a new constitution in February 2023, with the candidate elected in the same convention, the party had only four months to prepare and campaign for the elections. Additionally, threats by the party to boycott the elections left their supporters confused, which led to some not eventually voting. These challenges point to the gaps in parties and how they affect their performance in general and presidential elections.

8.8. The Judiciary and 2023 Elections

The judiciary has always been a controversial institution in Sierra Leone. Over the years, it has been criticized as being instrumentalized by successive governments. The confidence of the main opposition in the judiciary was eroded when they passed a judgment that removed ten of their MPs from parliament, with the government replacing nine of them with their members, with one having to run again in a bye-election. As an international media house reported,

> **"The Sierra Leone high court on Friday revoked the parliamentary seats of ten leading opposition party legislators, wiping out their majority in the chamber and prompting clashes with police on the streets of Freetown. The court took action against 10 of the 16 deputies of the opposition APC who were being prosecuted**

for alleged breaches of electoral law linked to the legislative elections in March 2018." [22]

Coupled with the above, the ruling on the PR system on 27 January 2023 left the opposition dissatisfied, perceiving that any matter related to the opposition would get an unfavourable outcome. The APC indicated this, which informed them of their decision not to contest the 2023 election results in court. They preferred to use a political rather than a legal route to address their grievances. In a press release by the APC dated 3 July 2023, they stated some of their reasons for not going to court, and they include:

> **"... In April 2018, the APC sought redress against malpractices in that year's presidential elections. The chief Justice delayed assigning the case until three years later. Even with this administrative abuse of powers to assign, the Chief Justice assigned the case to himself, presided over same, wrote the judgement himself and disposed of the matter by throwing it out of court'."[23]**

On 7 June 2023, APC and Lansana Dumbuya filed a case against the ECSL and The Chief Electoral Commissioner, seeking the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone to produce the disaggregated voter register and to comply with provisions of the PEA 2022. This matter has not yet been assigned up to the point of drafting this report.

The judiciary was also accused of witch-hunt in relation to the cases against the APC and its presidential candidate and the actions taken by the court to determine an interim executive of the party. These actions stifled the party's ability to prepare for the elections at an early stage. Thus, by the time of the elections, there was limited confidence on the part of the members and supporters of the APC in the judiciary and its independence.

The failure of the APC to go to court also left minimal room for the party to have its claims heard legitimately. Thus, it became very precarious, with the party refusing to participate in governance. This led to a political and governance stalemate until a negotiated political settlement was reached on 18 October 2023.[24]

8.9. Civil Society and the 2023 Elections

For the 2023 elections, civil society played a significant role in observing, monitoring and educating the citizens on elections and electoral processes. NEW was the principal non-partisan domestic elections observation coalition. Other groups who observed the elections included the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) and the Elections Observer Network (EON). Several women, youth and disability groups were engaged in civic education and non-violence campaigns across the country. International partners and government agencies funded these efforts for the promotion of free, fair, participatory, peaceful and credible elections. This is the tradition of civil society since democratic renewals after the civil conflict. In the 2023 elections, some sections of civil society became front runners pushing for partisan interests. Although this stance was seen in 2018, the 2023 posture was well-organized and destabilizing. Lead civil society actors who knew and understood how the PRVT/PVT worked were discrediting the methodology in public. It became apparent that independent and non-partisan actions were only meaningful for such civil society actors when their interests were not at stake.

After NEW released its PRVT findings, as was done in 2018, this category of civil society actors became the pioneers in mobilizing hate for NEW, exposing the leadership of NEW to intimidation, harassment, and death threats and calling for attacks and arrest of

[22] See: https://www.trtworld.com/africa/clashes-arrests-after-sierra-leone-court-unseats-10-opposition-mps-27172 (Accessed on 14 March, 2024).

[23] See: https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/apc-will-not-go-to-court-to-seek-redress-and-calls-for-the-chief-justice-to-resign/ (Accessed on 14 March, 2024).

[24] See Section 9 below for details.

NEW members. It is essential to state that NEW has played similar roles since 2002 and has employed the PRVT in 2007, 2012 and 2018. The actions of this section of civil society undermined citizens' trust and respect for civil society, and civil society's role became a disappointment for the Sierra Leonean public, regional election observer groups who released several statements in support of the PRVT and the international community. NEW notes the worrisome nature of the shrinking civic space in the country and had previously released a statement on the deteriorating state of the civic space and how several state institutions and civil society leaders and groups had been captured.

8.10. Attacks on NEW

NEW is the country's preeminent citizen election observation group, having monitored Sierra Leone's elections since 2002 NEW's ability to state facts about election unequivocally is on record in Sierra Leone. The coalition used the PRVT methodology to provide citizens and electoral stakeholders with systematic, impartial information on voting and counting and to independently and impartially assess the accuracy of the official results as announced by the ECSL. NEW publicly released the findings from the PRVT on 27 June, which led to intense security threats for the leadership and members.

Following the release of findings from the PRVT, which was conducted in line with international standards as noted by leading PRVT experts at the NDI, NEW as an organization faced direct threats of intimidation, violence, and harassment. For instance, the ONS issued a press statement on 29 June 2023, stating our PRVT was in contravention of the law (even though it was widely accepted by stakeholders, including the current ruling party, for the 2018 elections) and specifically noted that NEW could face "unfortunate consequences."

On the 25th of June 2023, the governing SLPP stated the conduct of the Presidential Parliamentary and Local Council election in which the party dedicated half a page of a press statement to make unfounded allegations and, in the process, threatened the safety of NEW and its members. The statement noted that the SLPP believes 'that NEW's professionalism is compromised.....and the SLPP has reviewed and verified many reported instances of collusion between NEW and the APC party in many parts of the country'. It further noted that 'the SLPP has received reports from many NEW staff in the Western Area Rural, Bo, Kailahun and Port Loko Districts who were not paid approved allowances ... thus increasing the vulnerability of such staff to unscrupulous politicians'.[25]

Apart from the fact that the SLPP's allegations were unfounded, NEW considers such unfounded allegations an attempt to threaten the coalition, set discord among members, and discredit the work of NEW.
NEW members received death threats and threats of physical violence over the phone from unknown numbers starting on 28th June 2023. Additionally, the leadership of NEW were also subjects of attacks on WhatsApp and on Facebook by party operatives. On their way out of Sierra Leone on 30th June 2023, a section of the NEW leadership was temporarily prevented from leaving by immigration authorities and the Sierra Leone Police. NEW, therefore, documents the aforementioned examples as evidence of violations of our rights as human rights defenders.

NEW regretted that as Sierra Leonean citizens who organized themselves to observe the elections, we became subject to harassment and personal attacks due to our role as nonpartisan election observers and human rights defenders. The resulting threats faced by NEW members were in direct contradiction with the statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders on the situation of election

[25] See the Press Release by the SLPP on [25]th June [2023].

observers as human rights defenders, which urges member states, including Sierra Leone, “to protect [election observers] from any violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of their legitimate exercise of their rights and freedoms.”

Citizen and international election observers and members of the international community have issued statements in support of NEW's PRVT, many of which referenced the recognition of election observers as human rights defenders. These include the African Election Observers Network (AfEONet), the Carter Center, the East and Horn of Africa Election Observer Network (E-HORN), the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA), EUEOM, the Global Network of Domestic Election Observers (GNDEM), the National Democratic Institute and the United States Department of State. The support and solidarity expressed by local and international actors strengthened the confidence and resolve of NEW to stay on track and continue delivering on its mandate.

9. Post-Elections: The Agreement for National Peace and Unity

Given the stalemate experienced after the results were announced by the ECSL, the international community, alongside the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion, established by an Act of Parliament in 2021, embarked on shuttle diplomacy with the government and the APC. Eventually, both parties agreed to have a dialogue facilitated by international actors. The dialogue occurred from 16th to 18th October 2023, with the Commonwealth, the AU, and the ECOWAS overseeing as negotiators. The lead facilitator was the former Vice President of the Gambia, Madam Fatoumata Jallow.

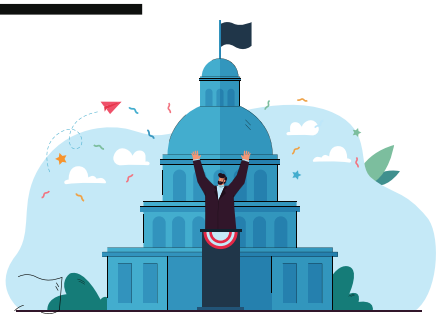
At the end of the dialogue, an agreement was reached, with the parties agreeing to the following: the President will make a national address on dialogue, unity, cohesion and peace; the APC will end its non-participation in governance; a cross-party committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review with a three-way leadership; Government to consider the release of persons arrested, detained and/or imprisoned for alleged elections and civil protest informed by a list to be submitted by the APC and other Political Parties; Government to consider the discontinuation of any politically motivated court cases against the APC, different parties and their supporters based on a list to be submitted by the APC and other parties; and upon assumption of their elective governance positions, all elected APC officials (Members of Parliament, Mayors, Chairpersons, Councillors) will have the issue regarding their entitlements addressed accordingly by the appropriate institutions.

The outcome of the dialogue was received with mixed feelings by members and supporters of both parties. However, the cross-party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review has been established with its ToR developed. It is hoped that this report, alongside those provided by other international observer missions, will contribute to the committee's work.

10. Recommendations

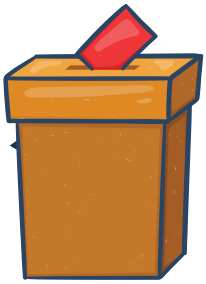
This section of the report proffers recommendations drawn from NEW observation of the 2018-2023 electoral calendar, its engagement with governance and electoral stakeholders, EMBs, national and international elections observation groups and citizens across the country. The recommendations are categorized based on the target group or lead implementing agency. NEW also identified a few recommendations as 'Priority' (P) recommendations for which the coalition will immediately engage the relevant stakeholders for implementation.

TARGET GROUP, OR LEAD IMPLEMENTING AGENCY.



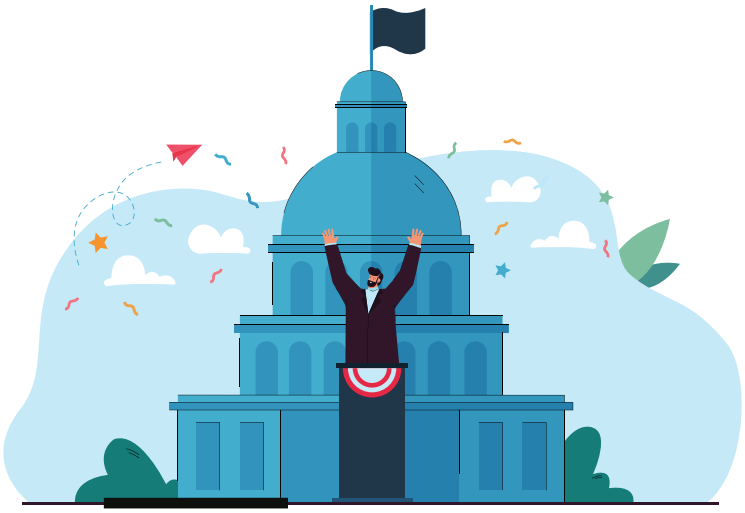
GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ELECTIONS OBSERVATION GROUPS



ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES

CITIZENS



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT

Parliament should enact a law that specifically calls for the protection of citizen observers during the entire electoral process. All national elections observation groups should be part of the national conversation for the preparation of the election observers' protection bill.

Priority Recommendations

Government in consultation with political parties, civil society and ECSL, should take a definitive position on the type of electoral system to be used for future elections. The aim is to identify an electoral system that is inclusive and considers the multiparty nature of democracy and the citizens' participation requirement in electing their representatives.

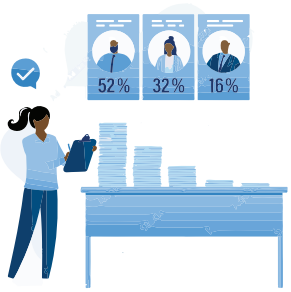
In consultation and collaboration with Political Parties, CSOs, and International Development Partners, the Government should conduct a credible Population and Housing Census in 2025, publish the benchmarks and guidelines for the census to correct the anomalies of previous censuses.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parliament to pass a law and provide for the adequacy of early voting with clarity on categories and circumstances applicable for the use early voting provision
- Government should work collaboratively with the opposition and civil society, to establish (by law) a cross party governance board to act as an inclusive platform for dialogue between the government and the opposition. The board (with a secretariat) could be co-chaired by the President and the Leader of the main opposition. This shoul d be a permanent infrastructure for dialogue on critical governance issues.
- Set up an apolitical technical committee of experts to lead the vetting and assessment of appointees as heads of key state institutions, such as the ECSL, PPRC, the Police, the Judiciary, the ACC, Statistics Sierra Leone and others, with pre-selected three names for appointment by the President. Members of the committee should be experts in public sector governance with no prior partisan associations.
- Through a broad consultation with political parties, Civil Society and International Development partners, Parliament should pass new census and statistics acts that provides the technical and broad-based requirements for inclusive and participatory censuses.
- Consistent with the TRC recommendations, Government should enact a law that provides a representative quota for young people and persons with disabilities.
- Parliament should revise its regulations to ensure provision is made for youth and PWD representation in every parliamentary committee.
- In consultation with political parties, parliament to pass act to provide for state funding of political parties.
- While we recommend a review of the Government White Paper on the Constitutional review, the process should take into account recent political and social developments in the country and legislate a clear timeline for implementation.
- Parliament to amend the 1991 constitution to provide precision on a fixed date for elections and transitional clause that will provide for a transitional legislation guide time frame from to swearing elected officials.
- The current PR system with two parties in Parliament is not the answer to the current crisis of political exclusion in Sierra Leone. Government should embark on a public dialogue, facilitated by experts with the aim of having the views of the public guide decisions on the most plausible option that the country should use in the next elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ELECTORAL COMMISION OF SIERRA LEONE

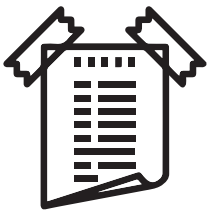
ECSL to ensure the voter registration is continuous and public to protect and promote the right to vote



The ECSL to fully display their tally processes and procedures to political parties, international and domestic observation groups in all their tally centres.

Priority Recommendations

Create a publicly available digital version of the voter register and make provisions made for citizens to request for amendment to their personal details with relevant supping documents.



Review the provision of the PEA 2022 to include clear provisions around the collation process and transmission of results, and publication of certified polling station results, to allow for the projection of collation figure inputted at the tally centre, with a corresponding accessible online version. These provisions must be brought in tandem with the provisions of the constitution

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the ECSL should efficiently and accurately disaggregate and publish voter registration and voting data for analysis across different categories of voters from women, to fist time voter, and PWDs
- ECSL should collaborate with NCRA to make possible the registration of inmate on remand – including the requirement of identification of inmates.
- ECSL and NCRA to establish clear procedures and processes to synchronise the civil register as a basis for the voter registration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES REGISTRATION COMMISSION

RECOMMENDATIONS

- PPRC should ensure that political parties have guidelines in their constitutions that ensure the election of 30% of women.
- PPRC should work with political parties to ensure women's safe participation in the political mainstream, such as effective complaint mechanisms for sexual violence/ harassment etc.
- PPRC to work with the law officers' department to review the PEA to ensure the implementation of recommendation four under the government category of recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SECURITY SECTOR

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The security sector should ensure the safety of all electoral staff, observers and journalists during the voting and tallying processes.
- The Sierra Leone Police to investigate, document and publish elections related violence for public consumption.
- The Office of National Security should come up with guidelines on electoral policing to avoid the repetition of police violence against opposition parties. NEW has recorded such incidences in 2018 at the residence of the Flag Bearer of the SLPP, and the Offices of the APC in 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Priority Recommendations

Political parties should review their constitutions and policies to allow for the meaningful implementation of the provisions of GEWE and PPA on the nomination of women in parliament. The aim is for political parties to prioritise the nomination of women at the top of the list

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Political parties should actively engage in the election process by deploying party agents across polling centres and should ensure that they keep within the election code of conduct while campaigning. If there are any grievances, they should utilise the legal system instead of taking matters into their own hands.**
- **That all political parties should have members that represent the youth bracket (18-35 years) and the PPRC should enforce youth enrolment and representation in the leadership cadre of political parties.**
- **That political parties must include youth issues in their manifestos and must be held accountable for the deliverance of such youth focused policies.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA

- **IMC to develop a code on political adverting in publicly funded media house.**
- **IMC to work with SLAJ and other media house to develop a code for digital and social media to effectively regulate the digital space.**
- **IMC and the media fraternity to provide constant training for traditional media and new media to reduce the pollution of the digital space.**
- **SLAJ and IMC should provide a system of monitoring for media houses to ensure fair, equal and balancing reporting of campaign activities of political parties.**
- **The SLBC should publish its airtime allocation schedule for all political parties.**
- **That the media should ensure gender sensitive programming and awareness raising, and provide space to women who aspire to be candidates or are already elected members.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY

- Civil society leaders must take immediate action to abort the polarization of the civic space along political party lines, as this offensive trend in the post-war civic space in Sierra Leone has the potential to ignite ethnic and regional divisions.
- The NEW recommends for greater community engagement and civic advocacy from CSOs as well as institutions such as the ECSL to educate citizens on the processes for voter registration.
- Civil society should maintain peace and neutrality and not engage in violence or hate speech of any kind.
- That the active engagement and representation of youth in consultation and advocacy committees is important to address the issues that youth face in electoral processes.
- That civil society organisations should help build youth capacity in order for young people to realise and express their participation in governance and democracy – from being involved in election observation to political representation.
- To support youth to develop a shared aspiration for the upcoming elections in 2028.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- Through collaboration with civil society and the government of Sierra Leone, donor partners should support the government to establish a 'Democracy Fund' to support political parties, civil society and democracy promotion in Sierra Leone.
- International Development partners to set benchmark on democracy promotion as the basis for bilateral development.

11. Annexes

NEW Strategic Plan 2022-2026
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KuwI6QM2DUGed8tYh6i0JkJOOM6tXCCL/view?usp=sharing

Analysis Of Official Results Released by the ECSL
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/4Jul2023_NEW_Analysis_of_Official_Results-1-7.5.23.pdf

PRVT Methodology
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2-Jul-2023-NEW-PRVT-Methodology-.pdf

Independent Non-Partisan Assessment of Presidential Election Results Statement
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NEW-Statement-Independent-Nonpartisan-Assessment-of-Presidential-Election-Results-27-June-2023.pdf

Partial Election Results Released By ECSL
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/27-June-NEW-PRVT-UPDATE-Partial-election-results-released-by-the-ECSL-26-June-2023-NEW-FINAL.pdf

Preliminary Statement
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NEW-25-June-2023-Preliminary-Statement.pdf

New Mid-Day Situational Statement
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NEW-MIDDAY-STATEMENT-240623.pdf

Sierra Leone goes to the polls on Saturday 24th June 2023 to elect a President
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NEW-Pre-Election-Statement-23June2023-1.pdf

Early Voting
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NEW-Press-Release-on-EARLY-VOTING.pdf

Long-TermObserversAheadofJune24th, 2023
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/NEW-PR-LTO-DEPLOYMENT.pdf

Distribution of voter registration cards
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/NEW-PR-VOTER-CARDS-DISTRIBUTION-FINAL.pdf

Documentary Proof Left a Number of Adults Unregistered
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NEW-PR-LAST-DAY-OF-PHASE-TWO-FINAL-2.pdf

Second Phase Registration of Voters
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NEW-PR-VR-EXERCISE-SECOND-PHASE.pdf

ECSL Starts Voter Registration as Scheduled but Some Registration Centres Did not Open on the first Day
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PR-VOTER-REGISTRATION-EXERCISE-FINAL-6th-Sept.pdf

Six bye-elections in Constituency 056 Tonkolili District; Ward 031, Kenema district; Ward 138, Falaba district; Ward 252, Port Loko District; and Wards 212 and 216 in Karene District

https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NEW-PR-ON-BYE-ELECTION-IN-CONST.-056-AND-5-WARDS.pdf

Re-run of the bye election be done for Ward 091 Kono District
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NEW-Press-Release-17-11-2021-ward-091.pdf

Bye-elections in Ward 069 and Ward 091
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Press-Release-on-BYE-ELECTIONs-KENEMA-AND-KONO.pdf

Bye-elections in Koinadugu
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PR-KOINADUGU-BYE-ELECTIONS-FINAL.pdf

Bye-election in Ward 350, Pujehun District
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Pujehun-bye-election.pdf

Bye-election in Ward 405
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PR-WARD-405-APRIL-2021.pdf

Bye-election in Ward 192, Khonimaka Chiefdom in Kambia District
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FINAL-PRESS-STATEMENT-WARD-192.pdf

Bye-elections in Constituency 010 and Ward 012 in Kailahun District
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NEW-PRESS-STATEMENT-BYE-ELECTIONS-CONST-010-AND-WARD-012-2.pdf

Bye-elections in Constituency 078, Wards 287, 348 and 226 and Re-run election in Constituency 110.
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/THIRD-PRESS-STATEMENT-ON-THE-RE-RUN-AND-BYE-ELECTIONS.pdf

Re-run and Bye-elections (Constituency 110, 078, Ward 226, 287 and 348, in Western Rural, Bo, Moyamba and Karene Districts respectively)
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NEW-1pm-Statement-on-the-re-run-and-bye-elections_12122020.pdf

Voting, Closing and Counting on the Re-run and Bye-elections. (Constituency 110, 078, Ward 226, 287 and 348, in Western Rural, Bo, Moyamba and Karene Districts respectively)
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NEW-Press-Release-Voting-Closing-and-Counting_12122020.pdf

Village Head Bye-Elections in the Western Area Rural District
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Press-Release-7-12-2020-VHE.pdf

NEW's Position on the Provisional Results of the Controversial 2021 Mid-Term Population and Housing Census
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NEW-PR-ON-MID-TERM-CENSUS-PROVISIONAL-RESULT-FINAL.pdf

Postponement of the Mid-term Census
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Press-Release-26-10-2020.pdf

Proclamation of a Mid-term Census
https://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NEW-PRESS-STATEMENT-29TH-JULY-2020.pdf

National Election Watch
NEW
Sierra Leone
Strengthening Free, Fair and Credible Elections

MARCH 7, 2018

PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

March 23, 2018

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission Background: The Carter Center deployed a team of four experts in Sierra Leone in February 2018 to monitor key parts of Sierra Leone's 2018 electoral process, including the legal framework, electoral preparations, the general security environment, and the resolution of disputes in the courts. Given the limited size and scope of the mission, the Center's team did not conduct a comprehensive observation of the electoral process as whole, nor of election day voting and counting processes. Due to its limited size and focus, the Center's mission did not issue a preliminary post-election statement. This report focuses on discrete aspects of the electoral process assessed by the expert team, with additional analyses that draw on reports from other international and domestic observation missions. The Center conducts its election missions in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which was endorsed by the United Nations in 2005.

Summary

Sierra Leone's March 7, 2018, elections were conducted under a legal framework generally consistent with international standards, and were assessed by international and domestic citizen observers as professionally administered. During the two years preceding the elections, the National Electoral Commission prepared a voter registry and revised constituency boundaries in a credible fashion. The campaign period was generally calm, allowing parties to mobilize supporters and communicate with the general public, although several violent incidents during the campaign period raised concerns.

The elections were the first organized since the end of the civil war in 2002 absent the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping mission and the second under the 1991 constitution in which an incumbent was not a contestant for the presidency. Sixteen parties nominated presidential candidates, 17 nominated parliamentary candidates, and 43 independent parliamentary candidates competed, providing voters with a genuine choice. No presidential candidate received the requisite 55 percent required to avoid a second round.

A runoff has been scheduled for March 27, following a neck-and-neck finish in the first round between the candidates representing the two parties that have dominated the political landscape since independence: the All People's Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP).
The March 27 runoff presents a key test of whether the 2018 electoral process will represent an important step forward in the country's post-civil war history. This will require that a relatively peaceful environment be maintained through the voting and counting processes, and that the announcement of final results be credible, with any disputes resolved through established legal channels.

Overview of Key Findings

General Context. Since the civil war ended in 2002, Sierra Leone experienced steady economic growth. However, the economy was severely affected by the 2014-15 Ebola crisis and the 2017 mudslides in Freetown. More generally, Sierra Leone remains near the bottom of the list in most categories covered by the UNDP Human Development Index.

Legal Framework. Despite recommendations from international observers and a Constitutional Reform Commission, the legal framework for the elections has not changed since the 2012 elections. It generally provides a sound basis for conducting a democratic electoral process, but would benefit from several reforms. The constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms but includes several undue limitations on civil and political rights, such as those restricting political party formation and ideology and candidate eligibility.

Boundary Delimitations. In 2016, the parliament increased the number of parliamentary constituencies from 112 to 132. The National Electoral Commission's (NEC's) initial boundary delimitation exercise was widely seen as a transparent, inclusive and professional process, but was subsequently complicated by parliament's 2017 decision to increase the number of districts in Sierra Leone from 14 to 16 and to dis-amalgamate some chiefdoms. These changes, as well as parliament's revisions to the NEC's final set of proposed boundaries, were widely seen as politicized. In addition, the NEC's decision to allow a maximum 25 percent population deviation amongst constituencies undermined the equality of the vote.

Voter Registration. In 2017, the first ever nationwide civil register was compiled from which the NEC extracted a voter register of 3.178 million citizens. Due to the limited capacity of the newly established National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA), the NEC assumed the lead role in the civil registration exercise. Despite organizational challenges, stakeholders generally expressed confidence in the accuracy of the final voter register.

Party and candidate registration. Seventeen political parties registered with the Political Party Registration Committee (PPRC). While new parties faced an overly bureaucratic and protracted registration process, seven parties were registered between 2012 and 2017, most within the year prior to the 2018 elections. The process for nominating candidates followed the prescribed procedures, although several cases challenging specific candidates for president and parliament were presented before the courts. The number of women participating as candidates was limited, with only two women running for president and women accounting for only 12 percent of parliamentary candidates.

Election Administration. As mandated by the 1991 constitution, the NEC had formal responsibility for the conduct of the 2018 elections. The NEC was widely viewed as a neutral and credible election management body, although many interlocutors noted that it faced immense political and administrative pressures throughout the electoral process. The NEC was proactive in meeting with political actors and other stakeholders to inform them on technical aspects of the process. From a broad perspective, however, the NEC should ensure greater transparency regarding its work, for example by publishing key information regarding its administration of the elections on its website and adopting formal regulations to govern the process.

Campaign Period. According to political party leaders, the freedom to campaign was generally respected, though some cited isolated instances of the authorities interfering in their campaigns or with their supporters. The media provided extensive coverage of the campaign. Both domestic and international media monitors concluded that the ruling party benefited from more positive coverage. The ruling party took advantage of its incumbency, including combining the president's final nationwide tour with campaigning for the ruling party's presidential candidate and with the launch of several large development projects during the run-up to the elections. Sierra Leone's campaign finance requirements

are limited and not well-enforced. Voters and the public at large did not have access to information concerning the campaign finances of electoral contestants prior to the polls.

Promoting peaceful elections. Public institutions, civil society, and international actors actively sought to promote a peaceful electoral process. The PPRC, for example, sought to ensure adherence by the parties to the Political Parties Act and a code of conduct. The PPRC also facilitated the preparation of the Freetown Declaration, which was signed by all the presidential candidates a week before the elections. The Declaration included a pledge to conduct a peaceful campaign and accept the outcome of the elections. To avoid political clashes, the NEC allowed parties to campaign only on allocated days in assigned districts. While the calendar restricted the freedom of parties to campaign in the time and place of their choosing, this step probably reduced the potential for violence between opposing political supporters.

Judicial role in elections. In the weeks preceding the elections, a series of legal challenges were brought before the Supreme Court regarding the eligibility of several presidential candidates. Most notably, the candidate from the National Grand Coalition (NGC) was challenged on the grounds that he had dual citizenship, which is a basis for ineligibility under the constitution. Following a series of technical delays in the proceedings, the court postponed its substantive hearing to March 28, breaching the court's 30-day deadline for adjudication of the case and denying effective and timely remedy of the dispute.

Vehicle ban. A ban on vehicle movement on election day imposed by the police was a politically contentious issue, with most parties signing a memorandum of understanding prepared by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), but with five parties refusing to sign. One of the parties ultimately challenged the ban in court, arguing that it violated freedom of movement and undermined the right to vote. The Supreme Court summarily dismissed the matter on the day before the election, without due consideration. While the ban may have served to reduce the risk of violence, The Carter Center notes that such a ban is a restriction on rights and freedoms, and hopes that Sierra Leone's democratic norms and institutions will be stronger in the future so that a similar ban is not necessary in future polls.

Election Day. According to the preliminary statements of domestic monitors and international observers, the balloting process provided Sierra Leoneans an opportunity to participate in a meaningful electoral exercise conducted in accordance with international standards. More than 84 percent of those registered turned out to vote, although voting arrangements were not provided for voters in pretrial detention centers, hospitals and long-term care facilities, nor for home-bound voters. According to observers, polling officials were well-trained and organized their often-cramped spaces to facilitate the orderly movement of voters through the casting of four separate ballots. Party agents, domestic monitors, and police were present at polling sites throughout the polling and counting processes. International observer groups reported a few administrative glitches and security-related incidents, including a troubling attempted police raid on the campaign headquarters of the leading opposition party after the polls closed, which reduced SLPP confidence in the Sierra Leonean Police.

Results management. The tabulation process for the presidential election required five days to complete. On March 13, the NEC announced the final results, in which no candidate reached the required 55 percent threshold to win in the first round. The SLPP and APC candidates received, respectively, 43.3 percent and 42.7 percent of the vote, reinforcing the leading position of these two

parties that have dominated Sierra Leone's political landscape since independence. These results were within the statistically valid range of a Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) conducted by the citizen observer organization National Election Watch (NEW), which relied on a sample of 506 randomly selected polling sites. NEW's PVT methodology follows recognized practices and provided a very valuable addition to the process.

Post-election challenges. Prior to the completion of the presidential tabulation process, the NGC and Coalition for Change (C4C) raised concerns in letters to the NEC, alleging various procedural irregularities and asserting widespread fraud. In partial response to these concerns, the NEC ordered recounts of presidential ballots in 154 polling sites but declined to exclude them from the final results. However, results from an additional 221 polling sites were excluded, in most cases because the number of votes cast exceeded the number of registered voters assigned to the polling site.

In the weeks following the release of the presidential and parliamentary results, a narrative critical of the NEC emerged among some political parties, which alleged that the NEC poorly administered the first round, with irregularities in the accounting of ballots and the counting of votes. Some also cited instances of voter intimidation. A lawyer with ties to the ruling APC filed a lawsuit reflecting these concerns, requesting injunctive relief with the Supreme Court on March 20. To date, The Carter Center is not aware of any concrete evidence to support these claims.

Recommendations for second round. With the announcement of final results, the NEC scheduled a second round for March 27, within the mandated 14-day period. With only one race between two candidates, the second round of elections should be easier to administer. However, in light of the concerns that have been raised following the first round, the NEC should consider enhancing controls over the management of excess ballots at the polling centers, expediting the counting and reconciliation processes, and ensuring maximum transparency to the post-election process of tabulation and finalization of results.

Maintaining the peace. Given the winner-take-all nature of the runoff, the perceived stakes for both the APC and SLPP are high and, not unexpectedly, the situation in different regions of the country has become more volatile. Further exacerbating tension and undermining public confidence, the NEC and the Sierra Leonean Police (SLP) issued competing press releases critical of each other's actions. Both the NEC and the SLP should exercise their professional duties, including implementing agreed-upon procedures to protect the integrity of the balloting and counting processes and investigating all incidents of electoral malpractice, in a manner that demonstrates their absolute impartiality. In a more positive vein, women, religious leaders and others in civil society are proactively seeking to impress on party leaders and presidential candidates that they have a critical responsibility to reduce tensions and to insist that their supporters conduct themselves to maintain a peaceful environment throughout the electoral process.

Carter Center in Sierra Leone

The Carter Center has a long history of commitment to West Africa, supporting the region's democratic transformation for more than two decades. The Center has fielded election observation missions throughout the region, including in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Nigeria. In Sierra Leone, the Center has deployed election missions for each of the country's post-conflict elections.

The Carter Center first became involved in Sierra Leone in 2002, when it observed the first presidential and parliamentary elections since the end of the country's civil war. A peaceful transition of power in Sierra Leone offered hope to the rest of what was then a conflict-ridden region. The Carter Center fielded a delegation of 22 observers, which was led by former Benin President Nicéphore Soglo and included nine civil society leaders from Liberia and Guinea. The Center's final report concluded that "the electoral process … enabled voters to freely express their democratic choices and … the official results reflected the will of the voters. Although the elections were far from perfect, they were characterized by robust political participation, inclusiveness, competence, and dignity."[1]

For Sierra Leone's 2007 elections, The Carter Center provided technical assistance to the African Union international election observation mission. Two Center staff members established an office in Freetown, drafted briefing materials, developed a deployment plan, and organized accommodation, transport, and delegation support. The AU mission, however, was responsible for its own observations and assessment of the election. Following the mission, the Center produced an internal report for the African Union with suggestions for the administration of future missions.

The Center was invited to observe the November 2012 elections and dispatched a core team and eight long-term observers from six countries to assess the process. The short-term observation delegation was led by the former president of Zambia, Rupia Banda, and the Carter Center's then vice president for Peace Programs, John Stremlau. The delegation observed election-day processes in all of Sierra Leone's 14 districts. After election day, the Center's long-term observers remained in the country to observe the counting and tabulation processes and post-election political developments, including the resolution of electoral complaints and two election-related trials.

The Center's final report on the 2012 elections found the process to be "generally orderly and transparent and in general accordance with Sierra Leone's legal framework and obligations for democratic elections." Although the Center "noted some limited administrative shortcomings," it reported that "the electoral process was well-conducted by National Electoral Commission officials, that polling staff performed admirably in difficult conditions, and that the people of Sierra Leone turned out in high numbers to cast their ballots freely. The electoral process was conducted with a high degree of transparency."[2]

[1] The Carter Center, *Observing the 2002 Sierra Leone Elections*, 2002.
[2] The Carter Center, *Observing Sierra Leone's 2012 Elections: Final Report*, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/sierra-leone-final-101613.pdf.

2018 Elections

The Carter Center sent a pre-election assessment mission to Sierra Leone in June 2017. The government of Sierra Leone subsequently invited the Carter Center to observe the March 7 polls. A four-person expert team was deployed to Freetown in early February, arriving immediately before the formal campaign period. Originally, the Center had hoped that this team would support the deployment of a full observation mission, including both long-term and short-term observers. However, due to funding constraints, in the end it was not possible to deploy a full mission.

As a result, the Center's team acted as an "expert mission" and focused on several key issues, including the legal framework, the role of the judiciary in the electoral process, the planning and training for the security forces and other actors to maintain peace during the election period, and the role of civil society in promoting the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. The expert team comprised Larry Garber, field office director; Nicholas Jahr, deputy field office director/political analyst; Marla Morry, legal/election analyst; and Jean Lausberg, security analyst.

Election Observation Methodology: Since 1989, The Carter Center has observed 107 elections in 39 countries. Carter Center election observation missions are conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which was adopted at the United Nations in 2005 and has been endorsed by more than 50 election observation groups.[3] Through observation, the Center provides an impartial, objective assessment of the quality of key aspects of the electoral process and the extent to which it meets the host country's obligations under national and international law.

Historical and Political Background[4]

From Parliamentary Democracy to One-Party Rule

Sierra Leone was granted independence from the United Kingdom in 1961. The country held its first national elections the following year. The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), which had shepherded the country through the previous decade of tutelary rule, emerged victorious. Its only significant opposition was the All People's Congress (APC). Both parties quickly came to rely on ethnic bases, with the SLPP popular among the Mende of the east and south, and the APC popular among the Temne of the north. Elections were held again in 1967, and this time the APC was declared the winner. A military coup followed 48 hours later. Twelve months afterward, noncommissioned officers from the north staged a counter-coup and returned the APC to power, where it would remain for almost the next quarter-century.

In power, the APC transformed the country into a one-party state. By 1991, a rebel group called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) began what would become a notoriously brutal insurgency in the

[3] Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, October 2005, https://www.cartercenter.org/documents/2231.pdf.

[4] This section of the report is derived from The Carter Center's 2012 election observation report, op. cit. note 2 at p. 10-12.

south and east. The next year, the army once again seized power, toppling the APC government. Capt. Valentine Strasser became the head of state. In 1996, when Strasser seemed to be retreating on a commitment to hold national elections, one of the coup's other leaders, Capt. Julius Maada Bio, deposed him, initiated peace talks with the rebels, and confirmed that elections would go ahead as planned.

The Return to Multiparty Democracy

The 1996 elections marked the return of multiparty democracy in Sierra Leone. Thirteen parties, including the SLPP and the APC, contested the elections. A former SLPP leader, John Karefa-Smart, formed the United Progressive People's Party and mounted a challenge to the country's more than three-decade-old duopoly.

The RUF insisted that peace precede elections, and rebels launched a campaign of terror to discourage people from going to the polls, cutting off the hands of their victims. Multiple incidents of violence were committed on election day that led to a number of deaths and had the effect of intimidating voters and decreasing participation. As a result, Bio declared that the polls would remain open for a second day to enable more participation in the election. Turnout for the election ultimately reached 50 percent. Since no presidential candidate won a majority, a second round was held. SLPP presidential candidate Ahmad Tejan Kabbah won the second round, with 59.2 percent of the vote to Karefa-Smart's 40.8 percent. In the parliament, the SLPP secured a plurality, winning about 36 percent of the vote, which translated into 29 of 68 seats. The UNPP placed second with 18 seats; the APC was a distant fourth, with five seats.

The war continued throughout Kabbah's first term, and his government was forced to abandon Freetown twice. In 1999, under a peace agreement signed between the government and rebel forces in Lomé, Togo, rebel leaders were given government posts and guarantees of amnesty for their actions during the war. During this period, the U.N. Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), deploying 17,500 peacekeepers and 400 civilian police across the country. Despite the favorable terms of the Lomé Peace Agreement, the RUF continued its military campaign until British troops assisted UNAMSIL in disarming the rebels and helping the government extend its control to areas formerly under RUF control. In January 2002, through a mix of international diplomacy, military action, and civil society protests, Kabbah was at last able to proclaim in Krio: "The war don don."

Postwar Elections and Reconstruction Efforts

Following the end of the war in 2002, elections were scheduled later that year. Eighty-one percent of registered voters went to the polls on election day, returning Kabbah to office with a landslide 70 percent victory over APC flag bearer Ernest Bai Koroma.

In May 2004, Sierra Leone held its first local elections since 1972, along with special polls for the representation of paramount chiefs in parliament. Observers found that both the SLPP and the APC engaged in electoral fraud, including ballot-box stuffing and manipulation of voter lists and tally sheets. The local polls were also undermined by the National Electoral Commission's (NEC's) inadequate financial resources and political interference from the ruling SLPP. Following the elections, the NEC blacklisted 1,098 polling staff suspected of being involved in the irregularities.

By the time of the next elections in 2007, five years after the end of the war, the peace dividend had failed to materialize and Sierra Leoneans were frustrated. Having served the two terms in office allowed by the constitution, Kabbah stood aside and his vice president, Solomon Berewa, was the SLPP flag bearer. Charles Margai, the nephew of SLPP founder and first prime minister Milton Margai, split from the SLPP and formed the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). Like Karefa-Smart's UNPP before, the PMDC threatened to overturn Sierra Leone's longstanding duopoly. The APC's presidential candidate was once again Ernest Bai Koroma.

Margai's PMDC cut badly into the SLPP's vote totals throughout the east and south, as well as in the Western Urban region. In the second round, Margai threw his support behind Koroma and the APC. Ethnic voting patterns again prevailed, with SLPP taking the east and south, while APC took the north and, crucially, the west, winning the election with 54 percent of the vote.

In the parliamentary elections, the APC won 59 seats and the SLPP captured 43 seats, while the PMDC secured 10 seats. International observers concluded that the electoral process was largely transparent and well-administered and that the NEC and the Political Parties Registration Commission demonstrated a high level of professionalism.

The next elections were in 2012; presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections were held on Nov. 17. These were the first elections since the civil war that were fully self-administered. Overall, election observers found that the process was conducted credibly and with a high degree of transparency, with party agents, citizen observers, and international observers having access to all stages of the electoral process.

The elections were contested by 10 political parties, with nine parties fielding candidates in the presidential race. Bio, now a retired brigadier, returned to the scene, winning the nomination to be the SLPP's flag bearer; his supporters championed him as the "father of democracy." The number of female candidates participating in the elections was very low and represented one of the most important shortfalls of the 2012 electoral process.

Voter turnout on election day was high, reaching 87.3 percent of registered voters. On Nov. 23, the NEC certified the final results of the presidential election, which indicated that President Koroma of the APC was re-elected with 58.7 percent of the valid votes, ahead of the SLPP's Bio, who garnered 37.4 percent of the votes cast. In the parliamentary elections, the APC captured 67 out of 112 parliamentary seats, consolidating its strongholds in the Northern region and Western Area region. The SLPP suffered a net loss of one parliamentary seat compared to the 2007 elections, while the PMDC lost its 10 parliamentary seats. Only 15 women were elected to parliament, one fewer than in the 2007 parliamentary elections.

While some in the SLPP sought to challenge the results, tensions were alleviated when, on Dec. 3, SLPP candidate Bio visited the Statehouse at the invitation of President Koroma to address the nation and assure the people of Sierra Leone that he was seeking peace and reconciliation. Bio's presence was seen as a tacit acceptance of the elections' results, despite an official petition filed by the party contesting results earlier that week.

Developments Since the 2012 Elections

As Koroma embarked on his second term, Sierra Leone was making significant progress in recovering from the damage of the war. The government's road-building effort continued, with the main roads extended in the east toward Kailahun. New iron mines in the north fed explosive economic growth, and GDP increased 20.7 percent in 2013. However, this growth was almost entirely erased when the Ebola epidemic seized the region. The disease would take the lives of 3,965 Sierra Leoneans, and the economic disruption would linger for several years.

During the 2015-17 period, the political situation in Sierra Leone remained quite uncertain. The opposition parties believed that the ruling party was looking to delay the 2017 elections and seeking to amend the constitution to allow Koroma to serve a third term in office.

In March 2015, Koroma removed Vice President Samuel Sam-Sumana from office. Sam-Sumana had been expelled from the APC earlier that month and, after soldiers reportedly surrounded his home, he sought refuge at the U.S. Embassy. Arguing Sam-Sumana had "abandoned" his duties and that the constitution requires the president and vice president to be members of a political party, Koroma dismissed him. Sam-Sumana's legal challenge to his ouster was in turn dismissed by the Supreme Court in October 2016. A case was subsequently lodged with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Community Court of Justice, claiming damages and seeking reinstatement. In November 2017, the ECOWAS court ruled that the termination was illegal and ordered the president to pay damages. The government publicly denounced the decision, claiming the ECOWAS court had no jurisdiction over the matter and declaring that it would defy the ruling.

Koroma launched a constitutional review process in July 2013, establishing an 80-member Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) composed of a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The CRC conducted a three-year, nationwide public consultation process, culminating in the release in January 2017 of a report with 134 recommendations, which were widely lauded for including credible proposals to advance human rights and democracy. However, the APC withdrew from the process before the recommendation's release due to its opposition to many of the proposals, including provisions limiting the president's power. Although the president announced in February 2017 that a constitutional referendum would be held in September prior to the scheduled March 2018 elections, no such referendum was held. Parliament was dissolved on Dec. 7 – three months before the election, as required by the constitution.

According to many observers, the major parties continue to see elections as a matter of mobilizing their respective ethnic bases instead of winning over a broader public. Opinion polling of voters' presidential preferences was virtually nonexistent, but more general opinion polling suggested APC entered these elections in a weakened position, with frustration over the slow economic recovery from the Ebola crisis and the commodity price collapse, as well as the government's handling of recent disasters.

A mudslide in Freetown in August 2017 is believed to have killed as many as 1,000 people, though official estimates provided by the government counted less than half that number dead. With Koroma barred from seeking a third term and the NGC perceived to be mounting a credible third-party challenge, the campaign began in an atmosphere of pronounced uncertainty.

Table 1 Sierra Leone Facts and Figures

Population	6.5 million [UNDP HDR 2016] 7.092 million [Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Census]
Ethnic Groups	Mende 31.9%, Temne 31.4%, Limba 8.4%, Kono 5.1%, Koranko 4.4%, Fullah 3.8%, Susu 2.9%, Kissi 2.5%, Loko 2.3%, Mandingo 2.3%, Sherbro 1.9%, Krio 1.3%, Yalunka 0.7%, Krim 0.2%, Vai > 0.1% [Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Census]
Languages	English (official), Temne, Mende, Krio
Religions	Islam 77%, Christianity 21.9%, other 0.9% [Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Census]
Life Expectancy at Birth	51.3 years [UNDP HDR 2016]
GDP per Capita	$1,497 (2011 PPP) [UNDP HDR 2016]
System of Government	Constitutional democracy [TCC 2012]
Legal System	English common law & customary law [TCC 2012]

Carter Center Expert Mission for the 2018 Sierra Leone Election: Assessment and Analysis of Key Electoral Issues

As noted above, the Center's team in Sierra Leone functioned as an "expert mission," focusing on several key issues, including the legal framework, the role of the judiciary in the electoral process, the planning and training for the security forces and other actors to maintain peace during the election period, and the role of civil society in promoting the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. The expert team conducted meetings and interviews with a wide range of electoral stakeholders. These meetings, together with their reviews of reports and analyses done by other organizations, allowed the expert team to analyze aspects of the electoral process, including voter registration, campaigning, and voter education. The expert mission followed the Center's standard methodological approach, to assess the degree to which key aspects of the electoral process were consistent with Sierra Leone's national legal framework and met its obligations for democratic elections under international law. The sections that follow provide summary analyses of key aspects of the electoral process.

Election System

The essence of any electoral system is to translate the will of the people into a representative government.[5] The type of electoral system is a sovereign choice, though key principles such as the universality and equality of the vote should be respected in any system adopted.

In Sierra Leone, the president is elected for a five-year term, with a two-term limit. A candidate who receives at least 55 percent of the valid votes cast is elected president. If no candidate receives 55 percent, a second round is held between the top two candidates within 14 days following the announcement of results in the first round. The candidate who receives the most valid votes in the second round is elected.

The parliamentary election system is a first-past-the-post system with each electoral constituency returning one member to the unicameral legislature. The outgoing parliament included 112 ordinary members. In May 2016, the parliament approved 20 additional electoral constituencies, increasing the number to 132 seats, to reflect results of the census conducted in 2014-2015, which indicated an increase in population and changes in the population distribution.

In addition to the parliamentary seat directly elected in the constituencies, the parliament also includes seats reserved for paramount chiefs who are indirectly elected into parliament by a select group of chiefdom councilors, with one chief elected for each administrative district (those elections were held a week prior to the March 7 elections).[6] According to international standards, electoral systems should support direct elections.[7] The system for election of the paramount chief members of parliament is thus inconsistent with this standard, and a separate national body for paramount chief representatives could be a suitable alternative.

Stakeholders expressed concerns to the Carter Center that the recent census statistics were not accurate and that the population distribution had been politically manipulated to justify the addition of the electoral constituencies, which were mainly in the north, the stronghold of the ruling party. A paper published by the Institute for Governance Reform, a domestic think tank, presented evidence suggesting that the national statistics agency, fully conscious of the prevailing political culture of regional voting patterns and ethnic mobilization of voters by the two leading political parties, allowed partisan interests to influence the census process to favor the ruling party.[8]

While the expert mission did not conduct a thorough analysis of the census, in light of concerns about possible partisan influence, the Center recommends that in the future the census process be conducted with safeguards and independent technical oversight to prevent partisan manipulation.

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[5] U.N., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(b); International IDEA Electoral Standards: Guidelines for Reviewing the Legal Framework of Elections, p. 28

[6] In most districts, paramount chiefs select one of their peers by consensus, usually after agreement on a rotation system. When no agreement can be reached, elections are conducted in the district among a unique electorate, based on an electoral college of councilors. For details, see the Carter Center's 2012 Final Report at p. 52.

[7] U.N. (CCPR), Concluding Observations on Hong Kong, (1995), paras. 408-435

[8] Institute for Governance Reform, *The Credibility of the 2015 Census in Sierra Leone: Will All Heads Be Counted?* January 2015.

Legal Framework

A sound legal framework is essential to the administration of democratic elections and to ensuring that a country upholds its international obligations. The legal framework includes constitutional provisions, domestic laws, regulations and procedures regarding the electoral process. Based on its international commitments, Sierra Leone is obligated to take measures to promote the principles of the rule of law, recognizing that laws must be consistent with international principles of human rights.[9]

Sierra Lone has ratified all major international and regional instruments that relate to human rights and the conduct and inclusivity of democratic elections[10] (see Table 2). The 1991 constitution, amended in 2002, 2008 and 2013, guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, including equality, non-discrimination, freedom of association and assembly, the right to free movement, and freedom of expression. Voting and candidacy rights for presidential and parliamentary elections are entrenched in the constitution. However, some established limitations to these rights and freedoms, as described below, are not in line with international standards that emanate from international and regional instruments. The 1999 Lome Peace Accord that ended the decade-long civil war called for a constitutional review process, and the postwar Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended a revision of the constitution to bring it in line with international human rights standards.[11]

Relevant International & Regional Treaties Signed by Sierra Leone [12]

Treaty/Declaration	Status	Date
African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	Ratified/Acceded	February 17, 2009
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	Ratified/Acceded	September 21, 1983
African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption	Ratified/Acceded	December 03, 2008
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	Signed	December 09, 2003
Economic Community of West African States Protocol on the Fight against Corruption	Signed	December 21, 2001

[9] U.N., ICCPR, art. 2; AU, ACHPR, art. 1; ECOWAS, Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.
[10] It has signed but not ratified the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.
[11] Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Witness to Truth*, Vol. 2, Chapter 3, http://www.sierraleonetrc.org/index.php/view-the-final-report/download-table-of-contents/volume-two/item/witness-to-the-truth-volume-two-chapter-3?category_id=12.
[12] The Carter Center Obligations & Standards Database, https://eos.cartercenter.org.

Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security	Ratified/Acceded	August 10, 2004
Convention on the Political Rights of Women	Ratified/Acceded (with reservations)	July 25, 1962
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Ratified/Acceded	October 04, 2010
Convention on the Rights of the Child	Ratified/Acceded	June 18, 1990
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	Ratified/Acceded	August 02, 1967
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	Signed	September 15, 2000
United Nations Convention against Corruption	Ratified/Acceded	September 30, 2004
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Ratified/Acceded	November 11, 1988
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Ratified/Acceded	August 23, 1996
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Ratified/Acceded	August 23, 1996

The 2012 Public Elections Act (election law), which was in force during the 2012 elections, regulates the conduct of all public elections, and the 2002 Political Parties Act regulates the registration of political parties, as well as the conduct of political parties and campaign finance. Together with the constitution, these acts form the primary legal framework for the conduct of elections.

Despite ongoing reform discussions, the legal framework for the elections has not undergone any changes since the 2012 elections, leaving key gaps and shortcomings in place and the recommendations put forward by international election observation missions unaddressed.[13] In addition, recommendations for bringing the constitution further in line with international standards related to democratic elections that were put forward by international experts as part of a UN-backed electoral reform process prior to the 2012 elections have not been addressed. Many of the recommendations put forward by these international actors have also been proposed in the Constitutional Review Committee's (CRC) recommendations for constitutional reform, as discussed below. In spite of this lack

[13] See, e.g., The Carter Center, op. cit. at p. 55.

of reform to address key gaps, the legal framework for the elections provides a broadly acceptable basis for the conduct of democratic elections, if properly implemented and enforced.

The three-year constitutional review process produced 134 recommendations, submitted by the CRC to the government in January 2017. Many of the proposals touch on civil and political rights that are key to a democratic electoral process, some of which had been originally recommended by the postwar Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Several recommendations relate to enhancing political participation for women and persons with disabilities as follows: the state must take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective and appointive bodies shall be of the same gender; at least 30 percent of election nominees for each political party in national and local elections must be women; parliament must enact legislation to ensure representation of persons with disability in the parliament and local councils; and political parties must take action to include persons with disability in all their activities and programs, including nomination in national elections.

Other election-related recommendations put forward by the CRC include: repeal of racially discriminatory provisions that require Negro-Africa ancestry to be a citizen (which adversely impacts suffrage rights); facilitate the right to vote of Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora; eliminate parliamentary seats reserved for paramount chiefs that are indirectly elected (and create a separate national representative body for them); change the first-past-the-post parliamentary election system to a proportional representation system, which would facilitate the representation of smaller parties; reduce the requirement for public officials to step down from 12 months before an election to 6 months, and exclude teachers; limit NEC commissioners to two five-year terms and decentralize their work by locating commissioners in the regions; and mandate regional, ethnic and gender diversity in the appointment of NEC commissioners. The recommendations also addressed freedoms for the media and independence of the judiciary, both of which are important institutions in the electoral process.

On Nov. 10, 2017, the government issued a white paper in response to the constitutional recommendations, rejecting 102 of the 134 proposals, including all that concerned the protection of human rights and advancement of democratic principles. The ones supported were mainly cosmetic in nature or claw-backs on existing human rights for national security. The government justified its response on the basis that provisions in the current constitution were adequate or that existing statutes already addressed specific concerns.

The white paper also sought to lower the threshold for a presidential election in a first round from 55 percent to 50 percent +1. As this threshold is not an "entrenched" clause in the constitution, modifying it does not require approval by referendum. Instead, a two-thirds vote of parliament would suffice to amend this constitutional provision.[14] Faced with resistance to the proposal from opposition parties and civil society, which claimed it was a blatant attempt to manipulate the electoral process in favor of the ruling party just three months before the election, as well as the international community, which expressed concerns about changing an election system so close to polling day in contravention of international good practice, the government abandoned its attempt to lower the threshold.

[14] Section 108 of the 1991 Sierra Leone Constitution distinguishes between provisions of the Constitution that can be amended pursuant to a two-thirds vote and those that require a referendum.

Parliament never debated the white paper prior to its dissolution on Dec. 7. A wide array of interlocutors from independent commissions to civil society organizations, many of whom were engaged in the constitutional review process, expressed to The Carter Center mission their deep dissatisfaction with the government's response to the CRC recommendations.

The CRC's recommendations are generally in line with international standards regarding human rights and democracy. However, several recommendations are inconsistent with international good practice, including the recommendation to impose a voting tax on diaspora voters if voting abroad is established and the recommendation to introduce an unduly high threshold of 30 percent for a political party to enter parliament if a proportional representation election system is used. In addition, the recommendations did not go far enough to advance the right to stand in elections, leaving most of the overly restrictive eligibility criteria unaddressed, including dual citizenship and racial ancestry restrictions.

Following the failure of the CRC process, in 2017 a bill was drafted that included some amendments that the NEC, in conjunction with the Law Reform Commission, had submitted to the minister of justice following the 2012 elections. However, the NEC contends the bill did not fully reflect its proposals, and the bill remains pending parliamentary review.

The proposed 2017 bill would provide the NEC (rather than the president) with authority to determine the dates for voter registration exercises and parliamentary and local elections, lower the threshold for presidential elections from 55 percent to 50 percent +1 (though, as noted above, this change would require a constitutional amendment via a two-thirds vote of parliament), and increase sanctions for a wide range of electoral offenses. In addition, the bill includes deadlines for withdrawal of candidates (by end of nomination period) and for changing a voter's address in the register (not less than six months before the election), which are unduly short. Notably, the bill does not reflect many of the changes that would bring the law more closely in line with international standards and good practice and that would address recommendations of previous international election observation missions. Some of these include the repeal of a ban on prisoners' voting rights that does not take into account the severity of the crime committed, and the use of serial numbers on both ballots and stubs that undermines secrecy of the vote.

Under the constitution, the NEC has authority to conduct all public elections and to adopt regulations that form part of the legal framework for the elections. These regulations are submitted to parliament and enter into force 21 days thereafter absent a vote of disapproval. However, the NEC generally did not exercise its regulatory authority, instead adopting only technical procedures. As such, various stages of the electoral process were implemented with limited or no legal rules. For instance, there were no rules related to determining the format of the ballot, allocating the order of contestants on the ballot, and the printing and distribution of ballots. Other examples of unregulated matters include the manner of establishing the campaign calendar, the process for observer accreditation, and the legal framework for presidential runoff elections. This lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework leaves the legal basis for the administration of various aspects of the electoral process incomplete and non-transparent. Though political parties expressed confidence in the NEC in the run-up to the polls, this dynamic could undermine trust in the NEC's credibility in future electoral processes

The voting procedures adopted by the NEC deviated from the election law in several respects. While the NEC does not have the explicit authority to adopt procedures deviating from the law and such practice is inconsistent with the principle of rule of law, the substance of some of the deviations were in line with international good practices. This included inking the voter's finger after casting of the ballot rather than before, and having voters sign the voter register upon receiving a ballot rather than the polling staff put a mark beside the voter's name. However, some deviations employed were not consistent with good practice, including allowing police and polling staff on duty at a polling center to vote at that center without striking them off from the voter lists in their original polling stations. These procedures created concerns among some political parties that safeguards to prevent multiple voting were absent.

The Carter Center recommends that, following the 2018 elections, the next government should closely consider the CRC recommendations and guide an inclusive political process to work toward a new constitution that is fully in line with international standards on civil and political rights and democratic principles, and to institutionalize key objectives of the post-war reconciliation process

In addition, as part of the large review process, the Center recommends that the NEC comprehensively review the election law to ensure that the NEC has the legislative framework necessary to conduct elections in line with international standards and best practices, and that it develop recommendations for amendment to the parliament. Suggested constitutional reforms related to the electoral process include: eliminating representation for the tribal chiefs in the current structure of a one-house parliament; incorporating provisions that guarantee the representation of women in parliament; and reducing to below 15 percent the disparity in the number of registered voters among constituencies. The NEC should also adopt a comprehensive set of regulations that remain in place for each election cycle, to be revised as needed, and that they be published on its website on a timely basis.

Boundary Delimitation

According to international standards, boundary delimitation should be managed by an independent and impartial body representative of the society as a whole to ensure that electoral boundaries do not favor any particular social group or political interest.[15] To ensure the right of equal suffrage is respected, the delimitation of boundaries should seek to ensure that elected representatives represent reasonably equal numbers of constituents.[16]

Sierra Leone's newly introduced boundary delimitations do not meet these standards. Although the NEC was broadly commended for conducting a transparent, nonpartisan and consultative delimitation process, its recommended boundaries were later altered during the parliamentary approval process, leaving some districts with a deviation of more than 15 percent from the population average, with many hovering near the NEC maximum 25 percent deviation.

The NEC is constitutionally mandated to conduct a review and revision of the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies every five to seven years, with parliament providing final approval of the proposed boundaries. In line with the principle of the equality of the vote and international best

[15] EISA and Electoral Commission Forum of SADC Countries, Principles for Election Management, Monitoring, and Observation in the SADC Region, p. 13.
[16] U.N. (CCPR), General Comment 25, para. 21

practices, the constitution requires that the number of inhabitants per constituency must be as nearly equal as possible to the total national population divided by the number of constituencies, taking into account such factors as geographical features, density of population, distribution of different communities, and administrative and chiefdom boundaries.

The 2012 election law does not include any provisions further regulating the terms and conditions of the boundary delimitation. Moreover, the NEC did not adopt any regulation on the manner of conducting the boundary delimitation process, leaving the entire process unregulated, other than adopting a legal instrument setting a maximum allowable population deviation for the parliamentary constituencies. In 2008, the NEC established the maximum deviation at 25 percent. Although none of the political parties raised the inequality of constituencies as an issue, the deviation is not in line with international good practice, according to which deviations should not be more than 10 percent, with a maximum of 15 percent acceptable to take into account factors such as those noted above in the constitution.[17]

Starting in May 2016, the NEC conducted a boundary delimitation exercise within the constitutional timeframe and revised the boundaries of the 132 electoral constituencies. The population figures used were those from the 2014-15 Provisional Census Report (the final census report came out in January 2017). Political parties and civil society stakeholders highly commended the NEC for conducting a professional, inclusive, and transparent boundary revision process, which included the establishment of Boundary Delimitation Monitoring Committees at national and district levels composed of representatives from election management bodies, national institutions, political parties, local and tribal government, civil society organizations, and professional associations.

In December 2016, the NEC forwarded the proposed boundary revisions to the minister of justice for submission for parliamentary approval. After a delay of several months, for which the minister was criticized, the revision bills were submitted to parliament in March 2017. The next month, parliament rejected the proposals for failing to meet the technical requirements for tabling such instruments. Some interlocutors alleged that these delays were designed to allow the government to ensure that administrative division reforms, which were apparently in the planning stages, served as the basis for the new electoral constituency boundaries.

In May, the parliament created an additional region and two new administrative districts (at the same time, dis-amalgamating 41 chiefdoms). Despite calls by the main opposition party to wait until after the upcoming election to implement the new administrative divisions, the revisions were approved. This obliged the NEC to revise the original boundaries proposals for various parliamentary constituencies. Some interlocutors expressed concern to the Center that these administrative division changes were politically motivated. The two new districts and most of the new chiefdoms are in the north, the stronghold of the ruling party. Some also asserted the timing of the changes was intended to postpone the election until a constitutional referendum could be held to approve the possibility of a third term for the outgoing president.

While the late changes to the administrative boundaries imposed unnecessary strains on the NEC, it managed to revise the affected electoral boundaries in what was widely acknowledged as a timely,

[17] See Council of Europe Venice Commission's 2002 Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters.

transparent and inclusive manner and resubmitted the proposal for parliamentary approval in July 2017. During parliamentary deliberations of the submitted bills, the proposed boundaries of various election constituencies were changed mainly by ruling-party MPs in what has been criticized by some interlocutors as a nontransparent manner, and without consultation with the NEC or other stakeholders. Various interlocutors, including political opposition actors and civil society, assert that these parliamentary revisions failed to reflect a technical, nonpartisan approach and that it was another delay tactic. The final boundaries were approved by parliament in August 2017, but the act was never published. While this did not appear to be an impediment to the electoral process, publishing the boundaries would improve transparency for voters and political parties alike.

Based on an analysis of the final population statistics for each of the 132 constituencies, the population sizes range from some 40,000 to more than 67,000. Around 35 percent of the constituencies have a deviation of more than 15 percent from the population average, with many hovering near the NEC maximum 25 percent deviation, and one constituency slightly above.

To ensure that respect for the equality of the vote is guaranteed, the Center strongly encourages the NEC to lower its maximum deviation and to adopt a legal framework governing the boundary delimitation process, including measures for transparency and safeguards against gerrymandering. These steps would bring Sierra Leone's processes in line with international standards and best practices.

Voter Registration

Voter registration is recognized as an important means to ensure the right to vote and should be made available to the broadest pool of citizens possible without obstacles to ensure universal and equal suffrage.[18]

Despite several obstacles, including late changes to the administrative boundaries and the political decision to create a new civil registry from which a voter registry would be extracted, political parties and civil society organizations expressed confidence in the accuracy of the final voter registry. The NEC, which has the constitutional authority for registering all eligible voters, successfully fulfilled its mandate to create a comprehensive and accurate voter registry, facilitating the task of a new authority to create a civil registry.

Under the Sierra Leone Constitution, citizens 18 years and older who have been not been declared of unsound mind have the right to vote, provided they are on the voter register. The constitution denies citizenship to persons of non-Negro-African ancestry, a discriminatory provision that particularly impacts the right to vote (and to be elected) for non-Negro communities that have been resident in Sierra Leone for several generations. The election law further disenfranchises all citizens serving a prison sentence; a blanket restriction on voting rights for prisoners is inconsistent with international standards as it does not take into account the severity of the crime committed. In addition, voting arrangements are not provided for those citizens in pretrial detention centers, hospitals and long-term care facilities, nor for homebound voters, effectively disenfranchising those citizens.

[18] U.N., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(b); AU, African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, art. 1; U.N., United Nations Human Rights Committee, General

The Constitution mandates the registration of voters under the direction and supervision of the NEC and requires that the voter register be revised and reviewed at least once every three years. Until the 2018 elections, the NEC conducted an active voter registration exercise for each election. In 2012, a biometric registration system was used for the first time. For the 2018 elections, the NEC had intended to conduct a voter registration exercise to update the existing voter register, rather than undertake another full voter registration initiative. However, the NEC had to abandon this plan in 2016 when parliament passed a law establishing a National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA), which was mandated to create and maintain a national civil register.

One of the apparent aims of the initiative to create the NCRA was to establish a comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date civil register to alleviate the need for the NEC to conduct costly voter registration exercises for each election. Following the creation of the NCRA, the government decided that the compilation of the national civil register would be conducted prior to the 2018 elections, and that the voter register would for the first time be extracted from a national civil register. This decision was made despite the lack of a clear legal basis, as the NEC continues to have the constitutional mandate "for the conduct and supervision of the registration of voters."[19]

The nationwide civil registration exercise, scheduled for 2016, was delayed due to the late arrival of biometric machines and the lack of capacity and funding of the newly established NCRA. At the same time, opposition parties and some civil society organizations voiced mistrust in the NCRA to act impartially in fulfilling its mandate to ensure an accurate civil and voter register, citing a lack of genuine independence of the body from a politicized public service. The dates for the civil registration exercise were moved several times from October 2016 to December, then to February 2017, and finally to March 2017. Since the legal deadline for compiling the voter register was approaching, the NEC, with its extensive experience in conducting voter registration exercises, assumed the lead in the civil registration exercise so as to ensure that it had a voter register to extract in time for the 2018 elections. In the meantime, the boundary delimitation proposal submitted by the NEC to the parliament was still pending approval. A Supreme Court challenge was subsequently lodged by ruling party MPs challenging the timing of the voter registration, but the case appears to have been withdrawn prior to the election.

Under the NEC's guidance, and alongside the NCRA, the civil registration exercise was conducted in two stages at 3,300 registration centers. In the first stage, those of voting age (including persons who were to turn 18 as of the election day) were registered, and in the second stage minors and anyone not registered in the first phase, including noncitizen residents, were registered. The registration exercise used a biometric system, as was done during the 2012 voter registration exercise. While technically the process was one of civil registration, in effect the NEC conducted a voter registration exercise. The first stage took place March 20 - April 30, 2017, and the second stage occurred shortly thereafter.

The registration process was widely reported as chaotic, slow, and cumbersome. These factors were attributed to understaffing and a low capacity of registration staff. The data collected was broader than that needed for voter registration. Citizens waited in line for many hours or had to return the next day. As a result, and following a call from political parties, the NEC extended the legal deadline for the voter

[19] Sierra Leone Constitution, Article 33. Comment No. 25 on "The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service," para. 11.

registration period from 15 to 42 days, which parliament approved. Some interlocutors raised concerns that the level of voter education on the registration process was insufficient, especially as there was much confusion among citizens about the coinciding civil/voter registration processes.

According to the NEC and other interlocutors, the biometric equipment used for the 2018 exercise, procured by the government for the NCRA to conduct the civil registration, was not always reliable, with some machines breaking down and data for some registrants not fully captured, particularly photos. Transmission of the data from the equipment to the central server, which was under the NCRA's permanent control, was slow due to low or no internet connectivity.

Early in the first stage of the registration process, the SLPP forwarded many questions to the NEC about the technical and IT aspects of the registration process, raising concerns about the limited transparency in the civil/voter registration exercise. As voter registration is a key aspect of the electoral process, full transparency in the registration process should be provided to ensure that stakeholders are confident in the credibility and accuracy of the final voter register.

After the first registration phase, the NEC extracted the needed voter data from the civil registry's server. However, the transfer of information from the NCRA's database to the NEC's server was slow. Moreover, the NEC discovered that 3,735 records were missing data and that the records of more than 39,000 registrants did not upload at all. While some stakeholders claimed this was a deliberate act and that the data was irretrievable, and called on the NEC to postpone the election, the NEC was able to recapture the records on the equipment or from registration forms, as well as to obtain some of the missing data directly from the registrants during the public exhibition period of the preliminary voter register that took place in August. Only three citizens lodged a court appeal on grounds that they did not appear on the register despite having registered; the NEC was able to show that these voters were on the register.

The final voter register was completed in September 2017, comprising 3,178,663 registered voters. The NEC subsequently distributed voter registration cards to all registered voters. There was a public outcry concerning the nature of the voter IDs, which were much simpler than the 2012 biometric voter ID cards. The NEC explained that, due to lack of funding, they could not provide biometric cards and the cards used for the 2018 elections would eventually be replaced by the NCRA-issued biometric national ID cards.

The voter ID cards indicated the number of the voter's constituency and ward. As a result, when the parliament subsequently changed administrative boundaries leading to modification of the electoral constituency boundaries, the NEC had to reissue 260,000 voter ID cards in December 2017 to inform those voters of the change in their constituency/ward.

The election law requires that the voter register be finalized not less than six months prior to an election, with no updates or changes allowed. While the election law does provide for voters to change their address, the NEC considered the six-month deadline for finalization of the voter register as the effective deadline for changing one's address. This timeframe is unduly long. The Institute for Governance Reform, a domestic think tank, reported that a December 2017 survey confirmed that

about 12.5 percent of registered voters had relocated residence since their registration, and thus had to travel long distances in order to cast their vote.

Following finalization of the voter register, the NEC did an electronic comparison of all registered photos and determined that more than 1,500 duplicate registrations had taken place. The NEC referred these cases to law enforcement for investigation as electoral offenses.

Some interlocutors alleged that the registration centers in the districts of the opposition party's strongholds were deliberately understaffed and ill equipped, and that some registration centers were located far from the registrants' residences, as a means to suppress the registration of opposition voters. The final number of voters registered increased by more than 20 percent (some 500,000 voters) compared to the 2012 elections, with the bulk of those new voters registered in the north, which fueled these claims of political bias. Several political parties raised troubling concerns that the distribution of registered voters was not consistent with the population distribution from the census completed only two years earlier, fueling the earlier claims that the census statistics on which the boundary delimitation process were based were politically manipulated.

The NEC forwarded electronic copies of the final voter register to all political parties though it did not publish the register on its website. No parties raised concerns about the credibility of the register. It also provided parties and civil society groups with information about the status of the number of voter ID cards that had not been picked up. Citizens were allowed to pick up their IDs until March 3; as of Feb. 20, some 165,000 IDs (5 percent) had not been claimed. Although the card was not required by law in order to vote, the NEC announced that those without voter ID would have to wait until the late afternoon when the polls are not busy to allow time for poll workers to otherwise check their identity.

Overall, the NEC played a critical role in the creation of a biometric civic registry, from which a voter registry was extracted. Despite the obstacles faced by the NEC during the voter registration exercise, some 500,000 voters were added to the rolls. Political parties and civil society groups broadly voiced confidence in the accuracy of the final voter register.

In future elections, the NCRA will be charged with maintaining a national civil register from which the voter register will be extracted. Given stakeholder concerns regarding the NCRA's credibility, impartiality and capacity, The Carter Center recommends that the parliament enhance the body's institutional independence through legislative measures, employ capacity-building and confidence-building measures, and guarantee the NCRA sufficient funding. These steps will help ensure that the civil register continues to be a comprehensive, accurate, up-to-date, trusted data source from which a credible and comprehensive voter register can be extracted. The NCRA should also prioritize the adoption of measures to ensure the privacy of citizens' and voters' data collected through the biometric civil/voter registration process, in accordance with international best practices.

Party Registration

International standards for party registration indicate that party registration regulations and deadlines should be clear and specific. States must protect the right and opportunity of every citizen to be elected, and that right may only be subject to objective and reasonable restrictions. [20]

The Sierra Leonean Constitution and the Political Parties Act prohibit political parties from having "aims, objectives and programs" that are in contravention of or inconsistent with the constitution and ban parties that have any connection to or that are formed for the sole purpose of securing or advancing the interests of a particular tribal or ethnic group, religion, community or geographic area. In addition, parties must prove they have registered offices in each province's headquarter town and in the Western Area, and new parties must resubmit evidence of their offices within 60 days of the election. The apparent intention of these provisions is to minimize political discord and national disunity, and not to suppress political freedoms. However, the provisions that ban parties formed to advance interests of tribal, ethnic group, religious, or community interests are contrary to international standards regarding the freedom of association and the formation of political parties. In this respect, these provisions unduly restrict party formation and activities, curtailing the right to associate and assemble and freedom of speech. Related, these conditions also limit political pluralism, insofar as they hinder formation of smaller parties, such as those that represent certain communities or groups of citizens.

The constitution establishes the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) as an independent body responsible for registration of political parties. The Political Parties Act extends the PPRC's mandate to monitor the conduct of political parties and their accountability to their membership and the electorate, to promote political pluralism, and to mediate intra- and interparty disputes. However, the PPRC's mandate is not supported by enforcement powers, not even for breaches of campaign finance rules, except for the far-reaching recourse of applying to the Supreme Court for cancellation of the party's registration for any breaches, regardless of the severity of the violation. A bill that has been pending for several years is aimed at enhancing the regulatory and enforcement powers of the PPRC, though the legality of some of its provisions are questionable, including a requirement that parties operate for a minimum period as a condition to contest elections.

Seven new political parties were registered following the 2012 elections, most in the year ahead of the 2018 elections, an unprecedented number in the country's history. However, this was not without excessive bureaucratic delays and obstacles. The protracted process left these newly formed parties uncertain as to whether they would be registered prior to the 2018 elections, and fostered the belief that the obstacles and delays were politically motivated, designed to dissuade parties from finalizing their registration and contesting the upcoming elections.

[20] U.N., ICCPR, art. 25; AU, AfCHPR, art. 13

Flag Bearers & Parties

Name	Political Party	Acronym
Mohamed Bah	National Democratic Alliance	NDA
Julius Maada Bio	Sierra Leone People's Party	SLPP
Josephine Claudius-Cole	Unity Party	UP
Kandeh Baba Conteh	Peace and Liberation Party	PLP
Saa Kabuta	United National Peoples Party	UNPP
Samura Kamara	All People's Congress	APC
Mohamed Kamarainba Mansaray	Alliance Democratic Party	ADP
Charles Margai	People's Movement For Democratic Change	PMDC
Gbandi Ngobeh	Revolutionary United Front Party	RUFP
Samuel Sam-Sumana	Coalition for Change	C4C
Jonathan Patrick Sandy	National Unity and Reconciliation Party	NURP
Mohamed Sowa-Turay	United Democratic Movement	UDM
Musa Tarawally	Citizen's Democratic Party	CDP
Victor Beresford Williams	Republic National Independent Party	ReNIP
Kandeh Konteh Yumkella	National Grand Coalition	NGC
Patrick O'Dwyer	National Progressive Democrats	NPD

The PPRC does not have a deadline to issue a final decision on party registration applications and, until formally registered, a party is prohibited to engage in any political activity. In practice, the cumbersome process undermines the principle of political pluralism and the freedom to associate. New parties reported that it took up to nine months to receive the decision on their registration. At various stages, the PPRC placed obstacles that further delayed the registration. Several formal objections against the NGC's registration were lodged at the PPRC concerning the party's logo and use of multiple colors. The PPRC decided the colors were likely to confuse the electorate with other parties and advised it to select a different color before authorizing its registration in October 2017.

The PPRC refused to register one political party, the People's Democratic League (PDL), a social democratic movement. PDL submitted an application in August 2016, which was denied more than a year later. The grounds for the decision have not been made public, but according to the PPRC, other interlocutors, and news reports, the party was denied on grounds that the ideology presented in the party constitution was not legally compliant with the country's constitution, that it criticized the APC and SLPP when those parties threatened to lodge a court case, and that it did not have the necessary number of party offices. The PDL was asked to redraft its constitution, and it responded by issuing a public statement alleging that the PPRC's refusal of its registration was politically motivated and urging the registration process to allow for the emergence of a party that genuinely represents the interests of the masses to provide real choice for the electorate.

It is significant that several new parties were registered for the 2018 elections, and the party registration process was generally inclusive. However, the PPRC's role in registering parties appears to allow the introduction of seemingly arbitrary and bureaucratic obstacles to political party formation and registration, and should be reviewed in advance of future elections. As noted above, the legal provisions that ban parties formed on the basis of tribal, ethnic group, religious, or community interests are contrary to international standards regarding the freedom of association. While these provisions are intended to inhibit the development of divisive tribal or ethnically based parties that might threaten national unity, Sierra Leone should consider alternative political and legal means to achieve that goal.

Candidate Nomination and Registration

International standards protect one's right to stand for election and to participate freely in the government of his or her country.[21] The right to be elected is a universal right requiring that states ensure that their citizens have the opportunity to stand for elected office, free from unreasonable restrictions.[22]

Sierra Leone's Constitution establishes the eligibility requirements for presidential and parliamentary candidates and includes a number of criteria that are not in line with international standards on non-discrimination and the right to stand for election. Presidential candidates must be nominated by a political party, excluding the right for independent candidates to contest. At least one presidential candidate claimed to have formed a new party for the sole purpose of contesting the election, while stating that she would have preferred to run as an independent.

Individuals can also be excluded from running in parliamentary and presidential elections for several reasons that appear unduly restrictive. These include excluding persons who are naturalized Sierra Leone citizens, have dual citizenship, are not fluent in the English language, are disqualified from their profession, or have declared bankruptcy, among other conditions. Individuals who have not resigned from the public service at least 12 months prior to the election, a seemingly unnecessarily protracted period and regardless of the level of position, are also excluded (though a constitutional provision exempts government ministers according to a 2016 Supreme Court decision).

[21] ICCPR, Art. 25(b) and African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Art. 13.1.
[22] UN CCPR: General Comment No. 25: The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service (Art. 25), para 15.

Despite these restrictions, the candidate registration process generally allowed for competitive contests. Sixteen presidential candidates nominated by political parties were approved to run. Seventeen political parties nominated 752 parliamentary candidates, and 43 independent candidates were registered. Only the APC and SLPP ran a full slate of parliamentary candidates, while the NGC ran in almost all constituencies. Only six parties nominated candidates in more than 25 percent of the constituencies. Four presidential candidates were also running for a parliamentary seat. There was an average of five candidates per ballot. The number of youth candidates (those 18-35 years old) reportedly increased by 50 percent compared to the 2012 elections.

In the year leading up to the 2018 elections, the PPRC monitored the national party conventions at which presidential nominees were chosen for compliance with the parties' constitutions. While the PPRC did not report any irregularities, several lawyers allegedly affiliated with various parties lodged challenges with the courts, alleging that various parties did not comply with their own constitutions in the selection of presidential and parliamentary candidates. The high court dismissed four cases challenging the selection of parliamentary nominees, including against the SLPP. In addition, the selection of the APC's presidential candidate, who was handpicked by the outgoing president at the party's convention, was widely believed not to be in compliance with the party's constitution. The PPRC was publicly criticized for not addressing this matter.

Both APC and SLPP organized highly contentious processes for nominating their presidential candidates. After reportedly courting more than a dozen contenders, outgoing President Koroma unilaterally anointed Minister for Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation Samura Kamara as his chosen successor. Critics argued that the move violated the party's constitution. The SLPP designated Julius Maada Bio to lead the SLPP once again into the elections. His opponents within the party alleged they suffered serious intimidation at the party convention. A number of SLPP members broke away to form a new party, the NGC, in support of the presidential ambitions of former senior U.N. official Kandeh Kolleh Yumella.

Many who felt they had been unfairly excluded by the APC and SLPP launched independent candidacies for parliament, leading to 43 independent candidates, a larger number than in the past. Former Vice President Samuel Sam-Sumana also founded a new political party, the Coalition for Change (C4C), as did former APC Minister Musa Tarawally, who established the Citizen's Democratic Party (CDP).

For the 2018 elections, the APC insisted that the constitutional ban on dual citizens be enforced for the first time in any election in the country's history, as it intended to challenge the eligibility of the NGC candidate. This significantly impacted various parties' candidate nominations, including the APC's, as many dual citizens, including sitting MPs, had expressed interest in nominations.

The amount of the nonrefundable candidate registration fees, established by a 2012 NEC statutory instrument (10,000,000 leones for parliamentary candidates and 100,000,000 for presidential candidates, i.e., $1,300 and $13,000 U.S. dollars), was a politically contentious issue. Opposition parties and civil society groups called for lowering the fees, which were criticized as exorbitant, not in line with the country's economic situation and not affordable for all citizens. These criticisms were credible in light of Sierra Leone's low annual gross domestic product and as compared with fees in other countries

in the region. Such high candidate registration fees unduly restrict the right to be elected, and are especially burdensome on and hinder the participation of women and youth in elections.

In 2017, after consultations with political parties, the NEC submitted an amended statutory instrument to parliament with lowered fees (3,000,000 for parliamentary nominees, or $400, and 30,000,000, or $4,000, for presidential nominees), but in October the instrument was thrown out on technical grounds. The NEC resubmitted the proposal but parliament failed to consider it prior to its dissolution in early December, raising allegations that the two main parties opposed the lowered fees because it would facilitate candidate registration for smaller parties and independent parliamentary candidates. Soon after, the government decided to subsidize the difference between the existing and the proposed fees, as it had done in the 2012 elections.

Smaller parties regarded even the subsidized fee as still too high to allow for an inclusive candidate registration process, disadvantaging the poorest in society, particularly women, and noted that it impacted the number of candidates they were able to nominate. Some parties chose to pay the fees of all or some of their nominees. The ruling party paid for all of its candidates' fees, while the main opposition party paid for the fees of its women candidates and the NGC paid the fees for its youth and women nominees.

The Carter Center recommends for future elections that the fee be revised to reflect the economic reality of the country. In addition, a revised law might include provisions for a refundable fee if the candidate receives a certain reasonable percentage of votes cast in the election, and for alternatives to the registration fee, such as presenting a certain reasonable percentage of voters' signatures collected in support of the candidate.

According to the NEC's procedures on nomination of candidates for the 2018 elections, the deadline for political parties to submit lists of approved candidates was January 10, and the period for nomination of each presidential and parliamentary candidate was January 17-26. The late nomination period may have also negatively impacted the timeliness of the court's adjudication of challenges to the presidential nominees, with the decisions all delayed until after the election.

Nominations for parliamentary candidates were submitted at the district-level offices and to the NEC headquarters for presidential nominees. Parliamentary candidates could not be nominated in more than one constituency, though candidates could contest both the presidential and parliamentary elections. Through efforts of the PPRC, the parties agreed to submit their nominations to the NEC on specific days in an attempt to avoid clashes between parties visiting the NEC offices at the same time. The PMDC reported that one of its parliamentary candidates was unable to register as it was also the APC's nomination day and riled APC supporters crowded the entrance to the NEC. While serving a notable aim, limiting the nomination period for each party to one prescribed day unduly restricts candidate registration. Security measures should allow parties and candidates to safely register their nominations without hindrances.

The NEC rejected one vice presidential candidate nominated by UNPP because he was under 40 years old, and the party substituted a new candidate. Voters and candidates, meanwhile, had the right to object to a candidate's provisional registration by Jan. 27, following publication of the provisional list of

nominees. Objections to parliamentary nominees are submitted to the district returning officer, whose decision can be appealed to the NEC headquarters. The possibility to challenge the NEC's decision is only by way of post-election petition challenging the results.

Some eight parliamentary nominees were challenged in various districts on grounds of ineligibility due to dual citizenship, non-resignation or late resignation from public service. These included an APC challenge to an NGC candidate who was also the party's presidential candidate on the basis of dual citizenship. All objections were denied at the district level and on appeal to the NEC on grounds of lack of evidence. The NEC issued its decisions on most of the appeals weeks after the legal deadline of Jan. 30, and the decisions were not made public. Challenges to the NEC's registration of presidential nominees are lodged with the Supreme Court; four such applications were filed.

Some interlocutors reported cases of nominees paying political parties for their nomination, and there were firsthand credible reports of some candidates being offered large financial incentives to withdraw from the race. Three independent parliamentary nominees formally withdrew their nominations, one after the ballot had been printed. The election law does not regulate the withdrawal of candidates or provide a deadline for withdrawal. The NEC's procedure on candidate nominations established a withdrawal deadline of Feb. 25, which was effectively after ballots had been printed. The NEC decided that the candidate's name would be manually struck off the ballot, voters informed, and any ballots for the candidate invalidated. International good practice encourages the adoption of legal provisions that harmonize the timing of the stages of the election administration.

The manner in which the parties and candidates are placed on the ballots is not regulated in the election law or NEC instruments. While some parties had preferred a lottery to be conducted, the NEC decided that the order would be alphabetical.

The Carter Center recommends that the NEC adopt a regulation governing all issues related to the ballot — including format, order, security features, printing, and distribution — to provide a legal basis for any decisions related to the ballots that will contribute to greater stability, transparency, and credibility in the electoral process.

Women's Participation as Candidates

The State shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life, and, in particular, shall ensure women, on equal terms with men, the right to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies.[23] As a member state of ECOWAS, Sierra Leone shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that women have equal rights with men to be voted for in elections, to participate in the formulation of government policies and the implementation thereof, and to hold public offices and perform public functions at all levels of governance.[24]

[23] UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Art. 7.
[24] ECOWAS: Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, Art. 2(3).

Inclusion of women candidates in the electoral process was particularly low. Only two of the presidential candidates were women (12 percent) and four vice presidential candidates were women, which marked an improvement from the 2012 elections, when no women contested the presidential elections. One hundred women ran for parliamentary seats, a mere 12.5 percent of all candidates, which was the same percentage of women that competed in the 2012 elections and was slightly lower than the percentage of female MPs in the outgoing parliament.

Of the five parties that nominated more than 100 candidates, the NGC and APC nominated the most women, 13 percent. Eight women candidates ran independently, making up 19 percent of all independent candidates. Some women ran as independents after parties withdrew their nominations subsequent to the submission of the party list to the NEC. Women aspirants reported that there is limited opportunity for women to find a place in the main parties, which are the main source of campaign funds.

Table 4 MP Candidate Figures by Gender per Party

Party	F	M	Total	% Women
APC	15	117	132	11%
ADP	8	27	35	23%
CDP	9	100	109	8%
C4C	13	116	149	10%
NDA	1	5	6	17%
NGC	16	111	127	13%
NPD	3	15	18	17%
NURP	0	1	1	N/A
PLP	1	2	3	33%
PDP	0	5	5	N/A
PMDC	5	20	25	20%
RNIP	0	3	3	N/A
RUFP	0	3	3	N/A
SLPP	11	121	132	8%
UDM	0	2	2	N/A
UNPP	1	3	4	25%
UP	7	9	7	44%
Total Parties	**90**	**660**	**752**	**12%**
Total Independent	8	35	43	19%
TOTAL	**98**	**695**	**793**	**12%**

The low number of women nominees was a critical shortcoming for the 2018 elections and reflected a lack of genuine political will to bring more women into the political sphere. It failed to contribute to the aim of 30 percent representation for women in the national legislative body, a widely used international benchmark, albeit one still far short of the international obligation for equitable representation of women and de facto political equality.

The Carter Center strongly encourages the adoption of legislation, and ideally a constitutional amendment, that includes provisions that will bring about women's equal participation in politics. In this respect, adoption of the long-awaited Gender Equality Bill that guarantees women's equal political participation is encouraged.

Election Administration

An independent and impartial election management body that functions transparently and professionally is recognized as an effective means of ensuring that citizens are able to participate in a genuine democratic process and that other international obligations related to the democratic process can be met.[25] The election management body is responsible for ensuring that the electoral process is in compliance with Sierra Leone's obligations for democratic elections and human rights. The body also should ensure accountable, efficient, and effective public administration as it relates to elections. [26]

The NEC administered the election under intense political pressure, a lack of independent financial resources, and a compressed electoral calendar. It was widely commended for the initial boundary delimitation exercise, for ensuring that the civil and voter registration exercise was completed, and for engaging regularly with the political parties and civil society. However, the NEC should consider steps that would provide for increased transparency, including the public posting of a comprehensive electoral calendar, meeting minutes, and using its website to disseminate information regarding the voter registry, final candidate lists, election day procedures, and information regarding electoral complaints and decisions.

Structure

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) is composed of a chief electoral commissioner (chairman) and four other members, who are appointed for five-year terms by the president after consultation with political party leaders and approved by parliament. Two of the current members are women. The 2018 elections were the first held under the leadership of the current chairman, Mohamed Conteh, who has been a long-standing commissioner. Each of the commissioners in practice is responsible for a different region in the country. The law also provides for district returning officers and regional returning officers located in the district and regional centers respectively. For the 2018 elections, there were 3,300 polling centers headed by a polling center manager and 11,122 polling stations within the polling centers, each headed by a presiding officer and staffed by six other poll workers.

While the NEC is granted independence under the constitution, the framework for appointment and dismissal does not sufficiently ensure the commissioners independence, as they are appointed by the president and the grounds for dismissal are unduly broad, including "misbehavior." According to the NEC and widely reiterated by opposition parties and civil society groups, the NEC faced mounting politically motivated pressures from the state throughout the electoral process. These pressures included an audit of the NEC's 2018 election-related spending, which was initiated by the Ministry of Finance in 2017 and which threatened to withhold the NEC's weekly funding, and an ongoing investigation of the NEC by the Anti-Corruption Commission initiated 10 months prior to the election, during the boundary delimitation and voter registration exercises. Some interlocutors noted that the corruption investigation was not transparent and flared up when controversial issues arose. The NEC reported that the investigation hindered preparations for the elections.

[25] UNHRC, General Comment No. 25, para. 20.
[26] AU, ACDEG, art 32(1)

The NEC's operational independence was also challenged by a failure to transfer financial resources in a timely manner, among other issues. Despite a commitment of the government to fully fund the 2018 elections, the amount requested by the NEC was not approved and the international community had to cover the difference. Moreover, the government delayed transfer of funds to the NEC early in the election period in 2017, which especially affected NEC's voter registration initiative and required its suppliers to provide their services on credit. Under pressure from the international community, the government started providing funds to the NEC. These funding delays were cited by interlocutors as an attempt to delay the election to allow for a constitutional referendum that would include a presidential third term. During this timeframe, a ruling party MP and supporters called for the resignation of the NEC chairman, accusing him of incompetence, while sections of the media called for restructuring of the NEC to purge some middle and senior management personnel. The chairman and the deputy also received death threats.

The NEC enjoyed a high level of trust from political parties and civil society. NEC Chairman Conteh was widely praised for his efforts in resisting government pressures, working relatively effectively under intense scrutiny and with limited resources, and being responsive to the concerns of political parties and other stakeholders. At the same time, most of the NEC's decisions are not subject to judicial review. The only decisions that can be appealed to court are those related to voter registration, candidate nominations, and the election results. Even those NEC decisions that directly affect electoral rights, such as the right to stand as a candidate, are not appealable. This shortcoming leaves many aspects of the administration of elections under the final authority of an administrative body, without judicial oversight and access to effective legal remedy, which is inconsistent with international standards and best practices. The Carter Center recommends that the election law establish a mechanism for challenging the NEC decisions and actions in court on a timely basis.

Electoral Calendar

Under the constitution, the date of parliamentary elections is decided by the president in consultation with the NEC, while the presidential election date is determined by the NEC in consultation with the president. The decision of the 2018 election date was challenging, with delays in the announcement due to the president's indecision. At the end of 2016, National Election Watch, a civil society election monitoring group, issued a public statement urging the scheduling of the election to allow for advance planning, especially the conduct of voter registration.[27] Three months later, the President set March 7, 2018, as the date for the parliamentary elections. The NEC's subsequent decision to hold the presidential election on the same date, which was justified as economically efficient, resulted in the presidential election taking place about 10 days past the constitutional deadline.

The late announcement of the election date left the NEC with a tight timeframe for election preparations, especially for the voter registration exercise. Some interlocutors noted that several aspects of the NEC's preparations were delayed, including the registration of candidates and printing of ballots. Apart from the time pressure on the election administration, the delay also placed uncertainty

[27] NEW Press Release, November 28, 2016, http://www.nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NEW-Press-Release-28th-Nov-Final-NEW-call-on-NEC-for-Election-date.pdf.

on aspiring candidates who were public servants as they had to step down not less than 12 months prior to the election. A lack of capacity at the NEC may have also contributed to the late timing of the preparations, which left little room for unexpected exigencies and for election officials and stakeholders to become familiar with the election day and tallying procedures that were adopted late in the process. Though not required by law, the NEC produced an election calendar, which includes concrete dates for some key stages of the process. However, it was not comprehensive, leaving out important deadlines, for example, in the design, printing and distribution of ballots; hiring and training of election officials; accreditation of observers; announcement of results; and holding of any second round.

Transparency

As mentioned above, international standards underscore the need for transparency in electoral bodies to prevent corruption, including meetings of election bodies.[28] Despite some outreach efforts to electoral stakeholders, transparency at the NEC was limited, a key shortcoming in the election administration.

The election law does not generally mandate transparency of the election administration, and the NEC did not employ broad transparency measures. The NEC sessions may be closed or open, and in practice they were all closed. Moreover, there are no requirements for publishing information on the NEC's website concerning the decision-making process (e.g., session minutes), statutory instruments (e.g., resolutions, regulations and procedures) and other relevant data. The website does not include much of this information and documentation. While lack of capacity to maintain an up-to-date, comprehensive website may play a role, the general default seems to be to keep information out of the public domain. As a result, stakeholders resorted to submitting letters to request information and raise concerns. In this respect, the SLPP was particularly active, corresponding with the NEC on matters related to the integrity of the electoral process, seeking information on safeguards related to ballots, voting and counting, and the results management process. The NEC was generally responsive to these requests for information.

The international community encouraged the NEC to engage regularly with political actors and other stakeholders as a confidence-building measure. The mechanism employed for responding to parties and stakeholders' requests for information and clarifications was regular meetings (at first biweekly, then weekly as the election approached) to which all political parties and relevant civil society organizations were invited. As observed by members of The Carter Center team, these meetings did not always provide comprehensive, clear, and consistent information, though parties and other stakeholders were appreciative of the NEC's efforts to respond to their questions, provide information, and listen to their concerns.

In Commitment 7 of Sierra Leone's 2016 National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership, the NEC committed to promote transparency and accountability in the management of elections, and specifically to publish online the voter register and constituency boundaries information.[29] However, the voter register was never published online and the boundary delimitation information posted was not the most up-to-date.

[28] U.N., UNCAC, art. 13(1)(a); AU, Convention on Corruption, art 12(2); ECOWAS, Protocol, art. 34(2)
[29] Republic of Sierra Leone, Mid-Term Self-Assessment of the National Action Plan, http://www.ogi.gov.sl/report/OGP%20SELF%20ASSESSMENT%20REPORT%202017.pdf.

A group of citizens lodged an access to information request for the final candidate lists and lists of all polling stations and centers, which under the election law were to be made publicly available not later than 15 days before the election but could not be found on the NEC's website. Other key information could not be readily found on the NEC's website, including the election calendar, procedural manuals on voting, counting and tallying, list of accredited observers, and decisions on complaints and appeals.

In line with Sierra Leone's commitment toward open governance and as a key tool to ensuring credible elections, the Center recommends that the NEC adopt a range of additional measures to enhance transparency to increase public perception of its independence and willingness to be held accountable.

To ensure a transparent, fair and impartial process, civil society organizations and opposition parties urged the NEC to adopt clear and objective criteria and safeguards for the vehicle permitting process related to the election day vehicle movement ban imposed by the SLP. However, the NEC declined to articulate the rationale for accrediting those vehicles that would be allowed to travel on election day and failed to publish a list of all institutions' vehicles that had been accredited, further limiting transparency in the process. Considering the politically contentious nature of the vehicle movement ban, the NEC should have provided the highest level of transparency in the vehicle accreditation process to maintain public trust in the election administration and in the credibility of the electoral process.

Ballot Security

According to international standards, states should put in place safeguards to ensure that voters are unable to register or vote more than once.[30] Sensitive election materials should be stored securely throughout the voting process.[31]

Ballot security was a politically controversial issue. The ballots and other sensitive election materials were printed in South Africa, with the assistance of the international community. In early February, 10 political parties submitted a joint resolution to the NEC urging it to disclose details about the printing of ballot papers, including the printing company, contract details, ballot paper quantities, serial numbers assigned, and shipment details, as well as the arrangements for the party's observation on the arrival in country of voting materials, their movement to the NEC's warehouse, and their distribution to the district centers. The ballots arrived in country in late February.

The high number of excess ballots printed raised particular concerns among parties and other stakeholders. The election law does not establish a maximum percentage of excess ballots to be printed (i.e., the number of ballots over and above the number of registered voters). The NEC decided to print 3,759,100 ballots, more than 18 percent excess ballots. The NEC explained to stakeholders that the number of excess ballots was needed to cover the procedure established for polling staff, police, and other security officials to vote at the polling center where they were on duty. However, taking into account those numbers of personnel, the excess ballots provided to polling centers was significantly above the required number. The NEC also noted its desire to cover the most extreme exigencies, including the loss of large numbers of ballots in the distribution process.

[30] U.N., Human Rights and Elections, para. 68
[31] CoE (Venice Commission), Code of Good Practices, sec 1.3,2.2,3.3-5 (explanatory report)

The controversy over excess ballots was exacerbated by the fact that the voting and counting procedures manual did not provide for reconciliation and accountability of the excess ballots. Moreover, the NEC's decision to put the excess ballots under the control of the polling center manager, a position not established under the law, for distribution to presiding officers on an as-needed basis, rather than under control of the presiding officers, also raised stakeholders' concerns. Several opposition parties requested information on the procedures for handling these ballots. In response, the NEC provided parties with supplementary information on the reconciliation process for the excess ballots.

The Carter Center recommends that for future elections transparent accountability measures for all ballots be put in place. In addition, consideration could be given to having the law establish a maximum percentage of excess ballots, taking into account a balance between possible exigencies and the need to maintain a credible process.

Voter Education

International standards require all eligible voters to be informed of their electoral rights before, during, and after election day.[32]

Insufficient voter education was consistently noted by interlocutors, with a lack of NEC funds being the primary cause, while many NGOs and other institutions contributed in a limited way to the voter education efforts. Interlocutors noted that voter education materials were distributed particularly late in the election cycle, in part due to the delays in government funding early on in the election period, and that the information was only basic, including posters on the candidates and how to vote. This was one area that stakeholders noted had much room for improvement, especially given the high illiteracy rate in the country, the conducting of multiple types of elections on the same day, and the number of invalid ballots in past elections. In a positive step and with international assistance, the NEC employed district voter education and training officers, all with disabilities, to work with disabled groups in the districts.

Persons with Disabilities

International election standards call for accommodations to be made for people with disabilities, and polling places must be accessible to peoples with disabilities.[33] Accommodation for persons with disabilities (PWD) has been given particular importance in Sierra Leone as many people were left disabled as a result of the decades-long civil war; the number of PWDs in the country is, however, not known.

In 2015, the NEC adopted a disability policy for ensuring the right to election participation for PWDs. The policy is a positive step and addresses issues such as working toward a national census of PWDs and list of voters with disabilities, providing voter education and information on all aspects of electoral process and results that is accessible to PWDs, training and sensitizing for polling officials on issues related to PWDs, and provision of assistive tools to facilitate voting for PWDs. In addition, the NEC in collaboration with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, conducted an assessment on access to the

[32] U.N., Human Rights and Elections, para. 75; U.N, ICCPR, art 25(b); OAS, ACHR, art. 23; U.N., UDHR, art 21(3); U.N., ICERD, art. 5(c); AU, ACDEG, art. 4
[33] U.N., CRPD, art. 29

electoral process for PWDs that culminated in recommendations for electoral institutions, political parties and civil society.

The 2011 Persons with Disabilities Act provides that all public buildings must be made accessible for persons with disabilities within five years of the adoption of the act, or 2016. However, this objective has not been widely achieved, including for polling stations. The NEC conducted an assessment, with assistance from the international community, to identify those polling stations that were the most wheelchair inaccessible and some were provided with ramps. However, the NEC acknowledged that many polling stations would remain not fully accessible. In a positive step, the NEC reintroduced the provision of tactile ballot folders to polling stations to facilitate blind voters for the 2018 elections. Measures and public funding to enhance the political participation of persons with disabilities in future elections, including the accessibility of all polling stations and NEC offices for wheel-chair bound citizens (as well as access to buildings of law enforcement and the judiciary as key institutions in the electoral process), and voter education for the hearing and visually impaired is strongly encouraged.

Election Campaign

Equitable treatment of candidates and parties during an election, as well as the maintenance of an open and transparent campaign environment, are important to ensuring the integrity of the democratic election process. Sierra Leone's legal framework and its international and regional commitments create obligations related to campaign periods, including the right to freely express opinions and to participate in public affairs.[34]

Legal Framework

The election law has limited rules regarding the campaign. There are various non-binding codes on campaign conduct signed by political parties and candidates, including the NEC's code of election campaign ethics, the signing of which is a precondition for candidate registration, and a PPRC code of conduct for political parties, candidates and supporters. While the codes include some provisions that are suitable for inclusion in the law, other provisions are more appropriate for a non-binding code of conduct. For example, a provision in the PPRC code of conduct commits signatories not to use the media to complain against other parties, the PPRC and the NEC.

International good practice indicates that campaign rules that concern legitimate restrictions should be incorporated into the legislation to ensure their enforceability. In addition, the ban on use of state resources for campaigning would benefit from further elaboration, as it is a serious malpractice. While there is an extensive list of electoral offences, misuse of state resources is not included, making the ban unenforceable.

The NEC and PRRC have overlapping mandates to handle campaign-related complaints. The NEC's mandate emanates from the election law, while the PPRC's campaign code of conduct establishes a complaint process to the PPRC. These institutions do not have deadlines for handling such complaints or enforcement powers, although the PPRC can initiate court proceedings to de-register political parties that violate the terms of their registration, even for the smallest infractions. There is also no legal

[34] ICCPR, art 19(2); ACHPR, art. 13(2); ICCPR, art. 19; ACHPR, art. 13.

requirement for the NEC and PPRC to forward complaints or information on campaign-related electoral offences to law enforcement for investigation and possible prosecution.

The election law includes provisions that unduly restrict freedom of expression in the campaign process, in that it requires political actors in their campaigning to "respect and take into account the Fundamental Principles of State policy set out in the constitution", and to "carry out the campaign in keeping with ethical and moral standards and the respect due to the other candidates and political parties and the electorate." To "insult or defame" other parties and candidates is also prohibited, while under the 1965 Public Order Act, defamation is criminalized, punishable by prison terms of three to seven years. Under the Political Parties Act, public servants are prohibited from engaging in any political activities or speech, including within the 12 months after stepping down from their position. These types of restrictions are contrary to the constitutionally protected freedom of expression and are inconsistent with international standards. Moreover, freedom to disseminate ideas that may challenge the constitutional order and principles and to deliver criticism of other parties and opponents is fundamental to a democratic electoral process.

The official campaign period is established by the NEC. For the 2018 elections, the NEC established a 30-day campaign period, from February 4 – March 5, with a legally mandated campaign silence period on March 6. Campaigning prior to the start of the official period is prohibited. The PPRC has a role in monitoring campaign activities for compliance with the political parties' code of conduct and, in December 2017, re-activated the District Code Monitoring Committees in all districts, as well as a national committee, composed of representatives from political parties, civil society, and law enforcement.

The election law requires the NEC to create a campaign calendar in consultation with political parties and candidates, which sets out a schedule of campaign events (rallies, processions, marches) to be held by the contenders. It is an election offense to hold any campaign event outside of the calendar, subject to a minimum fine of 20,000,000 Leone or a prison term of not less than five years. While the campaign calendar was to set out the precise locations, days and times for events, the NEC instead created a calendar that banned events except on certain days in certain districts allocated to parties. The days and districts were allocated by lottery for the parties, while independent candidates were left out and given only one day each in their respective constituencies. This approach discriminated against independent candidates.

During the campaign, the PPRC issued a statement calling on parties to comply with the calendar and urging the police to remain vigilant and charge anyone caught violating it. This strict calendar was also imposed in previous elections with the apparent aim to prevent political violence and was seemingly accepted by the parties. However, such a strict approach is inconsistent with the law as written, and curtails the freedom of assembly. While the violence prevention intentions are clear and understandable, the restrictions are inconsistent with international obligations for democratic elections. In the future, Sierra Leone should aspire to conducting elections without needing such restrictions.

There were apparent differing understandings amongst stakeholders about whether the calendar was a ban on all types of campaign activities (including door to door campaigning) or just public campaign events, e.g. rallies, processions. The NEC did not clarify this matter. There were reports alleging that

some parties sold their campaign days to other parties and that the ruling party did not adhere to the calendar, holding campaign events on its off days without repercussion. This type of practice is concerning as it creates an uneven playing field in the campaign or the perception thereof. Some parties raised concerns that the calendar violated their campaign freedoms and that the randomized schedule was not conducive to running an efficient campaign as the days and districts were not assigned in a logical manner to allow for timely and cost-effective campaign tours. The C4C reported that, on its allotted campaign days, scheduled events at the public stadiums were cancelled by the authorities in Makeni and Freetown.

On Jan. 8, the PPRC issued a statement calling on the ADP to remove all posters and billboards bearing Islamic connotation from public places within 48 hours on grounds that it contravened the constitutional prohibition against political parties using any reference connected to any religion. The posters included the campaign slogan "Allah is One." The ADP publicly announced it would defy the order. The PPRC subsequently publicly apologized for its statement, which had implied a connection between terrorism and Islam, but did not backtrack from its orders to take down the posters. Also on Jan. 8, the PPRC called on the C4C to desist from using the national colors in its campaign and the NGC was ordered to "harmonize its colors and to desist from using individual colors during their political activities" (related to using some colors connected to other parties) on grounds that these actions violated the terms and conditions of its registration, which prohibit parties from using the national colors or colors of other registered parties.

In mid-February, the PPRC issued a statement calling on the APC to remove all banners and posters that carry the slogan "Krios for APC" from public places on grounds it contravened the constitutional prohibition against parties aligning with any particular tribal group. The call came after sections of the Krio community said they were deeply offended by the ruling party's misrepresentation of the political loyalty and support of the Krios as a tribal group. The APC did not heed the call and the posters were seen up until election day, including a large one on the Supreme Court premises.

The election law generally provided the electoral contestants an opportunity to organize their supporters and communicate with the public. The NEC and PPRC utilized various legal and consultative mechanisms to encourage a peaceful campaign, although these mechanisms at times also affected freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. The Carter Center recommends a post-election review to assess whether, for future elections, less restrictive mechanisms can equally serve the broad goal of maintaining the peace and preventing violence.

Campaign Activities

Due to the limited size and scope of its mission, The Center did not observe campaigning in a systematic manner. However, the Center experts met with representatives of four of the six largest parties (measured by the number of candidates nominated by the party for parliament), and three smaller parties, including one of the women presidential candidates. The Center's interlocutors reported they were campaigning via door-to-door efforts, large-scale rallies, and marches. Parties, particularly the APC and SLPP, regularly distributed branded t-shirts, caps, and other items.

The campaign period officially began on Feb. 4. However, the majority of parties, including APC and SLPP, initiated campaign activities well in advance of the official start date. By mid-January, Freetown was plastered with campaign posters, billboards, and flyers, which were also in evidence outside the capital. Candidates were moving about the country, holding de facto campaign events. President Koroma undertook a "farewell tour" of the country in December 2017, accompanied by the APC's presidential and vice-presidential candidates, which prompted concerns regarding an abuse of state resources in support of the ruling party's campaign.

The Center's team encountered campaign events organized by APC and SLPP in the capital on several occasions. For the most part, these events were peaceful and consisted of marches and processions converging in mass rallies downtown. A significant exception occurred before the official start of the campaign period, on Jan. 28, the day assigned to APC to formally nominate its candidates. The major parties' nomination days became rallies by another name, and on APC's nomination day, a confrontation between youth "cliques" mobilized by the party for the occasion resulted in several stabbings and at least one death.[35]

Three debates organized by a consortium of organizations featured candidates from the six parties that fielded more than 25 candidates for parliament. The debates were carried live on television, radio and through streaming on the internet. Presidential candidates participated in the three-hour-long, first debate. The second and third debates, respectively, included candidates under 35 and women candidates. The parties not invited to participate, not surprisingly, objected to their exclusion. Including 17 parties would have made the process unwieldy and reduced its impact. While quality public opinion surveys do not exist in Sierra Leone, various interlocutors viewed the debates as a commendable initiative to focus attention on critical policy issues confronting the nation.

The use of state resources for campaigning was a common concern raised by opposition parties and civil society organizations. In the months leading up to the elections, the outgoing president undertook an official presidential "thank you" tour countrywide. The tour was apparently used as a campaign opportunity, which used public resources, vehicles and staff, with the events featuring the APC's presidential candidate alongside the president. Opposition parties accused the president of misuse of state resources to pay for his nationwide campaigning, apparently costing millions of dollars, and deliberately skewing the playing field. The PPRC and NEC were publicly criticized for not addressing this apparent transgression. International good practice indicates that state or public resources should not be used to support a particular party. Given these guidelines, and the concerns about instances of the misuse of government resources, The Carter Center recommends that the PPRC and NEC implement stronger and more proactive measures to address these concerns in future elections.

Some interlocutors also raised concerns about the excessive amount of money spent by the ruling party in its campaign efforts, claiming the government had obviously funded the campaign. There were also assertions that the Chinese government had contributed to and participated in the ruling party's campaign, with claims that Chinese monies had been traced to the supply and distribution of campaign

[35] Africa Review, The Challenges of Policing Sierra Leone Elections, February 25, 2018, http://www.africareview.com/news/The-challenge-of-policing-Sierra-Leone-election/979180-4319192-glbhn/index.html.

materials and the printing of official party banners and posters, and that Chinese officials were seen distributing valuable giveaways to gain favor with the ruling party.[36]

Concerns were raised about paramount chiefs openly supporting the ruling party. While not legally banned, this is prohibited under the PPRC's code of conduct as well as the 2013 Code of Ethics and Service Standards for Chiefs which requires their political neutrality. This was considered by stakeholders to be an abuse of their role as traditional leaders in light of the extreme influence they have over their community members. In this respect, a balance between the rights of all citizens to engage in political activity and the abuse of office and resources in the campaign process should be sought in both the law and practice.

There were reports that minors were used by political parties for various campaign activities, including distribution of campaign materials, and in some cases supplied with alcohol and drugs. This led to a public statement by a UNICEF representative that denounced the involvement of minors in political activities as a violation of the rights of children.

Allegations of campaign vote buying were raised by interlocutors, citing instances of various parties' giving away goods to gain voters' support, and noting that the ruling party's giveaways were especially excessive. These giveaways could be seen during the parties' campaign rallies. The line between party campaigners and attendees at campaign events was blurred as campaign processions through the streets included thousands of people, with reports that many were paid with cash or giveaways in exchange for their show of support.

In January, the government issued a temporary ban on conducting female genital mutilation, which is widely practiced in the country, to prevent political actors from paying for the cutting ceremony to gain political support, which apparently is a common practice.

Several political parties claimed that the police misused their powers in the election process, including assertions that the police provided uneven protection at party offices and rallies, with the ruling party receiving substantial police protection and opposition parties either no or little protection. Interlocutors also raised allegations about discriminatory application of the law, with the police detaining unruly supporters of opposition parties but not those of the ruling party, as well as arbitrary arrests of opposition supporters. During the campaign period, the leader and presidential candidate of the ADP had been awaiting trial for several months on charges of small arms possession, which the party claimed were politically motivated and part of a larger intimidation campaign that included firebombing of the party's headquarters in mid-2017. Several civil society organizations publicly condemned the actions against the party.

The election campaign provided opportunities for parties to organize and to communicate with voters. The three debates enhanced the electoral process and should serve as a precedent for future elections. However, to address concerns about the partisan use of government resources during an election

[36] The Sierra Leone Telegraph, Chinese in APC Campaign, February 14, 2018, http://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/chinese-in-apc-campaign-leader-and-chairman-for-life-must-give-answers/.

campaign, The Carter Center recommends specifying proscribed activities in the legal framework and empowering the NEC and PPRC to examine allegations of government abuse.

Campaign-Related Violence

Incidents of election-related violence and intimidation occurred on several occasions when APC or SLPP ventured into areas that have historically been considered the other party's stronghold. APC officials alleged that on the evening of Jan. 26, the party's nomination day, SLPP partisans in Pujehun marched through town throwing stones at the homes of APC supporters and threatening to kill them. Almost a month later, during a Feb. 20 campaign stop in Kamalo (Karene), the birthplace of APC presidential candidate Kamara, SLPP alleged its presidential candidate was attacked by APC supporters. (APC officials denied the allegation.) That same day, former Vice President Samuel Sam-Sumana's C4C claimed his campaign day in his home district of Kono ended in a clash, which resulted in eight people injured and a vehicle burned.

Following these incidents, a wave of election-related violence and intimidation rippled across the country. The NGC reported that eight of its supporters in Port Loko were detained in late February by the SLP on trumped-up charges. Multiple secondary sources reported clashes between party supporters in Bo and Kenema during the evening of Feb. 27. Although it is unclear which parties were involved, both towns are traditionally SLPP strongholds, and APC had campaigned in Bo that day. Injuries were reported in Kenema. The most serious clashes were reported the following day in Waterloo, near Freetown. This was also an APC campaign day, and SLPP alleges that the ruling party's MP candidate for a local constituency celebrated the occasion by leading supporters in an attack on the home of their district chair in which two vehicles were burned.

The Institute for Governance Reform also reported inter-party clashes in Koinadugu and Kambia around this time, noting that in these incidents "all opposition parties involved… are blaming the incumbent regime for starting the violence." The IGR went on to note "a pattern of attacks on opposition party offices that has gone unpunished since 2009."[37]

In spite of several serious incidents of violence, the campaign provided political parties an adequate opportunity to present their respective platforms to the general public. For the most part, the campaign was conducted in a peaceful manner, although during the final week before the election several incidents of violence hindered freedom of assembly for several parties. For all political activities, and particularly during election campaigns, The Carter Center recommends that the SLP provide adequate security for all parties and conduct effective investigations of all violent incidents.

[37] Institute for Governance Reform, Briefing Pack for the 2018 Elections (sent via e-mail to International Observers on March 6, 2018).

Campaign Finance

The state is obligated to take measures to prevent corruption, particularly in the context of campaign financing. [38] The regulation of campaign finance should enforce a transparent process in which all political parties and candidates are treated equally. While the authorities have the legislative mandate to impose restrictions on campaign finance, very little was done to stem the flow of money or resources during the 2018 elections. Steps should be taken to implement a comprehensive campaign finance framework, so as to allow greater controls and to create a more even playing field for all political parties.

A limited framework for party and campaign finance is set out in the Political Parties Act. Not later than 21 days after an election is called, political parties are required to submit a statement of assets and liabilities to the PPRC. In spite of this requirement, no parties had submitted the statement for the 2018 elections and the PPRC did not enforce the requirement. Public funding for party and campaign activities is not provided and the source of funds is limited to monetary or in-kind donations by eligible voters. This leaves smaller parties with little money to campaign, especially in light of the country's poor economic situation. Opposition parties noted that the advantages and alleged abuses of the incumbency are therefore magnified. There is no limit on amount of donation to a political party or requirements to disclose donation information, and the PPRC has not exercised its express authority under the Political Parties Act to adopt regulations limiting donations and requiring disclosure so as to minimize the influence of money in the political process.

There are no campaign finance reporting requirements prior to election day, limiting citizens' right to information about financial support for candidates, and limiting voters' ability to make an informed choice prior to casting their vote. There is no limit on campaign spending, and several analysts speculate that the 2018 election campaign was the costliest in post-war Sierra Leone. Within 60 days after the announcement of results, parties and independent candidates are required to submit a detailed statement of campaign expenditures, but this is not subject to audit by the PPRC or other independent authority with the requisite authority and capacity.

The lack of a framework to submit, have audited, and publish comprehensive information on campaign finance, on both donations and expenditures, at regular intervals significantly limits transparency in the elections. The Carter Center recommends that a comprehensive framework on campaign finance be developed that ensures the highest level of transparency in campaign finance, including prior to election day. Commensurate penalties for breach of campaign finance rules and reporting requirements should be established.

Role of Media

The media play an indispensable role during democratic elections by educating voters and political parties about major issues, thus giving them access to information so they can make a truly informed decision. Sierra Leone's regional commitments indicate that in order to promote equality, political

[38] Treaty obligations established the general requirement and indicated that states shall promote transparency in public decision-making as a means of combating corruption. U.N. Convention Against Corruption, arts. 18 and 13; African Union Convention on Corruption, art. 7; UNCAC, art. 7

parties and candidates must have access to the public media on a nondiscriminatory basis and that public service media should ensure that the public receives adequate and balanced information during election periods.[39] This includes ensuring that women candidates are able to secure equal media coverage to their male counterparts.

There is limited regulation of the media in coverage of the campaign. The election law provides only that the state-owned Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), which operates a TV station and a radio network, must ensure equal air time is given to each candidate and political party during an election period, and that not less than 30 minutes of airtime must be allocated to each candidate and party. Media is regulated by the Independent Media Commission (IMC), whose members are by law appointed by the president acting on the advice of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), and subject to the approval of parliament. However, SLAJ reported that the current members of the IMC were appointed without consultation and are ostensibly ruling party activists. Nonetheless, according to several interlocutors, the IMC has generally demonstrated independence from the government. A Media Code of Practice, which includes provisions on fairness in political reporting, is the self-regulating instrument enforced by the IMC which can impose fines, suspensions, and closures.

There are more than 20 regularly published newspapers, approximately 40 radio stations – more than half of which are community stations – and two television stations. Most newspapers are independent, though many rely on political funds, which impacts their content, and some are more directly associated with political parties. The print media routinely criticize both the government and opposition parties.

Radio is the most important and widely accessed medium for obtaining information, due to the low literacy rate, which is estimated at less than 50 percent of the adult population, and the high cost of print and TV media. Independent radio outlets also rely on political funds. Internet usage was at just 2 percent of the population in 2014, and thus the role social media played in the 2018 campaign was very limited.

Some interlocutors raised concerns that media outlets face government pressure on content and that the criminal libel law is used to intimidate journalists. Some parties noted media outlets must be paid to provide news coverage. According to the EU's media monitoring of the 2018 election campaign, "During the campaign period, the monitored media regularly covered the election process and candidates in a variety of programmes. The presidential debate gave voters the opportunity to compare political platforms of six key candidates."[40] However, media monitors concluded that the ruling party benefited from more positive coverage.

When citizens criticized the election day vehicle movement ban on social media, the Inspector General of Police warned the public, media, and political parties to cease commenting on the ban, suggesting that court action was the only legitimate means to challenge the ban. Notably, in the weeks leading up to the election, one social media user, a university student, was charged for alleging the police had accepted a bribe to commit election fraud. Citizens were informed that the police would increase

[39] AU, Declaration on Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, art. 6; AU, Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, art. IV.5.
[40] European Union Election Observation Mission, Preliminary Statement, March 9, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_eom_sierra_leone_preliminary_statement090318_1.pdf.

surveillance of social media by its Cyber Forensic Unit to identify such transgressors. The authorities' response raises concerns about restrictions on the freedom of expression and is especially troubling as slander and libel remain criminalized for all persons, regardless of public profile, and are charged, contrary to international standards. The Carter Center encourages the authorities to foster a climate in which dissenting political expression and criticism of authority are tolerated, especially during an electoral period.

Role of Civil Society

According to public international law, all people have the right to participate in the public affairs of their country.[41] This includes the right of citizens to participate in nongovernmental organizations as well as to participate in citizen observer organizations and contribute to voter education efforts.[42] Through these means, civil society can play an essential role in upholding an electoral process that is accountable and in which all participants can have confidence.

Sierra Leone has an active civil society and a plethora of nongovernmental organizations, which are involved with a range of civic, religious, development, human rights and other activities. For elections, many of the organizations form coalitions of often overlapping organizations to implement programs involving voter education, peace and conflict prevention, voter registration, election campaign and election day monitoring. The specific programs are often funded by external donors seeking to enhance the peacefulness and quality of elections in Sierra Leone. Many of the umbrella coalitions existed in previous elections, even as they sought to incorporate advances in technology into their repertoire of undertakings for the 2018 elections. Sierra Leone civil society organizations operate freely, are well-respected, and contributed significantly to the conduct of the electoral process.

The National Elections Watch (NEW) was established in 2002 and today represents a coalition of 375 organizations. For this election, they monitored the voter registration, distribution of voter ID, and boundary delimitations processes, and the role of the media during the campaign[43]. Most notably, they recruited more than 11,500 volunteers to serve as election day poll monitors.[44] In addition, NEW selected 506 polling sites in a random sample to provide a rapid assessment of the quality of election day procedures and projection of results in the presidential election. Ultimately, 98 percent of the NEW

[41] U.N., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(a); AU, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, art. 13(1); U.N., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 21(a).
[42] U.N., United Nations Human Rights Committee, General
Comment No. 25 on "The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service," para. 11; U.N., Human Rights and Elections: A Handbook on the Legal, Technical, and Human Rights Aspects of Elections, para. 124.
[43] See NEW Press releases issued during 2017 and 2018, http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/category/press-release/.
[44] NEW Press Release, March 6, 2018, http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NEW-2018-PRE-ELECTION-STATEMENT-.pdf.

sample sites provided the requisite data soon after the close of the polls, and their projection fell within a statistical range of less than 1 percent of the official NEC results that were announced on March 13.[45]

NEW was part of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium, which also included the Campaign for Good Governance, the Independent Radio Network, the Institute for Governance Reform, 50/50 Group, and two international organizations, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and Search for Common Ground. Each of the organizations sponsored specific activities related to the elections and provided mutual support in ensuring the broadest impact. Another coalition, which included the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, Africa Young Voices network, the PPRC, NEC and the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium, organized the candidate debates.

Several civil society organizations focused their attention on violence prevention. They trained peace volunteers, who would monitor rallies and other events, and seek to mediate when disputes erupted. The peace monitors also disseminated peace messages through a variety of media. A couple of organizations also established "situation rooms," where volunteers collected information regarding incidents occurring in different parts of the country and often triggered direct mediation efforts by the organization's leaders with the relevant authorities. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the Women's Situation Room (WSR) both sought to project the solidarity of women across West Africa and beyond in promoting peace through vigilance and activism.

As in previous elections, Sierra Leone's active civil society played multiple roles in contributing to the electoral process before, during, and after election day and they serve as a tremendous resource for the country. Specifically notable are the proactive efforts of multiple organizations to develop creative approaches to preventing violence in different regions of the country.

Security Sector

In accordance with obligations in public international law, potential voters must have the ability to vote without intimidation or coercion, and security personnel must play a constructive role in providing protection to voters, candidates, and electoral management body personnel.[46]

The Carter Center expert mission sought to understand the planning and training processes employed by Sierra Leone's security forces, and how their efforts had an impact on the ground. Preventing violence before, during and after an election is both essential for the conduct of a credible process and a major challenge for many countries. [47] While civil society organizations may play an important contributory role in lowering tensions and mediating disputes, the security sector inevitably must play the critical role.

[45] NEW Press Releases, March 12 and 14, 2018, http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PROJECTION-OF-RUN-OFF-1.pdf and http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NEW-PROJECTION-AGAINST-NECS-OFFICIAL-RESULTS.pdf.
[46] AU, Convention on Corruption, art. 4; U.N., UNCAC, art. 18; U.N., Human Rights and Election, para. 94-97; EU, Handbook (Ed. 2), p. 52
[47] USAID, Best Practices in Electoral Security, January 2013, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2496/Electoral_Security_Best_Practices_USAID.pdf.

For the most part, the security forces provided an environment that allowed parties and candidates to campaign and to organize. However, several incidents of violence marred the campaign. The security forces failure to pursue vigorous investigations resulted in a corresponding loss of confidence among the parties most affected.

Elections in Sierra Leone have been characterized by violence, intimidation, and assault, not only against political opponents but also against the wider populace and, in several cases, have been marred by allegations of election rigging. However, in 2012, Sierra Leone was widely acclaimed for conducting free, fair, and credible elections. The security sector played a significant role in providing the enabling environment for the conduct of these relatively peaceful elections.

To consolidate the gains made in strengthening democracy and fostering peace in the country, a 2014 National Security Council (NSC) directive called for establishing an Integrated Election Security Planning Committee (IESPC) under the auspices of the National Security Coordinator and the National Security Council Coordinating Group (NSCCG). The IESPC was tasked with providing a framework within which security sector institutions could be adequately prepared and resourced to perform elections security-related duties with professionalism, gender sensitivity, impartiality, and credibility. The objective was to ensure a safe and secure environment exists for all stakeholders, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized. The IESPC also coordinated international assistance that sought to advise and support national authorities and institutions.

An important achievement in the development of an integrated security plan for the 2018 elections was the National Election Threats Assessment, a comprehensive 2017 exercise involving more than 800 respondents from all sectors of Sierra Leone society. This led to the development of a district risk map, which served as a guide for the deployment of security resources before, during, and immediately after the elections. The essence of the district risk mapping was to highlight potential hotspots around the country and to guide prioritization with respect to the limited resources available to the sector.

The district risk mapping exercise identified several potential threats associated with vehicle movement, including the use of government vehicles under the control of the ruling party to transport party militants, who could be perceived as intimidating prospective voters on polling day; the use of vehicles by marshals to transport government ministers; and the use of vehicles to transport unaccredited political functionaries. Notwithstanding these concerns, the IESPC Election Security Strategy did not include any recommendation to ban vehicle movement. The only reference regarding this issue is under Preferred Outcome: “Free and unhindered movement of voters.”

A training manual was developed by the IESPC to guide actors within the National Security Architecture (NSA) in their conduct during the elections. The manual defines “security” as the state of being free from danger or threat. Security is described as a crucial condition in the context of elections — it assists in establishing an enabling environment that is conducive to holding a democratic poll. This training material was designed to help all security personnel know their responsibilities during the entire electoral process and work together in the provision of security. A total of 3,400 security personnel were trained during the period preceding the election, or about 25 percent of the SLP’s total force.

The Sierra Leone security sector began preparing for the elections a couple of years in advance and developed well-conceived plans and training programs for addressing potential security challenges. The newly appointed Inspector General, who serves as head of the SLP, sought to impress on his subordinates the importance of remaining neutral in their interactions with all political actors. During the early weeks of the campaign, the SLP seemed to have internalized the planning and training. However, the SLP was severely faulted by opposition political parties and civil society actors for not credibly investigating several incidents of violence during the two weeks preceding the election. As election day approached, complaints against the SLP became more vocal, with the leading opposition party questioning the SLP's neutrality.

Role of the Judiciary in the Electoral Process

Effective, clear, and fair procedures for electoral dispute resolution are an essential part of a well-functioning electoral process.[48] Voters and other electoral stakeholders must be given, and must perceive that they possess, a voice in the quality of the electoral process if the process is to retain credibility. Timely and effective resolution of disputes is critical in ensuring that the right to an effective remedy and right to a fair and public hearing are realized.[49]

Given the prominent roles played by the Supreme Courts in recent elections, including in Kenya and Liberia, The Carter Center mission directed attention to the role of the Sierra Leone judiciary in the electoral process. This involved reviewing carefully the constitutional, legal and regulatory framework related to the judiciary, soliciting perspectives on the independence of the judiciary in Sierra Leone, and observing firsthand the various challenges heard by the Supreme Court during the week before the election.

The impartiality of the Sierra Leone judicial system was questioned by many opposition parties and independent observers. The Supreme Court's failure to expedite election-related cases created uncertainty among the election administrators, contesting parties, and the general public as election day approached. Although, the court's decisions relating to the presidential candidates did not preclude any of those challenged from participating in the election, this uncertainty may have impacted the race.

Background

Various courts in Sierra Leone have jurisdiction over election-related matters regarding challenges to candidate nominations, cases against the authorities alleging abuse of power in the electoral process, prosecution of electoral offences, and petitions against the election results. The independence of the courts is key to ensuring an electoral process is conducted in a legal manner and that cases concerning election matters are handled impartially and on a timely basis, without the influence of politics or pressure from the government of the day. A wide array of interlocutors reported that there is deep public distrust in the courts to handle cases in an unbiased and timely manner, free of corruption and

[48] AU, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa, art. 2(i); U.N., United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 32, para. 27.
[49] U.N., Human Rights and Elections, para. 75.

politics. The president's constitutional power to select members of the judiciary and the government's role in overseeing the judiciary plays into this distrust, as do the apparent political connections of some judges, including those sitting on senior-level courts.

The courts are not provided with any funds in the state's election budget. In preparation for the 2018 election, the judiciary was provided with international assistance to increase its capacity for handling the various types of election-related cases. In collaboration with the Judicial and Legal Training Institute, almost 30 all judges and 35 magistrates in the country were trained on the management and adjudication of election-related cases, both pre- and post-election petitions and electoral offenses. Some 50 lawyers were also trained. Other international assistance provided to the judiciary during the election period included the establishment of a centralized electronic case management system to assign matters and maintain case dockets, as well as the provision of vehicles and office space. Several months before the election, the chief justice made a public statement that election cases would be prioritized by the courts and handled on an expedited basis.

Court Challenges to Presidential Candidate Nominations

The High Court and Supreme Court have jurisdiction with respect to challenges to candidate nomination. The High Court has jurisdiction related to any challenges to MP candidate nominations, but these are only to be lodged to the court as part of a post-election petition challenging the MP results. Challenges to presidential candidates must be lodged with the Supreme Court within seven days of formal nomination and must be decided within 30 days. This deadline however is not harmonized with the Supreme Court rules of procedure and does not ensure that the court's decision is made before election day. The law is also unclear as to what actions the NEC should take if a court disqualifies a presidential candidate, whether before or after the election. Three cases were lodged with the Supreme Court in the pre-election period challenging three presidential candidate nominations, none of which was satisfactorily considered or resolved within a reasonable timeframe with respect to the election date. While international standards indicate that courts should act expeditiously in addressing election-related cases, in the context of the three challenges brought against presidential candidates, its possible that the court's delays may have helped avoid serious tensions that, which might have erupted had the court ruled to disqualify any of the candidates.

The most prominent case was lodged on Feb. 5 challenging the eligibility of the NGC's presidential candidate, Kandeh Yumkella on grounds that he was either a dual citizen, was no longer a Sierra Leone citizen, or that he was a naturalized citizen. Yumkella publicly acknowledged that he had been a dual citizen, but claimed that he renounced his U.S. citizenship. While stakeholders widely understood the case as a political strategy of the ruling party to disqualify Yumkella, the case raised a number of legitimate legal and factual questions. Applying the Supreme Court's technical rules, the matter was unduly protracted, which was problematic in view of the time-sensitive nature of this pre-election dispute. The first hearing took place on Feb. 28, three weeks after the case was filed, and was adjourned to March 2 and further adjourned to March 5 on technical grounds. The NGC, in an apparent delay tactic, then requested that two judges on the panel step down for potential conflict of interest. The request was granted and the hearing was postponed until March 6, at which time the case was further adjourned on technical grounds until March 28, a date that corresponds to the last day assigned for the second round in the NEC's calendar. The court's handling of the case left it in breach of the 30-day

adjudication deadline and the matter without effective timely resolution. Given the result of the first-round election, with Yumkella not advancing to the second round, the court may now declare the case moot.

On Feb. 26, a case was lodged with the Supreme Court requesting leave to file an application beyond the legal deadline to challenge the nomination of the APC's presidential candidate and to decide the substance of the case on an expedited basis. The case was widely seen as a political response to the case against the NGC candidate, and was lodged several weeks after the deadline for challenging presidential candidate nominations. The petition alleged the APC's candidate was ineligible on the grounds that he was a dual citizen, a public official who had not stepped down more than 12 months before the election, and his selection at the party's convention did not comply with the party's constitution as he had been handpicked by the outgoing president. The applicant claimed the late filing was due to awaiting evidence from the UK government on the defendant's citizenship. The request was first heard on March 1 and on technical grounds postponed to March 5, at which time the court reserved its decision, leaving the matter unresolved prior to election day and without effective and timely resolution.

The third Supreme Court case challenged the nomination of the NDA's presidential candidate on grounds that he had been nominated at the party's convention in November 2015 in contravention of an injunction that barred holding the convention pending a court case between the party's two factions. The first hearing in the Supreme Court took place on March 2, more than one month after the case filing and beyond the 30-day legal deadline for the court's decision. The hearing was then adjourned until March 5 due to the lack of courtroom space as another hearing was scheduled for the same courtroom. Following the hearing on March 5, the court issued its decision, dismissing the application on grounds that it related to another pending High Court case, which the court ordered to be finalized on an expedited basis.

Court Case on Vehicle Movement Ban

The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) imposed a ban on vehicle movement throughout election day, citing concerns about potential election day violence (with exceptions for NEC-accredited vehicles for parties, observers, media outlets and NGOs, essential service providers, and commercial and government transport for voters to get to polling stations.) Following the SLP's announcement of the ban at the end of January, politically charged negotiations toward an MoU between the police and political parties took place over several weeks with broad-based political and civic pushback, with the police intent on enforcing the ban whether or not all parties signed the MoU. In a concerted effort to show their support for a peaceful election, most parties eventually signed the MoU (even those that openly expressed mistrust of the police). However, several opposition parties, including the SLPP, NGC, and PMDC, and various civil society organizations and human rights activists denounced the initiative, with some parties and activists going so far as calling on citizens and supporters to defy the ban.

Those opposed to the ban cited a lack of trust in police impartiality, reflective of the general public's distrust of law enforcement, and claimed the ban had not been sufficiently justified as a necessary security measure. Further, they argued it was intended to facilitate the ruling party, which has access to state-owned vehicles, to engage in electoral malpractice, and that the ban unconstitutionally restricted freedom of movement and undermined the right to vote. On March 1, the PMDC lodged a complaint to

the High Court challenging the vehicle ban on grounds that it had not been justified by the police as a necessary security measure and violated the constitutionally protected freedom of movement. On March 5, the Sierra Leone Bar Association issued a public statement that the legal basis for the vehicle ban in the Police Act, as cited by the Inspector General of Police in his February announcement of the details of the ban, had been repealed years earlier and that the ban violated freedom of movement. On the same day, following a brief hearing, the High Court issued an interim injunction barring the police from further public dissemination of information about the vehicle ban as contained in the MoU until the following day's session. The next day, without substantive hearing, the court summarily rejected the application and set aside the interim injunction, leaving the ban in force. In doing so, the court denied due process, and its brief written reasoning revealed that it failed to sufficiently consider legitimate legal arguments, including the question of the constitutionality of the ban.

While containing security risks is a critical element in any electoral process, under international standards this aim does not supersede fundamental rights and freedoms except in limited circumstances. Restrictions imposed during an election, such as the vehicle ban, require special scrutiny, given their potential to limit full democratic participation. At the same time, in the context of a volatile electoral environment with heightened risks of conflict, some limits on freedom of movement might be warranted as a temporary extraordinary measure. Sierra Leone's recent history of conflict certainly provides reason to consider deviations from standards. However, the country and its people need to overcome their reliance on such restrictions to mitigate risks of violence.

The Carter Center recommends that in future elections, the authorities exercise due restraint in imposing any measures that impede citizens' rights and freedoms. At the same time, if risks of electoral violence persist, the PPRC, political parties, and other stakeholders should work together to negotiate voluntary agreements and codes to help ensure a peaceful electoral process, even including vehicle bans or other restrictions, if necessary, based on broad consensus of stakeholders.

Electoral Offences Court

The election law provides for the establishment of an Electoral Offences Court as a division of the High Court, and the constitution empowers the chief justice to determine the number and location of the judges to sit on that court. The mandate of the court is to try any criminal offenses established in the election law, which includes a broad range of offences related to voter registration, candidate nomination, campaigns, voting and counting, and tabulation. There is a right to appeal a conviction to the Court of Appeal. In September 2017, the Electoral Offences Court was established. The head of the High Court appointed 10 judges in October and an 11th judge in January 2018. A senior judge from the Court of Appeal was appointed as supervisor of the court. One judge was assigned to each of Bo, Kenema, and Makeni, with two in Kono, and the remaining judges assigned to the Western Area with headquarters in Freetown.

The Electoral Offences Court made a policy decision that it would take jurisdiction over any crime related to elections, even if not strictly an electoral offense. Thus, cases involving hooliganism or assaults that occur at campaign rallies, which typically are dealt with by magistrates, would be referred to this court. The Sierra Leone Bar Association had an initiative offering pro bono work for persons

charged with election offenses, with a focus on vulnerable persons. The Electoral Offences Court has the power to invalidate an election result if it determines there is a reasonable presumption that the commission of an electoral offense affected the results.

All trials must be concluded within six months of the establishment of the court. As the court was formed in early September, all cases had to be finalized only a few days after election day, providing limited time for investigation and prosecution of crimes committed in the days prior to the election or related to voting, counting, tabulation, and announcement of results. By the time the Electoral Offences Court was to be dissolved, there were no reports that any cases had been tried, including for the perpetrators of reported clashes during the campaign that took place in parts of the country. In addition, the investigation of more than 1,500 cases of double voter registration forwarded by the NEC to the police months before the election did not lead to any prosecutions. These issues raise concerns about the efficiency of the police in the conduct of election-related investigations and the limited duration of the Electoral Offences Court's mandate.

While the concept of electoral offenses courts is sound, their ineffectiveness during this election cycle suggests that they are not serving their intended purpose. The Carter Center recommends a review of the Electoral Offence Court legal framework and operational structure, including considering an amendment to the law that would ensure the duration of the court's mandate is sufficient for handling electoral offenses that are prosecuted after election day.

Post-election Court Cases

Challenges to the parliamentary election results can be lodged to the High Court within 21 days of the announcement of results, which may include objection to the nomination of a parliamentary candidate. The High Court decision can be appealed within 14 days to the Court of Appeal, which makes the final decision. The Supreme Court has final jurisdiction over challenges to presidential results, which are to be lodged within seven days. The courts do not have any deadlines for adjudication of cases, which can lead to the anomaly of a president being sworn into office while a case challenging the results is pending. The Carter Center recommends that Sierra Leone adopt the international best practice of requiring post-election cases to be resolved within an established deadline that ensures proceedings are not unduly protracted. This avoids indefinite uncertainty of the results that can raise political tensions and potentially lead to conflict.

Election Day

The quality of voting operations on election day is crucial to determining how closely an election falls in line with its democratic obligations. According to Sierra Leone's international and regional commitments, all citizens should enjoy the right to universal and equal suffrage, subject only to reasonable and objective limitations.[50] A core obligation under international law is that elections shall be held by secret ballot, which is recognized as a means of ensuring that the will of the

[50] U.N., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(b); U.N., United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 25 on "The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to

people is expressed freely and that a cast ballot cannot be connected with a voter to avoid intimidation and political retribution.[51]

As noted above, given the limited size and scope of the mission, the Center's team did not conduct a comprehensive observation of the electoral process as whole, nor could it provide a robust assessment of election day voting and counting processes. Nonetheless, the Center's experts did visit polling stations in Freetown and surrounding areas on election day to gain impressions that could be compared against those from the larger observation missions.

Voting

The polls were scheduled to open at 7 a.m. on March 7 and, according to NEW, more than 80 percent had opened by 7:30.[52] Polling centers were located in schools, churches, and, in smaller villages, in an open area. According to the NEC, there were between one and a maximum of 14 polling sites per polling center, with each polling site managed by seven NEC officials. International and domestic citizen observers reported that NEC officials organized the often quite cramped space in a manner that facilitated, to the best extent possible, the smooth flow of voters through the process of casting four ballots and the presence of multiple party agents and domestic monitors.

According to the polling procedures, prior to entering the polling site, a voter should have his/her left index finger checked for indelible ink. Upon entering the polling site, voters present their registration card to an election official, who finds the person's name in the voter registry. The official should then read the voter ID number aloud. A second election official should then stamp blank presidential and parliamentary ballots on the back and show the voter how to mark and fold the ballots. The voter should then proceed to a cardboard booth that provides privacy to mark the ballots with a pen or stamp for fingerprint, fold the ballots and deposit them in the appropriate ballot boxes. The voter should then be given ballots for the mayor and local council races, mark them and place them in their appropriate boxes. The last step of the process was for the voter to place his/her left index finger in a bottle of indelible ink.

The consensus of domestic and international observers, consistent with impressions from the Center's team in Freetown, was that the NEC officials were well-trained and conducted themselves in a professional manner and worked effectively in often difficult conditions. According to observer groups, in virtually all polling sites, there were at least three-party agents, one NEW monitor and often a monitor from another Sierra Leonean organization. The SLP reportedly was present at all polling centers and, for the most part, did not enter the polling sites.

According to observer organizations, queues were long in the morning at many polling centers, but by mid-afternoon the lines were moving quickly. Women with babies and the elderly reportedly were allowed to proceed to the head of the line. While efforts were made to accommodate differently abled

Equal Access to Public Service," para. 21; U.N., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 21(3); IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, art. 2(6).

[51] IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, art. 2 (7)

[52] NEW Press Statement on the Voting Process, March 7, 2018, http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/STATEMENT-ON-THE-VOTING-PROCESS.pdf.

voters, observers noted that the physical constraints at many polling centers posed serious challenges. Nonetheless, the NEC reported a high turnout of more than 84.7 percent. Polls closed at 5 p.m. after all voters in line had voted.

In terms of administrative procedures, the ballot accounting procedures appeared weak. Observers reported that contingency ballots were not always kept in a secure place and that presiding officers at polling centers were often unclear when asked about materials transfer forms and contingency ballots. The ballot boxes also were not uniform, with some having only two seals as opposed to the prescribed four seals.

The election day vehicle ban reportedly was enforced by the police and respected by the political parties. Roads were empty, except for authorized vehicles. Buses plied main thoroughfares in Freetown and provided a means of transportation for many citizens. Similar to its report on the 2012 elections, once again The Carter Center urges Sierra Leone to take steps to build a more robust democratic society founded on norms of non-violence and coexistence, so that in future elections such a ban will not be considered necessary.[53]

Overall, observers reported that the Sierra Leone security sector performed very well across the country. The SLP, with the support of officers of other security services, was visible at polling centers. In general, the security services presence was reported as non-intrusive with respect to the election operations.

However, there were reports of two serious election day incidents that took place in Freetown in the late afternoon. At the Brookfields polling center, near the center of Freetown, eyewitnesses reported that an APC deputy minister arrived in a government vehicle and was confronted by SLPP party agents, who questioned what he was doing there. An SLPP local candidate then arrived with food for the SLPP agents, which led to further confrontation. The police, including the quite distinctive Quick Reaction Force, were called to the scene and sought to quiet the commotion. The scene was cleared with only those required to be inside the polling center during the closing of the polls allowed to remain.

The second incident involved an attempt by the SLP to enter the home of the SLPP presidential candidate, which also served as a party headquarters, after the close of polls. According to the police, they were searching for equipment that would allegedly be used to hack the tabulation process, without apparent warrant. A crowd of SLPP supporters gathered to prevent entry and the military sent reinforcements. A tense situation was calmed through several hours of mediation efforts by the head of the Commonwealth Observer Group, former Ghana President John Mahama. He was later joined by the head of the Eminent Women's Group, who insisted that the police must have a valid warrant to enter Bio's residence. While the legal basis for the raid was not substantiated and the political context only reinforced SLPP suspicions, the SLP inspector general publicly defended the police actions and stated that they acted professionally and in accordance with the rule of law. Given the limited trust among SLPP supporters and the SLP, the SLP commanders have the challenge of rebuilding trust and confidence with the SLPP before the run-off election.

[53] TCC 2012 report, p. 38-39, 92.

Counting and Tabulation

According to observers, most polls closed at 5 p.m. or shortly thereafter if voters were waiting in line. The election officials — in the presence of party agents, domestic monitors, and international observers — then began an extensive counting and reconciliation process. The procedures required that polling officials confirm that each ballot box contained ballots that were properly stamped and that had been deposited in the appropriate box, then count the number of ballots in the box and the unused ballots to ensure that the numbers were consistent with the total number of ballots that had been received. They then were to count the ballots, first for president, then parliament, then mayor and last local council, and record the results on the results and reconciliation form, with a copy posted at the polling site. Overall, the counting procedures as prescribed were onerous. According to observer groups, they were not always strictly applied or were applied in the wrong order.

Following the count, the materials were collected and brought to a district returning office, where they were collected and then delivered to one of five regional tally centers for tabulation. The centers were designed so that the results from each district would be entered into a computer, with multiple checks to ensure that the inputted numbers were accurate. Observer groups reported that accredited observers were allowed in the center, but were kept in restricted areas, making direct observation difficult.

The NEC indicated prior to the election that tabulation for the presidential election would take four to seven days. However, in response to concerns raised during the 2012 elections, the NEC agreed to release results progressively, following tabulation of 25, 50 and 75 percent of the results from each district. In a March 8 press release, the NEC reported that "data entry is underway, and accuracy will take precedence over speed."[54] The following morning, an NEC press release showed the percentages that had been inputted for each district, with variances ranging from 0 percent for Kambia district to 77 percent for Western Area Urban.[55] Later in the evening, the NEC issued an update showing that the slowest district, Pujehun, had now inputted 43 percent of the results.[56] Yet the NEC still declined to release results, without offering an explanation of why it was deviating from the announced plan. Finally, at 1 p.m. on March 10, the NEC released the results of the first 25 percent tabulated for each district, which showed the APC and SLPP candidates well in front of all the other candidates, but neither in a position to achieve the 55 percent required to avoid a runoff.[57]

As described earlier, NEW designed a PVT based on a sample of 506 polling sites. By early morning on March 8, NEW had received results data from 98 percent of the sample points. As shared with the international observer missions, the data showed that: a) no candidate would cross the 55 percent threshold; b) the APC and SLPP candidates were running neck and neck, with each receiving more than

[54] NEC Official Statement, March 8, 2018, http://necsl2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NEC_Statement_0803.pdf.
[55] NEC Official Statement, March 9, 2018 http://necsl2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/9th-March-2018-Press-Statement.pdf.
[56] NEC Official Statement, March 9, 2018 http://necsl2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Statement-PM-9-March.pdf.
[57] NEC Official Statement, March 10, 2018http://necsl2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/First-Progressive-Announcement-of-Presidential-Elections-Results-10th-March-2018.pdf.

40 percent of the vote; and c) no other candidate was likely to receive more than 7 percent of the vote. NEW debated whether to release the information publicly, as had been promised, and ultimately decided at mid-day on March 9 to release a somewhat confusing statement, which concluded that "based on our data a runoff is sacrosanct."[58]

The NEC announced the final results on March 13 and scheduled the run-off for March 27, within the 14 days allowed by the constitution.[59] In response to letters sent to the NEC by NGC and C4C, and its own rules, NEC ordered recounts of 154 ballot boxes, which were ultimately included in the count, and excluded 221 ballot boxes for various irregularities, most notably more votes cast than registered voters. According to the NEC, 2.67 million ballots were cast in the presidential race, with 5.1 percent of these ultimately determined to be invalid ballots,[60] most often because the ballot included more than one mark or the signed name of the voter. The NEW projected results tracked within half a percentage point for all candidates on the NEC final results.[61]

Table 6. NEC Results

Candidate	NEW - 7 MAR 10PM	ME 95%	NEC 25% - 10 MAR 1:30 PM	NEW-NEC 25% Difference	NEC 50% - 10 MAR 6PM	NEW-NEC 50% Difference	NEC 75% - 11 MAR 6PM	NEW-NEC 75% Difference	NEC FINAL - 00 MAR 0PM	NEW-NEC FINAL Difference
Kamara	**42.92%**	**2.81%**	**44.60%**	**1.7%**	**43.20%**	**0.28%**	**42.57%**	**-0.35%**	**42.70%**	**-0.22%**
Mansaray	1.10%	0.28%	1.10%	0.0%	1.00%	-0.10%	1.03%	-0.07%	1.10%	0.00%
Samana	**3.32%**	**1.04%**	**3.30%**	**0.0%**	**3.40%**	**0.08%**	**3.43%**	**0.11%**	**3.50%**	**0.18%**
Tarawally	0.45%	0.09%	0.40%	0.0%	0.40%	-0.05%	0.45%	0.00%	0.50%	0.05%
Bah	0.42%	0.19%	0.30%	-0.1%	0.30%	-0.12%	0.33%	-0.09%	0.30%	-0.12%
Yumkella	**6.77%**	**0.98%**	**6.60%**	**-0.2%**	**6.70%**	**-0.07%**	**6.95%**	**0.18%**	**6.90%**	**0.13%**
O'Dweyer	0.16%	0.03%	0.10%	-0.1%	0.20%	0.04%	0.17%	0.01%	0.20%	0.04%
Sandy	0.10%	0.02%	0.10%	0.0%	0.10%	0.00%	0.09%	-0.01%	0.10%	0.00%
Conteh	0.17%	0.05%	0.10%	-0.1%	0.20%	0.03%	0.17%	0.00%	0.20%	0.03%
Margai	0.52%	0.38%	0.40%	-0.1%	0.40%	-0.12%	0.38%	-0.14%	0.40%	-0.12%
Williams	0.09%	0.02%	0.10%	0.0%	0.10%	0.01%	0.10%	0.01%	0.10%	0.01%
Ngobeh	0.43%	0.05%	0.40%	0.0%	0.50%	0.07%	0.50%	0.07%	0.50%	0.07%
Bio	**43.05%**	**3.08%**	**42.00%**	**-1.1%**	**43.10%**	**0.05%**	**43.33%**	**0.28%**	**43.30%**	**0.25%**
Sowa	0.20%	0.04%	0.20%	0.0%	0.20%	0.00%	0.23%	0.03%	0.20%	0.00%
Kabuta	0.12%	0.03%	0.10%	0.0%	0.10%	-0.02%	0.12%	0.00%	0.10%	-0.02%
Cole	0.16%	0.04%	0.10%	-0.1%	0.10%	-0.06%	0.15%	-0.01%	2.00%	1.84%

By March 20, the NEC had announced parliamentary results in 125 constituencies, with APC candidates winning 63 seats, SLPP candidates 46 seats, C4C candidates eight seats, NGC candidates four seats, and independents four seats, with seven seats still pending.[62]

[58] NEW Projects a Run-Off for the 2018 Presidential Elections in Sierra Leone, http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PROJECTION-OF-RUN-OFF-1.pdf.
[59] NEC, Statement from NEC Chairperson and National Returning Officer on the Results of the Presidential Election Held on 7th March 2018, http://necsl2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FINAL.pdf.
[60] NEC Release, March 14, 2018, http://necsl2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/District-Breakdown.jpg.
[61] NEW Election Results Projection Against NEC Official Results, http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NEW-PROJECTION-AGAINST-NECS-OFFICIAL-RESULTS.pdf
[62] Africa News, Sierra Leone's ruling APC secures parliamentary majority with 63 seats, March 20, 2018, http://www.africanews.com/2018/03/20/sierra-leone-s-ruling-apc-secures-parliamentary-majority-with-63-

Post-Election Developments

In the days after the election, the general public anxiously awaited the official announcement of results. However, the parties, through the reports of their agents, had a good idea of their relative performance. The NGC and C4C presidential candidates both seemed stunned by their poor performance. The SLPP also alleged that their party agents had been kicked out of polling sites in APC — controlled areas and other irregularities, even as it knew that its presidential candidate would be competing in the second round. APC supporters, meanwhile, were reportedly surprised that their presidential candidate was running neck and neck with his SLPP counterpart and what that might portend for the second round.

On Saturday, March 10, after the NEC's announcement of 25 percent of the official results, clashes broke out in Freetown and tensions were reported high in several other regions of the country. In response, under the auspices of an initiative by the eminent personalities associated with the Women's Situation Room, three of the leading candidates, Kamara (APC), Yumkella (NGC) and Sam-Sumana (C4C), issued public statements urging their supporters to refrain from violence and to respect the outcome of the elections, which were shown on television and posted on social media. Bio (SLPP) declined to make a statement, claiming the APC candidate was not sincere, as evidenced by his refusal to condemn attacks committed by APC activists against the homes and property of SLPP supporters.

On March 19, NEW issued a statement expressing its concerns over the rising tensions:

> National Election Watch (NEW) is worried about political parties fanning tribal incitements with the use of hate speech and inflammatory statements. This ugly situation has already degenerated into widespread violence and stakeholders publicly intimidating citizens perceived to be their opponents. The current political intolerance so far exhibited undermines the tenets of participatory democracy together with free, fair and credible elections. … NEW calls on Dr. Samura Wilson Kamara of the All People's Congress (APC) and Brig. (Rtd.) Julius Maada Bio of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) to publicly condemn all forms of political intolerance, hate speech, regional and tribal intimidation and violence going on across the country.[63]

On March 19, President Koroma convened a meeting with NEC, PPRC, SLP and other security officials to discuss the upcoming runoff. According to reports of the meeting, NEC acknowledged that "political parties as well as ordinary citizens had raised concerns of widespread irregularities and malpractices that took place during the March 7 polls."[64] Koroma commented "that it is the responsibility of the government to guarantee the security of the state and to ensure a peaceful and smooth transition. The president urged NEC to ensure that the conduct of the elections is transparent, acceptable and at the end of the day reflects the will of the people."[65] He then announced agreement on a series of steps, including the involvement of security personnel "in the transportation of voting materials from the

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seats/?utm_source=Media+Review+for+March+20%2C+2018&utm_campaign=Media+Review+for+March+20%2C+2018&utm_medium=email.

[63] NEW Press Release, March 19, 2018, http://nationalelectionwatchsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/INTOLERANCE-PRESS-STATEMENT-20-3-2018.pdf.

[64] CocoRioko, "NEC Updates President Koroma on the March 27th Run-off," https://cocorioko.net/nec-updates-president-koroma-on-the-march-27-run-off-election/.

[65] Id.

airport to polling centres, tally centres down to Freetown."[66] While Koroma presented this step as designed to enhance the integrity of the runoff, SLPP supporters viewed increased involvement of the security sector in the election process with considerable suspicion.

Relations between the NEC and SLP, meanwhile, became increasingly contentious. On March 21, the NEC issued a press release accusing the SLP of "unwarrantedly" entering NEC premises to interrogate NEC staff and obstruct them from doing their work.[67] The SLP Inspector General responded in a press statement that the SLP's Criminal Investigation Division is currently investigating more than 200 election-related cases, including some involving NEC staff, who have already been charged in court.[68] On March 20, an APC— affiliated lawyer filed a petition with the Supreme Court seeking an injunction to preclude further announcement of results by the NEC and to restrain the NEC "from conducting the Presidential Election scheduled for March 27, 2018 pending the hearing and determination of this application." No specific evidence was cited in the petition justifying the request for an injunction.[69] As of March 22, the Court had taken no action in response to the petition.

Role of International Observers

As is common today for elections in Africa, several experienced institutions, in addition to The Carter Center, dispatched missions for the Sierra Leone elections, including the African Union, ECOWAS, Commonwealth, European Union and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA). These organizations, which all abide by the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, collaborated on the issuance of a joint pre-election statement, and the heads of delegation met for a debriefing on the day after the election .[70] The heads of delegation included four former presidents of African countries: former South African President Kgalema Motlanthe (African Union); former Interim President of Liberia Amos Sawyer (ECOWAS); former Ghana President John Mahama (Commonwealth); and former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan (EISA).

In their preliminary statements, these delegations all agreed that the balloting process had been well-organized and the NEC staff had been well-trained. The statements also commended the work of the NEC and PPRC, as well as the political parties and police, for their efforts in ensuring a peaceful and orderly process. All noted that the process was on-going, with the tabulation process underway, the results yet to be announced, and challenges yet to be filed and adjudicated, and promised to continue their monitoring activities through these still-to-be-completed phases.

[66] Id.
[67] NEC Press Release, March 21, 2018, http://necsl2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Official-Statement-21st-March-2018.pdf.
[68] SLP Press Release, March 22, 2018, http://police.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PRESS-STATEMENT-22-MARCH-2018.pdf.
[69] Sierra Leone Telegraph, Sierra Leone Electoral Commission dragged to the High Court, March 20, 2018, http://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/sierra-leone-electoral-commissioner-dragged-to-the-high-court/.
[70] "Communique Issued at the Pre-Election Meeting of Heads of International Observation Mission", March 7, 2018, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/democracy/sierra-leaone-030618.pdf.

As expected, there were also differences in nuance among the statements. ECOWAS, which offered the first assessment on the day after the election, commented:

> The preparation of the 2018 elections, the conduct of the electioneering campaign, as well as the processes on Election Day, up until the release of the results of the four elections by the responsible officials at the polling stations, were free, fair, and credible. The vast majority of the qualified Sierra Leonean population who wished to do so was provided the required space to exercise their constitutional rights to vote or to be voted for.[71]

The African Union applauded

> the people of Sierra Leone for their commitment to upholding democracy as demonstrated by their patience and civil conduct on Election Day. Based on its observations and findings, the AUEOM considers the 7 March 2018 elections as largely peaceful and transparent until now. The AUEOM concludes that the 2018 general elections were generally conducted in line with the national legal framework as well as the regional, continental and international standards for democratic elections.[72]

The European Union, however, was slightly more critical, headlining its statement with the following quote: "Well-conducted elections provided voters a wide choice although the campaign was marred by intimidation."[73] The EU also provided an assessment of the media, which was based on a content review of seven media outlets during the month preceding the election, and criticized the use of government resources by the ruling party for campaigning.

The Commonwealth, while stating that the "electoral environment on Election Day was conducive to the free exercise of the people's franchise and basic freedoms were respected," referenced the events at the SLPP headquarters, commenting that "although we were able to de-escalate this situation, the disproportionate response coupled with the lack of trust in this institution is of concern, particularly as the process continues."[74]

EISA also offered a word of caution, stating that "the process up until the end of the first day of tallying has so far been conducted substantially in line with sub-regional, continental and international standards, although there is room for improvement, especially in the legal framework to further level the playing field."[75]

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[71] GNN Liberia, "ECOWAS Releases Sierra Leone 2018 General Elections Preliminary Declaration", March 8, 2018, http://gnnliberia.com/2018/03/08/ecowas-release-sierra-leone-2018-general-elections-preliminary-declaration/.
[72] https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20180309/preliminary-statement-7-march-2018-general-elections-republic-sierra-leone.
[73] "Preliminary Statement: 7 March 2018 General Elections in the Republic of Sierra Leone", March 9, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_eom_sierra_leone_preliminary_statement090318_1.pdf.
[74] Commonwealth, "Sierra Leone General Elections 2018: Commonwealth Observer Group Interim Statement', March 7, 2018, http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/Chair%20-%20Interim%20Statement%20-%202018%20Sierra%20Leone%20-%20Final.pdf.
[75] EISA, "EISA Election Observation Mission to the 2018 Election in Sierra Leone", Preliminary Statement, March 9, 2018, http://www.eisa.org.za/pdf/sie2018eom1.pdf.

The presence of several professional and high-profile delegations positively impacted the environment in which the electoral process unfolded. The geographic reach and analytic focus of these delegations before, during, and after election day ensured that all aspects of the electoral process were subject to scrutiny. The collaboration and coordination of the delegations represents best practice, ensuring consistent messages are presented to the Sierra Leone authorities and the general public, while leaving room for in-depth areas of focus by individual missions. Equally important, the serious engagement of several former African presidents provided a constructive example for Sierra Leone leaders, including the incumbent president, who is leaving office after serving two terms.

At the same time, the delegations were sensitive to concerns that have been raised in recent elections, including in Kenya, about some standard elements of election observation missions. One key example concerns the issuance of a preliminary statement two days after the elections, even though key parts of the process were on-going. The timing of such statements is fraught with the prospect of seeming to offer a premature assessment that may later have to be walked back. At the same time, the public, the media, and international audiences all expect to hear early reports from the observer missions, and could possibly misinterpret any delays in making preliminary reports.

Furthermore, the failure to issue statements following election day could preclude an opportunity to calm tensions and to offer an assessment on critical components of the electoral process that have been completed. In the case of Sierra Leone, the observer groups have remained vigilant during the post-election period, with at least one organization publicly condemning the violence while urging the parties to maintain civility and to avoid inflammatory speech.[76]

Summary Assessment

In spite of several aspects of the legal framework that are inconsistent with international standards, Sierra Leone's March 7, 2018 election provided a competitive and inclusive environment and generally conformed with international standards. Parties had an opportunity to present their platforms to the public through rallies and media, and voters were able to choose from among a wide selection of candidates. The NEC provided effective administration, and the general atmosphere, with some notable exceptions, was generally peaceful. The election results were tabulated in a transparent fashion and the outcome in the presidential race clearly necessitated the scheduling of a second round between the two leading candidates.

Given the perceived stakes, tensions within Sierra Leone are expected to crest during the runoff period. The NEC should ensure that the election is credibly administered, and that there is maximum transparency in all phases, especially including the post-election counting, tabulation, and finalization of results. The political parties, civil society and the SLP must all act to ensure that violence is avoided. It is particularly important for the party leaders and presidential candidates to make clear public statements instructing their supporters to maintain a peaceful environment throughout the process, ideally in joint public appearances.

[76] Relief Web, "Africa Union condemns the violence ahead of the second round presidential election in Sierra Leone", March 20, 2018, https://reliefweb.int/report/sierra-leone/african-union-condemns-violence-ahead-second-round-presidential-election-sierra.

Following the elections, and allowing for the exhaustion of legal challenges, a new government will be formed and a new legislature will be seated. All parties will have an obligation to ensure that the tensions that emerged during the election period dissipate and that Sierra Leone continue on a democratic path, while addressing key economic and social obstacles to development.

Recommendations

The Center respectfully offers the following recommendations in the hopes that they help inform the process of constitutional and electoral reforms in Sierra Leone.

To the Parliament/Government:

1. A comprehensive review of the electoral legal framework should be conducted to address gaps and inconsistencies identified by the NEC, political parties, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders during the 2018 election cycle, and to ensure that the NEC has the legislative framework necessary to conduct elections in line with international standards and best practices. The consultative process should build on the work performed by the Constitutional Reform Commission and the electoral reform bills submitted by NEC and should begin as soon as the new parliament is seated.
2. The National Civil Registration Authority's institutional independence should be enhanced through legislative measures, and capacity-building and confidence-building measures should be employed, with sufficient funding to ensure that the civil register represents a comprehensive, accurate, up-to-date, trusted data source from which the voter register can be extracted. Priority should also be given to adopting measures to ensure the privacy of citizens' and voters' data collected through the biometric civil/voter registration process, in accordance with international best practices.
3. The existence of legal and bureaucratic obstacles to political party formation and registration in the current law and practice should be simplified, with clear deadlines established for approving or rejecting a party's registration application.
4. The fee structure for candidate nominations should be revised to reflect the economic reality of the country and to address the special obstacles that hinder the equal participation of women. A revised law might include provisions for a refundable fee if the candidate receives a certain reasonable percentage of votes cast in the election, and for alternatives to the registration fee, such as presenting a certain reasonable percentage of voters' signatures collected in support of the candidate.
5. A comprehensive framework on campaign finance should be developed that ensures the highest level of transparency in campaign finance, including prior to the election day. Commensurate penalties for breach of campaign finance rules and reporting requirements also should be established.
6. The law should be amended to ensure the duration of the Electoral Offences Court's mandate is sufficient for handling of electoral offenses including those that are prosecuted after the election day.
7. Legislation, and ideally a constitutional amendment, that include provisions promoting women's participation in politics should be adopted. In this respect, adoption of the long-awaited Gender Equality Bill that guarantees women's equal political participation is encouraged.

8. The SLP's capabilities and commitment to provide adequate security for all parties and to conduct effective investigations of all violent incidents should be enhanced.
9. The election law should establish a mechanism for challenging on a timely basis the NEC decisions and actions in court.
10. The adoption of legislation or internal judicial rules that require post-election cases be resolved within an established deadline that ensures proceedings are not unduly protracted.
11. The law should establish the maximum percentage of excess ballots, taking into account a balance between possible exigencies and the need to maintain a credible process, and that transparent accountability measures for all ballots be put in place.
12. In future elections and assuming there is a justifiable need, the PPRC, rather than the SLP, should accept the lead role in facilitating negotiations among the police, political parties, and other stakeholders regarding any restrictions on freedom of movement, including an election day vehicle ban, to ensure that a balance is drawn that achieves the widest consensus possible and has the least impact on fundamental freedoms.

To the NEC:

1. The NEC should adopt a comprehensive set of regulations that remain in place for each election cycle, to be revised as needed, and they should be published on its website on a timely basis.
2. The NEC (and PPRC) should adopt a proactive approach in regulating the use of government resources in support of any political party or candidate in future elections.
3. The NEC should adopt regulations governing all issues related to the ballot— including format, order, security features, printing and distribution— to provide a legal basis for any decisions related to the ballots that will contribute to greater stability, transparency, and credibility in the electoral process.

To the political parties:

1. Communicate messages reinforcing the importance of peaceful, democratic competition.
2. Disassociate from all acts of violence, intimidation and harassment and hold supporters accountable for violating the policy.
3. Strengthen internal processes and structures that promote the political participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other special-interest groups, including in party decision-making and leadership positions.

European Union
Election Observation Mission

SIERRA LEONE 2023

Final Report

General Elections

24 June 2023

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FINAL REPORT

GENERAL ELECTIONS

24 June 2023

The Election Observation Missions are independent from the institutions of the European Union. The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy and position of the European Union.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
APC	All People's Congress
AU	African Union
AYV	African Young Voices
C4C	Coalition for Change
CEDAW	Convention on the Political Rights of Women
CJ	Chief Justice
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSCA	Cyber Security and Crime Act
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African States
ECSL	Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
EON	Elections Observer Network
EOPC	Election Offences and Petitions Court
EU	European Union
EU EOM	European Union Election Observation Mission
FVR	Final Voter Register
GEWEA	Gender Empowerment and Women's Equality Act
HRC-SL	Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
ICPNC	Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IMC	Independent Media Commission
IRCSL	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone
IRN	Independent Radio Network
LE	Leone
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIC	Ministry of Information and Communication
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAC	National Advisory Council (in reference to APC's National Advisory Council)
NatCA	National Communication Authority
NATCOM	National Telecommunications Commission
NCPD	National Commission for Persons with Disability
NCRA	National Civil Administration Authority
NCSIRCC	National Computer Security Incident Response Coordination Centre
NEW	National Election Watch
NGC	National Grand Coalition
ONS	Office of National Security
PEA	Public Election Act
POA	Public Order Act
PMDC	People's Movement for Democratic Change
PPA	Political Parties Act
PPRC	Political Parties Registration Commission
PR	Proportional Representation System
PRVT	Process and Results Verification for Transparency
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation

RRF	Reconciliation and result forms
SLAJ	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists
SLAWiJ	Sierra Leone Association of Women in Journalism
SLBA	Sierra Leone Bar Association
SLBC	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
SLL	Sierra Leonean currency Leone
SLP	Sierra Leonean Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
UNCAC	UN Convention against Corruption
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VID	Voter Identification Card
WAYN	West African Youth Network

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 general elections attested to Sierra Leoneans' strong commitment to democracy. On 24 June citizens in large numbers went to the polls to elect the president, members of the parliament, mayors, and local councillors. The recently revised legal framework gave hope for enhanced integrity in the conduct of the elections and greater gender parity in politics. However, voters' trust in the credibility of elections was undermined by lack of transparency during critical stages of the process, particularly during the tabulation process, and by significant statistical inconsistencies in the results. An independent citizen observer group who voiced concerns was threatened and its leadership had to flee the country, which is indicative to democratic backsliding.

The timely and inclusive electoral reform of 2022 laid a sound basis for democratic elections. New laws included gender quota for party lists, as well as provisions that aimed to ensure ECSL's financial independence and strengthen the mandate of other institutions involved in the elections. Legislative initiatives prior to the 2023 elections led to full implementation of five EU EOM 2018 recommendations, while another nine were partially implemented.

The election day was generally calm, despite notably delayed opening of polling stations and isolated cases of violence. Voters patiently waited to cast their ballots, dedicated poll workers strived to ensure a smooth voting, citizen observers were at all polling centres and journalists provided regular reports. Counting of the ballots was largely transparent, yet the planned electronic transmission of results from polling stations did not take place. However, a lack of sufficient explanation and action by the Election Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) made stakeholders perturbed.

Tabulation and announcement of results proved to be the tipping point for the credibility of the elections. The entire process was opaque, meaningful observation was impeded and the declaration of winners was not followed by publication of disaggregated results per polling station. On 27 June, the ECSL declared Julius Mada Bio of the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP) elected for a second term, passing the constitutional threshold of 55 per cent in the first round by 1.17 percentage points.

Following the declaration of the results of the parliamentary elections a few days later, it was clear that result totals published by the ECSL showed several statistical inconsistencies and mathematical improbabilities. These included notable discrepancies in the number of average valid votes per polling station between the first and second batch of presidential results, varying from a decrease of 75 per cent to an increase of 31 per cent per district; a difference of up to 23 percentage points per district between the turnout for the presidential and parliamentary elections, with some districts registering substantially lower parliamentary turnouts and others showing significantly lower presidential turnouts; turnout above 90 per cent in five districts; and only 0.4 per cent of invalid votes nation-wide. These inconsistencies, combined with the ECSL's decision not to publish disaggregated results, undermined the credibility of the tabulation process and voters' confidence in the outcome of the polls.

Early in the process, the ECSL appeared operationally prepared, yet a lack of transparency raised concerns. Against the backdrop of prevailing distrust in state institutions, the presidential appointment of ECSL commissioners added to the perception of political bias. Furthermore, the ECSL itself missed many opportunities to build stakeholders' trust, as most decisions and procedures were neither published, nor comprehensively explained to the citizens.

The voter registration process and the subsequent production and distribution of voter identification cards (VIDs) created various uncertainties for stakeholders and voters alike. The ECSL took steps to improve the accuracy of the register and to distribute VIDs, yet, again, lack of timely and comprehensive communication on those corrective measures left room for speculations. The ECSL shared with political parties the final voters register per polling centre, but the one per polling station was not published, reducing confidence and transparency.

The candidate registration process was inclusive, yet voters' right to know whom they would be electing was disregarded. The final candidates' lists for parliamentary elections were published in the Gazette only four days before the polls; local council lists were made public after the elections. Parties also did not disclose their lists of candidates, adding to uncertainties for voters and candidates alike.

Throughout the campaign, fundamental rights of freedom of assembly and movement were largely respected. Lead presidential candidates toured the country, while those for other races focused on a door-to-door canvassing. The campaign was personality-centred, unfolding in a polarised environment and focusing on ethno-regional alliance building rather than issues.

Divisive online communication heightened tensions during the campaign. Aggressive content, exploiting ethno-regional divide and economic hardships, was posted on Facebook and Twitter, while manipulative information spread through WhatsApp. It created insecurity also for rural voters who rarely use internet, as such messages were often read out at community meetings.

Political violence in weeks before the polls disrupted the playing field in at least six districts. The EU EOM crosschecked and confirmed reports on at least 17 violent attacks, which negatively affected the campaign environment nation-wide. Most assaults of party supporters and attacks on party offices or private properties of politicians went unpunished. It shrank the space for political participation in the south and south-east.

Political activism was also discouraged through a demonstrative and disproportionate use of force by security agencies prior to, during and after election day. Live ammunition and tear gas was fired outside the main opposition party's headquarters in Freetown twice (three days prior to and then one day after the elections). In each case one person was killed. Most stakeholders had low trust in law enforcement bodies due to alleged biased behaviour.

Abuse of incumbency was another factor that distorted the playing field. Active participation of government ministers in rallies, alongside extensive campaign messaging on official government websites and social media accounts, effectively blurred the line between governing and campaigning. The public TV's favourable coverage of the SLPP was another example of incumbency advantage.

Well-established, independent media made a positive contribution to the electoral process. District-level debates helped voters to compare lead candidates directly and to make a well-informed choice on election day, while news coverage by independent broadcasters offered a balanced account on the campaign. However, the dire financial situation notably reduced pluralism in broadcasts of many community radio stations, who often sold their prime time to the APC or SLPP.

Another positive takeaway from the 2023 elections was the national fact-checking initiative iVerify, which was set-up to equip voters with reliable information and to safeguard the information environment. Falsehoods before, during and after the election day were de-bunked

through a multitude of digital and offline channels. In addition, media and civil society were also key to various voter information campaigns promoting inclusive participation.

Citizen observers and faith-based organisations played a pivotal role in these elections. They monitored different aspects and stages of the process, offering voters a non-partisan assessment. An independent and credible parallel vote tabulation, done by the citizen observer group National Election Watch (NEW), pointed out statistical inconsistencies in results data. The following public intimidation of NEW by state and non-state actors, punctuated by a disinformation campaign, aimed to clamp down on voices of dissent and clouded future perspectives for genuine, non-partisan civic activism.

Overall, the 2023 general elections underscored a clear commitment among Sierra Leoneans to the democratic processes, while also proving an urgent need for further reforms focusing on transparency, trust-building and inclusion. The EU EOM is offering 21 recommendations for improving the way elections are organised, managed, and conducted and for upholding regional and international commitments. There are seven priority recommendations:

1. Publish the final voter register per polling station and per polling center in a timely manner and allow voters to verify and correct all their details.

2. The ECSL to establish and publish detailed procedures for the tabulation and announcement of results, as well as put in place a robust, transparent, and easily verifiable results' processing system well ahead of elections.

3. Publish on the ECSL website comprehensive election results data by polling station, including results per candidate and per party, the number of registered voters and of valid and invalid votes, in a timely manner and in an easily trackable and downloadable database format.

4. Ensure safety and security for all candidates through a timely conclusion of investigations, holding perpetrators of violence accountable, and enabling the PPRC to act effectively upon violations of campaign rules.

5. Ensure enforcement of legal restrictions on the misuse of state resources and explicitly prohibit the use of official functions, as well as government websites and social media accounts for campaign purposes.

6. Ensure transparency in campaign finance by introducing caps for campaign revenues and expenses and clear rules of reporting and public disclosure before, during, and after the elections, including by the media, and by implementing robust sanctions for noncompliance.

7. Protect freedom of expression by clearly aligning the definitions of "cyber-terrorism", "cyber-stalking", "cyber-bullying" and "incendiary information" with relevant regional and international standards.

II. INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the 24 June General Elections in Sierra Leone following an invitation from the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The EU EOM was present from 11 May to 13 July 2023. It was the fifth time that EU deployed an observation mission to Sierra Leone.

The EU EOM was led by the Chief Observer, Evin Incir, Member of the European Parliament. The mission comprised a core team of 10 experts based in Freetown and 28 long-term observers who arrived on 20 May and deployed to all 16 districts regions of Sierra Leone; 40 short-term observers were present from 18 to 27 June and deployed throughout the country.

For the election day, the EU EOM was reinforced with 14 locally recruited observers from diplomatic representations of EU Member States and Norway. In addition, a delegation of four Members of the European Parliament, led by Georgios Kyrtsos, Member of the European Parliament, joined the mission. In total, the EU EOM deployed 104 observers from 26 EU Member States, as well as from partner countries Canada and Norway.

The mission's mandate was to observe all aspects of the electoral process and assess the extent to which the elections complied with regional and international commitments for elections, as well as with national legislation. The EU EOM is independent in its findings and conclusions. The mission followed an established methodology and adhered to the "Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation", endorsed under United Nations auspices in October 2005 and now espoused by over 50 organisations.

III. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The general elections held on 24 June 2023 were the fifth consecutive elections since the Republic of Sierra Leone returned from an 11-year period of civil war to civilian rule in 2002. During those 21 years the country saw two peaceful and orderly administered changes of power between the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All People's Congress (APC), through the citizens' vote, attesting to significant steps towards the consolidation of democracy. The changes of government that occurred each time happened when the incumbent President had concluded his second and constitutionally final term. During all previous elections the ruling party of the day has been exploiting incumbency advantages to tilt the playing field in its favour.

The 2023 presidential elections were contested by the same two main contenders of the 2018 elections, only that the incumbency has switched. Julius Maada Bio this time around campaigned from a position of executive power and sought re-election for a second and final term on the SLPP ticket. Samura Kamara, the 2018 candidate of the then ruling APC, went into this year's campaign as the leader of the main opposition party. Since independence in 1961, the SLPP and APC have dominated Sierra Leone's political landscape, with no new party being able to sustain a relative success beyond one election cycle. The two parties that won parliamentary seats in 2018, the National Grand Coalition (NGC) and the Coalition for Change (C4C), partly realigned with the SLPP and APC ahead of the 2023 elections.

The pre-campaign environment was characterised by strong political tensions between the main political camps and by high ethno-regional polarisation, primarily between the Temne in the north, mainly supporting the APC, and the Mende in the south and east, primarily backing the SLPP. Several issues contributed to this strife. The 2021 mid-term census was disputed by the APC, parts of civil society and data experts. The key controversy concerned a significant numerical population growth in southern and eastern districts, the strongholds of the SLPP, and a numerical population decline in the APC strongholds in the west, including a decrease in

Freetown of some 450,000 persons, as well in north and north-west.[1] This census contributed to additional five parliamentary seats in the Southern and Eastern Regions and a reduction of parliamentary representation by two seats in the Western Area.[2] Delays in the publication of the voter register and a lack of meaningful dialogue, cooperation and trust-building between the ECSL and the opposition parties compounded the political environment.

The elections took place within a context of high unemployment and soaring living costs for the majority of the population.[3] Protests over the increasing socio-economic hardship in August 2022 resulted in at least 30 citizens and 7 police officers being killed and saw use of disproportionate force by the security agencies. There were concerns that new protests could interact with electoral dynamics and destabilise the political situation in the run-up to the elections.

Signs of shrinking civic and political space became evident in 2022. During protests several APC politicians and CSO activists were arrested. Parallel court cases were opened against key APC leaders, including Samura Kamara and the mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, for alleged misappropriation of public funds. Both the arrests and the court cases were seen by several stakeholders and independent analysts as signs of a more restrictive government course. Threats by the ECSL to withdraw the accreditation of the National Election Watch (NEW) over their findings during the 2022 by-elections added to that perception, as did the controversial confirmation of the ECSL Chair and the Commissioner for the Western Area. The President's decision to reintroduce the proportional representation (PR) system, despite the Parliament's refusal to include it in the revised Public Elections Act, also was seen as a move to consolidate political power instead of encouraging a broader national consensus.

There were also uncertainties about the competitiveness of the elections. The APC faced internal struggles, partly stemming from a court injunction in April 2022 against its leadership structure, which had been deemed unlawful by the High Court, and led to the installation of an Interim Transitional Governance Committee. In February 2023, the APC finally overcame its leadership impasse, electing as party flagbearer and rallying behind Samura Kamara, who, a few days after his election, was indicted for alleged misappropriation of public funds. In late April 2023 the High Court adjourned the court case against him until after the election.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVIOUS EU EOM RECOMMENDATIONS

Several EU EOM 2018 recommendations not requiring constitutional revision were fully or partially addressed.

Following the 2018 elections, the EU EOM made 30 recommendations for changes of which six were identified as priority recommendations. Altogether five recommendations can be considered fully implemented, including two priority recommendations, while another nine recommendations are considered partially implemented.

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1 The government usually undertakes a population census every 10 years, with the last one being undertaken in 2015. Whereas the government argued that a mid-term census would be needed for development planning, the opposition alleged political motives and called to boycott it. International development partners were critical, and the World Bank retracted from pledges of financial support.

2 During the 2022 voter registration process about 2 percentage points more voters were registered in the SLPP strongholds if compared with 2018, whereas the north and north-west the number of registered voters decreased by 1 percentage point.

3 According to the World Bank, Sierra Leone's economic growth has been affected by exposure to multi-dimensional exogenous shocks (economic, epidemic, climatic) with little time to recover: the Ebola epidemic (2014-16), the collapse in global commodity prices, including of iron ore (2015-16), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) and, recently, the war in Ukraine. Food prices has risen by more than 50 percentage points during the last year.

Legislative initiative and change of practice both contributed to fully addressing five recommendations. One priority recommendation was implemented during the 2022 voter registration exercise, which was conducted jointly by the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) and the ECSL. The other priority recommendation considered implemented concerned the introduction of the National Elections Sustainability Trust Fund that enhanced the financial autonomy of the ECSL, with all disbursements made in a timely manner. The ban on vehicular movements on election day was judged unconstitutional and was not imposed this time, in line with the 2018 recommendation. Two out of four recommendations, related to the media and freedom of expression, were addressed by amending the Public Order Act (POA) and by strengthening the independence of media regulator, the Independent Media Commission (IMC).

Partially implemented recommendations were mostly addressed in terms of laws or regulations but lagged behind in their implementation. These included clearly defined nomination fees for elections, with a scale of fees enumerated in the Public Elections Act, 2022 (PEA). However, these fees were still considered high by stakeholders. Delays in the adjudication of both election petitions and offences have been partially addressed through the PEA and the Public Elections (Petitions) Rules (2022). The recommendation referring to campaign finance was partially implemented with the revised Political Parties Act 2022 (PPA), that expanded the role of the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) in regulating political parties' conduct and provides a mechanism to sanction breaches. However, these powers were not used to a full extent. The enactment of the Gender Empowerment and Women's Equality Act 2022 (GEWE), the PEA and the PPA addressed the legal aspect of the recommendation on enhancement of women participation, but in practice political parties did not demonstrate will to foster women electability.[4]

Other recommendations were not implemented mainly because of lack of political will and/or time. Those include amongst others, recommendations to publish ECSL decisions and disaggregated results per polling station, to enhance independence of the state broadcaster, to conduct more comprehensive civic and voter education, and to address problematic dispute resolution mechanisms. Nine recommendations required constitutional changes, but no constitutional revision took place during the electoral cycle.

V. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

A sound foundation for conducting democratic elections, but legal uncertainty stems from ambiguities and gaps in the law.

a. International principles and commitments

Sierra Leone is a signatory to the main international conventions and treaties containing principles and standards for the conduct of democratic elections.[5] As a member of the African Union (AU), Sierra Leone has also ratified many regional human rights treaties and as a member

[4] Other recommendations partially implemented concern voter education, measures to level the playing field during the campaign and improving security features on results' forms and reconciling ballots received by voters and signatures.

[5] Those include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR ratified in 1996); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW ratified in 1988); the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD ratified in 1967); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD ratified in 2010); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1990); the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (ratified in 2016); and the UN Convention against Corruption (ratified in 2004).

of ECOWAS is a party to the protocol of Democratic and Good Governance.[6] Ratification of international treaties is provided for in the Constitution through an enactment or by passing of a resolution in Parliament to ensure domestication of international commitments.

b. Electoral legislation

The electoral cycle was marked by the adoption of new laws for the conduct of elections, addressing some of the issues previously identified, and statutory instruments to regulate the electoral system. The reforms followed broad stakeholder consultations, in line with international good practice, and were seen as a positive development rising the expectations of an improved electoral process.

Fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression and the right to a legal remedy are enshrined in the 1991 Constitution but may be unduly restricted by law and in practice. The Constitution also underpins key election processes, such as the electoral system, candidacy eligibility, voter registration, establishment of the ECSL and the appointment of commissioners, conduct of political parties, and some aspects of dispute resolution. Notable restrictions on the right to stand include the ban on independent candidates for the presidential office, dual and naturalised citizens, and requirement for civil servants who intend to contest the election to resign 12 months before the polls. The legal framework was amended partially to reflect the widely advocated enhancement of gender equality and respect for other human rights issues, but further reforms are needed to guarantee full inclusion, transparency, and legal certainty.

All amendments to the electoral framework were made at least six months prior to the election date in line with regional commitments.[7] The Public Elections Act (PEA) and the Political Parties Act (PPA), both revised in 2022, largely reiterate the provisions of their previous versions. Novelties of the PEA include the introduction of a gender quota in candidate nomination for party lists, and the enhanced financial autonomy of the ECSL, addressing previous EU EOM recommendations. The PPA expanded the powers of the renamed Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) to regulate political parties' activities and even to deregister them for non-compliance, with a possible appeal to the Supreme Court. Potential sanctions for prohibited conduct, including hate speech, are set out in the new provisions. Although the PPRC can further regulate campaign finance, potentially limiting the influence of money in the elections, this statutory power was not used.

Progress towards the advancement of gender equality was also made by the adoption of the 2022 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE Act), introducing a 30 per cent gender quota in public and private bodies.[8] While, positively, provisions criminalising defamatory and seditious libel were repealed from the Public Order Act in 2020, the enactment of the 2021 Cyber Security and Crime Act (CSCA) was seen by many as impeding freedom of expression, also in the electoral context. These instruments, supplemented with elements of other

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6 Those include the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR ratified in 1983); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (ratified in 2015); the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ratified in 2009) and the AU Convention on Preventing and Combatting Corruption (ratified in 2008). Sierra Leone has signed, but not yet ratified, the African Youth Charter. The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (The ECOWAS Protocol).

7 ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

8 The GEWE Act, s.3(1) and 4(1)

statutes, as well as regulations and codes of conduct, form the core of the national legal framework governing the elections.

Nonetheless, the amendments introduced did not address some previously flagged issues. Namely, legal provisions are not sufficiently elaborated, several sections of the law are still lacking clarity, and other vaguely drafted provisions leave undue scope for arbitrary interpretation, including provisions related to the announcement of election results.[9] Campaign finance issues and enforcement of sanctions for campaign violations are not adequately addressed to ensure transparency and equal opportunities, which created an uneven playing field amongst contestants. At odds with international and regional commitments, the legal framework does not articulate clear mechanisms for certain aspects of dispute resolution, depriving stakeholders from an effective legal redress.[10]

RECOMMENDATION: ***Ensure legal certainty for all aspects and stages of the electoral process by removing from Constitution and the PEA conflicting sections and ambiguities that leave undue scope for arbitrary interpretation, through an inclusive revision process.***

c. Electoral system

The President serves a five-year mandate, with a two-term limit for presidential office. The two-round system is applied to elect the President and Vice-President together in the first round if they obtain at least 55 per cent of the valid votes. Otherwise, a second round takes place, between the two candidates who achieved the highest vote, within 14 days from the official announcement of election results. The Parliament comprises 149 members who serve a five-year mandate; 135 seats were distributed through a District Block Proportional Representation system (PR system), while the remaining 14 were reserved for Paramount Chiefs, who were elected in late May.

The decision to conduct elections under the PR system was taken in late 2022 without broad stakeholder consultation and founded on a constitutional provision,[11] challenged in the Supreme Court by the opposition and justified by the court on the absence of valid constituencies.[12] The method of allocation of the seats in the districts, of calculation of minimum threshold to be attained, and of apportionment of seats to the elected political parties or candidates were provided in the 2022 Regulations.[13] The allocation of seats per district was performed by the ECSL based

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9 No deadline is provided in the law for the ECSL to announce the election results; PEA, s.93 does not indicate a timeframe for results to be published, while the wording "and in any other means" leaves room for arbitrary interpretation on the method of publication. Such information should be precise, given that parliamentary elections can only be challenged upon publication in the Gazette; PEA, s.52(a) there is no time frame for the issuing of the certificate of elections, while s.52(b) does not provide for a deadline to publish the results in the Gazette; PEA, s.144(1)(a) contravenes s.54 on the jurisdiction of the Election Offences and Petitions Court and the relevant provision of the Constitution; PEA, s.54 the form of initiating a challenge against presidential election is not in line with the Supreme Court Rules; The PEA does not include any provision on complaints' procedure on election day.

10 ICCPR, art. 2.3(a): "*All persons whose rights or freedoms are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity*" and art. 2.3(b): "*Such a remedy shall [be] determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy.*" ACDEG, art. 17(2): "*State Parties shall [….] establish and strengthen national mechanisms that redress election-related disputes in a timely manner*."

11 Constitution, s.38A(1) provides that the president upon consultation with the ECSL may direct that an election is to be conducted applying PR system "instead of constituencies". The PR system was introduced by constitutional amendment and used in 2002 and was a provisional arrangement since no reliable population census data were available to draw constituencies.

12 *Hon. Abdul Kargbo & Councillor Hakiratu Maxwell-Caulker v. AG & ECSL S.C. Misc. Appl. 06/2022*, Judgment dated 27 January 2023.

13 Statutory Instrument of Nº14 of 2022, The Public Elections (District Block Proportional Representation System) Regulations 2002.

on a political compromise that resulted in an average of the 2016 seats and the population quota of the 2021 mid-term census.[14] Political parties had to submit lists of candidates twice the number of seats to the ECSL, respecting the 30 per cent gender quota for each of the 16 districts, which varied between 4 seats (Falaba and Koinadugu) and 16 seats (Western Urban-Freetown). To enter Parliament, contestants had to pass a 11.9 per cent threshold, which was the calculated product of dividing the total number of districts with the total number of seats multiplied by 100.

Low level of public awareness of the revived PR system was a common concern throughout the campaign. Many voters were not aware of how their votes would translate into parliamentary or local council seats, while most EU EOM interlocutors viewed the PR system as largely centralised and depersonalised, lowering deputies' accountability towards voters. Other aspects of the PR system, such as the filling of potential vacancies, were not discussed.[15] EU EOM interlocutors claimed that the high threshold to enter parliament was challenging to reach for smaller parties and independent candidates, negatively affecting political pluralism.

VI. ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

The ECSL's lack of transparency affected confidence in the integrity of the elections and hindered the right of access to information and institutional accountability.

a. Structure and composition of the election administration

The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) is a constitutionally independent and permanent body with regulatory powers, responsible for voter and candidate registration and the conduct of all elections and referenda. It is composed of a chairman and five commissioners appointed for a five-year term, each responsible for a different region, namely the East, North, South, West, and for the first time Northwest. All commissioners were appointed between April 2019 and March 2023.

ECSL commissioners are appointed by the President upon consultation with the leaders of all political parties and subject to parliamentary approval. The appointment procedure has always been criticised by whichever parties are in the opposition for impeding on the ECSL's institutional independence. The lack of formal structures of consultations, along with questions over the parliamentary process,[16] does not guarantee inclusivity, which in turn negatively affects trust in the ECSL and perception of its institutional independence.[17] Eligibility criteria for the position of ECSL commissioner include "proven integrity," but do not provide for any merit-based criteria.[18] Positively, the 2022 revision of the PEA provided a higher standard for the President's authority to remove a commissioner from office by replacing the term "misbehaviour" with "gross misconduct" to mitigate potential misuse. However, the previous terminology of

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[14] The last two population censuses were conducted within less than 10 years. The first, in 2015, under the then APC government, was criticised by the opposing SLPP; the second, considered a mid-term population census in 2021, under the SLPP government was boycotted by the APC.

[15] Constitution, s.38A(4) on the PR system provides for potential vacancies in Parliament to be filled from political parties' lists and not with by-elections as provided in s.39.

[16] The exact number of votes cast during parliamentary sessions is not systematically counted nor publicly available.

[17] ACDEG, art. 17.1 states that State Parties shall "*Establish and strengthen independent and impartial national electoral bodies responsible for the management of elections.*" 2001 ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, art. 3 states that "*The bodies responsible for organising the elections shall be independent or neutral and shall have the confidence of all the political actors*."

[18] Candidates for the position of ECSL commissioners cannot hold at the same time the office of ministers, deputy ministers, be members of the parliament, or be a public officer. Commissioners must not be older than 65 years and must be otherwise qualified to be elected as members of parliament.

"misbehaviour" remains in the Constitution, which takes precedence over the PEA.[19] There is no specific mechanisms to appeal such dismissal.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Establish an inclusive appointment process for ECSL commissioners including formalised consultations. Considerations could be given to introducing criteria and measures to ensure equal and merit-based access to the election administration.***

Most stakeholders expressed confidence in the ECSL's operational capacity. The organisational structure of the ECSL is suitable to fulfil its mandate, with an administrative secretariat coordinating the activities of fifteen specialised departments.[20] During the election period, the 17 District Election Offices are complemented by 5 regional tally centres.

Perception of the impartiality of the ECSL was highly polarised along the political divide. The SLPP expressed trust in the ECSL, while the APC perceived the ECSL as biased, with rising criticism as election day approached. Nearly all stakeholders expressed concern about governmental influence over staff appointments among public institutions. The ECSL was not exempt from such criticism.

b. Administration of the election

The ECSL received timely disbursement of state funding and appeared operationally prepared, but delays, errors, and omissions in the delivery of sensitive materials occurred on election day.[21] Some ECSL staff shared their views with the EU EOM indicating that additional resources, especially for logistics and voter education, could have been beneficial. Despite a tight timeline and budget, the ECSL recruited some 91,300 temporary election staff and conducted cascade trainings, which were mostly positively assessed by the EU EOM observers. More simulations with sample materials could have been beneficial. The tablets, which were to be used for the electronic transmission of results from polling stations, were not deployed on time for testing or inclusion in trainings, while problems encountered on election day highlighted the lack of logistical preparedness and quality control at the central level.

The ECSL held regular public meetings of its Political Parties Liaison Committee in the presence of civil society and media. Those meetings informed on key decisions and offered opportunities for discussion. However, ECSL decisions, regulations, procedures, and minutes were not published, which prevented the scrutiny of the ECSL decision-making processes and if the necessary quorum was reached. This undermined regional and international commitments to access to information and institutional accountability.[22]

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19 Constitution s.32.8.

20 Operations, procurement and logistics, training and procedures, data management and voters roll, information and communication technology, electoral education, electoral inclusion, external relations, media and communication, research, monitoring and evaluation, legal affairs, finance, administration, human resources and capacity building, and internal audit.

21 ACDEG, art. 15.4 states that "*State Parties shall provide [public] institutions with resources to perform their assigned missions efficiently and effectively*."

22 UNCAC art. 10: "*Taking into account the need to combat corruption, each State Party shall […] take measures to enhance transparency in its public administration, including with regard to its organisation, functioning and decision-making [including] Adopting procedures or regulations allowing members of the general public to obtain […] information on the organisation, functioning and decision-making processes of its public administration and […] on legal acts that concern members of the public.*" ACDEG, art.15.8 requires "*Transparency and fairness in the management of public affairs.*"

RECOMMENDATION: ***Introduce a legal obligation for the ECSL to publish timely, including online, all ECSL decisions, regulations, and procedures, while also guaranteeing their continued online accessibility.***

Most operations were conducted in accordance with the electoral calendar. Yet, several delays and shortcomings at key stages of the electoral process occurred, and were not comprehensively explained to the public, reducing confidence in the process. Those included important steps in the voter registration process (see below); late publication of and numerous errors in the final candidate lists for parliamentary elections; late announcement of the early voting date;[23] lack of publication of tallying and result certification procedures; and lack of publication of results disaggregated at the polling station level. A stress-test or a nation-wide mock exercise of the results management system was not conducted, and there was no public information on the security safeguards of the results management system, a measure that could have defused political tensions.

The ECSL worked to address problematic issues at different stages, but more systematic and timely public information could have enhanced certainty and institutional transparency.

c. Civic and voter education

The ECSL developed TV and radio ads, videos, animations, songs, jingles, and posters, explaining how to mark the ballot and calling for peaceful elections. However, the overall visibility of the voter education varied, with many stakeholders noting that it was insufficient in rural areas. Civic and voter education was rarely designed to address women and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, voters were not often aware about the requirement to be included in the civil registry to vote.

Radio jingles were produced in twelve languages and disseminated through local radio stations. The ECSL also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with 27 CSOs for the dissemination of voter education, as well as with four broadcasters for a free weekly slot dedicated to discussions on the electoral process. The list of CSOs and radio stations the ECSL said to be working with was neither published nor shared with the EU EOM.[24] The ECSL was active on its social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter, but very few posts supported its voter education campaign.

The ECSL also contracted town criers and some 1,800 Locality Electoral Education Committees to spread information at the local level. Nevertheless, due to limited financial and human resources, it remained highly dependent on CSOs for the dissemination of voter information. Some district election staff confirmed that monitoring of voter education activities conducted by civil society was challenging, and that the implementation of all activities could not always be confirmed. In general, the vast majority of voter education activities were proactively conducted by CSOs, sometimes even on a voluntary basis.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Conduct continuous campaigns to ensure all eligible voters are duly recorded in the civil register and develop targeted civic and voter education with a continued collaboration between the ECSL with other governmental institutions, civil society, and media.***

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[23] Voters registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare and away on pilgrim on election day could vote early (20 March 2023 Constitutional Instrument, Early Voting Regulation). It was announced on 13 June and took place on 15 June in 16 district election offices. In total 321 voters registered as Hajj pilgrims were registered; turnout was 72 per cent.

[24] The EU EOM media interlocutors criticised ECSL's lack of transparency in selection process of outlets for voter information campaign.

VII. VOTER REGISTRATION

Lack of clear and timely public explanations of technical problems related to the voter register reduced confidence in its integrity and accuracy.

a. The right to vote

The right to register as a voter is afforded to all citizens, who are at least 18 years old on the date of the election, of sound mind and ordinarily resident in a ward.[25] Persons who have committed an electoral offence within the preceding five years, as well as all persons serving a prison sentence, are disqualified from voting regardless of the nature of the offence or the duration of the sentence.[26] For the 2023 elections, despite existing legal provisions, no arrangements were made to adjust the voter register or to register persons in pre-trial detention and the diaspora and subsequently facilitate voting.[27]

RECOMMENDATION: ***Ensure the right to vote by making the necessary arrangements to facilitate registration and voting for prisoners on remand.***

b. Voter registration

Since the 2016 National Civil Registration Act, citizens are only added to the voter register if already included in the civil register, which is used to initially extract voters' data. The registration was conducted jointly by the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) and the ECSL from 3 September to 4 October 2022. Both institutions described the cooperation as successful and cost effective. A total of 3,374,258 voters, among whom 52 per cent women, were registered.

The NCRA and ECSL registered first-time voters who were not previously included in the civil register and updated voters' contact details. Changes in voters' address of residence and related allocation to the relevant polling stations were conducted during the registration update, the display of the provisional voter list and the distribution of voter identification cards (VID). Voters were however not provided the opportunity to correct misspelled names or erroneous dates of birth, reducing the accuracy of the voter register.[28] At a later stage, before the elections, voters could not verify the voter register, which created uncertainties and lack of confidence in the final voter register. Following transfers and corrections to voters' allocation per polling station, the number of registered voters per polling centre was published on 25 May 2023. The final voter register per polling station was neither published nor shared with stakeholders, undermining transparency and confidence in the voter register, and hindering the ability to assess voter turnout accurately.[29]

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25 Constitution, s.31.

26 A banket deprivation of prisoners' right to vote has been deemed in caselaw a violation of article 25. HRC GC 25, para. 14: "*If conviction for an offence is a basis for suspending the right to vote, the period of such suspension should be proportionate to the offence and the sentence*".

27 According to the Director of Correctional Centre as of 12 July there are 1,959 male and 88 female prisoners on remand. See the PEA s.15.2.b.ii on the diaspora and s.17.c on imprisonment disqualification.

28 PEA, s.18 state that "*the registration of voters, updating and revision of the Voters Register*" to be conducted at least six months prior to an election.

29 Transparency and the right to information are promoted by the ICCPR art.19.2 and by the UNCAC art. 5.1 and 13.1: "*Each State Party shall […] promote the participation of civil society and reflect the principles of the rule of law; proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency, and accountability.*" The ECOWAS Protocol, art. 5: "*The voters' lists shall be prepared in a transparent and reliable manner, with the collaboration of the political parties and voters who may have access to them whenever the need arises.*"

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: ***Publish the final voter register per polling station and per polling center in a timely manner and allow voters to verify and correct all their details.***

Issues related to the voter registration were widely debated throughout the electoral period, as political parties, the opposition in particular, and civil society organisations were requesting access to and publication of the disaggregated voter register since December 2022.[30] Technical problems and oversights included missing pictures, incomplete data, inadequate software capture of first-time voters, and omission of voters from the provisional voter lists. Many of these problems stemmed from data losses incurred during data transfers with the NCRA. Although the ECSL developed an application for voters to verify their data, provided certificates to concerned voters, and recaptured some 6,000 pictures during the voter card distribution, the voter register remained a source of mistrust throughout the entire electoral process.

Several shortcomings and problems related to the procurement, quality, and distribution of VIDs compounded criticism of the voter registration, also negatively affecting public confidence in the ECSL. The ECSL did not communicate on the procurement process of the VIDs, and many VIDs had missing or poor-quality pictures.[31] Nevertheless, the ECSL went ahead with the distribution of VIDs from 6 to 17 April across all 3,630 registration centres. The short distribution period led to the extension for collection of VIDs in district offices until election day. Three days before the election, the ECSL announced the delivery of 19,000 reprinted VIDs, without providing their distribution per district or voter information targeting concerned voters. The total number of VIDs collected was not made public.

An electronic copy of the final voter lists, including voters' names and pictures, was provided to political parties on 8 June and to the NEW two days before the election. However, the lists provided were considered insufficient. The provision of data per polling station, as well as additional voter data in case person's picture was missing or was of a very poor quality would have strengthened stakeholders' ability to assess the accuracy of the final register of voters.

VIII. REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES

Introduction of gender quota elevated women participation, while late publication of lists interfered with voters' right to know their candidates.

a. Registration of political parties

The freedom of association and the right to form or join political parties are enshrined in the Constitution and generally respected in law and in practice. The PPA 2022 grants the PPRC the power to register, regulate, supervise, and monitor the conduct of political parties, as well as deregister political parties for non-compliance with the law, with a possible appeal to the Supreme Court.

Requirements for registering political parties are considered excessively onerous for smaller political parties, undermining the principles of equal participation, freedom of association, and fair competition.[32] Those include a minimum of fifty registered members in each electoral district

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30 The publication of the full voter register, should not interfere with international standards related to privacy and data protection. Sharing the full voter register with electoral stakeholders is considered an effective confidence building measure.

31 The ECSL informed the EU EOM that low-quality pictures included in the civil registry were not enhanced or recaptured.

32 ICCPR, art. 22.1: "*Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests*." and art. 22.1: "*No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of the right to freedom of association other than those which are prescribed by law […]*".

and maintaining offices in Freetown and all regional headquarters' towns for at least five years. Except for the SLPP and APC, no other party fully met these criteria. The PPRC, however, did not enforce the law, as it did not want to disadvantage other parties. Out of the 17 political parties registered, 13 filed candidates for the presidential and 14 for the parliamentary elections.

b. Registration of candidates

Several candidacy requirements are overly restrictive and do not accord with regional and international standards. Presidential candidates should be political parties' nominees, over 40 years old and meet the criteria to run for parliament, excluding naturalised citizens and those with dual citizenship. Independents may stand only for parliamentary and local council elections. Civil servants intending to contest presidential and parliamentary elections must resign 12 months prior to the polls, which is considered too restrictive and against regional and international commitments.[33] All contestants must pay a non-refundable nomination fee, linked to the minimum wage.[34] Many interlocutors considered it still to be disproportionately high especially for smaller political parties, given the double number of candidates required to be included in the lists for parliamentary and local council elections under the PR system.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Protect the right to stand by removing undue restrictions, including the requirement for civil servants to resign from public office 12 months before election, and allow for independent candidates to run for presidential office.***

For the first time a gender quota was introduced for party lists, requiring at least one woman for every two male candidates nominated, although without a clear ranking order, which was interpreted by political parties as an authorisation to place women candidates primarily in the third place. To ensure compliance, the ECSL designed a software for submission of party lists, with a fair and mandatory vertical distribution of women candidates.[35] However, as reported by EU EOM interlocutors, parties tried to circumvent the quota by identifying male candidates as female ones. Women eventually comprised 32 per cent of all parliamentary candidates, with the APC and SLPP having 32 and 33 per cent female contestants respectively.

The registration process for all races was inclusive, but the extremely delayed publication of the full lists of candidates for parliamentary elections reduced voters' ability to make an informed choice. The provisional list of 13 presidential candidates was published timely on 11 May. The parliamentary and local council lists, however, were posted on the ECSL's website on 14 June and then removed and reposted several times, with the final list for parliamentary elections published in the Gazette on 20 June, beyond the legal deadline and with numerous errors.[36] The ECSL explained delays with necessary rectifications in the lists, amongst others, to identify the right gender of the candidate, and to ensure that parties submit at least twice the number of

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33 ICCPR, art. 25(b) "*Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any […] unreasonable restrictions to vote and to be elected […]*". HRC GC 25, para.17 "*The right of persons to stand for election should not be limited unreasonably by requiring candidates to be members of parties or of specific parties*." The right to stand as an independent candidate has also been recognised by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. In *Tanganyika Law Society and The Legal and Human Rights Centre and Reverend Christopher Mtikila v. The United Republic of Tanzania*, (009 & 011/2011), the court found the ban on independent candidacy violated the individual right to equal protection, prohibitions against discrimination and rights to political participation and association in the African Charter.

34 Some SLL 36,000 (EUR 1,680), SLL 3,600 (EUR 168), and SLL 1,800 (EUR 84) for presidential, parliamentary, and mayoral or chairmanship candidates, respectively. HRC GC 25, para. 16, "*Conditions relating to nomination dates, fees or deposits should be reasonable and not discriminatory*."

35 The ECSL software was rejecting lists that did not have a female candidate in one of the first three places, then one in the next three places, etc.

36 The candidate lists for local council elections were not published before elections.

nominations as seats. Political parties also refused to disclose their own lists, admitting that internal negotiations on the ranking of candidates were still ongoing. As a result, many contestants from the APC and SLPP campaigned without having confirmed their placement in the list and subsequent electability. The absence of final candidates' lists undermined voters' right to scrutinise their prospective representatives, contrary to international standards.

While 14 parties contested the parliamentary elections, only the SLPP and APC filed candidates for all elections in all districts; there were 29 independent parliamentary candidates nationwide, including one woman.

IX. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The initially competitive campaign turned openly confrontational, and subsequently was marred by violence against the opposition in several parts of the country.

On 25 May, for the first time in the country's electoral history, most presidential candidates, including the SLPP and APC flagbearers, publicly signed a peace pledge. The high-profile event was initiated by the Inter-religious Council and the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) and supported by a wide range of national and international actors. Key to the success of the event was that the two main contenders signed the document together on stage, with their handshake lending weight to the promise to abstain from violence. However, the impact of the peace pledge on the campaign environment appeared limited, with little or no awareness among party activists and the wider public at the district level. Also, in the weeks that followed, both parties failed to dissociate themselves from acts or potential acts of violence.[37]

The political environment initially allowed for competitive campaigning throughout the country, in a generally peaceful atmosphere, with a focus on personalities and ethno-regional alliance building rather than issues. However, in a highly polarised political scenario, with the tensions raising in the weeks ahead of the polls, the campaigning space became increasingly restrictive for the APC in several southern and eastern districts. This followed initially localised politically motivated violence that eventually affected the districts of Kailahun, Pujehun, Kenema, and Bo in the south and east, as well Kambia in the north-west, all of them except for Kambia strongholds of the SLPP.[38]

Throughout the campaign, the EU EOM received and crosschecked information on at least 17 violent attacks. Those included the burning of an APC office in Bo district, vandalisation of further party offices in Kailahun and Pujehun, and armed attacks on party officials and some candidates in Pujehun, Kenema and Kambia with several of them being hospitalised. The security concerns led to the cancellation of scheduled APC rallies in some locations, and in the week before the elections, APC officials left Bo, Kailahun and Pujehun districts for fear of their safety.

In the south and south-east, the attacks on the APC and the lack of adequate police reaction distorted a level playing field, while the police were generally seen as biased by most EU EOM interlocutors. EU EOM observers reported about a widespread perception that investigations of violent attacks against APC candidates and activists often were not sufficient to ensure victim's

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[37] Neither the President nor SLPP leadership called on supporters in their strongholds to stop violence against the APC. The APC did not distance itself from inciteful calls by a prominent diaspora blogger to potentially use violence during the protests against the ECSL.

[38] In Kambia, the country's ambassador to Guinea organised the SLPP campaign, police treated SLPP favourably, and according to the EU EOM observers, army trucks transported SLPP campaign material.

right to effective remedy. The police cited lack of capacity as a reason for failing to conclude investigations in a timely manner. It is acknowledged though that in several districts police also attempted to accommodate interests and concerns of both main parties.

EU EOM observers also confirmed a few instances when SLPP supporters were victims, including damaging of a house of a SLPP candidate in Freetown. They noted, however, that generally the SLPP campaign went on freely without interruptions or security incidents throughout the country, including in the APC strongholds.

Demonstrative and disproportionate use of force by security agencies discouraged political activism, with the political climate becoming more tense starting from the second week of June. On 12, 13 and 21 June in several district capitals, including Freetown, police and military were deployed to the streets in large numbers.[39] Though no large-scale protests or confrontations occurred, at least 150 persons were arrested. The excessive use of force by the police, with live ammunition and tear gas canisters fired against the APC headquarters in Freetown on 21 June, resulted in one casualty.[40] The APC's public requests to ECSL which were not met, fuelled further tensions.[41] The attempt to broker a compromise between the APC and ECSL failed and the party called for protests just three days prior to the polls.[42] This created insecurities for voters and stakeholders alike.

The PPRC with its capital headquarters and five offices in the regions did not always and fully use its recently enhanced powers to ensure adherence to the campaign rules.[43] Its most significant and publicly discussed decision was a ban, agreed with political parties, on so-called "street rallies", which were widely used in past elections to show the strength and popular support of the party or a candidate. The PPRC chair in specific cases used his personal authority to mediate conflicts between the parties. However, the PPRC as an institution often did not use its powers to sanction campaign violations, partly due to concerns that sanctions could destabilise the political situation, and partly because the police were not able to conclude investigations in political violence cases, which in turn would allow the PPRC to take further actions. This led to perceptions of impunity among stakeholders at the district level.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: ***Ensure safety and security for all candidates through a timely conclusion of investigations, holding perpetrators of violence accountable, and enabling the PPRC to act effectively upon violations of campaign rules.***

The political campaigns were dominated by the two main presidential candidates, whereas the 11 other candidates conducted very limited and low-key or no campaigns at all. At the beginning of the campaign, district-based campaign days had been allocated to each party who fielded

39 A highly popular diaspora blogger called for protests on 12 and 13 June against the ECSL, with severe threats against the chairman and requesting the postponement of the elections. Some of his demands, like the one for the publication of the disaggregated voter register, echoed those of the APC. While not openly supporting the blogger, the APC also did not distance itself from his messages, which included elements of hate speech.

40 Similar incident at the same location occurred also after the elections. See section Post-election Developments.

41 On 14 June the APC presidential candidate called for the resignation of all ECSL commissioners within 72 hours and the elections to be administered by a panel of international experts. They also requested the disaggregated voters register and asked the ECSL not to use electronic result transmission. There was also a request to end the violence against the party in the south and the east.

42 The PPRC and ICPNC held several meetings between the APC and the ECSL, in the presence of other electoral stakeholders.

43 At the end of the first week of June, PPRC deployed another 20 staff to the district level, hosted by the ECSL.

candidates in that district, to avoid possible clashes between competing parties.[44] The 11 low-key presidential candidates and their parties openly formed alliances with one of the two main parties, mostly the SLPP, but no clear camps took shape, as internal splits prevented a unified position of the individual parties in favour of one of the two main presidential candidates. Although discouraged by the PPRC, smaller parties "donated" campaign days to the two main ones or campaigned together with them. It was mainly SLPP benefitting from this practice in several districts, including Bo, Kambia and Kono.

Abuse of state resources and public office as well as campaigning by government officials gave an undue advantage to the ruling party. Neither the PPRC nor any other state authority ensured adherence to the PPA and the PEA, which explicitly prohibits use of state resources, facilities or officials for campaigning.[45] The President started to campaign early, using inaugurations of government projects to promote his track record and agenda. During the official campaign period (23 May – 21 June), the EU EOM noted misuse of government vehicles in 50 per cent and ministers canvassing for votes in 32 per cent of SLPP campaign events observed.[46] The country's ambassadors to Guinea, Liberia and Egypt were actively organising the SLPP campaign in Kambia and Pujehun. Official websites and social media accounts of ministries and the presidency were also used for campaign purposes. Paramount and other Chiefs, as public officials legally bound to be neutral, were seen either actively campaigning for or silently taking sides with the SLPP in 8 of the 16 districts (Kono, Tonkolili, Pujehun, Koinadugu, Falaba, Bonthe, Bo and Western Urban). Campaigning by state officials blurred the line between governing and campaigning, and gave an undue advantage to the ruling party, contrary to regional and international good practice.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: ***Ensure enforcement of legal restrictions on the misuse of state resources and explicitly prohibit the use of official functions, as well as government websites and social media accounts for campaign purposes.***

X. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Inadequately regulated finances of the campaign undermine transparency of the process.

Campaign finance is not sufficiently regulated, undermining transparency. The law neither provides for interim reporting nor for fair ceilings on income or spending, contrary to the international and regional principle of level playing field. The PPRC did not apply its statutory powers to impose such limits, disadvantaging parties with less resources. The PPRC also did not require disclosure of information on donations or expenses, which could have reduced the impact of money in the electoral process.[47] Only the APC, NGC and SLPP out of the 14 political parties

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44 When publishing the campaign calendar in Gazette, the ECSL mixed up the second page of the calendar for seven districts, meaning, that some parties who did not have candidates in those districts received days for campaigning, while others could campaign on days that were not initially allocated to them. In practice it changed the rhythm of campaign but went entirely unnoticed by the ECSL at national and district level as well as by the main parties.

45 The PPA s 35 (5) explicitly prohibits on the use of "state resources, facilities or officials" for the daily activities of campaign of a political party.

46 The EU EOM observed a total of 50 campaign events throughout the country, 28 of SLPP, 15 of APC, 2 of PMDC, 1 NGC, 1 UDM, 3 independents.

47 ICCPR, HRC GC 25, para. 19: *Reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined […] by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party.*" UNCAC, article 7(3): "*Each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures […] to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, article 10; "Each State Party shall […] incorporate the principle of transparency into funding of political parties."*

contesting elections submitted their financial statements to the PPRC as required by law. The PPRC admitted that abiding strictly by the legal requirements would result in most political parties being excluded from the races, hence no sanctions were imposed. Overall, many aspects of campaign finance, such as obligations for accounting and reporting, are inadequately elaborated, and combined with limited enforcement during elections, did not ensure equal opportunities for contestants.

Political parties and campaigns were mostly financed from membership fees and donations including from the diaspora; on the regional level most campaigns were self-financed, with no details provided as to the origin or the allocation of funds. Most candidates and local party branches did not keep income or expenditure records, as reported to the EU EOM.[48] In most cases, individual candidates received campaign material from the parties' headquarters.

Political parties did not advertise much in traditional and online media. Instead, the APC and SLPP bought bulk airtime by hour on local radio stations. Only a few political ads were placed in national broadcasters. The Facebook Ad Library report shows that from 8 May, 32 political ads were bought, with a total spending not exceeding EUR 600. All but two favoured the SLPP.[49]

There are no reporting requirements for service providers, such as media or online platforms, further reducing the accountability in campaign finance. Even if the law requires all media to offer equal prices for political advertisement, in practice each outlet established a different price list for different political parties. The professional organisations of journalists recommended strict adherence to equal price policy and publication of the price lists by media organisations.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: ***Ensure transparency by introducing caps for campaign revenues and expenses, and clear rules of reporting and public disclosure, before, during, and after elections, including by media, and by implementing robust sanctions for noncompliance.***

XI. MEDIA

A few well-established media strived to offer balanced coverage of elections, yet most outlets favoured either the SLPP or APC

a. Media environment

Media provided extensive campaign and elections coverage, despite technical and financial hardships, which especially affected outlets outside urban areas. With only 26.2 per cent of the population having access to electricity, radio is the main source of news, especially in rural areas, with 228 radio stations out of a total of 531 registered media outlets. Many radio stations operated sporadically and faced additional challenges during the rainy season, which coincided with the start of the election campaign. Also disinformation and fake news originating from social media often entered the radio and TV broadcasts, as observed by the EU EOM.

English and Krio were the main languages for television and radio programmes, whereas English dominated the print press. Major local languages, such as Mende, Temne, Limba, Kono and Fullah, were only used in the ECSL and the CSO Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL) voter education jingles to reach out to various groups of multi-ethnic population. With the strong broadcast media market and low adult literacy rate, newspapers have gradually lost

[48] Despite a legal obligation for political parties and candidates to submit a statement on expenditures incurred during the campaign to the PPRC after the elections as per PPA, s.37(2).

[49] See Annex 3 *Social Media Monitoring Results*, sub-section 4 for further details.

their readership. Positively, most print outlets have up-to date news websites and very popular social media accounts.

Most media outlets face multiple financial and technical challenges, which in turn significantly affected the quality of editorial outputs, to the detriment of voters. The public broadcaster Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) did not receive state funding on a regular basis, and often funds received did not reach regional offices, thus impeding their operations. Community and private radio stations also struggled financially. Hence, instead of producing their own content, broadcasters sold their prime time to leading parties. It significantly reduced the amount of impartial information available to voters and affected smaller parties and independent candidates, as there was no space left for the free airtime, contrary to the law. In the highly polarised pre-election information environment, lack of funding also made media vulnerable to political interference with editorial decisions.

Professional trainings for journalists improved the quality of election coverage. Multiple media organisations, such as Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Guild of Newspaper Editors, Association of Broadcasters, Independent Radio Network (IRN), and Sierra Leone Association of Women in Journalism (SLAWiJ) organised a wide range of trainings for journalists on key professional principles for election coverage.

Instances of violence against journalists occurred before and during the campaign, creating a challenging working environment for media professionals. For example, shortly before the official start of the campaign two executives of the radio station FOP were brutally assaulted at two different political events in Moyamba. Both reported those incidents to the police, yet both cases were closed due to lack of evidence. Another freelance journalist was harassed and intimidated by party supporters closer to the polls, with perpetrators not being brought to justice. After the elections, two journalists were trapped inside the APC headquarters during the standoff with security agencies, their cars were damaged, but no compensation was paid. Those cases exemplify the absence of effective protection of media practitioners.

Communication between independent media houses and the ECSL was difficult, undermining media's editorial independence. For the first time since 1996, the ECSL informally discouraged the IRN, which is Sierra Leone's largest platform of radio stations, from reporting the provisional results from the polling stations.[50] This eroded the confidence of the journalistic community in the transparency of the process. Another instance that damaged the image of the ECSL and reduced trust among media professionals, was the ECSL's informal "advice" given to the journalists from one of the leading broadcasters to change their reporting style or to be 'blacklisted' from covering any upcoming public events. Inconsistent communication from the ECSL to the media continued until the election day and some journalists did not receive the accreditation to report from the national tally centre in Freetown.

b. Legal framework for the media

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and of the press. The Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) establishes the regulatory framework for the media sector, while the National Communication Authority (NatCA) provides broadcast media with frequencies. The Independent Media Commission (IMC) is the main regulatory body for the broadcasting sector

[50] It was a long-standing tradition of the IRN to have reporters moving from one polling centre to another and reading out results data, as posted outside the voting place or citizens sending to the radio station photos with result forms which were than later, after the verification, read out by radio presenters.

and was monitoring media's compliance with campaign coverage rules, which require equal access and balanced reporting.

Recent legal changes introduced into the IMC Act strengthened the regulator's mandate and enhanced its powers to uphold professional reporting standards but failed to ensure its financial independence. The IMC comprises 13 members, with the chairman being appointed by the President, on the advice of SLAJ and subject to the approval of Parliament, while the other 12 members are appointed by SLAJ, Sierra Leone Bar Association, Sierra Leone Institute of Engineers, Inter-Religious Council, Minister of Information, and civil society organisations.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Protect the independence of the media regulator by granting in the law financial independence and sustainability of the IMC, as well as by further facilitating the autonomy of the IMC, with the Chairman being appointed by an independent board of media professionals and legal experts, through an open, inclusive, and competitive pre-selection process.***

The IMC introduced the 2022 Elections (Coverage and Reporting) Regulation to orient media outlets on how to report and election stakeholders on how to interact with the media. Prior to the elections, the regulator organised numerous trainings for journalists and monitored broadcasters' coverage of the campaign. After the elections, the IMC published the results of their countrywide media monitoring, with an overall positive assessment of journalists' work. The regulator was perceived by media professionals as effective and fair.

The IMC upheld principles of professional journalism and implemented sanctions in an overall effective manner. After a review of complaints, the regulator suspended live call-in programmes of three radio stations – Citizen, Justice and Tumac. Two of those radio stations were APC and one SLPP leaning. All three allowed on air commentaries that in a local context were perceived as "hate speech". The formal reason for suspension was lack of the equipment for delaying live broadcasts, which is a legal requirement.[51] In another case the IMC decided to seek through the court a permanent closure of an SLPP-leaning radio station, who openly attacked IRN's professional integrity and reputation, while also disrespecting other reporting standards.

Legal and operational standing of the SLBC makes the public broadcaster excessively dependent on governmental bodies. The President appoints the Director General upon the approval by the Parliament. The Deputy Director General is appointed by the Board, with representation of the Council of Paramount Chiefs, Inter-religious Council, Women's Forum, Sierra Leone Bar Association, University of Sierra Leone, Youth Council, SLAJ and civil society. The SLBC reports on their financial activities to the Minister of Information and Communications after the end of each financial year; the Minister also approves remuneration, fees and other expenses paid to the Chairman and the Board.[52]

In a positive development, Part V of the Public Order Act (POA), which criminalised libel, defamation, and sedition, was repealed in 2020. However, the 2020 Cyber Security and Crime Act placed new constrains on freedom of expression and was seen as potentially harmful for media by journalists and civil society organisations advocating for media freedom.

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[51] Most EU EOM interlocutors noted that these three radio stations do not follow professional journalistic standards, instead they openly favour one party and incite violence.

[52] SLBC Act, 2009, Sec. 6 and 19.

c. Media monitoring findings

Broadcast media closely followed the campaign, devoting most of its prime-time news to election-related topics, and focusing primarily on the campaigns of the APC and SLPP. A handful of well-established radio and TV stations strived to offer balanced coverage and engaged in fact-checking, helping voters to navigate the pre-election environment.[53] At the same time, many other outlets were either owned by politicians or their affiliates, or they financially hinged on government advertising. These outlets openly rallied either for the APC or SLPP and allowed divisive language to be used on air. Such coverage did not stimulate an issue-based debate.

Public broadcaster SLBC's TV favoured the SLPP and devoted to the ruling party, the President and his family some 90 per cent of all prime-time newscasts, predominantly in a neutral tone. The President was the most quoted political actor within SLBC TV evening shows.[54] During the 30-day monitoring period incumbent's direct speech reached 2 hours 9 minutes, compared to the direct quotations of APC's presidential candidate that summed up to 28 minutes.[55] The SLPP and the President also dominated SLBC Radio broadcasts on elections and politics, exceeding 60 per cent of the total airtime. Such campaign coverage illustrated SLBC's subservience to the government and proves that resolute steps are needed to ensure that the public broadcaster fulfils its public service remit and provides voters with diverse information.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Ensure the citizens' right of access to information by transforming Sierra Leone Broadcast Corporation into a genuine public service broadcaster. This includes a clear legal separation of SLBC from any government institution, and an open and competitive pre-selection process for the appointment of the management, with the participation of industry professionals, and by an independent board.***

Private broadcasters better facilitated the ability of voters to make an informed choice by equitably dividing the prime-time news between the APC and SLPP, with an overall neutral tone. The African Young Voices (AYV) Radio and Democracy Radio undertook a more diversified approach. They analysed the President's record in office in their news and gave some airtime to parties that were not represented in the Parliament.[56]

Main campaign narratives featured in the news were "NO run-off", "economic changes" and "peaceful elections", yet no detail on substance was included in those notions. The coverage of rallies also did not add much, as the APC and SLPP presidential candidates were accusing each other of various wrong-doings, using negative rhetoric, rather than explaining their manifestos. Journalists also rarely scrutinised APC and SLPP campaign promises for accuracy or economic viability. As a result, voters had a very narrow scope for obtaining factual information on which to make a well-informed choice.

Media's coverage of the activities of the President and the government exposed how the ruling party used institutional events for campaign purposes. The President's official visits, frequently accompanied by the Minister of Information, regularly featured in broadcast media with news stories exemplifying the lack of clear distinction between their official and campaign roles. The

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53 The five-member EU EOM Media Monitoring Unit monitored a sample of national and state-level media. The sample included two public (TV a radio) and six private broadcasters (two TV and four radio) with a close to-nationwide reach, and four newspapers and their online versions. For further details on media monitoring methodology see Annex 2 *Media Monitoring Results (Annex 2)*.

54 See also Annex 2, Charts 4, 5 and 7.

55 See also Annex 2, Charts 6.

56 See also Annex 2, Charts 4 and 5.

Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Spokesperson of the President were also often taking part in the campaign-related events, as featured on broadcast media. During those events, government officials encouraged voters to support the SLPP.

AYV TV and SLBC TV held regular programmes and discussions with stakeholders on voter education, as well as showed voter information jingles by the ECSL, NEW and CARL in different local languages. Celebrities also took part in audio-visual messages calling for peaceful elections.[57]

Positively, debates among candidates for various elections were organised by media and civil society organisations in at least eight districts, allowing voters to compare candidates directly. Mayoral debates were held in Freetown, Kambia, Kabala, Moyamba and Port Loko. Regrettably, on 3 June in Kambia the debate between the SLPP and APC candidates was interrupted by the police, who used force to disperse the participants, stating that such actions were needed as no prior notification was received. The peace initiative 'Talking Drum Studio' held 60 debates, also bringing together representatives of vulnerable groups. Such positive and inclusive practices merit further expansion and continuation beyond the electoral period, as debates proved to be an effective format of general civic education.

The presidential debate did not take place, to the detriment of voters. The National Political Debates Committee was preparing it but could not secure the necessary funding. It was also not clear if both the SLPP and APC presidential candidates would agree to share the stage. Unlike the peace march, the presidential debate was not included in the ECSL campaign calendar. There is also financial support foreseen for media, who would organise it. Many EU EOM interlocutors stressed that the inclusion of a presidential debate in the ECSL calendar would promote a culture of issue-based political discussions and would help voters to form their opinion about their prospective leaders.

XII. SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

Independent fact-checkers countered disinformation, while divisive messages raised agitation.

a. Social media environment

One out of five Sierra Leoneans has access to the Internet, while only one out of ten has a social media account.[58] In total, some 780,000 people access social media regularly. Although there are no official data related to digital or media literacy in Sierra Leone, most stakeholders cite challenges in education and digital skills as the key reason why misleading and manipulated information was shared so broadly. Overall, only 47.7 per cent of the adult population are literate, knowing how to write and read.[59] Yet, some 60 per cent have access to 3G coverage, which is sufficient for browsing internet and, most importantly, for sharing voice messages, pictures, and videos via different social media channels.

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57 See also Annex 2, Charts 10 and 11.
58 Digital Sierra Leone 2023. See also Annex 3 *Social Media Monitoring Results*, Chart 1.
59 In Sierra Leone there is a gender gap in literacy skills: while the literacy rate among males is estimated to 55.3 per cent, among females reaches only 40.1 per cent World Bank: literacy in Sierra Leone 2021

The main social media platform is Facebook, with 75 per cent of social media users having an active Facebook account.[60] In most cases the communication language on all social platforms is English or Krio. Among instant messaging platforms, WhatsApp is the most popular one, having a three-fold role in political communication: it was a key platform for contestants to communicate with supporters and voters; it was used by the ECSL and civil society to inform voters; and it was the channel for misinformation to spread. Usually, WhatsApp communication comprised an audio or video message, which was easy to understand for everyone regardless their literacy rate and which was then further shared with friends and family, without a verification. The EU EOM also observed that in areas where the internet coverage was limited, political messages were sent to community leaders who passed the content orally to others. [61]

The first national fact-checking initiative, iVerify, was established just before the elections. It effectively debunked many false stories before, during and after the elections, helping voters to navigate the pre-election information environment. However, the project was established too late to also carry out wider educational programmes on the danger of disinformation and to teach social media users on how to identify false or manipulated content. Considering that access to internet is growing steadily, while the literacy rate remains very low, further development and implementation of various media literacy programmes, including related to elections, would be beneficial. Such programmes could have a special focus on digital literacy and could target the most vulnerable parts of society.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Promote the independent formation of voters' opinions by developing inclusive media and digital literacy programmes in close collaboration with civil society, fact-checking initiatives, professional media organisations and tech platforms.***

b. Legal framework for social media and digital rights

The 2021 Cyber Security and Crime Act (CSCA) puts undue restrictions on freedom of expression online. The vague definitions of various cybercrimes do not accord with international standards and leave room for politicians and law enforcement bodies to exert pressure on critical voices. The National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre, citing the CSCA, has publicly warned those engaged in the "spreading of incendiary information in social media to destabilise the state", considering it as an "act of cyber-terrorism", subject to long prison sentences. However, the CSCA does not refer to the "spreading incendiary information", rather it references "a terrorist act", without defining it, and refers to the 2012 Anti-terrorism Act, which also contains vague definitions. Many EU EOM interlocutors noted that the CSCA leads to self-censorship online, especially on politically sensitive topics. During the campaign, the Act was cited to detain a prominent APC activist for allegedly spreading harmful content on WhatsApp, while in mid-April, a media entrepreneur was detained after posting a video critical of the president. Those examples demonstrated that this broadly worded Act might be misused to silence dissent.

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60 75.4 per cent of traffic data is generated by the Facebook users, 7.5 per cent by Twitter, 5 per cent by YouTube. Number of WhatsApp users is not publicly available.

61 Online communication in Sierra Leone is not limited to social media platforms. Different dedicated phone apps are serving as hubs for media outlets: Sierra Leone Radio Stations app is a hub for 8 radio stations, SLTube app covers several live TV channels, 16 newspapers and 5 radio channels, and AYV has their own app. The ECSL and IRN also have up-to date apps, as has Samura Kamara, although introduced only on 2 June 2023.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: ***Protect freedom of expression by clearly aligning the definitions of "cyber-terrorism", "cyber-stalking", "cyber-bullying" and "incendiary information" with relevant regional and international standards.***

The NatCA is the regulatory body for the ICT and telecommunication industry, established under the respective Act in 2022. The NatCA Chairman is appointed by the President for four years, with a possibility of renewal for another term. The NatCA is responsible for issuing licences to telecommunication companies and internet providers, and regulates access to the internet, but not the content. The Act lacks precision on who initiates a shutdown of the internet or a restriction of access to certain content or platforms, while it is in NatCA's remit to enforce such measures. The August 2022 protests served as an example of the government's ability to swiftly, within hours, switch off the internet without following a due process.[62] Such lack of transparency on matters related to restricting access to internet does not accord with international standards for freedom of expression.

The IMC Act was amended in 2020 amongst others to regulate online content created by traditional media outlets. Thus far the IMC has not used these powers, admittedly having little or no capacity to examine the content that broadcast, and print outlets post on their social media accounts or websites. The IMC also has not issued any regulations related to online content.[63]

There is no specific data protection legislation. The 2013 Right to the Access to the Information Act regulates retrieval and re-use of information held by public institutions and stipulates publication of information of public interest online.[64] However, in practice only a few government institutions provide comprehensive and up to date websites where citizens could source information of public interest in a user-friendly format.

c. Social media monitoring findings

Political discussion groups and pages on Facebook offered a relatively pluralistic space to discuss issues related to elections and politics.[65] Those large groups were open to the public and their moderators swiftly removed content that was inciteful or unrelated to politics or elections. On traditional media's Facebook pages around half of the posts were related to elections, while most social media influencers focused on infotainment, frequently mixing news with entertainment. Notably, on political party groups, only 17 per cent of all posts were related to elections.[66]

The online campaign by APC and SLPP was vivid, with engaging, yet also confrontational discussions unfolding across various social media platforms.[67] During the campaign, different social media strategies were used by the APC and SLPP presidential campaigns, with both

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62 See: Netblocks.net report

63 Another institution that has oversight powers over online communication, including election-related, is the National Computer Security Incident Response Coordination Centre (NCSIRCC), established by CSCA. The head of NCSIRCC is appointed by the President for five years with the possibility of a second term. The appointment mechanism makes the institution vulnerable to perception of bias. There is virtually no public information on this institution, its website is almost empty. EU EOM interlocutors also were not fully aware of this institution. Hence, its role in regulating online communications cannot be assessed.

64 Right to the Access to the Information Act, 2013, part 1.1 states that publication of information means "*to make available it in a form generally accessible to members of the public and includes print, broadcast and electronic forms […]*".

65 The EU EOM established a Social Media Monitoring Unit (SMMU) on 21 May, and consistently monitored online content until 23 June. The SMMU downloaded 45,571 posts and tweets from which 17,351 were coded, with 55.2 per cent of them being election related. See also Annex 3, Section 2, Table 1, Chart 3 and 4

66 See in Annex s3, Chart 8 for further details about election and non-election related posts.

67 No other party meaningfully campaigned online.

finding their ways to interact with voters, disseminate information and raise support. While the President posted only on Twitter, the presidential candidate of the opposition divided his messages between Twitter and Facebook, putting 367 posts on Facebook and almost ten times less on Twitter.[68] The President posted 67 tweets during the campaign period, but his Facebook account stayed dormant. Both candidates had enabled Twitter Blue feature, with Bio posting three times longer messages than Kamara.[69] However, their active use of social media did not translate into cohesion of a policy message, as political hashtags were applied chaotically, and party' manifestos were only briefly presented and quickly forgotten.[70]

The SLPP campaign strongly relied on amplification of their messages through official government accounts on Facebook and Twitter, systematically eroding the distinction between governing and campaigning. Combined, the official Facebook pages of the State House and Ministry of Information placed 41 posts, with 80 per cent of them featuring SLPP campaign activities, including re-posts of President Bio campaign.[71] On June 18, the ECSL reposted on its official Twitter account the first page of Awoko newspaper with the headline "Sierra Poll predicts 56 per cent win for Bio".[72]

Aggressive and divisive messages added to the already tense pre-election information environment, playing a significant role in online communication on political and electoral matters. The most damaging messages were made by a diaspora blogger, Adebayor, whose calls to boycott the elections and to protests in mid-June reached at least 58,000 people on Facebook alone. His posts were also widely shared on WhatsApp and re-played at community gatherings, reaching those who seldom use social media.[73] In total the EU EOM detected divisive content on 409 Facebook posts and in comments to 550 tweets; 49 posts and 10 tweets contained a tribalistic message. Facebook pages and groups placing such messages had up to 238,345 followers each.[74]

Disinformation was mostly spread through WhatsApp groups aiming confuse voters and impair their electoral choices. Outright false content rarely featured on Twitter and Facebook. The EU EOM found such content in only 35 posts, while manipulated information was identified in 89, out of 9,586 election-related posts coded. None of those posts got more than 2,813 interactions.

Facebook's owner, Meta, introduced for the elections period only basic measures to prevent abuse and spread of harmful content. Fact-checkers recognised by Facebook did not have a solid presence in Sierra Leone and Meta did not have a so-called "trusted partner" with a direct communication line with Facebook. Consequently, content moderation in local languages was scarce, without a direct communication channel for swift removal of harmful content.

The ECSL's communication on social media was chaotic and only a fraction of all posts and tweets were on voter education.[75] For the whole campaign period, the ECSL published 132 posts

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68 See Annex 3, Chart 5 and 7 for further details.
69 See Annex 3, Chart 6 for further details about coded tweets.
70 The EU EOM analysed the use of 82 hashtags, half affiliated with the APC or SLPP. See also Annex 3, Chart 9a and 9b, 10, 11and 19.
71 The name of the Facebook page of State House was changed to "TheBioPresidency".
72 The post is still on their Twitter account (accessed: 07.07.2023)
73 During the monitoring, Adebayor posted 50 audio messages on Facebook; got 13,293 reactions and 715 shares in total.
74 See Annex 3, Chart 13, 14a and 14b, as well as 15.
75 See Annex 3, sub-section 5 for further details on the ECSL communication online.

on Facebook and 163 Tweets.[76] Messages often were posted with delay. Furthermore, half of the posts on Facebook and around 25 per cent of all tweets were posted in the last week before the election day.[77]

XIII. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Positive legislative steps to enhance women's political participation were undermined by lack of political will.

Positive legislative steps strive to ensure the advancement of women in elected and appointed offices and were welcomed by all EU EOM interlocutors. The much-anticipated 2022 Gender Empowerment and Women's Equality (GEWE) Act introduced a 30 per cent gender quota for appointed and elective positions, except for those made by the president. Women accounted for an average of 37 per cent of candidates for the parliamentary elections and 30 per cent of elected members of the parliament (41 out of 135).[78] Every district, except for Falaba, will be represented by at least one woman.[79] Out of 7 mayoral and 15 local council chairperson positions, two women were elected. One as a mayor of Freetown for the APC and one as a local council chairperson in Bonthe district on the SLPP ticket (see Annex 1).

Political will to genuinely enhance women participation in political life was still lacking. It was exemplified by the placement of women in the lists of candidates for parliamentary elections:[80] only one SLPP list (Kambia) was led by a woman, while all APC lists were headed by a man and women were rarely placed in the second position. Only one woman ran as an independent, one contested the presidential race, while five stood as presidential running mates.

A positive initiative to promote inclusion were the organisation of public debates for female candidates, but overall women were still underrepresented in media. For example, the EU EOM media monitoring showed that not a single prime-time news item was devoted to the female presidential aspirant, and women contesting other races were also barely visible in the national media with the exception of the First Lady whose canvassing for SLPP was often featured in both broadcast and print media and promoted on social media.[81]

Despite legislative progress, actual enhancement of gender equality is lagging behind, due to a number of factors, including the social and cultural context and developmental and educational challenges. Gender inequality hampers women's political participation, contrary to the country's international commitments and constitutional provisions on equality.[82] To promote *de facto* gender parity, political parties could take more responsibility by making clear commitments to include women in all levels of their executive and providing for voluntary quotas in their constitutions or manifestos.[83]

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76 To put this into perspective: the ECSL posted 12 posts on Facebook and 13 tweets on the election day alone and further 7 posts on Facebook and 9 tweets day after the elections, on Monday 25 June.
77 See Annex 3, Chart 18a and 18b.
78 The SLPP will be sending 20 while the APC 21 women to the parliament.
79 In Falaba district the four seats are evenly divided between APC and SLPP and none of them had a woman candidate in either of the first two positions.
80 In total only four out of 63 lists were led by female candidates.
81 See also Annex 2, Charts 8 and 9.
82 The Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa requires State Parties to take affirmative action to promote women's political participation. CEDAW encourages adoption of temporary special measures.
83 PPA, s.43 "*A political party may have at least 30 per cent placement for women in executive position from ward to national level*".

RECOMMENDATION: ***Advance gender parity through a clear commitment by political parties to appoint women to decision-making positions within their structures at all levels. A continued, cross-sectoral capacity and awareness building would further enhance women participation in political life.***

Positively, there is a strong civil society movement to advance the inclusion of women in political and economic life. Organisations like Campaign for Good Governance, 50/50 and SEND in May 2023 launched the Sierra Leone Women's Manifesto 2023 with the target to engage a wide range of actors to advance gender parity. The EU EOM interlocutors also noted that the GEWE Act and its alignment with other laws was only the first step, and that further advocacy for translating this legal progress into tangible improvements for women in public life will be essential.

XIV. PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

Further efforts needed to promote genuine youth engagement in elections.

Sierra Leone ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 (the "Convention") and has signed in 2008 but not yet ratified the African Youth Charter, a comprehensive regional instrument that seeks to reinforce and consolidate efforts to empower young people through meaningful participation.[84] Nevertheless, Sierra Leone still lacks the legal framework and a proper national youth policy that would provide for the rights and duties of young people.

Youth constituted some 60 per cent of voters registered for 2023 elections and positively, everyone who turned 18 shortly before or even on election day could vote.[85] All first-time voters had to actively request inclusion in the voter register. At times it was cumbersome for those who did not have a valid national identity card, as such voters were required to provide a birth certificate or testimony from a traditional or religious chief. To facilitate youth participation as voters, continuous civic campaigns encouraging timely registration could be beneficial.

Youth actively participated in elections not only as voters, but also as citizen observers, poll workers and journalists yet high unemployment rate also made them prone to political instrumentalisation.[86] A number of voter education jingles targeting youth were aired on broadcast media. The ECSL and Inspector General of Police focused their messages on preventing youth involvement in electoral violence, while CSOs stressed the importance of peaceful elections and adherence to electoral procedures. Despite those voter information efforts, political parties were seen to take advantage of economically vulnerable young persons, paying some of them to cause targeted disruption or to attack opponents during the campaign. This underlines the need for greater efforts to protect genuine youth engagement in elections.

XV. PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Despite encouraging commitments by several stakeholders, independent access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities was not always ensured.

For the first time political rights of persons with disabilities were reflected in law. The participation rights of persons with disabilities in public life were introduced in the PPA 2022

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84 The rights of the child are spelled out in the Constitution and in the Bill titled the 2022 Child Rights Act. The Act seeks to repeal and replace the 2007 Child Rights Act and the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 44) and would provide for the promotion of the rights of the child. Yet, it is pending in parliament since early 2023.

85 According to the 2015 census, youth make up about 80 per cent of the population.

86 According to West African Youth Network there were only some six candidates below 35 running for the parliament.

with a non-mandatory provision aiming to promote their greater inclusion on all levels of political parties. Similarly, the rules for assisted voting were revised in the PEA 2022 in accordance with international standards.[87] However, the right to vote and stand remains unduly restricted to persons of a sound mind.[88] While these steps represent measures of progress, meaningful inclusion to reflect constitutional guarantees of citizens' equality is yet to be achieved. According to census figures and the ECSL, persons with disabilities represent over one per cent of the entire population and some 0.6 per cent of registered voters.

The ECSL efforts to promote the participation of persons with disabilities were limited by the lack of general accessibility of public buildings and insufficient targeted reach of voter education. The ECSL coordinated measures to facilitate the participation of vulnerable groups through a dedicated inclusion department. Nevertheless, EU EOM observers noted that voter education was rarely designed to address persons with disabilities, and polling centres were not independently accessible for persons with reduced mobility or the elderly in over a half of EU EOM observations, contrary to national and international requirements.[89] Further, no alternative arrangements were considered, as assistive voting devices were rarely available. The tactile ballot guides were available in only half of the polling stations visited.

The two main political parties addressed needs of persons with disabilities in their manifestos, but those issues did not meaningfully feature in their campaigns and were not discussed in media. The SLPP claimed certain progress during their administration, including social protection schemes and cash transfers. The APC and SLPP both promised to aim at stronger policy mainstreaming to address needs of persons with disabilities, but neither ensured that their campaign activities and materials were accessible and adapted to for this group of voters. The public television SLBC was not translating their news bulletins in sign language. Sign language was only used during live broadcasts from results collation centres.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Ensure meaningful access to the electoral process for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, by targeted voter information campaigns, by granting independent access to polling stations, and by providing various assistive tools for independent voting.***

XVI. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

Intimidation of credible citizen observer groups that offered an independent assessment of elections, signalled democratic backsliding.

Election observation is clearly addressed in the legal framework, and accredited organisations are entitled to attend and observe all aspects of the electoral process, including registration,

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87 PPA, s.43 requires that political parties "*shall endeavour to make adequate provisions for persons with disability in executive position from ward to national level*".

88 PEA, s.17(a) deprives the right to register from "*lunatics within the meaning of an enactment in force in Sierra Leone.*" UDHR, article 21, para. 2, *"[…] equal access to public service […]"* HRC GC 25, para. 15, *"Persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements […];* CPRD, article 29 "*States Parties shall [....] undertake to: a) Ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life.*"

89 The 2011, Persons with Disability Act, s.29: "*The National Electoral Commission shall ensure that during elections, polling stations are made accessible to persons with disability […].*" CRPD, art 29 states: "*State Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others […] by ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use.*" HRC GC 25 p.12 also states that "*Positive measures should be taken to overcome […] impediments to freedom of movement which prevent persons entitled to vote from exercising their rights effectively.*"

polling, counting, and the compilation and announcement of results.[90] The law does not provide timeframes for accreditation nor any requirement for the ECSL to justify decisions not to accredit an applicant or provisions for the timely appeal against refusal of accreditation. In total, the ECSL accredited some 25,000 domestic and 1,000 international observers, as well as 2,500 journalists.

Citizen observers and faith-based organisations monitored different aspects and stages of the electoral process, with well-established groups issuing timely reports thus offering voters a non-partisan assessment of elections.[91] The largest citizen observer group, the National Election Watch (NEW) deployed 6,000 observers on election day, covering all polling centres, and was the only observer group that conducted a comprehensive parallel vote tabulation (PVT). In the morning of 27 June, NEW published a statement noting that according to the PVT results, Sierra Leoneans should prepare for a second round of presidential election. On the same day that the ECSL announced the presidential results, which declared Bio having won the election in the first round, NEW released its PVT results, and two days later, on 29 June, the Office of National Security (ONS) issued a press release which could be read in no other way than a possible threat to NEW's leadership. Public intimidation of citizen observers not only goes against regional and international commitments, but also signals prospective democratic backsliding.

The second largest group, the Elections Observer Network (EON), a newly created umbrella body, reported some 4,500 observers on election day. They did not publish any statement prior to the elections and released a brief positive assessment of elections two days after the polls. Several interlocutors perceived EON as a government friendly initiative set up to counter the potentially critical assessment by NEW. Concerns had been raised by civil society activists about the potential instrumentalisation of civil society organisations, who would echo the government's narrative and discredit non-partisan voices. EU EOM interlocutors also noted that while an overall conducive environment is being created for government-friendly organisations, the space is shrinking for voices of dissent.

International observer groups included the African Union, ECOWAS, the Commonwealth, and the Carter Center. Most stakeholders, including political parties, stressed the importance of international observer groups in contributing to the integrity of the electoral process.

XVII. ELECTORAL DISPUTES

Despite legislative revision, procedural timelines deter timely consideration of election-related matters, particularly before election day.

a. Complaints and appeals.

Adjudication of complaints and appeals has not been significantly reviewed in the new PEA, which does not provide for effective or timely remedies, especially for pre-election cases. Given the short time between the nomination of candidates and election day, decisions on objections to presidential aspirants may be delivered very close to the election day, whereas objections on parliamentary and local council candidates are decided by the ECSL and may be challenged in

[90] Several mentions of observers are made in the PEA, including in s.s.164 and 167. HRC GC 25: "*There should be independent scrutiny of the voting and counting process*".

[91] Entities that published post-election statements included NEW, the Sierra Leone Bar Association, the Council of Churches Sierra Leone, and the Pentecostal Fellowship Sierra Leone.

court only after the elections, falling short of international standards by depriving aspiring contestants of the right to an effective remedy.[92]

Registrations of candidates were in general not objected to, with very few exceptions. The EU EOM became aware of one and two objections against parliamentary candidates in Kailahun and Kenema districts respectively, which were dismissed by the district office and therefore not appealed to the ECSL.[93] On 31 May, the Supreme Court concluded a case filed on 17 May challenging Samura Kamara's presidential candidacy with a court order striking out the case on procedural grounds.[94] Candidates for all races may be disqualified after a conviction and sentence for an offence involving fraud or dishonesty, with no statutory provision for a fresh nomination of a substitute candidate by the political party. In April, a criminal case pending before the High Court, involving, among others, the APC presidential candidate, was adjourned until after the elections, relieving political uncertainty and tensions and allowing for a smooth registration of presidential candidates. The indictment was initiated by the Anti-Corruption Commission in November 2021 over alleged funds' misappropriation during Samura Kamara's tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2014. A potential conviction a few days before elections could have deprived APC from contesting the presidential race. An appeal filed to the High Court by the Unity Party on 23 May against a decision made by the PPRC in April not allowing the party to contest the elections was not decided until after the elections.[95]

Two election-related cases were submitted in June but were not considered before election day. On 7 June the APC filed a case against ECSL in the High Court requesting orders directing the ECSL to release the disaggregated data of the voter register and to strictly comply with the legal provisions on tabulation and certification of results on a district level.[96] The court case followed an APC's letter to the ECSL requesting to provide the party with an electronic copy of the disaggregated voter register and a confirmation that compilation and certification of results would be performed by the District Returning Officers. On 12 June, the People's Movement for Democratic Change filed a case with the Supreme Court questioning the constitutionality of the Chief Electoral Commissioner's appointment and the handling of the electoral process by the ECSL.[97] Governed by regular procedural timeframes, those cases were not expedited by the court and therefore not heard before the elections, depriving the parties from an effective legal remedy and thus falling short of international and regional principles.[98]

RECOMMENDATION: ***Allow for expedited adjudication of all election-related disputes before election day by adjusting court regulations and timelines and by permitting challenges to parliamentary candidates' registration to be brought to court before election day.***

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92 ICCPR, article 2(2): *"[…] to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights […]"* UDHR, article 8: *"Everyone has the right to an effective remedy […]"*.

93 Pursuant to PEA, s.61(5) the right to appeal to the ECSL is granted only in the event of disqualification of a candidate.

94 *Paul Kamara and Rev. Alimimay Coleson Turay v. Chairman of the ECSL, the ECSL, Dr. Samura Kamara and the APC, SC No 2 2023.* The respondents, namely the ECSL and the APC, had previously applied for dismissing the case for not complying with formal requirements. Given that the applicants did not file their statement of case within the deadline provided by the Supreme Court Rules, the case was automatically struck out.

95 *Unity Party v. Political Party Regulations Commission CIV.APP. 2/23 2023 U.No.1* pursuant to PPA, s.40(3).

96 *The APC, The National Secretary General of the APC v. ECSL, the Chairman of ECSL, HC MISC 116/2023 A. No.6* was filed on 7 June and dismissed by the Court on 5 July for failure of the applicant to appear in court.

97 *Patrick John, People's Movement for Democratic Party (PMDC) v. Mohamed Konneh, Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, Attorney General.*

98 ECOWAS Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, art.7: "*Adequate arrangements shall be made to hear and dispose of all petitions relating to the conduct of elections and announcement of results*."

Unless alternative resolution mechanisms are applied, electoral disputes are handled by courts, with *ad hoc* election tribunals established. On 11 May 2023, the Chief Justice appointed twenty judges to all regions and districts and assigned additional six to deal with cases across the country to the newly introduced Election Offenses and Petitions Court (EOPC).

The courts are broadly accessible for addressing pre- and post-election disputes, including in some instances rights of appeal. Despite improved mechanisms for resolving electoral disputes, such as the establishment of the EOPC and the adoption of new rules governing their procedures,[99] the late appointment of the registrars and the subsequently delayed set up of EOPCs raised questions over their effectiveness during the campaign. The EU EOM observers reported no cases filed until after election day to the regional branches of the EOPC. Overall, trust in the judiciary in handling political cases is low amongst the electoral stakeholders of the opposition and smaller political parties. The judicial branch reportedly also suffers from financial constraints to fulfilling its tasks.

b. Electoral offences

The PEA provides for campaign related offences and respective sanctions applied; offences listed in the POA fall under the competence of the magistrates' courts and are governed by regular court procedures, at times confusing stakeholders.

Throughout the campaign period the EU EOM received reports of arrests of party supporters and prolonged detentions beyond the constitutional deadline that clearly fall below international and regional standards.[100] On 9 May, 11 APC supporters were arrested at different locations in Pujehun district and subsequently detained at the police station in Bo for allegedly disorderly behaviour during celebrations that followed the nomination of an APC local council candidate. The EU EOM was informed that they were only released on bail after several appearances before The court. The case was still pending before the Bo Magistrate's court at end of July. Another case of an attack on an independent candidate allegedly by an SLPP supporter during the campaign was dismissed by Moyamba Magistrates' court. On 13 June, 13 persons were arrested in Western Rural and detained in Waterloo police station allegedly for carrying placards containing election-related slogans. They were only released after seven days while ten persons were charged under the POA.

Further instances of harassment or assaults during the campaign period were reported to the EU EOM but did not reach the courts reportedly due to lack of evidence or witnesses. Interlocutors noted that witnesses often feel intimidated, or evidence is hard to collect. Arthur Pearce, a well-known APC supporter, was arrested on 10 June and detained at the Criminal Investigations Department without been formally charged, while attempts at securing bail by his lawyers were denied. An application requesting his release on the grounds of unjustified prolonged detention was not timely assigned to a judge and ultimately abandoned after his release on 20 June.[101]

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99 The Public Elections (Petitions) Rules, 2022.

100 Contrary to Constitution, s.17(3)(b) and ICCPR, article 9.1: "*Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law*" and article 9.4: "*Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful*." UDHR, article 9: "*No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile*". ACHPR, article 6: "*Every individual shall have the right to liberty and to the security of his person. No one may be deprived of his freedom except for reasons and conditions previously laid down by law. In particular, no one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained*."

101 *Arthur E. Pearce v. AG, IGP and CID* MISC. APP. 57/23 filed on 14 June in the High Court.

Overall, stakeholders expressed low trust in law enforcement bodies due to alleged biased behaviour.

c. Challenging election results

The renewed EOPC has an expanded mandate to hear civil cases, including election petitions. However, the revised jurisdiction resulted in conflicting provisions both within the PEA and with the Constitution over the jurisdiction of presidential election results petitions.[102]

Any citizen who voted may challenge the validity of the presidential election by petition to the Supreme Court within seven days of the declaration of the results. Apart from specific provisions on candidates' qualifications, the law does not specify the grounds on which an election may be invalidated or detail the threshold of evidence required to substantiate claims. Notably, no specific provisions are made for the possibility of invalidating an election after assumption of office or in the event of a run-off there is no legal provision for challenging the results of the first round, which, combined with recent jurisprudence, leaves a gap in the law.[103] Further provisions for possible challenges to presidential election do not allow for an effective and timely legal redress, since no specific deadlines for a court ruling are foreseen.

RECOMMENDATION: ***Introduce timelines ensuring speedy consideration of petitions against presidential election results before assumption of office. Provide for the possibility of challenging the results of the first round in the event of a run-off.***

For parliamentary elections, only voters registered in the respective district, or persons who claim to have been elected or to have had the right to stand, may challenge the election, by petition to the EOPC within 21 days upon publication of the results in the Gazette. According to the 2022 Public Election (Petition) Rules, the EOPC has approximately four months to issue a judgment, which then can be appealed within 14 days to the Court of Appeal. Under the general constitutional provision, the latter is bound by a three-month time limit upon conclusion of evidence and final addresses to deliver its judgment.[104] The lack of a deadline for publishing parliamentary results may detract from the expedited procedure of adjudication of election petitions in the revised framework.

Possible effects of a petition include an order to inspect election materials and the EOPC must thereby determine whether a person was duly elected, or the election was void.[105] An election will not be held void solely on the grounds of non-compliance with the PEA if conducted in line with the principles laid down therein or the results were not affected. When the EOPC determines that a person was not duly elected, then the candidate's seat becomes vacant, regardless of whether an appeal is lodged against the decision.[106] For elections conducted under the PR system, parliamentary vacancies are filled by the next-in-line candidate in the political party list.[107]

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102 PEA, s.144.

103 Constitution, s.45(1)(b) provides for a challenge to the validity of the election of an individual and not to the process as such. The Supreme Court in the petition *SC/CIV. 6 and 7/2018 Dr. Sylvia Olayinka Blyden, Dr. Samura Matthew Wilson Kamara, Hon. Alhaji Minkailu Mansaray, Dr. Osman Foday Yansaneh v. The Chief Electoral Commissioner, National Electoral Commission, His Excellency Julius Maada Bio, SLPP* filed after the second round of the 2018 election, ruled that the petitioner could not reference the conduct of the election in the first round as the seven-day deadline had elapsed.

104 Relevant provisions: Constitution, s.78(2)(4), PEA, s.144-153, Public Election (Petition) Rules, 2022.

105 PEA, s.147(b), 148-153, Constitution, s.38A.

106 In the latter case, the seat remains vacant until a decision is reached by the Court of Appeal, or the appeal is abandoned.

107 Constitution, s.38A and Statutory Instrument of Nº14 of 2022, The Public Elections (District Block Proportional Representation System) Regulations 2002.

XVIII. VOTING, COUNTING AND TABULATION OF RESULTS

Critical lack of transparency during the tabulation of results eroded trust in the credibility of the elections.

a. Opening, voting, closing, and counting

The election day was generally calm, yet several isolated violent incidents disturbed the polling and counting. Tensions in some polling stations were directly observed by the EU EOM and in nine cases observers could not finish their observation of voting or counting due to insecurities.

The opening of polling stations was delayed in nearly all polling stations visited, due to the late reception of essential and sensitive material, as well as the lack of preparedness of, or absent polling staff. The longest delays were reported in Kono and Western Urban Freetown, where at some polling stations voting started as late as five hours after the scheduled opening. On election day the ECSL did not comprehensively explain reasons for delays. The EU EOM observers negatively assessed the opening in 19 out of 43 polling stations observed across all 16 districts.

The overall conduct of the voting was positively assessed in 92 per cent of the polling stations observed, with procedures mostly followed except for the verification of voters' finger for ink mark. Other procedural deviations included the addition of voters in supplementary voter lists without having the ECSL authorisation certificate and allowing voters with a VID who were not registered in the polling station to vote. In one third of polling stations observed, the polling staff did not read the name of voters, and as the number of registered voters per polling station was neither published nor included in the result and reconciliation form, party agents and observers could not adequately scrutinise voter lists' integrity.

Overall, polling staff shared information with the EU EOM and worked in a transparent manner, with exception of one instance in Kono where EU EOM observers were denied entry to a polling station and two instances in Kenema and Kono where the presiding officers were refusing to respond to observers' questions. The EU EOM observers noted that some polling staff was absent in a number of polling stations, mostly queue and ballot box controllers (in 27 per cent of polling stations visited). Throughout the day long queues were noted in 40 per cent out of the 353 polling stations observed. Women represented 47 per cent of all polling staff members in observed stations.

Essential materials were missing in 21 polling stations observed, mostly material transfer and result and reconciliation forms, but also insufficient ballot papers. Voting ended early in two observed polling stations due to lack of ballots, compromising voters' right to vote. The EU EOM was informed of similar cases from across the country, including from Freetown where infrastructure allowed timely corrections to prevent early closing of polling stations. Inadequate logistical planning and the inability to promptly address logistical shortcomings, especially in Freetown, reduced confidence in the process. The secrecy of vote was not ensured in nearly 20 per cent of observed polling stations due to layout of the polling station and configuration of the voting screen.

Closing and counting were generally transparent and calm in the polling stations observed. However, in 3 out of 42 cases the EU EOM observers could not finish the observation due to rising tensions. 10 polling stations observed closed after the designated time due to long queues, in line with the regulation, whereas in two other cases voting was officially extended to compensate for the late opening, contrary to the ECSL instructions. Inconsistent instructions on extension of polling hours were observed by the EU EOM during ECSL's trainings.

Counting procedures were largely followed in polling stations observed, although the sequence for processing different elections varied. In 13 out of 42 observed cases, polling staff had difficulties to fill the result and reconciliation forms (RRF), but figures mostly reconciled. In nearly all cases the electronic transmission of results from polling stations was not successful, due to either malfunctioning of the tablet or lack of internet connection.

During opening, voting and counting, party agents from SLPP and APC were present in nearly all observed polling stations, with the exception of the district of Pujehun, where APC agents were disproportionately underrepresented, with presence in only 17 per cent of polling stations visited. Citizen observers, primarily NEW and EON, were less represented, with presence in 50 per cent and 25 per cent of visited polling stations, respectively.

On election day intimidation and violent incidents were reported by police, media, citizen, and international observers in six districts, and live ammunition was fired in Port Loko, Freetown and Koinadugu, creating insecurities for voters and poll workers alike. The EU EOM directly observed violence and unrest inside nine polling stations during voting, closing or counting, including in Port Loko, Western Urban, Tonkolili, Kambia and Freetown, primarily caused by delays or voters not being able to find their names on the list or tensions closer to the end of voting. Further confirmed election day incidents included the burning down of a house of the APC parliamentary candidate in Bonthe and the evacuation of APC agents from Pujehun due to threats. EU EOM observers also saw the SLPP chief campaigner bussing Sierra Leonean voters residing in Guinea into Kambia. The ECSL reported intimidation of election staff and destruction of voter register in several polling stations.

Preliminary turnout figures were not announced after the closing.

b. Tabulation and announcement of results

The reception of materials at district level was slow, sometimes disorganised, and procedural omissions were observed in all 15 district collection centres observed. Contrary to procedures, some 38 per cent of tamper evident envelopes (TEEs) received were not sealed. Other observed procedural irregularities included TEEs being opened to verify their content prior to their transmission to the regional tally centre and at times also to capture the result forms for electronic transmission. In two instances, EU EOM observers observed changes being made to the RRFs in Kono and Freetown, outside of the verification process. Party agents and observers were very rarely present at the intake of materials at the district level. Overall, meaningful observation of this phase proved to be difficult, as procedures were not published, and the plans for retrieval of materials were not shared with the EU EOM observers in most districts.

Result tabulation at regional tally centres was not transparent and EU EOM observers could not meaningfully observe the process. Tallying begun slowly in the morning of 25 June, in the presence of party agents, citizen and international observers. The workflow between the material intake of RRF and their data entry was well organised. Projection screens were not used, contrary to ECSL's initial indication. Two regional certifying officers informed the EU EOM that last-minute instructions precluded use of the projectors and further instructions on how to communicate at the tally centres were not given. As a result, in all five tally centres no progressive release of information was provided on polling station results received, processed, audited, and excluded per district. The reasons for the exclusions of results or number of voters concerned were not communicated.

Unrest and tensions were directly witnessed by EU EOM in tally centres in Port Loko, Freetown and Makeni. Overall, the right to access information during the tabulation and to effective remedy thereafter were not guaranteed, contrary to regional and international commitments.[108]

District and regional certification of the results was not made public, and no information was shared as to when it was conducted prior to the announcement of results at the national level.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: ***The ECSL to establish and publish detailed procedures for the tabulation and announcement of results, as well as put in place a robust, transparent, and easily verifiable results processing system well ahead of election days.***

Announcement of results was not accompanied by prompt publication of results data, thus preventing independent scrutiny and eroding trust in the credibility of the elections. Partial results for presidential elections were released on 26 June through a press release posted on the ECSL social media accounts. On 27 June, the ECSL Chairman formally announced the final results of the presidential race. Result totals were first published on ECSL website but removed a day later. On 1 July the results for parliamentary, chairpersons and mayoral elections were read out, but not published on the ECSL website or its official social media accounts, hence making live broadcasts from the national tally centre the only public source of information. Those results per district were placed online only in the late evening of 3 July; final results per district for the presidential elections were not published.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: ***Publish on the ECSL website comprehensive election results data by polling station, including results per candidate and per party, the number of registered voters and of valid and invalid votes, in a timely manner and in an easily trackable and downloadable database format.***

The ECSL did not publish online disaggregated results and turnout by polling station, preventing voters, observers, and parties from comparing the result forms provided at polling station level with final results data and thus limiting stakeholders' ability to verify and challenge the results. The ECSL reported a total of one per cent of all polling stations nationwide being excluded from the presidential count, yet the specific polling stations that were excluded, their distribution per district or region, or the reasons for the exclusion of specific polling stations was not provided. The percentage of polling station results excluded from the parliamentary count per district ranged from 0.2 per cent in Pujehun to 6.6 per cent in Kailahun, per region it ranged from 0.6 per cent in the West to 4.4 percent in the North. For the parliamentary elections also neither the list of polling stations, nor reasons for exclusion were published.

The RRF do not include the number of voters registered, added to the supplementary voter list and who signed/thumb printed the voter list, reducing the transparency and accountability of turnout data and preventing reconciliation with the number of votes cast. These omissions are

[108] UNCAC art. 13.1: "*State parties shall promote the active participation of individuals and groups [by] ensuring that the public has effective access to information.*" ACDEG art.3.8 requires "*Transparency and fairness in the management of public affairs.*" HRC GC 34, p.18: "*State parties should proactively put in the public domain Government information of public interest"* and "*make every effort to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to such information*".

contrary to the general principles of transparency and the right to information enshrined in regional and international instruments.[109]

RECOMMENDATION: ***Enhance the transparency and integrity of the elections by including in the results and reconciliation form reconciliation between votes cast and the number of voters included in the final register of voters and added on the supplementary voters list, and voters who received ballots as confirmed by signatures or thumbprints in the final register of voters.***

XIX. RESULTS AND POST-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

Threats against credible civil society organisations and statistical inconsistencies in results data compromised the democratic process.

a. Publication of results

According to the results, as announced by the ECSL, President Julius Maada Bio of the SLPP secured his second term with 56.17 of the valid votes, thereby meeting the constitutional 55 per cent threshold for the first round. The APC's presidential candidate got 41.16 per cent, whereas the other 11 candidates together accumulated to 2.67 per cent of the valid votes. The parliamentary results allocated to the SLPP 81 seats (60 per cent) and to the APC 54 seats (40 per cent), out of the directly elected 135 seats.[110] No other party or an independent candidate surpassed a 11.9 per cent threshold to enter the legislative chamber.

The results, released at various stages of the process, showed several mathematical impossibilities. For example, for the presidential election the results data of the first batch (representing 60 per cent of polling stations) released by the ECSL for Kailahun district indicated that in 407 polling stations 153,668 votes were cast. This is mathematically improbable, even if all the biggest polling stations of the district were taken into account.[111] There were also mathematically improbable results in the first batch from Bo and Bonthe district. The statistical inconsistencies between the first and second batch of presidential results included notable discrepancies in the number of average valid votes per polling station, varying from a decrease of 75 per cent in Karene to an increase of 31 per cent in Kono. There were also very high turnouts exceeding 95 per cent in three districts and 90 per cent in further two districts, as well as a strikingly low number of invalid votes nationwide of just 0.4 per cent, significantly lower than previous elections.

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[109] See ICCPR art.19.2: "*Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas*"; and UNCAC art. 13.1: "*State parties shall promote the active participation of individuals and groups [by] ensuring that the public has effective access to information.*" See also HRC GC 34, p.18 "*State parties should make every effort to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to information (of public interest).*"

[110] Results of parliamentary and the local council election were published in Gazette on the 20 and 26 July respectively.

[111] The ECSL informed the EU EOM that in each polling centre all but the last polling station (PS) has 300 registered voters, and only the last PS in a PC can have a maximum of up to 400 voters. Kailahun district has 679 polling stations, of which 94 have more than 300 voters; 435 PS have 300 voters and the rest less than 300. If the ECSL had included all the 94 PS with more than 300 voters and 313 with 300 voters the maximum of votes cast could have been 126,687 votes, 26,981 short of the number announced by the ECSL in their first batch. Similar patterns were observed in Bo (11,225 votes more than the maximum number of possible voters) and Bonthe (5,111 votes more than the maximum number of possible voters). In Kenema to obtain reported number of voters only 161 of them should not be present on the election day, which constitutes 0.05 per cent of all voters in the district.

When comparing the turnout between parliamentary and presidential elections,[112] further statistical inconsistencies become apparent.[113] Four districts (Falaba, Bo, Bonthe and Moyamba) registered a parliamentary turnout that was substantially lower than for the presidential elections, with a decrease ranging from 13.7 per cent points to 23.9 per cent points.[114] Sharp parliamentary turnout increases as compared to the presidential turnout were registered in Western Urban and Western Rural, by some 14 percentage points, bringing the turnout in Western Rural to the highly improbable level of 98.5 per cent. Also, Pujehun (south) had an increase of 5.5 per cent points, bringing the turnout to the 97.9 per cent, also questionable. The highly improbable turnout figures and the statistical inconsistencies between the two races, compounded by a very low number of invalid votes, further increased the doubts among stakeholders and the public about the credibility of the results as announced by the ECSL.

The SLPP won 4 mayoral seats and 8 local chairpersons, while the APC gained 3 mayorship, including Freetown, and 7 local chairpersons.

b. Post-election developments

The immediate post-election period gave credence to concerns about the shrinking of the civic and political space and was characterised by high tensions. There was an unprovoked use of force by the security agencies against the APC, firing tear gas canisters and live ammunition at the party headquarters on 25 June when the APC leadership, including the presidential candidate, was in the building; standoff resulted in one fatality.[115]

The NEW faced a coordinated disinformation campaign aiming to discredit the organisation, underpinned by a range of intimidating public pronouncements from state and non-state actors.[116] On 27 June NEW published the results of its PVT, indicating that neither presidential candidate secured 55 per cent of the votes in the first round and that a run-off would have to be expected. NEW reportedly tried in vain to engage the ECSL prior to the publication of the results. Instead, the organisation came under heavy attacks on traditional and social media, as well as by some national CSOs and the SLPP. On 29 June, the Office of National Security (ONS) issued a press release against the publication of PVT on the potential implications to national security. The ONS qualified the publication as an act against the Constitution intending to provoke undue tension by arbitrarily interpreting constitutional provisions. It was viewed by many, including by the EU EOM, as intimidating and possibly foreshadowing an arrest. ONS's undue intervention led to the NEW leadership fleeing the country and was viewed by some civil society actors as going beyond the ONS powers.[117] Threats of arrest based on standard observation activities

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112 The results data for the presidential election by district was released on 27 June. The document was not signed or stamped by ECSL, but the sum for all districts for all candidates matches with the numbers read out by the ECSL Chairman during the announcement of presidential results. The ECSL never debunked this results data.

113 Voters added to the supplementary voter lists may cause some disparities, yet such a notable difference would indicate that many voters had cast the ballot for one election and not the other. The EU EOM observers did not observe such practices.

114 Falaba (north) with a turnout decrease of 23.9 per cent points (from 80.2 to a 56.3 per cent); Bo (south) with minus of 13.7 per cent points (to 78 from 91.6 per cent), Bonthe (south) with a minus of 15.4 per cent points (to 80.3 down from 95.6 per cent), Moyamba (south) with minus 15.9 per cent points (to 73.3 from 89.2 per cent).

115 Police denied using live ammunition during the standoff. Independently verified video footage as well as eye-witness accounts give very strong credence to the claims that live ammunition was fired.

116 ACDEG, art. 22 stipulates that "*State Parties shall create a conducive environment for independent and impartial national monitoring or observation mechanisms.*" ICCPR, art. 9.1 states that "*Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention.*"

117 The Press Release refers to Constitution, s.93 (Committees in Parliament) which is irrelevant to the election process; Constitution, s.33, which refers to the powers of the ECSL, does not include any provision stating that "the ECSL is the sole state organ recognized by law to proclaim election results in Sierra Leone" as alleged in the Press Release. Notably, NEW did not claim to provide official election results, only disclosed the results of the PVT.

implemented with a professional methodology and in the framework of a MoU with the ECSL directly contravene regional and international principles on the right and opportunity to participate in public affairs and freedom of expression.[118]

Most media reported extensively on post-election developments, including violent incidents. The public broadcaster SLBC and the largest commercial broadcaster AYV did not cover post-electoral violence and refrained from news reports that could be perceived as critical to the ECSL, ONS or other governmental bodies. However, both provided space to invited experts for their negative assessment of the EU and NEW observation activities.

The APC leadership rejected the result, calling for a fresh election within six months "to be overseen by credible individuals and institutions who will ensure a fair and transparent process." The APC also demanded the resignation of the ECSL commissioners and the heads of security bodies and judiciary as well as the imposition of travel bans on those officials, the President, and several members of government. The party also declared that none of their elected officials would take up their seats in the parliament or as a mayor or a local council chair, including the elected mayor of Freetown. All but one APC member of the parliament did not participate in the first seating on 13 July.[119] Citing lack of trust in the Judiciary and absence of clear timelines for such cases, APC decided not to challenge the presidential election in court.

[118] ACDEG, art. 22 stipulates that "*State Parties shall create a conducive environment for independent and impartial national monitoring or observation mechanisms.*" ICCPR, art. 9.1 states that "*Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention.*"

[119] Mohammed Bangura elected on the APC ticket from Karene took the Oath of office of Members of Parliament and subsequently was expelled from the party.

XX. RECOMMENDATIONS

NO.	FR page #	CONTEXT	RECOMMENDATION	SUGGESTED CHANGE IN LEGAL FRAMEWORK	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL / REGIONAL PRINCIPLE / COMMITMENT
LEGAL FRAMEWORK						
1	**13**	Legal provisions are not sufficiently elaborated, several sections of the law still are lacking clarity, and other vaguely drafted provisions that leave undue scope for arbitrary interpretation. These include provisions on the announcement of election results, campaign finance issues related to or enforcement of sanctions for campaign violations, as well as on mechanisms for certain aspects of dispute resolution. Other laws lack significant term definitions leaving room for arbitrary enforcement.	***Ensure legal certainty for all aspects and stages of the electoral process by removing from the Constitution and PEA conflicting sections and ambiguities that leave undue scope for arbitrary interpretation, through an inclusive revision process.***	PEA Constitution	Parliament ECSL	**Rule of law** **ICCPR, art.25. ICCPR, HRC GC 25**, para. 20: *"…This implies that voters should be protected […] from any unlawful or arbitrary interference."* **UNCAC, art.7(4):** "*Each State Party shall, […] adopt, maintain and strengthen systems that promote transparency and prevent conflicts of interest*." **ACDEG, art.2:** "*Promote and enhance adherence to the principle of the rule of law premised upon the respect for, and the supremacy of, the Constitution*"
ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION						
2	**14**	ECSL commissioners are appointed by the president upon consultation with the heads of all political parties and subject to parliamentary approval. The appointment procedure has always been criticised by whichever parties are in the opposition for	***Establish an inclusive appointment process for ECSL commissioners including formalised consultations. Considerations could be given to introducing criteria and measures to ensure equal and merit-based access to the election***	Clarifications/ Precisions in PEA, s.2	The President Parliament	**Taking steps to give effect to rights.** **Freedom from discrimination** **Prevention of corruption** **ACDEG, art.17.1**: "*State Parties shall Establish and strengthen independent and impartial national electoral bodies.*"

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		impinging on the ECSL institutional independence. The consultation process is not formalised, and alongside questions over the parliamentary approval, does not ensure inclusivity. It negatively affects trust in the ECSL and perception of its institutional independence.	***administration.***			**ICCPR, GC 25, p.20**: "*An independent electoral authority should be established to supervise the electoral process and to ensure that it is conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with established laws .*" **ECOWAS Protocol, art.3**: "*The bodies responsible for organising the elections shall be independent or neutral and shall have the confidence of all the political actors.*"
3	**15**	The ECSL did not publish most of its decisions, regulations, procedures. This reduced the transparency in the process and information about decisions made, as well as diminished institutional accountability.	***Introduce a legal obligation for the ECSL to publish timely, including online, all ECSL decisions, regulations, and procedures, while also guaranteeing their continued online accessibility.***	ECSL regulation or procedures Possibly inclusion of new article in the PEA	ECSL Parliament	**Transparency and access to information** **ICCPR, art.19.2** "*Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive […] information.*" **ACDEG, art.15.8** "*Transparency and fairness in the management of public affairs.*"
4	**16**	Civic and voter education rarely targeted women, youth, and various vulnerable groups, and most stakeholders noted that voters were not fully aware of various aspects of the electoral process. For example, first-time voters were not aware of	***Conduct continuous campaigns to ensure all eligible voters are duly recorded in the civil register and develop targeted civic and voter education with a continued collaboration between the ECSL other governmental institutions,***	No legal reform needed	ECSL Ministry of Information Media Organisations CSOs	**Right and opportunity to participate in public affairs.** **Freedom from discrimination** **UNCAC, art.13**: "*State parties shall promote active participation [through] measures as: (b) Ensuring that the public has*

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		the necessity to be included in the civil registry to register as a voter, many voters did not know how under the PR system their votes would translate into the parliamentary and local council seats, many were not fully familiar with the gender quota. Broader civic education related to responsible participation in elections was also lacking.	***civil society, and media.***			*effective access to information"* **ICCPR, GC 25, p.11:** "*Voter education and registration campaigns are necessary to ensure the effective exercise of Article 25 rights by an informed community*."
VOTER REGISTRATION						
5	**17**	Despite existing legal provisions, no arrangements were made to registering and subsequently for voting of persons in pre-trial detention for 2023 elections.	***Ensure the right to vote by making arrangements to facilitate registration and voting for prisoners on remand.***	No change in legal framework required	ECSL	**Right and opportunity to vote.** **ICCPR, art.25. ICCPR, HRC GC 25, para. 11**: "*…Where registration of voters is required, it should be facilitated and obstacles to such registration should not be imposed […].*" **ACHR, art.3:** "*Every individual shall be equal before the law…Every individual shall be entitled to equal protection of the law*"
6	**18**	The final voter register per polling station was neither published nor shared with stakeholders. Also, voters were not provided the opportunity to correct misspelled names or erroneous dates of birth,	**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION** ***Publish the final voter register per polling station and per polling center in a timely manner and allow voters to verify and correct***	ECSL regulation or procedure	ECSL	**Right to vote** **UNCAC, art.13.1:** "*state parties shall promote the active participation of individuals and groups [by] ensuring that the public has effective access to information.*"

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		reducing the accuracy of the voter register.	***all their details.***			**ECOWAS Protocol, art.5:** "*The voters' lists shall be prepared in a transparent and reliable manner, with the collaboration of the political parties and voters who may have access to them whenever the need arises.*" **ICCPR GC 25 para 11:** *"States must take effective measures to ensure that all persons entitled to vote are able to exercise that right"*
CANDIDATE REGISTRATION						
7	**19**	Undue restrictions on the right to stand for election include the ban of independent candidates for presidential office, and requirement for civil servants who would like to contest the presidential, parliamentary and/or local council election to resign 12 months before the polls.	***Protect the right to stand by removing undue restrictions, including the requirement for civil servants to resign from public office 12 months before election, and allow for independent candidates to run for presidential office.***	PEA, Constitution	Parliament	**Right and opportunity to participate in public affairs.** **ICCPR, art.25, para. (c)** "*To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.*" **ICCPR, HRC GC 25, para.17**, "*The right of persons to stand for election should not be limited unreasonably by requiring candidates to be members of parties or of specific parties.*"
CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT						
8	**21**	Political violence a week before the polls disrupted the playing field in at least six districts. Districts most affected by political violence were	**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION** ***Ensure safety and security for all candidates through a timely***	No change in legal framework required	Security Agencies	**Freedom of expression, assembly and association** **ICCPR, art.19.2:** "*Everyone shall*

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		Kailahun, Pujehun, Kenema, and Bo in the south and east, as well Kambia in the north-west, all of them except for Kambia strongholds of the SLPP. Most assaults of party supporters and attacks on party offices or private properties of politicians went unpunished. The PPRC also noted that sanctions for campaign violations cannot be enforced before the police have concluded their investigations. It shrank the space for political participation in south and south-east.	***conclusion of investigations, holding perpetrators of violence accountable, and enabling the PPRC to act effectively upon violations of campaign rules.***			*have the right to freedom of expression".* ICCPR, art.21: "*The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized."* *Art.25: "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;"*
9	**22**	The abuse of state resources and public office during rallies as well as campaign by government officials gave an undue advantage to the ruling party. Official websites and social media accounts of ministries and the presidency were also used for campaign purposes. Neither the PPRC nor any other state authority took action to ensure adherence to the PPA and the PEA, which explicitly prohibits use of state resources, facilities or officials for campaigning.	**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION** ***Ensure enforcement of legal restrictions on the misuse of state resources and explicitly prohibit the use of official functions, as well as government websites and social media accounts for campaign purposes.***	PEA	PPRC ECSL	**Prevention of corruption** **Fairness in the election campaign** **ACHR, art. 13(2) & (3):** "*Every individual shall have the right of access to public property and services in strict equality […] .*" **ECOWAS Protocol, art.38(1)** "*Member States undertake to fight corruption and manage their national resources in a transparent manner, ensuring that they are equitably distributed.*" **ICCPR, HRC GC 25, par.19** "*Persons entitled to vote must be*

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						free to vote for any candidate […] without undue influence or coercion of any kind which may distort or inhibit the free expression of the elector's will."
CAMPAIGN FINANCE						
10	**23**	The PPA neither provides for interim reporting nor introduces fair ceilings on income or spending. The PPRC did not apply its statutory powers to impose such limits or require disclosure of information. Media, contrary to legal obligations did not offer the same advertising prices for all contestants and price lists were not public. Overall, many aspects of campaign finance, such as obligations for accounting and reporting, are inadequately elaborated, and compounded by limited enforcement during elections did not ensure equal opportunities for contestants.	**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION** ***Ensure transparency in campaign finance by introducing caps for campaign revenues and expenses and clear rules of reporting and public disclosure before, during, and after the elections, including by the media, and by implementing robust sanctions for noncompliance.***	Introduction of regulations by PPRC pursuant to PPA, s.45(3) or amendment of PPA	PPRC Parliament IMC	**Transparency** **Prevention of Corruption** **ICCPR, HRC GC 25, para.19**: "*Reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that […] the democratic process is not distorted by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party.*" **UNCAC, art.7(3):** "*Each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures […] to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office.*"
MEDIA						
11	**25**	The Chairman of Independent Media Commission is appointed by the President and the financial	***Protect the independence of the media regulator by granting in the law financial independence and***	IMC Act (2020)	Parliament IMC Ministry of	**Freedom of opinion and expression** **Right to access to information** **The Declaration of Principles on**

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		independence is not ensured either by law or in practice. The IMC does not receive necessary funding in a timely manner, which makes it difficult for the regulator to fulfil its duties. Furthermore, allocation of funding depends on the government's decisions, which makes the institution vulnerable to political pressure.	***sustainability of the IMC, as well as by further facilitating the autonomy of the IMC, with the Chairman being appointed by an independent board of media professionals and legal experts, through an open, inclusive and competitive pre-selection process.***		Information and Communications	**Freedom of Expression in Africa (DPFEA), principle 17.1.** *"A public regulatory authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast […] shall be independent and adequately protected against interference of a political, commercial or other nature. 2. The appointment process for members of a public regulatory body […] shall be independent and adequately protected against interference. The processes shall be open, transparent and involve the participation of relevant stakeholders."*
12	**26**	The Director General of the SLBC is appointed by the President and approved by the Parliament. The SLBC funding, approved by the Parliament, did not always reach regional offices, impeding their operations. Such legal and operational standing makes the SLBC subservient to the government, which was evidenced by public broadcasters' election coverage. Some 90 per cent of all prime-time news were devoted to	***Ensure the citizens' right of access to information by transforming Sierra Leone Broadcast Corporation into a genuine public service broadcaster. This includes a clear legal separation of SLBC from any government institution, and an open and competitive pre-selection process for the appointment of the management, with the participation of industry professionals, and by an independent board.***	The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation Act (2009)	Parliament President The Ministry of Information and Communications SLBC	**Freedom of opinion and expression** **DPFEA, principle 13**: *"States shall establish public service media governed by a transparently constituted and diverse board adequately protected against undue interference of a political, commercial or other nature. 2. The senior management of public service media shall be appointed by and accountable to the board. 3. The editorial independence of*

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		the president, the government and the SLPP.				*public service media shall be guaranteed. 4. Public service media shall be adequately funded."* **ICCPR, art.19, HRC GC 34, para.16** *"States parties should ensure that public broadcasting services operate in an independent manner, […] guarantee their independence […] provide funding in a manner that does not undermine their independence."*
SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL RIGHTS						
13	**28**	Low levels of education and very limited digital skills of most social media users were among the key reasons why misleading or manipulated information was shared so broadly. Only 47.7 per cent of adult population know how to write and read, but 60 per cent have access to 3G technology which is sufficient to share WhatsApp messages. The newly established national fact-checking initiative made a positive contribution to safeguarding the information environment, it did not have sufficient time to educate social media users on the danger of disinformation. Also Meta did not	***Promote the independent formation of voters' opinions by developing inclusive media and digital literacy programmes in close collaboration with civil society, fact-checking initiatives, professional media organisations and tech platforms.***	No legal changes required	Ministry of Information Ministry of Education Civil Society Organisations Media outlets Meta, Google and TikTok	**Right to participate in public affairs** **Freedom of expression and opinion** **ICCPR, GC 25** *"Voters should be able to form opinions independently, free of violence or threat of violence, compulsion, inducement or manipulative interference of any kind."* **UN, OSCE, OAS, ACHPR Joint declaration on freedom of expression and "fake news", disinformation and propaganda, 3 March 2017,** 6(a): *"All stakeholders – including*

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		carry out any digital and media literacy programs prior to 2023 elections.				*intermediaries, media outlets, civil society and academia – should be supported in developing participatory and transparent initiatives for creating a better understanding of the impact of disinformation and propaganda on democracy freedom of expression, journalism and civic space, as well as appropriate responses to these phenomena."*
14	**27**	The 2021 Cyber Security and Crime Act (CSCA) contains vague definitions for various cybercrimes. It does not accord with international standards and leaves room for law enforcement bodies and politicians to exert pressure on critical voices and trigger self-censorship.	**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION** ***Protect freedom of expression by clearly aligning the definitions of "cyber-terrorism", "cyber-stalking", "cyber-bullying" and "incendiary information" with relevant regional and international standards.***	Amendment of CSCA	President Parliament Ministry of Justice	**Freedom of expression and opinion** **ICCPR, art.19:** *"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression […]"* **ICCPR, art.19, HRC GC 34**, para.35 *"When a state party invokes a legitimate ground for restriction of freedom of expression, it must demonstrate in specific and individualized fashion the precise nature of the threat, and the necessity and proportionality of the specific action taken, in particular by establishing a direct and immediate connection between the expression and the threat."* **DPFEA, art.13(1)** *"States shall*

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						review all criminal restrictions on content to ensure that they serve a legitimate interest in a democratic society."
PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN						
15	**32**	New legislation introduced gender quota for elected and appointed offices, but political will was lacking to meaningfully enhance women participation in politics. Women were rarely placed in electable positions in the party lists and media rarely featured female candidates. Positively there is strong commitment from the civil society to push for a genuine inclusion with the adoption of the Sierra Leone Women Manifesto being the first step toward greater gender parity.	***Advance gender parity through a clear commitment by political parties to appoint women to decision-making positions within their structures at all levels. A continued, cross-sectoral capacity and awareness building would further enhance women participation in political life.***	No legal change needed	Political Parties PPRC CSOs	**Women's participation in public affairs** **ICCPR, art.3**: "*[…] Equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights […]*" **CEDAW, art.7**: "*State parties […] ensure to women […] the right […] to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy.*" **CEDAW Committee, GR 23** para.22: "*[…] Political parties must embrace the principles of equal opportunity and democracy and endeavour to balance the number of male and female candidates."*
PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILTIES						
16	**34**	The ECSL's efforts to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities were limited by the lack of general accessibility of public	***Ensure meaningful access to the electoral process for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, by targeted voter***	PEA PPA 2011, Persons with	Parliament ECSL	**Right and opportunity to vote** **CPRD, art.29**, "*States Parties shall [....] undertake to: a) Ensure that*

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		buildings and insufficient targeted voter education. Polling centres were not accessible for persons with reduced mobility in more than a half and tactile ballot guides were available in half of the polling stations observed. The public television did not translate news in sign language. Provisions related to participation of persons with disabilities are not harmonised across various legal and regulatory instruments.	***information campaigns, by granting independent access to polling stations, and by providing various assistive tools for independent voting.***	Disability Act		*persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life [....] by: i. Ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use.*"
ELECTORAL DISPUTES						
17	**36**	Adjudication of complaints and appeals does not guarantee effective or timely remedies especially for pre-election cases. Given the short time between the nomination of candidates and the election day, decisions on objections to presidential aspirants may be delivered very close to the election day, whereas objections on parliamentary and local council candidates may be challenged in court only after the elections.	***Allow for expedited adjudication of all election-related disputes before election day by adjusting court regulations and timelines and by permitting challenges to parliamentary candidates' registration to be brought to court before election day.***	Supreme Court Rules PEA	Judiciary Parliament	**Rule of law** **Right to an effective remedy** **UDHR, art.8:** "*Everyone has the right to an effective remedy […]*". **ICCPR, art.2(2):** "*[…] to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights […]*". **ICCPR, art.19(2):** "*[…] freedom to see, receive and impart information […]*".
18	**37**	The law does not specify the grounds	***Introduce timelines ensuring***	PEA,	Parliament	**Rule of law**

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		on which an election may be invalidated or detail the threshold of evidence required to substantiate such claims. Provisions for possible challenges to presidential election do not allow for an effective and timely legal redress since no specific deadlines for court ruling are foreseen. Notably, in the event of a run-off there is no legal provision for challenging the results of the first round, which combined with recent jurisprudence leaves a gap in the law.	***speedy consideration of petitions against presidential election results before assumption of office. Provide for the possibility of challenging the results of the first round in the event of a run-off.***	Constitution		**Right to an effective remedy** **UDHR, art.8:** *"Everyone has the right to an effective remedy […]"* **ICCPR, art.2(3)(a)** *3. Each State Party […] undertakes to ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy."* **ICCPR, GC 32, p.27** *"An important aspect of the fairness of a hearing is its expeditiousness."* **ACDEG, article 17(2)** *"Article 17(2) State Parties shall […] Establish and strengthen national mechanisms that redress election related disputes in a timely manner."*
POLLING, COUNTING, TABULATION AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS						
19	**40**	The ECSL presented result management system to party representatives a week prior to the polls yet tally and result announcement procedures were not published. Projection screens were not used. No progressive release of information was provided on polling station results received,	**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION** ***The ECSL to establish and publish detailed procedures for the tabulation and announcement of results, as well as put in place a robust, transparent, and easily verifiable results processing system well ahead of election day.***	ECSL regulation or procedure	ECSL	**Transparency and the Right to information** **ICCPR, art.19.2** *"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas".* **UNCAC, art.13.1**: State Parties shall *"promote the active*

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		processed, audited, and excluded per district. The reasons for the exclusions, or number of registered voters in affected polling stations were not disclosed.				*participation of individuals and groups [by] ensuring that the public has effective access to information.*"
20	**41**	The ECSL did not publish online disaggregated results and turnout by polling station, preventing voters, observers and parties from comparing the result forms provided at polling station level with final results data, limiting stakeholders' ability to challenge the results.	**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION** ***Publish on the ECSL website comprehensive election results data by polling station, including results per candidate and per party, the number of registered voters and of valid and invalid votes, in a timely manner and in an easily trackable and downloadable database format.***	ECSL regulation or procedure	ECSL	**Transparency and the Right to information** **Right to effective remedy** **UNCAC, art.13.1:** state parties shall "*promote the active participation of individuals and groups [by] ensuring that the public has effective access to information.*" **ACDEG, art.3.8:** State Parties commit to "*Transparency and fairness in the management of public affairs.*" **ICCPR, GC 34, p.18 on art.19**: "*State parties should proactively put in the public domain Government information of public interest. State parties should make every effort to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to such information.*" **ICCPR, GC 25, p.20:** "*There should be independent scrutiny of the voting and counting process*".

NO.	FR page #	CONTEXT	RECOMMENDATION	SUGGESTED CHANGE IN LEGAL FRAMEWORK	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL / REGIONAL PRINCIPLE / COMMITMENT
21	**41**	The RRFs do not include the number of voters registered, added to the supplementary voter list and who signed/thumb printed the voter list, preventing reconciliation with the number of votes cast and reducing the transparency and accountability of turnout data.	***Enhance the transparency and integrity of the elections by including in the results form reconciliation between votes cast and the number of voters included in the final register of voters and added on the supplementary voters list, and voters who received ballots as confirmed by signatures or thumbprints in the final register of voters.***	ECSL regulation or procedure	ECSL	**Transparency** **Right to effective remedy** **ICCPR, art.19.2:** *"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive, […] information*". **ICCPR, GC 34, p.18** "*State parties should proactively put in the public domain Government information of public interest.*"

ANNEX 1 – ELECTION RESULTS

Table 1: Presidential results

Candidate	Party	Votes	
		Number of votes	Per cent
BAH Mohamed Chernoh	National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	**21 620**	**0,77%**
BIO Julius Maada	Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP)	**1 566 932**	**56,17%**
COKER Prince	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	**5 981**	**0,21%**
JONJO Mohamed	Citizens Democratic Party (CDP)	**2 367**	**0,08%**
KABUTA Saa Turay	United National Peoples Party (UNPP)	**4 059**	**0,15%**
KAKAY Iye	Alliance Democratic Party (ADP)	**4 336**	**0,16%**
KAMARA Nabieu Henry	Peace and Liberation Party (PLP)	**7 717**	**0,28%**
KAMARA Samura Mathew Wilson	All Peoples Congress (APC)	**1 148 262**	**41,16%**
MARGAI Charles Francis	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC)	**16 012**	**0,57%**
SACCOH Abdulai Dougakoro	Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP)	**6 796**	**0,24%**
SANDY Jonathan Patrick	National Unity and Reconciliation Party (NURP)	**1 369**	**0,05%**
SOWA-TURAY Mohamed	United Democratic Movement (UDM)	**1 665**	**0,06%**
WILLIAMS Beresford Victor	Republic National Independent Party (ReNIP)	**2 692**	**0,10%**
Total number of valid votes cast		**2 789 808**	**100%**
Invalid votes		**10 883**	**0,4%**
TOTAL		**2 800 691**	
REGISTERED VOTERS		**3,374,258**	

Table 2: Parliamentary results

	APC	SLPP	Other	Valid votes	Invalid	Total number of votes	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	Invalid (%)
Kenema	11,541	271,066	2,921	285,528	1,166	286,694	318,306	90.1%	0.4%
Kono	32,067	74,290	17,539	123,896	233	124,129	174,036	71.3%	0.2%
Bombali	140,566	10,361	2,469	153,396	715	154,111	206,380	74.7%	0.5%
Kailahun	6,813	171,622	0	178,435	660	179,095	192,333	93.1%	0.4%
Falaba	16,606	19,646	2,461	38,713	245	38,958	69,170	56.3%	0.6%
Koinadugu	33,127	16,036	3,812	52,975	298	53,273	85,209	62.5%	0.6%
Tonkolili	125,051	20,299	10,121	155,471	743	156,214	207,525	75.3%	0.5%
Kambia	57,970	35,164	9,714	102,848	545	103,393	152,642	67.7%	0.5%
Karene	54,058	19,540	1,499	75,097	375	75,472	100,296	75.2%	0.5%
Port Loko	101,142	60,071	8,992	170,205	831	171,036	237,021	72.2%	0.5%
Bo	24,148	215,025	7,380	246,553	815	247,368	317,216	78.0%	0.3%
Bonthe	4,154	81,894	0	86,048	363	86,411	107,645	80.3%	0.4%
Moyamba	18,825	85,759	5,075	109,659	533	110,192	150,402	73.3%	0.5%
Pujehun	4,961	105,413	2,450	112,824	632	113,456	115,925	97.9%	0.6%
Western Area Rural	175,410	151,670	8,085	335,165	1,499	336,664	341,870	98.5%	0.4%
Western Area Urban	307,479	239,403	10,910	557,792	1,596	559,388	598,282	93.5%	0.3%
TOTAL	1,113,918	1,577,259	93,428	2,784,605	11,249	2,795,854	3,374,258	82.9%	0.4%

Table 3: Chairmans and Mayors results

	APC	SLPP	Other	Valid votes	Invalid	Total number of votes	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	Invalid (%)
Kenema (Chair)	9,134	140,279	797	150,210	653	150,863	318,306	72.0%	0.4%
Kenema (Mayor)	10,138	66,838	1,100	78,076	385	78,461			0.5%
Kono (Chair)	18,391	45,592	9,632	73,615	539	74,154	174,036	69.8%	0.7%
Kono (Mayor)	14,669	25,423	6,817	46,909	380	47,289			0.8%
Bombali (Chair)	92,027	7,679	1,413	101,119	462	101,581	206,380	69.6%	0.5%
Bombali (Mayor)	39,122	2,358	414	41,894	197	42,091			0.5%
Kailahun	9,386	143,056	1,791	154,233	666	154,899	192,333	80.5%	0.4%
Falaba	17,257	21,077	2,447	40,781	247	41,028	69,170	59.3%	0.6%
Koinadugu	37,935	17,857	3,052	58,844	325	59,169	85,209	69.4%	0.5%
Tonkolili	129,832	21,087	5,682	156,601	720	157,321	207,525	75.8%	0.5%
Kambia	45,429	20,267	5,463	71,159	376	71,535	152,642	46.9%	0.5%
Karene	63,330	10,319	1,349	74,998	359	75,357	100,296	75.1%	0.5%
Port Loko (Chair)	128,549	20,941	2,855	152,345	754	153,099	237,021	71.0%	0.5%
Port Loko (Mayor)	12,310	2,528	259	15,097	77	15,174			0.5%
Bo (Chair)	7,438	124,265	2,570	134,273	568	134,841	317,216	68.3%	0.4%
Bo (Mayor)	14,608	65,121	1,728	81,457	392	81,849			0.5%
Bonthe (Chair)	3,013	77,681	584	81,278	341	81,619	107,645	79.3%	0.4%
Bonthe (Mayor)	404	3,341	0	3,745	18	3,763			0.5%
Moyamba	21,750	85,851	3,979	111,580	530	112,110	150,402	74.5%	0.5%
Pujehun	4,096	97,108	0	101,204	422	101,626	115,925	87.7%	0.4%
Western Area Rural	157,164	135,079	7,072	299,315	1,096	300,411	341,870	87.9%	0.4%
Western Area Urban	288,683	268,213	5,153	562,049	1,954	564,003	598,282	94.3%	0.3%
TOTAL	1,124,665	1,401,960	64,157	2,590,782	11,461	2,602,243	3,374,258	77.1%	0.4%

Table4. Council and Cities Council results

	APC	SLPP	Other	Valid votes	Invalid	Total number of votes	Registered voters	Turnout (%)	Invalid (%)
Kenema (Council)	10,072	155,719	1,036	166,827	571	167,398	318,306	79.6%	0.3%
Kenema (City)	12,249	64,011	9,071	85,331	504	85,835			0.6%
Kono (Council)	19,375	45,249	9,071	73,695	567	74,262	174,036	68.7%	0.8%
Kono (Koidu)	14,957	23,558	6,725	45,240	41	45,281			0.1%
Bombali (Council)	88,882	7,292	1,033	97,207	108	97,315	206,380	71.2%	0.1%
Bombali (Makeni)	46,418	2,802	222	49,442	89	49,531			0.2%
Kailahun	11,260	147,811	0	159,071	210	159,281	192,333	82.8%	0.1%
Falaba	16,060	19,747	2,330	38,137	247	38,384	69,170	55.5%	0.6%
Koinadugu	32,594	16,408	3,734	52,736	325	53,061	85,209	62.3%	0.6%
Tonkolili	123,012	18,666	7,724	149,402	721	150,123	207,525	72.3%	0.5%
Kambia	46,153	19,265	6,153	71,571	377	71,948	152,642	47.1%	0.5%
Karene	62,780	11,218	0	73,998	349	74,347	100,296	74.1%	0.5%
Port Loko (Council)	128,022	22,038	4,245	154,305	53	154,358	237,021	71.7%	0.0%
Port Loko (City)	13,208	2,076	206	15,490	73	15,563			0.5%
Bo (Council)	7,160	117,163	1,238	125,561	410	125,971	317,216	59.6%	0.3%
Bo (City)	11,986	48,533	2,250	62,769	406	63,175			0.6%
Bonthe (Council)	3,491	77,549	0	81,040	384	81,424	107,645	79.0%	0.5%
Bonthe (City)	442	3,168	0	3,610	51	3,661			1.4%
Moyamba	21,604	86,519	4,024	112,147	535	112,682	150,402	74.9%	0.5%
Pujehun	4,145	95,096	1,353	100,594	832	101,426	115,925	87.5%	0.8%
Western Area Rural	171,232	130,631	3,008	304,871	1,150	306,021	341,870	89.5%	0.4%
Western Area Urban	300,958	240,066	2,743	543,767	1,741	545,508	598,282	91.2%	0.3%
TOTAL	1,146,060	1,354,585	66,166	2,566,811	9,744	2,576,555	3,374,258	76.4%	0.4%

ANNEX 2 – MEDIA MONITORING RESULTS

Starting from 23 May, the EU EOM systematically monitored a sample of national and regional media. The sample comprised 12 outlets with a close to a nationwide reach. Those were public TV and radio, two private TV channels, four private radio stations and four newspapers, including their online versions and official Facebook accounts.[120] As radio is the key type of media in Sierra Leone, the EU EOM, also used *Radio Garden* app for online live monitoring of the selected radio stations, especially after the E-Day when the provisional results from regions were broadcast via radio stations.

Media monitoring included quantitative and qualitative analysis of the coverage of campaign and other socio-political issues, assessing the amount of time and space allocated to candidates, political parties, public officials, and other politically relevant subjects, as well as evaluation of the tone of the coverage and the gender balance across the media landscape. The latter contributed to the EU EOM's assessment of female participation in the public and political life. The monitoring also registered voter education campaigns in the media.

All monitored media broadcast in both English and Krio, depending on a programme. Similarly, print media's posts on Facebook were also either in English or Krio, helping the voters to acquire election-related information in a timely manner.

1. The EU EOM monitoring results for broadcast media with a nation-wide reach

The quantitative monitoring was done from 23 May to 22 June, and was stopped during the campaign silence, on election day and during the announcement of results for Presidential, Parliamentary, Mayoral and Local Council elections, when only qualitative analysis was performed. On campaign silence day, 23 June, only voter education content was coded.

The broadcast media monitoring focused on programs aired during the prime-time hours:

- For radio stations – from 06:00 to 08:00 and from 18:00 to 00:00.
- For television channels from 18:00 up to 00:00.

1.1. Total time allocated to political communication in national broadcast media's primetime programming

During the 30-days' monitoring period, the EU EOM coded TV broadcasts lasting 754 hours in total, with 45 hours of political and election-related content. Media poverty and technical challenges related to the rainy season influenced the volume of the media recordings sample. For example, *Star TV* regularly stopped their programmes due to technical problems, amounting to some 13 per cent of all prime-time broadcasts. Such instances reduced the information on which voters could make their choices.

The EU EOM coded radio broadcasts lasting 1,488 hours in total with 59 hours of political and election-related content. The *Star Radio*, originally included in the sample, did not produce any editorial programmes due to the financial and technical difficulties. Due to the rainy season and the power cuts, several broadcasters often switched off their equipment for long periods thus further decreasing the monitoring sample.

Chart 1 demonstrates the amount of inaudible or absent broadcast from the recording sample as well as political communication share.

[120] TV: AYV, SLBC, Star; radio: AYV, Culture, Democracy, SLBC, Star; newspapers: Awareness Times, Awoko, Concord Times and Standard Times.

Chart 1

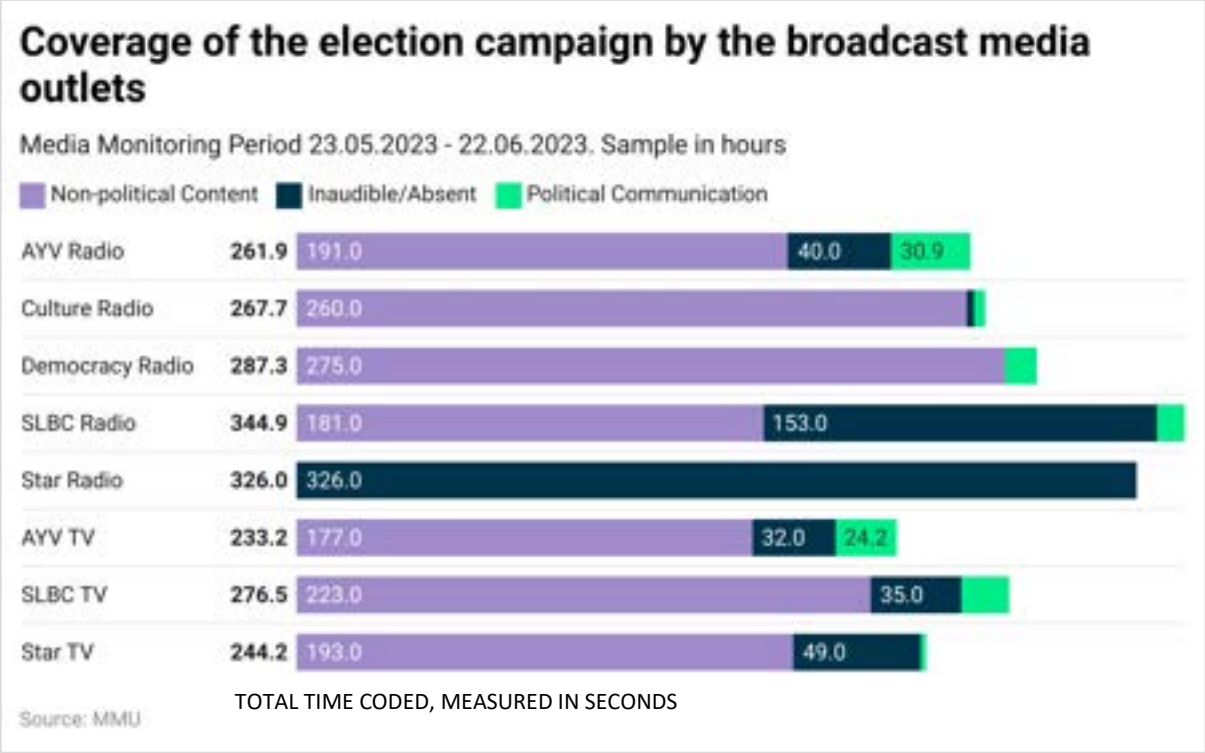


Table 2 shows how much airtime media outlets devoted to the coverage of electoral and other socio-political issues. On average outlets devoted some 5 per cent of their prime-time broadcasts to issues related to politics and election, with the AYV TV and radio having most extensive election coverage.

Table 2

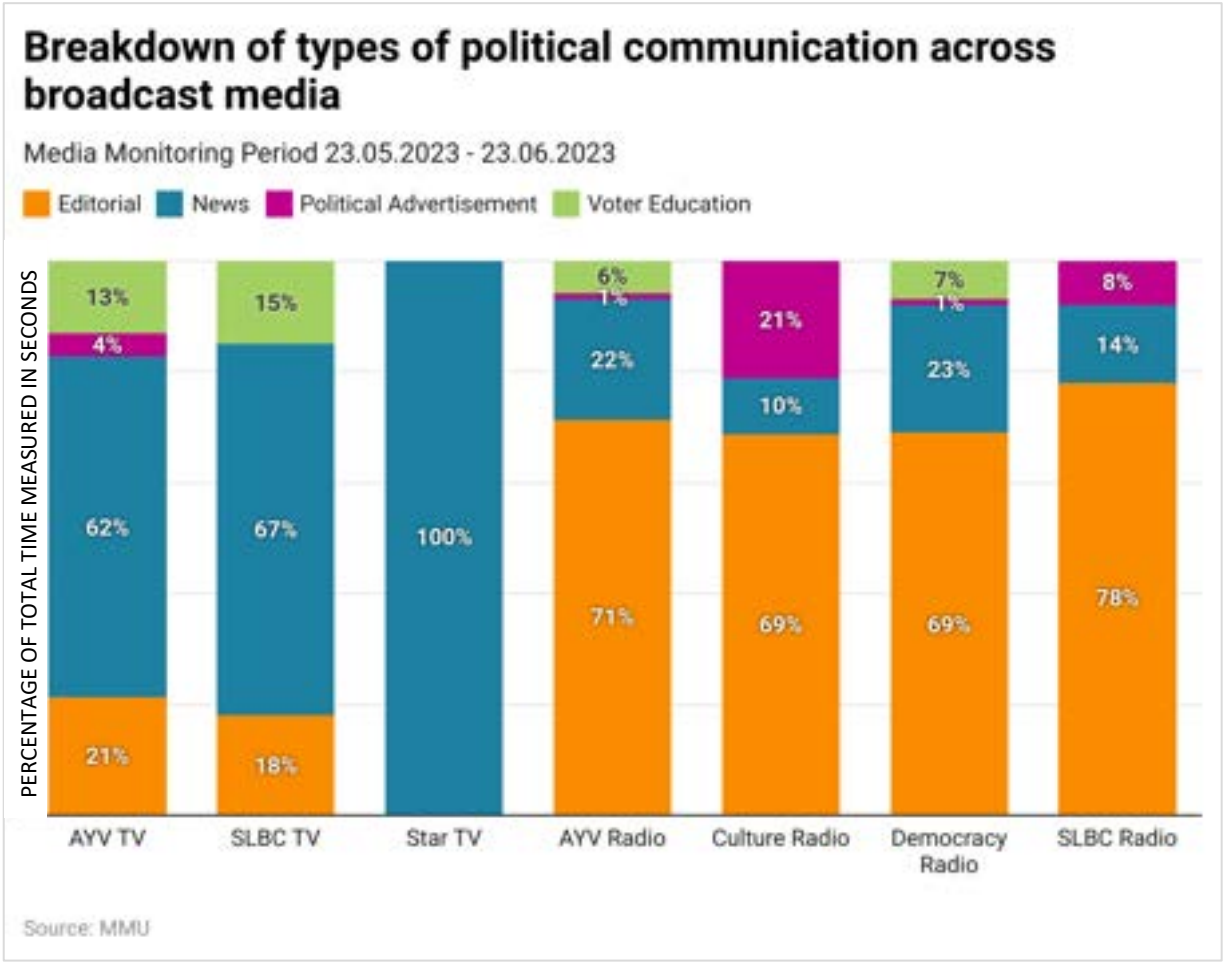
Media Outlet	Percentage of total time coded	Time Allocated to Political Communication
Television Channels		
AYV TV	12 per cent	24 hours 13 minutes
SLBC TV (public)	7 per cent	18 hours 28 minutes
Star TV	1 per cent	2 hours 10 minutes
Radio Stations		
AYV Radio	13 per cent	30 hours 53 minutes
Culture Radio	2 per cent	4 hours 42 minutes
Democracy Radio	4 per cent	12 hours 20 minutes
SLBC Radio (public)	3 per cent	10 hours 52 minutes
Star Radio	0 per cent	0 hours 0 minutes

Chart 3 demonstrates the breakdown of types of radio and TV broadcasts containing political communication. Editorial programmes include political discussion shows, interviews with electoral stakeholders and call-in programmes. Voter education programmes include short voter information clips produced by ECSL, and civil society organisations.

All TV channels primarily covered election-related issues in their news programmes. On radio stations elections on politics were mainly discussed in editorial programmes, providing more

analysis of the election campaign and the contestants, while during the call-in programmes the audience could rise issues of their concern. Overall, the radio stations had more analytical and inclusive approach for the coverage of the election content, if compared with TV. Notably, on the *Culture Radio* news were considerably shorter than paid-for political advertising, hence reducing voters access to journalistic coverage of elections. Such editorial policy also undermines the main principle of media to inform the audience on the newsworthy events in a balanced manner. Positively, the *AYV TV* and *SLBC TV* devoted a notable share of their prime-time programmes to voter education.

Chart 3



1.2. Exposure of political actors in broadcast media

Chart 4 shows the proportional distribution of time among various political actors within the prime-time programmes of editorial choice. Those political actors include political parties and their candidates, the president, and federal government ministers. The public broadcaster devoted much of its coverage to the ruling party and the president, while commercial broadcasters divided their airtime more equitably. The APC got considerable exposure on five out seven monitored outlets; RENIP got a meaningful coverage on three, but RUFP on one broadcaster. Other parties (NDA, NGC, NURP, PMDC, UDP and UP) were only sporadically mentioned, leaving voters with a very limited knowledge about their candidates. *Star TV* and AYV Radio devoted the most substantial amount of coverage to independent candidates.

Chart 4

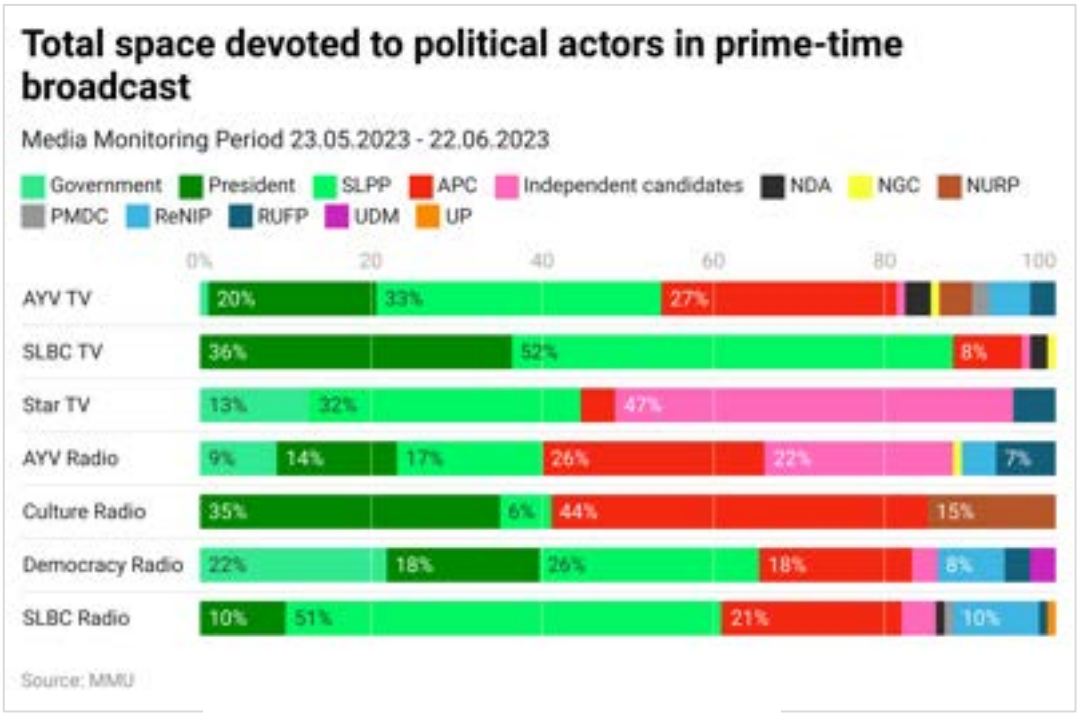


Chart 5 shows p ıs political actors within the prime-time news bulletins. On five out of seven outlets the president and the ruling party got more than half of the airtime. Notably, the public radio reported more about the APC, than the SLPP or the president, two further broadcasters equitably divided their news coverage between the APC and SLPP. Star TV was the only station devoting a meaningful coverage to covering independent candidates within the news.

Chart 5

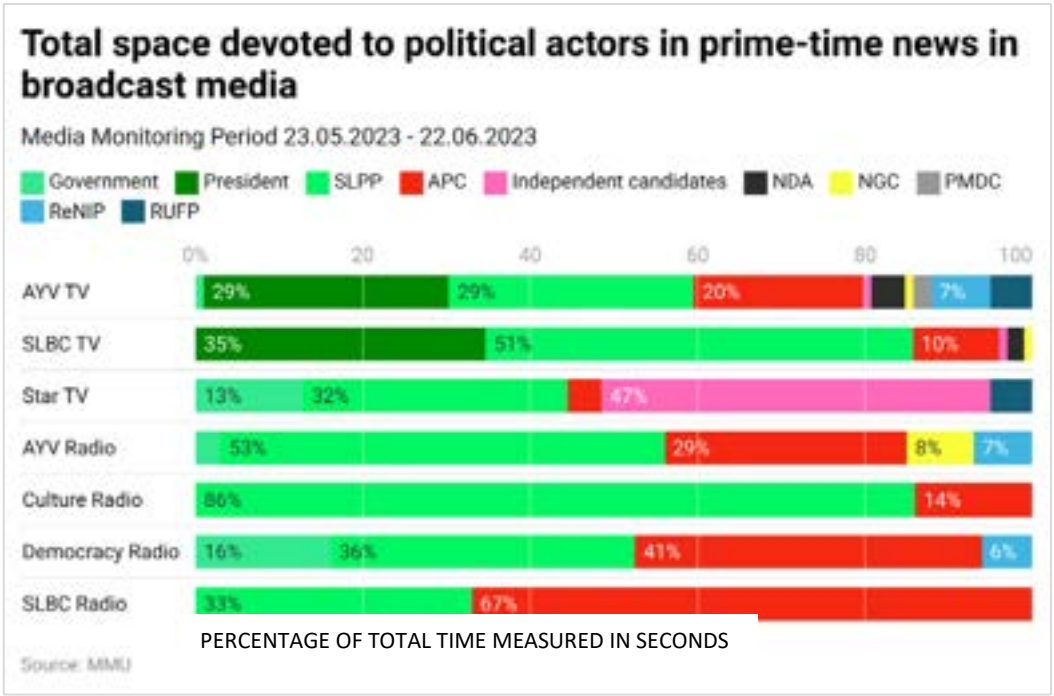


Chart 6 shows the length in seconds of the presidential candidates' direct speech aired in broadcast media during the election campaign. The incumbent was by far the most quoted

politician, followed by the APC presidential candidate. The public radio SLBC Radio devoted almost the same amount of time to direct quotes from the APC and SLPP candidates. In contrast, the public TV devoted four times more airtime to Bio, than to Kamara. The AYV TV quoted the highest number of presidential candidates. In total only 7 out of 13 presidential candidates were given the address voters directly within the prime-time programming of in the monitored media. It which limited the voters' possibilities to know and scrutinise the candidates.

Chart 6

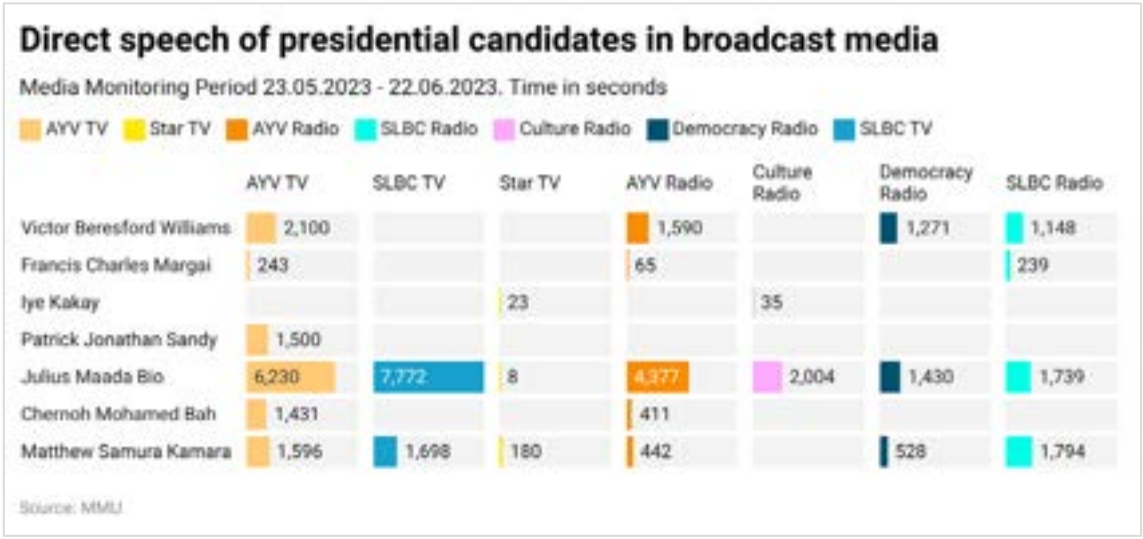
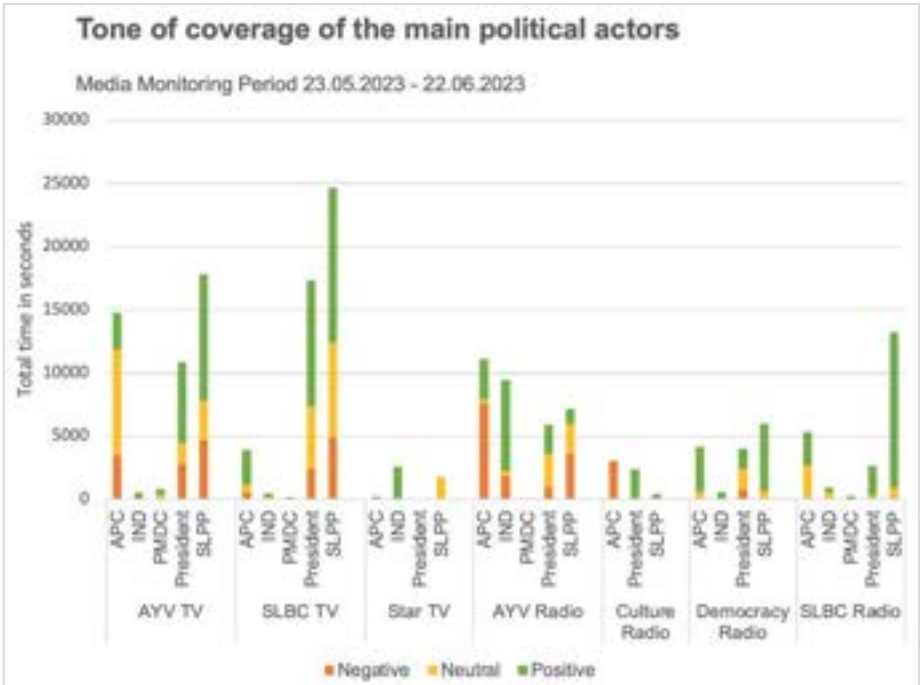


Chart 7 demonstrates the tone of coverage towards the most frequently featured political actors in news bulletins and other programmes of editorial choice. *AYV TV* and *SLBC TV* tone was mostly balanced towards key contestants; *Culture Radio* broadcasts featured many positive comments about incumbent, while *Democracy Radio* and *SLBC Radio* news and editorial programmes were predominantly positive in tone towards both the APC and the SLPP. *Star TV* and *AYV Radio* clearly favoured independent candidates in their coverage These observations proved media preferences towards different political forces during the election campaign.

Chart 7



1.4. Gender balance in broadcast media

Chart 8 demonstrates the gender balance across monitored media, exemplifying underrepresentation of female candidates. The *Democracy Radio* was the only exception with 13 per cent of its editorial content being devoted to female political actors.

Chart 8

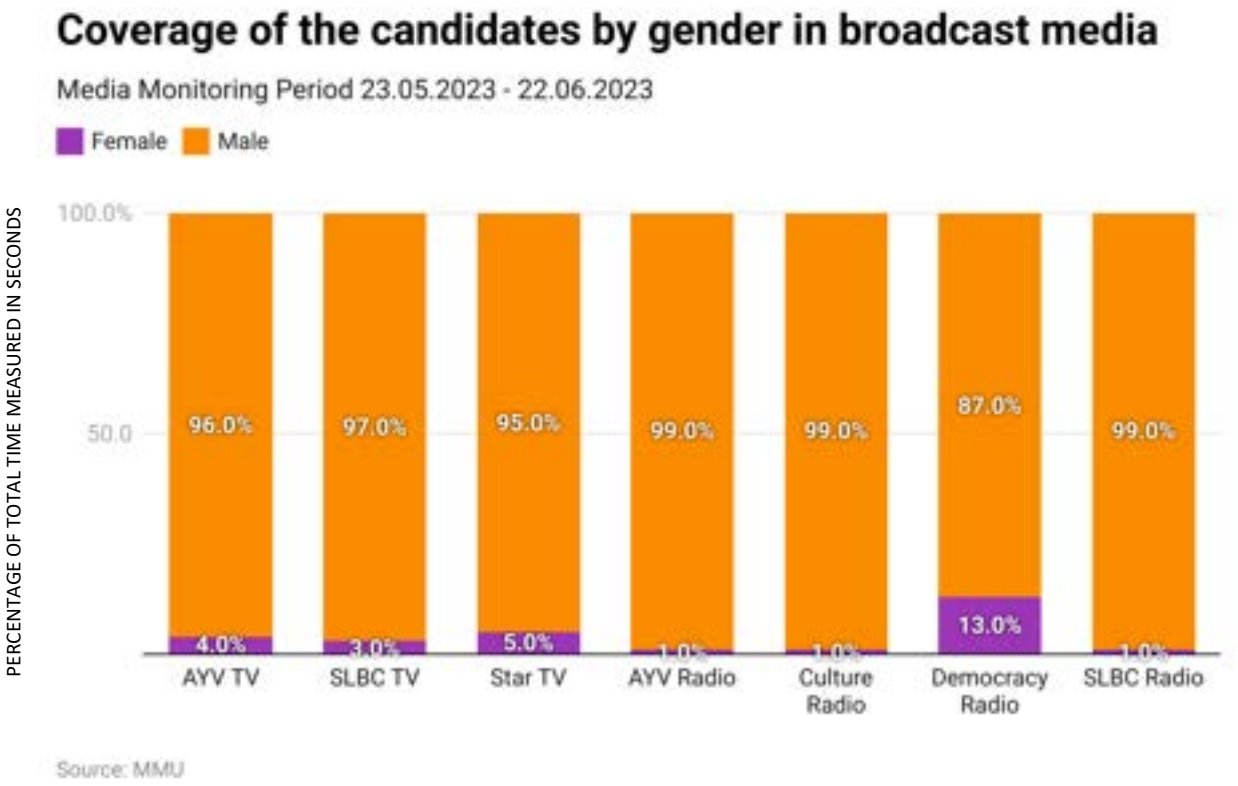
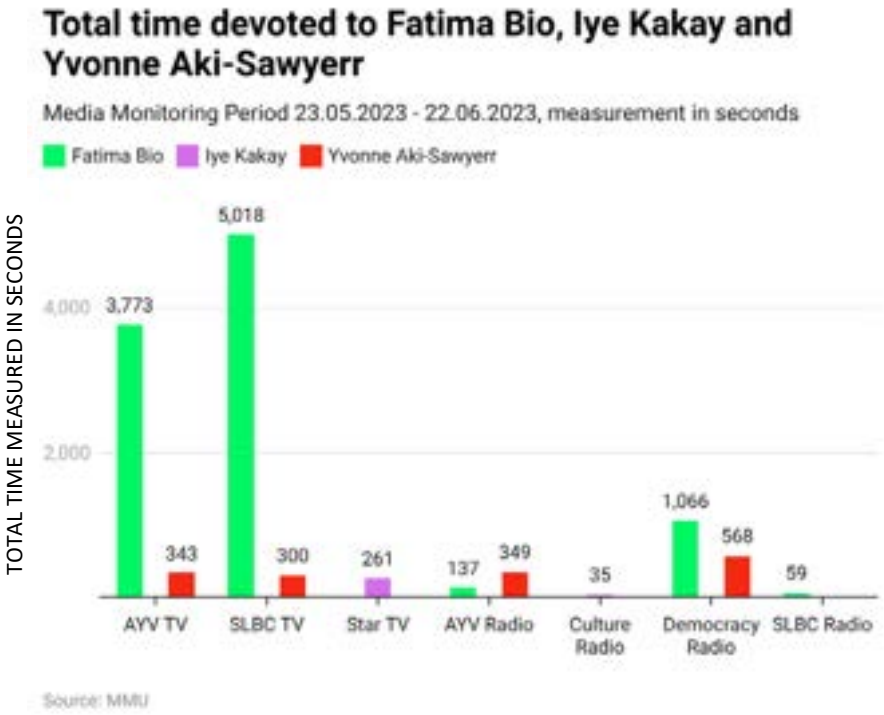


Chart 9 shows the comparison of the total time in seconds devoted to female political actors in the monitored media. Among all female politicians only three got a meaningful exposure within the news and other programmes of editorial choice, including the First Lady Fatima Bio who actively campaigned for the SLPP. Overall, First Lady got by far more coverage that the most visible APC politician, Freetown mayoral candidate Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr or the only female presidential candidate from Iye Kakay (ADP). The coverage of female political actors is another example of women underrepresentation in public and political life, while in the electoral context it shows how little information voters had about women contesting various races.

Chart 9



1.5. Voter information across the monitored broadcast media

During the 30-day campaign period a total of 112 voter information clips or jingles were broadcast by the monitored media, with 42 clips shown on TV and 70 jingles aired on radio. As the radio stations are the most popular media outlet in Sierra Leone, most government and non-government organisations opted to broadcast their jingles there.

Chart 10 shows the proportional distribution of voter information clips per a sponsoring organisation, while Chart 11 demonstrates the topics of the voter education clips aired on monitored radio and TV stations. The main voter information message was a call for "peaceful elections", which was exclusively used by the law enforcement agencies, such as the Office for National Security (ONS), the police and the army; the ECSL and CSOs also had some voter information on election day procedures. Voter information clips were rarely targeting youth, women, or persons with disabilities.

Chart 10

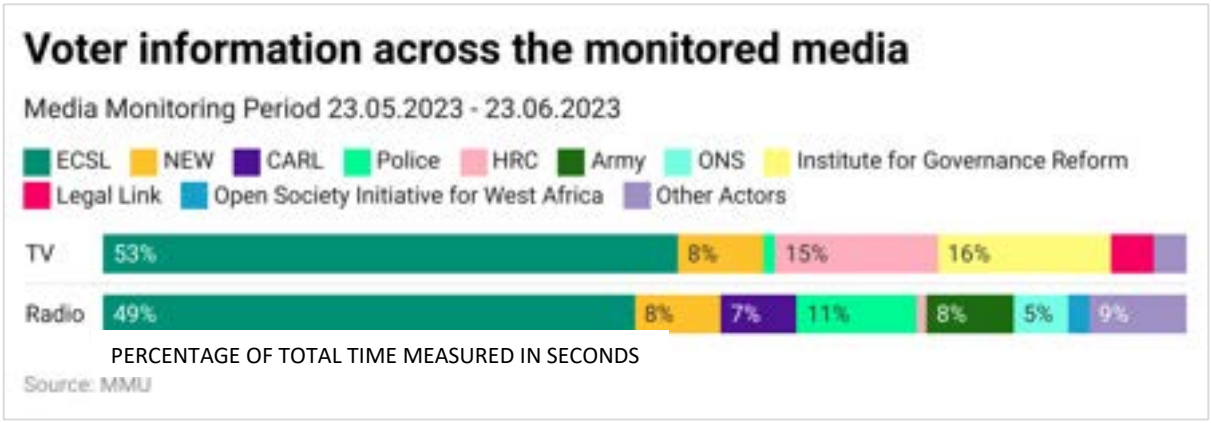
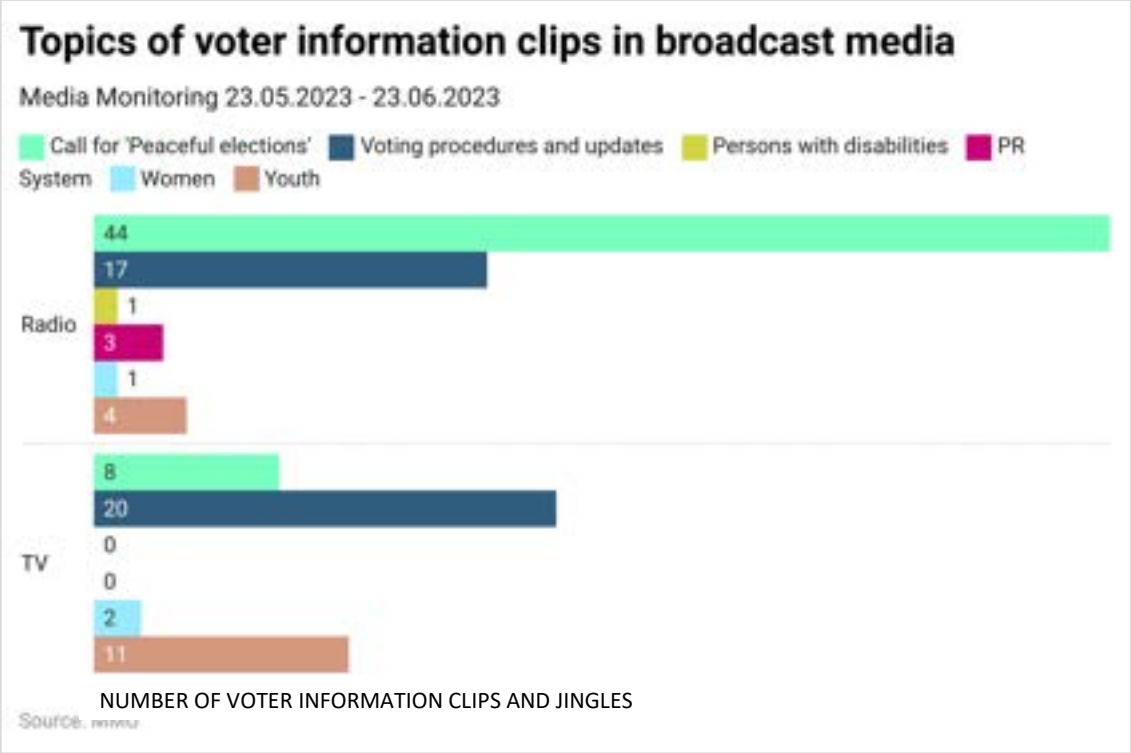


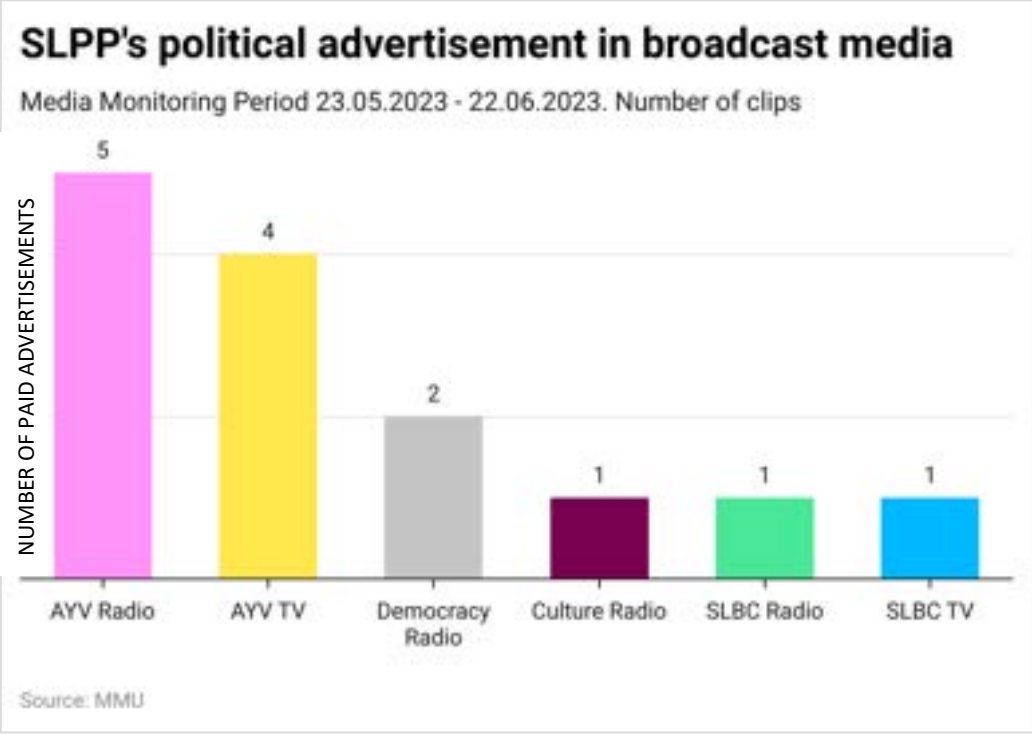
Chart 11



1.6. Political advertisement in broadcast media

The SLPP was the only political party who used the paid advertisement in broadcast media monitored by the EU EOM. Chart 11 shows a number of paid advertisements placed in each media outlet. On average each advertising lasted for some five minutes on radio and some ten minutes on TV. The party did not use short jingles for promotion.

Chart 12



2. The EU EOM monitoring results for print media with a nation-wide reach

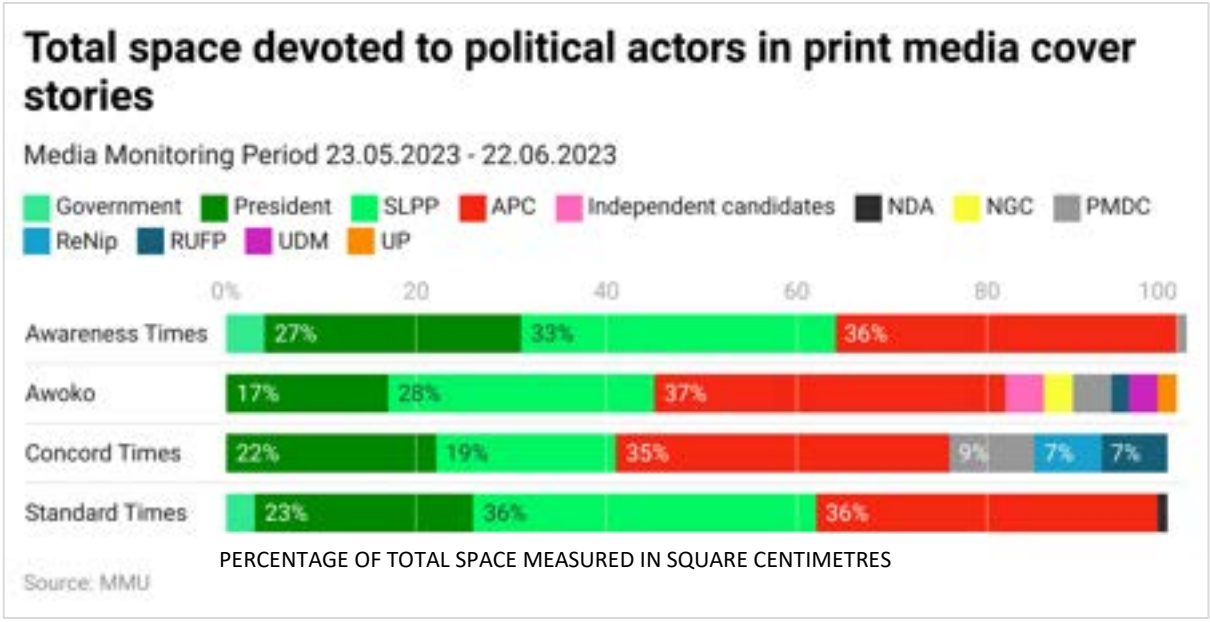
Awareness Times, Awoko, Concord Times and *Standard Times* were monitored from 23 May to 22 of June. All those English-language newspapers were issued daily, except for the weekends. To analyse newspapers' coverage of the elections, media monitors measured space allocated to political actors on each newspaper's front page, as well as the remaining part of the front-page article published inside.

Political events affected the frequency newspapers' publication. Dues to the fear of protests and violence the *Concord Times* were not printed on 12 June 2023, whereas both the *Awareness Times* and *Concord Times* did not print their issues on 13 June 2023.

2.1. Exposure of political actors in print media

Chart 13 demonstrates the allocation of the space to the political actors in front-page stories. All four monitored newspapers devoted most of the coverage to the APC, SLPP and the president. However, *Awoko* and *Concord Times* also provided their readership with information on other political parties; *Awoko* featured also independent candidates, which was the most beneficial approach for voters.

Chart 13

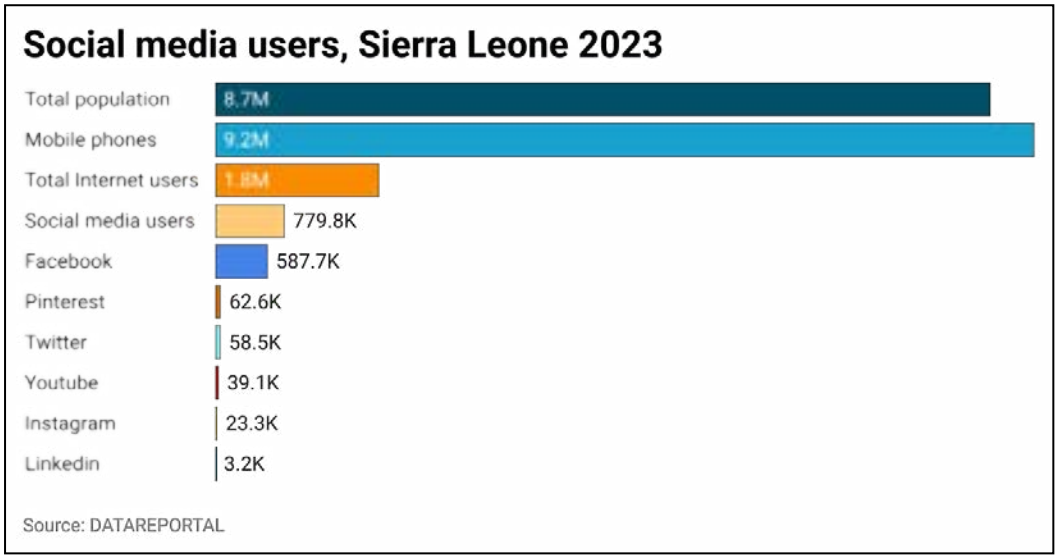


ANNEX 3 – SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING RESULTS

1. Social media environment.

One out of five Sierra Leoneans have access to the Internet, while only one out of 10 has a social media account. In total some 780,000 people access social media regularly. The main social media platform is Facebook, with 75 per cent of social media users having an active Facebook account. Other social media platforms are used rarely, with some 60 thousand users of Pinterest and Twitter and around 40 thousands having a YouTube account.

Chart 1. Social media users / population of Sierra Leone



2. EU EOM Sierra Leone 2023 methodology

The EU EOM social media monitoring unit (SMMU) comprised four monitors responsible for coding of data downloaded from social networks, using following tools:

1. CrowdTangle for extracting data from Facebook and
2. SentiOne used mainly for collecting data from Twitter.

In addition, SMMU also reviewed individual posts on TikTok.[121]

The SMMU was fully operational and started coding of data on 21 May, two days before the start of the official election campaign.

The coding of Facebook posts and tweets was done in two ways. At first, a given monitor had to determine whether the post was or was not related to the ongoing election campaign. If the post in question was not related to the campaign, the coding of the post ended there. If the post or tweet was related to elections, the coding continued for further details.

The coding of election-related posts and tweets covered a range of subjects, such as the main and secondary topic of the post, the tone of the post, information if any party or candidate contesting the elections were mentioned in the message and whether the post contained disinformation, manipulated content or inflammatory language.

Apart from the coding made by the SMMU, statistics automatically generated by the above-mentioned social media listening tools were also considered. In the case of Facebook posts, these were the number of likes and other reactions, the number of comments and the sharing ratio. For

[121] For this platform, the analysis consisted of a manual check of the clip's content.

tweets, the number of reactions, comments and re-tweets were considered. The total number of followers per page (Facebook) or account (Twitter) was also analysed, in relation to the activities of the main presidential candidates in particular.

When it was necessary to determine whether a particular photo or video clip had indeed been taken in the given circumstances and during this electoral campaign, a reverse image search engines were used. The SMMU mainly used Google Images and TinEye.

For the visualization purposes Datawrapper, Gephi and SankeyMatic services were used.

Table 1. The social media monitoring and data collection/visualization tools used.

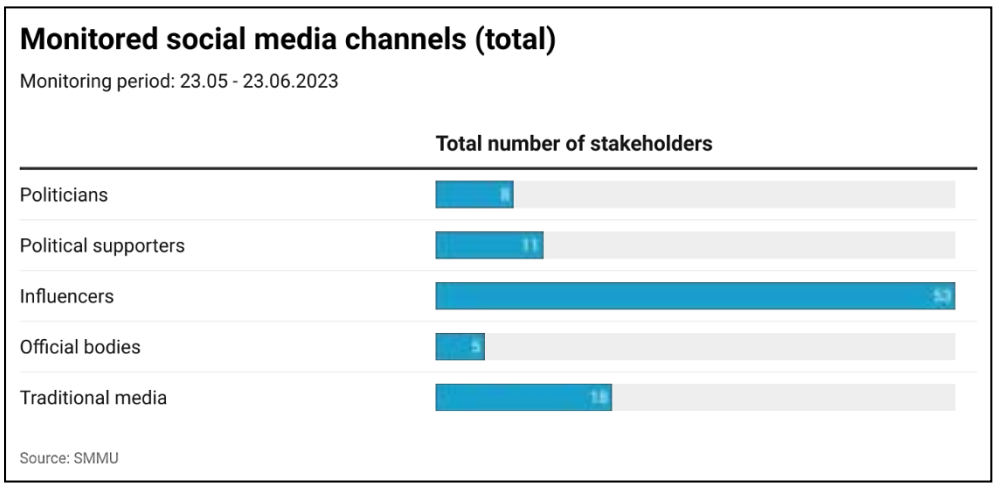
Tool		
Social Listening tools	CrowdTangle	SentiOne
Paid Advertising Monitoring	Meta Ad library; Meta ad library report	
Fact checking	Google Images; TinEye; IVerify website	
Visualisation	DataWrapper; Gephi; SankeyMatic	

3. Election contestants campaign online.

a. Number of posts

In total 24,166 Tweets and 21,405 Facebook posts were downloaded using CrowdTangle and SentiOne tools. EU EOM SMMU coded 8,926 Tweets and 8,425 Facebook posts; 6,385 Tweets and 3,201 Facebook posts were coded as "election related". Coding scheme for the posts contained two columns for the topic, so the SMMU may code the main and secondary topic for the given post or tweet. Main topic for the Facebook and Twitter were the campaign and secondary – the government. In total 54 per cent of Facebook posts and 66 per cent of tweets had only one topic.

Chart 2. Monitored social media channels – total.



The sample was selected considering:

- The reach and impact of the page/group on the political agenda (number of followers, interaction rate per post, quotation level in traditional media and sum of shares). On the

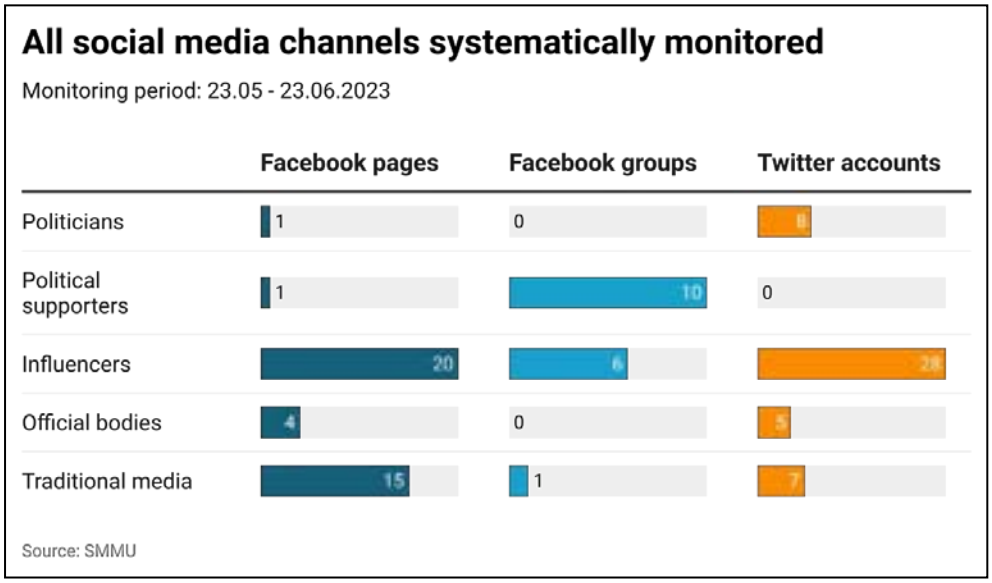
second step snowball method were used and the EU EOM selected those followers of pre-selected channels that also had many followers.

- The content of the page (are topics covering social, political, and electoral issues, is the content original or is it primarily re-shared, is the content controversial, etc.).
- Political affiliation of the account, page, or group.
- The dominant language used on the page to obtain a balanced sample of digital content in English and Krio.

Stakeholders observed during the campaigning period were divided into five main categories: Politicians (8 Facebook pages, groups and Twitter accounts), Political supporters (11 Facebook pages, groups and Twitter accounts), Influencers[122] (53 Facebook pages, groups and Twitter accounts), official bodies (5 Facebook pages, groups and Twitter accounts) and traditional media (18 Facebook pages, groups and Twitter accounts).

During the election campaign, only two political parties regularly engaged with voters on social media platforms: the ruling SLPP and the opposition APC. Representatives of other parties, even if they had a social media account, did not post there very often or were not posting at all.

Chart 3. Monitored social media channels – types.



The largest groups of pages and accounts analysed were influencers, who accounted for half of all stakeholders observed. Influencers usually run their own Facebook pages and their own Twitter accounts, relatively rarely creating discussion groups. There were only six cases in the latter category.

Influencers also tend to use accounts created for political campaigns. Both main contestants for the presidential office, used Twitter accounts, while President Bio did not used his Facebook account, unlike his opponent, who used Facebook ten times more intensively than Twitter.

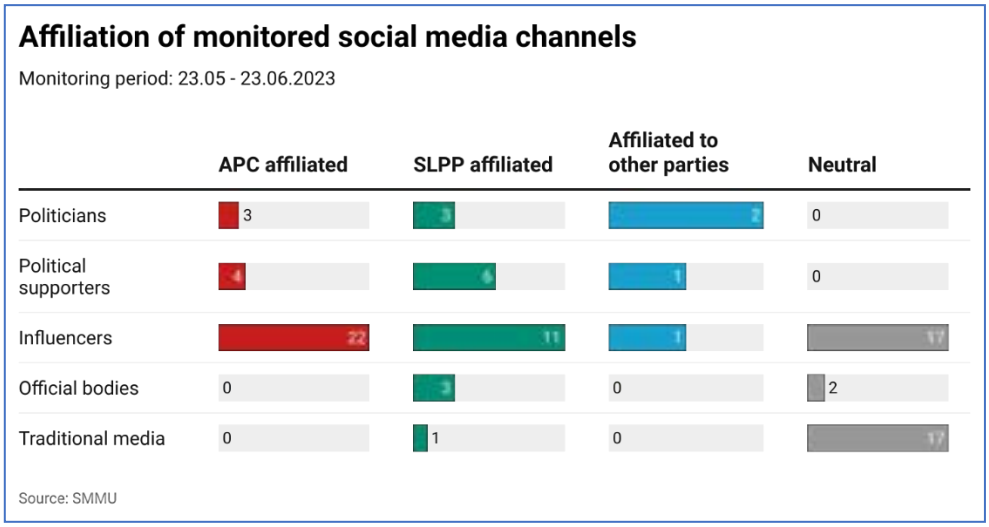
In contrast, political supporters tended to demonstrate their support for candidates on Facebook groups. All groups observed were open (anyone could post on their timelines), they were

[122] The "influencer" category included pages of individuals who took sides in the political arena or remained neutral, who had a large pool of online followers and who were frequently quoted by traditional media outlets. The "political supporters" category included only Facebook groups, who indicated support wither for the APC or SLPP.

moderated, and ultimately political discussions took up relatively little space there, as can be seen in this annex, Chart 8.

The traditional media, with one exception, ran their own Facebook pages and Twitter accounts.

Chart 4. Monitored social media channels – affiliation.



As for the party affiliation it was not easy to establish. For example, APC party member, Sylvia Olayinka Blyden, at the beginning of the campaign showed growing friendship to the First Lady (SLPP) and at the same time showed growing contempt for some of the members of her own party. A similar story could be observed in affiliation of the traditional media, who tended to switch alignment from one party to another during the campaign period. The only traditional medium that was clearly aligned with the ruling SLPP, was the public broadcaster SLBC.

Influencers were showing support to their chosen party and – sometimes – even if the party itself distanced from the given influencer (as it was the case for diaspora blogger Adebayor, whose support for APC was not officially recognized by the party).

Chart 5. Statistics for posts/tweets for main presidential contestants

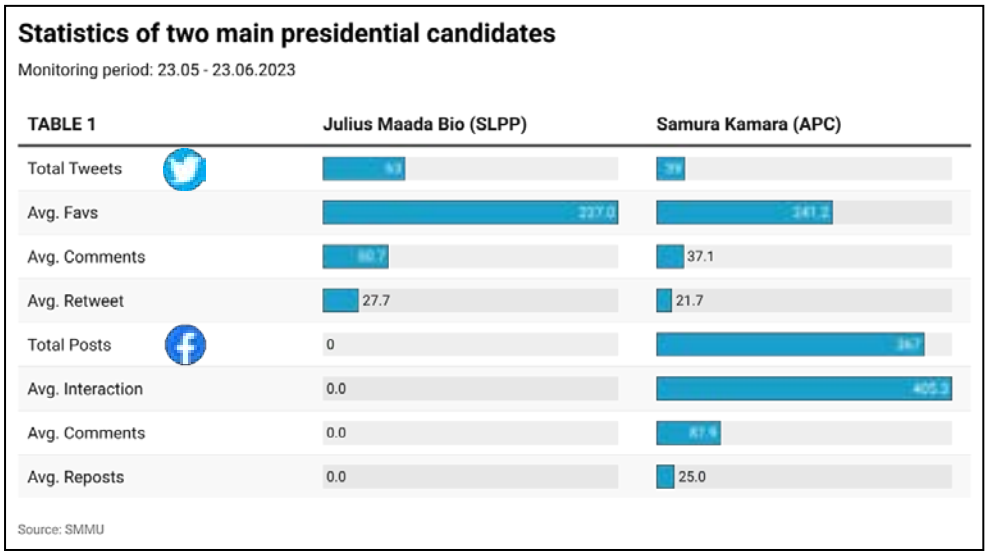
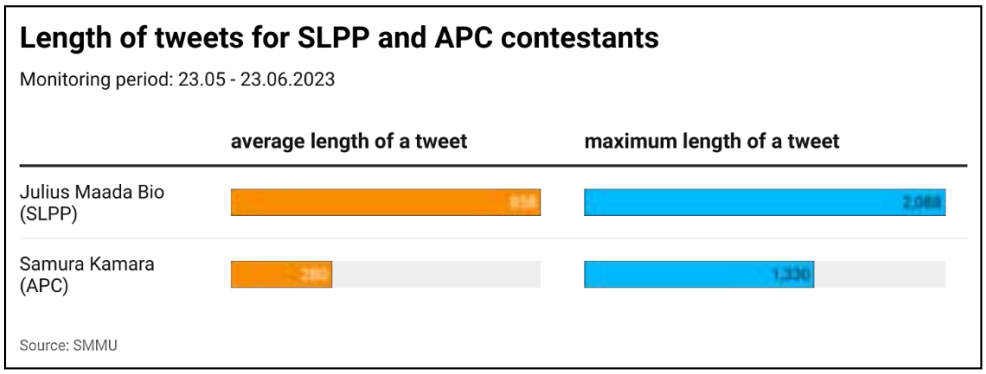


Chart 4 and Chart 5 show that Julius Maada Bio did not use his Facebook account during the campaign, while being very active on Twitter. Having over 170 thousands of followers on Twitter, he managed to maintain the average reactions ratio 227 per post. Samura Kamara used

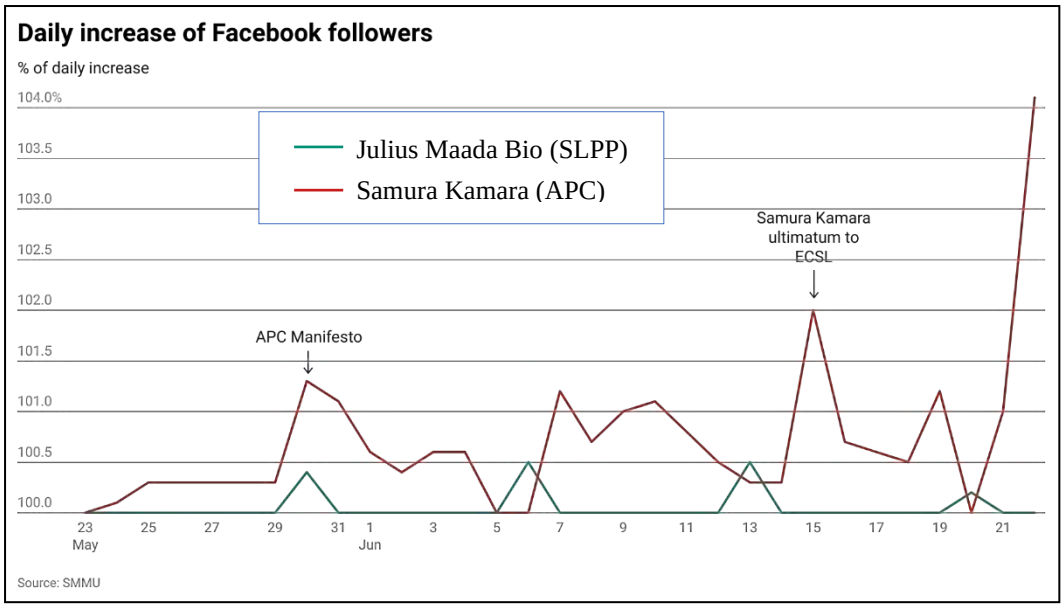
Twitter more moderately, tweeting one post per day on average. Taking into account that his base of followers on Twitter (25-27 thousand) was smaller than that of the President's, he got bigger engagement with an average ratio of 241 reactions per post. Samura Kamara was way more vocal on the Facebook, where he put 367 posts during the campaign period, getting an average of 405 interactions, while each post was shared on average 25 times.

Chart 6. Length of Tweets – Julius Maada Bio and Samura Kamara



As for the Twitter accounts, both contestants used Twitter Blue feature, which allowed them to pass longer messages, which in turn could enable both to provide more detailed information. The SLPP candidate used this feature extensively, with messages from President Bio being three times longer than those of his opponent and reaching 858 characters on the average. The longest Tweet from President Bio had 2,088 characters. The longest message from Samura Kamara reached 1,330 characters with 280 characters on average per tweet.

Chart 7. Daily increase of Facebook followers



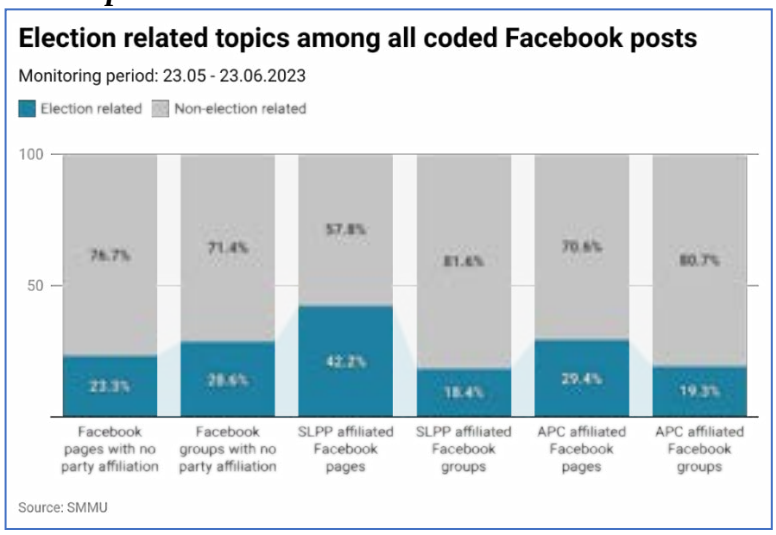
Analysis of followers show a sharp growth of the pool of followers on several occasions. It is possible to buy additional supporters on Facebook and Twitter, which usually results in a sharp peak of number of supporters and/or number of likes for the given page.[123] Usually "likes at

[123] Analysis of number of likes and followers per page was performed to assesses the extent to which online support could have been considered as genuine. Every Facebook page that posts regularly tend to get new followers and likes, as the platform provides an easy way to subscribe to the given channel, while it is rather complicated to unsubscribe.

posting" and "number of followers" are growing steadily. Numbers of likes or followers may increase with each post, but a detailed analysis can show peaks that cannot be explained by a natural influx of followers, generated by posts on key campaign events, political statements with far-reaching consequences or so like. This kind of phenomenon can be found at the last day of campaign for Samura Kamara when a simple message encouraging to vote resulted in more than 2,500 new supporters in less than 24 hours. At the same time a genuine growth of followers, triggered by political events was observed, for example after the presentation of the APC manifesto (end of May) and after the APC made an ultimatum on 15 June, which resulted in 1,000 new followers. The number of followers of Bio's page was steady, but then there were no posts made on this account during the campaign.

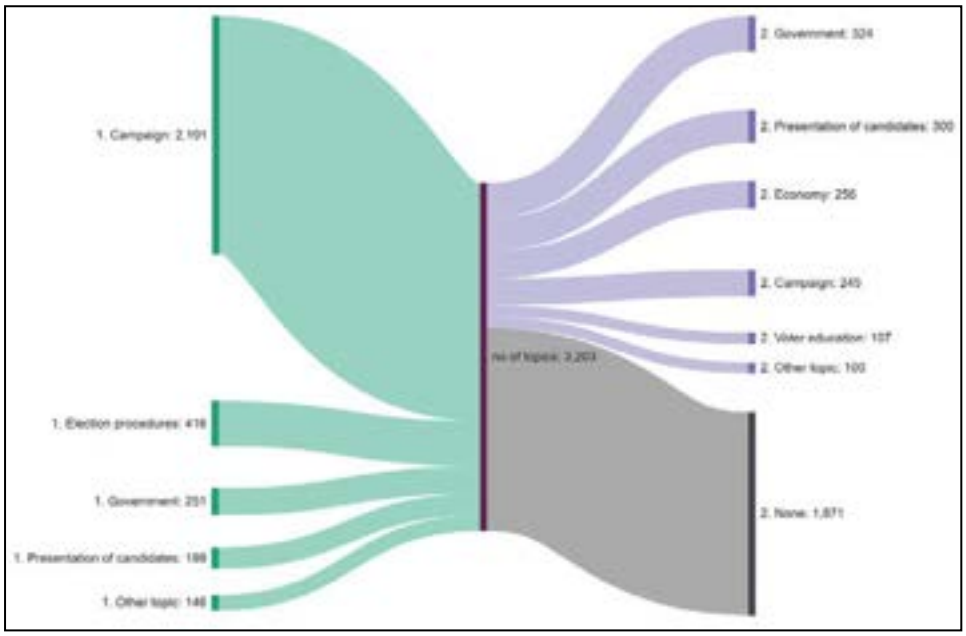
b. Topics and tone of the posts

Chart 8. Election and non-election related posts



Among the Facebook pages those affiliated with SLPP kept the highest election related ratio of posts (over 42 per cent), as showed in Chart 7. Among APC affiliated pages only 29 per cent of all discussions were election related. Facebook groups, in general discussed everything but elections with 18 and 19 per cent of all posts featuring election-related topics on SLPP and APC affiliated groups respectively. The proportional distribution of election and non-election related topics indicate that most party affiliated groups and pages primarily served as a forum for like-minded individuals to discuss a wide range of topics related to everyday life or entertainment and was not among the key campaign channels that would reach voters beyond the already established support base.

Chart 9a Primary and secondary topics on Facebook



For both, Facebook (Chart 9a) and Twitter (Chart 9b) posts the primary topic was the same: half of the Facebook posts that were election related started with the campaign, followed by the election procedures and topics related to the government activities and decisions. While the order of topics was the same for coded tweets, the campaign was discussed in 68 per cent as a first topic while election procedures were discussed in 20 per cent of the tweets. No secondary topic was found in 58 and 46 per cent of the Facebook posts and tweets, respectively.

Chart 9b. Primary and secondary topics on Twitter

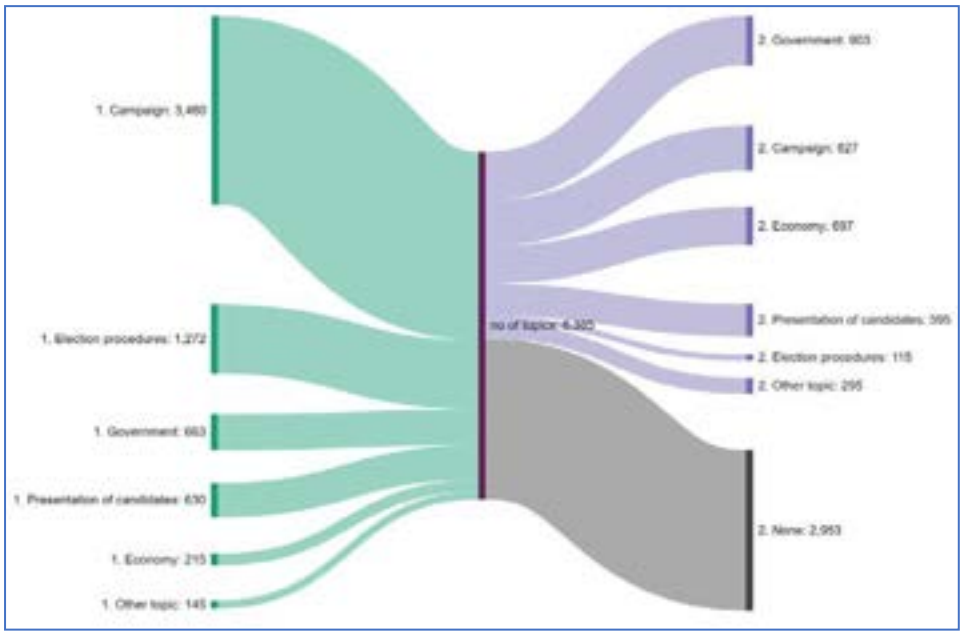
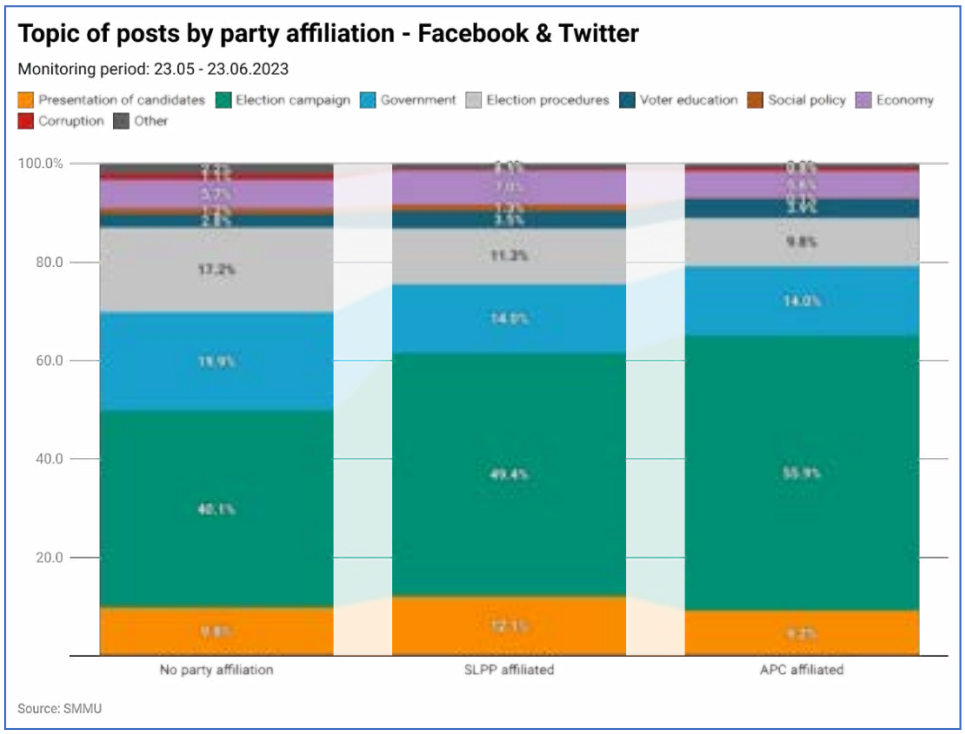
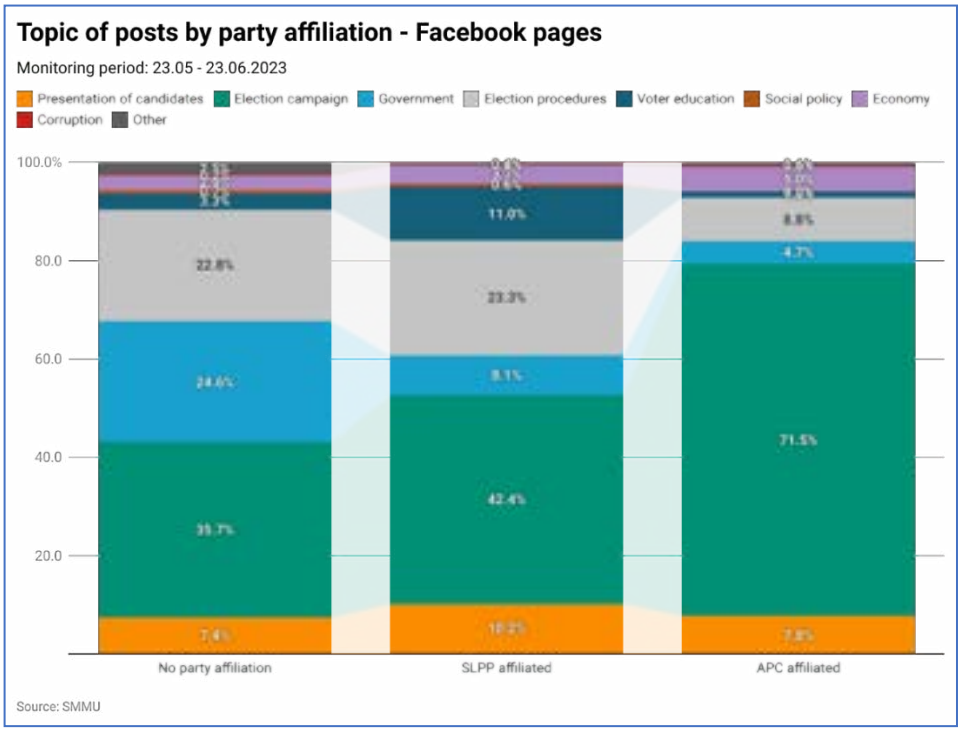


Chart 10. Topics by party affiliation



APC affiliated Facebook pages, groups and Twitter accounts focused on election campaign which was discussed in 56 per cent of all posts. For SLPP affiliated accounts election campaign also was very important and this topic was featured in half of the coded posts and tweets. The government was discussed in 14 per cent of all posts and tweets, regardless the party affiliation, but this type of discussion took on different tones within posts from supporters of both parties. Other topics were not that prominent and regarded election procedures, presentation of candidates and economy in general. Topics like "voter education", "social policy" and "corruption" were featured only occasionally.

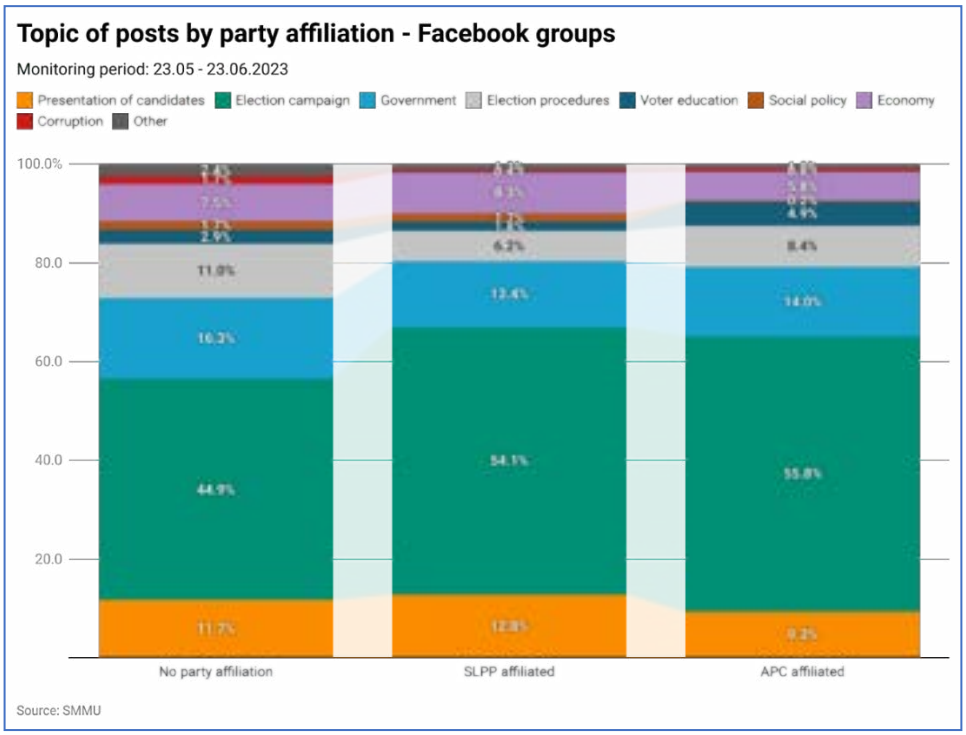
Chart 11. Topics by party affiliation (Facebook pages)



On Facebook pages affiliated to the SLPP main topic was election campaign, followed by a topic "election procedures", which was also discussed in one quoter of the coded posts. One in 10 posts on these pages had a voter education message. For the APC related Facebook pages election campaign was discussed in 70 per cent of the time, while other topics, namely election

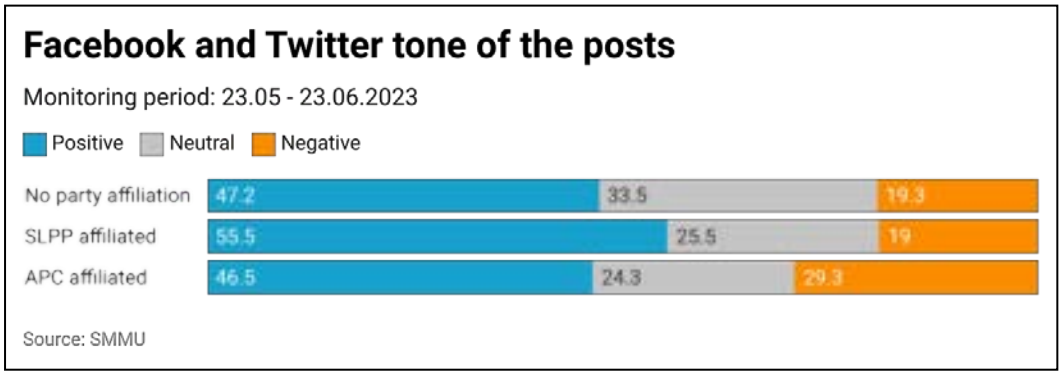
procedures and presentation of candidates were discussed in by far less frequently, as show in Chart 12.

Chart 12. Topics by party affiliation (Facebook groups)



If there was an election related discussion on Facebook groups, it focused on the campaign itself on the APC and SLPP affiliated groups. Supporters of both parties discussed the government and presentation of candidates. The APC supporters discussed election procedures and the SLPP supporters issues related to the economy.

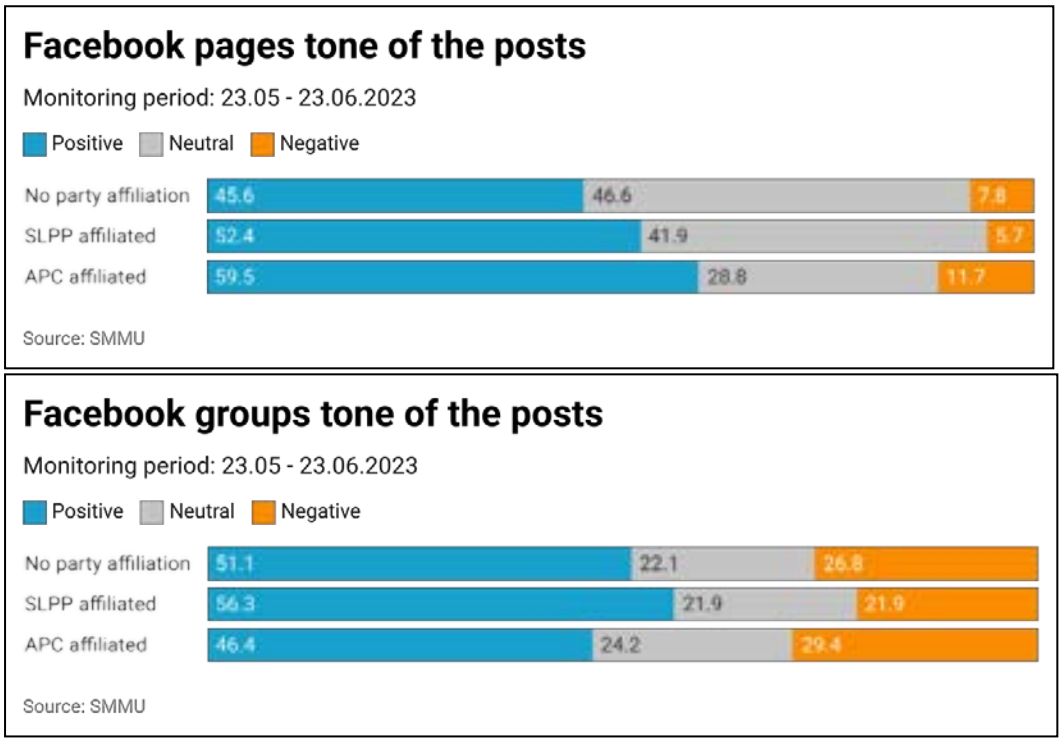
Chart13. Tone of the posts (Facebook and Twitter)



The EU EOM SMMU evaluated the tone of the post towards a certain political actor or a process, featured in the post. The positive tone was assigned to the posts usually prising the party, the candidate, the campaign event, or policy proposal. The neutral tone was assigned to posts containing only factual information about a political party, candidate or event. Negative tone was assigned to the post that was giving a negative assessment of the political opponent, party, or policy proposal, contained divisive language, swear words, or was otherwise perceived in a local context as demeaning.

Chart 13 shows that election-related posts from accounts affiliated with the SLPP were primarily positive in tone (55.5 per cent), while posts and tweets from accounts affiliated with the APC were less positive (46.5 per cent), and the share of posts containing negative messages was notably higher in such posts (29.3 per cent).

Chart 14a and 14b. Tone of the posts (Facebook pages and groups)



Facebook pages are general more positive in tone than Facebook groups. While the percentage of negative content on both SLPP and APC affiliated pages are small (5.7 and 11.7 per cent respectively) the percentage of negative content on Facebook groups is considerably higher with 21.9 per cent and 29.4 per cent for SLPP and APC affiliated groups.

Chart 15. Tone of the posts (Twitter accounts)

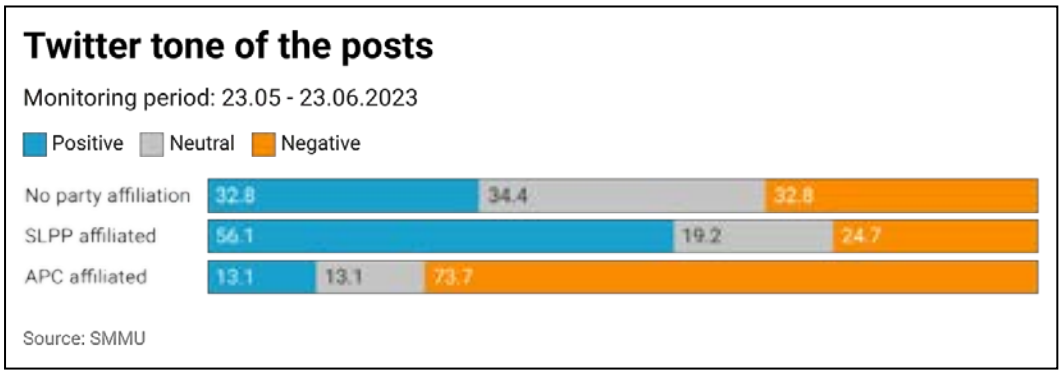
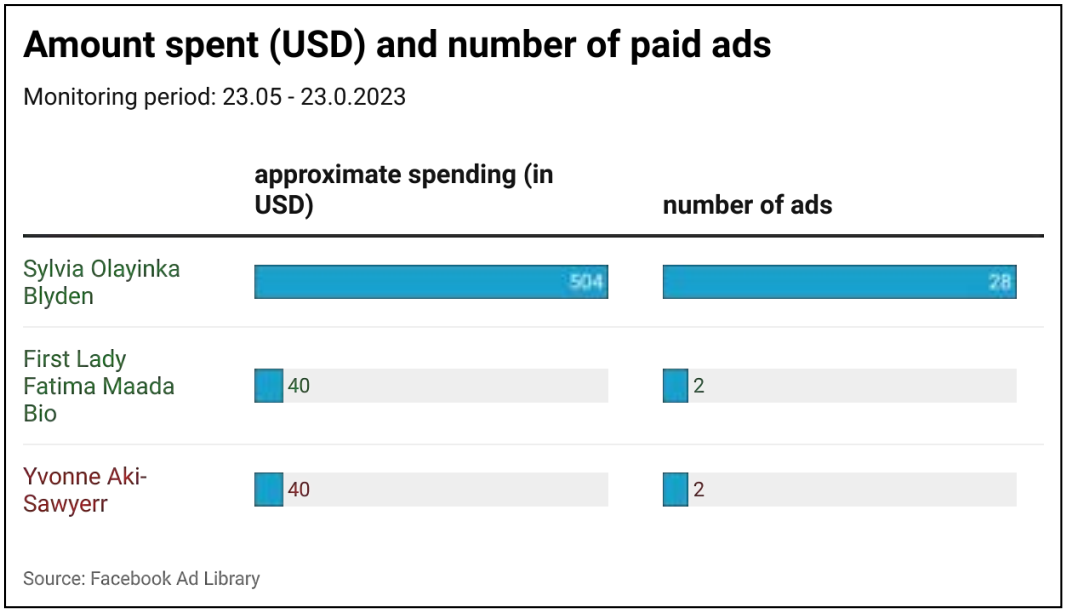


Chart 15 shows an unusually high percentage of negative content in the tweets by APC affiliated accounts, who frequently lamented the incumbent, the SLPP and various government decisions. It is worth noting that among those accounts majority of the posts come from just two very vocal opponents of the SLPP and the President Julius Maada Bio in particular.[124] The SLPP affiliated Twitter posts got 56.1 per cent of positive messages, that mainly prised achievements of President Bio and 24.7 percent negative ones.

[124] Those were @LeoneIssues with 20,000 followers on Twitter and @JustMeBeingMe4 with 15,000 followers on Twitter.

4. Paid-for content (advertising)

Chart 16. Facebook paid ads spending[125]



Only 32 political advertisements were bought during campaign period by the political actors, among them 28 ads were bought by the APC politician, currently aligned with the SLPP (Sylvia Olayinka Blyden). Further two adds were bought by the First Lady and two by Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, the APC mayoral candidate for Freetown. Overall spending on the advertisement on Facebook is estimated below 600 USD.

[125] Exchange rate USD/EUR = 0.9 as for 12.07.2023

5. ECSL communication on social media

Chart 17. ECSL activity - topics

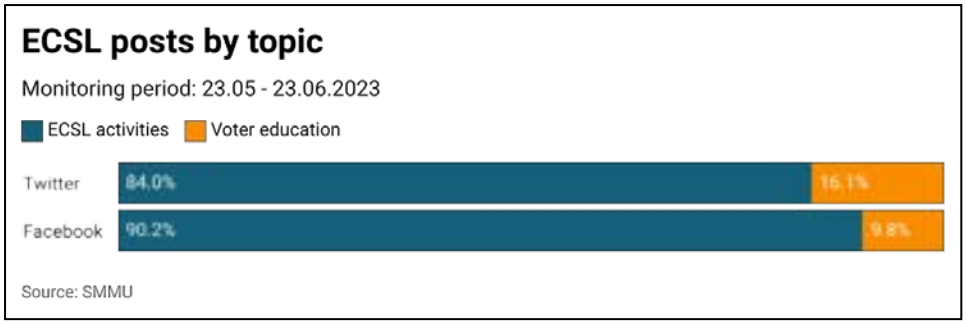
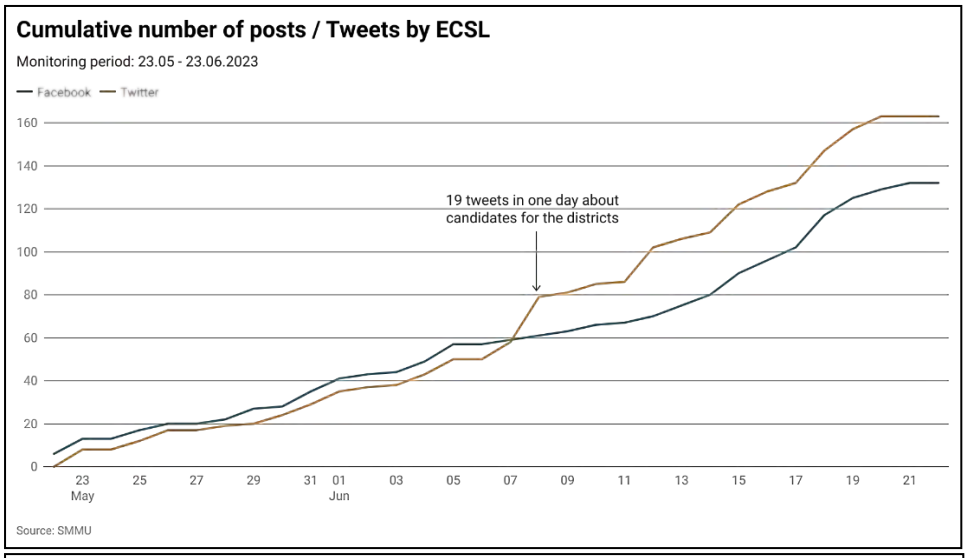
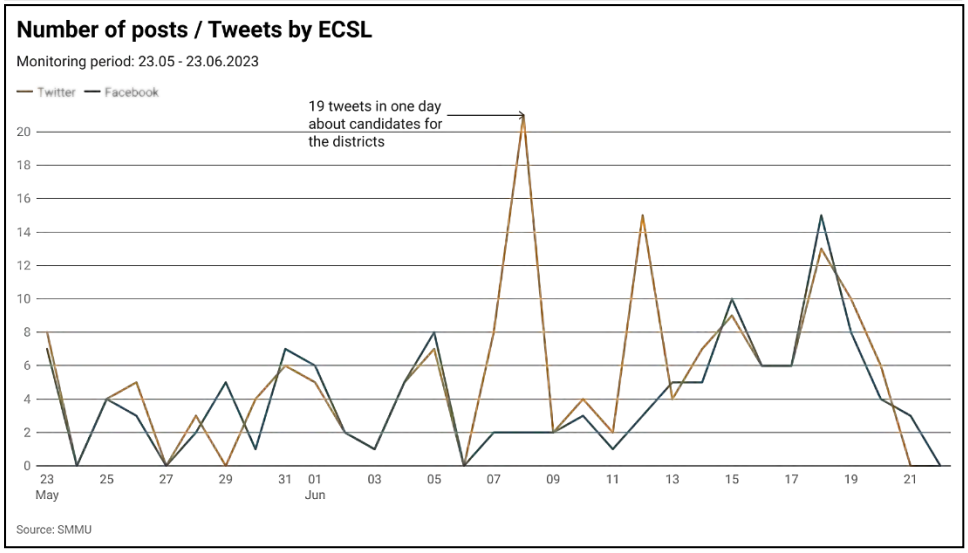


Chart 18a and 18b. ECSL activity number of posts



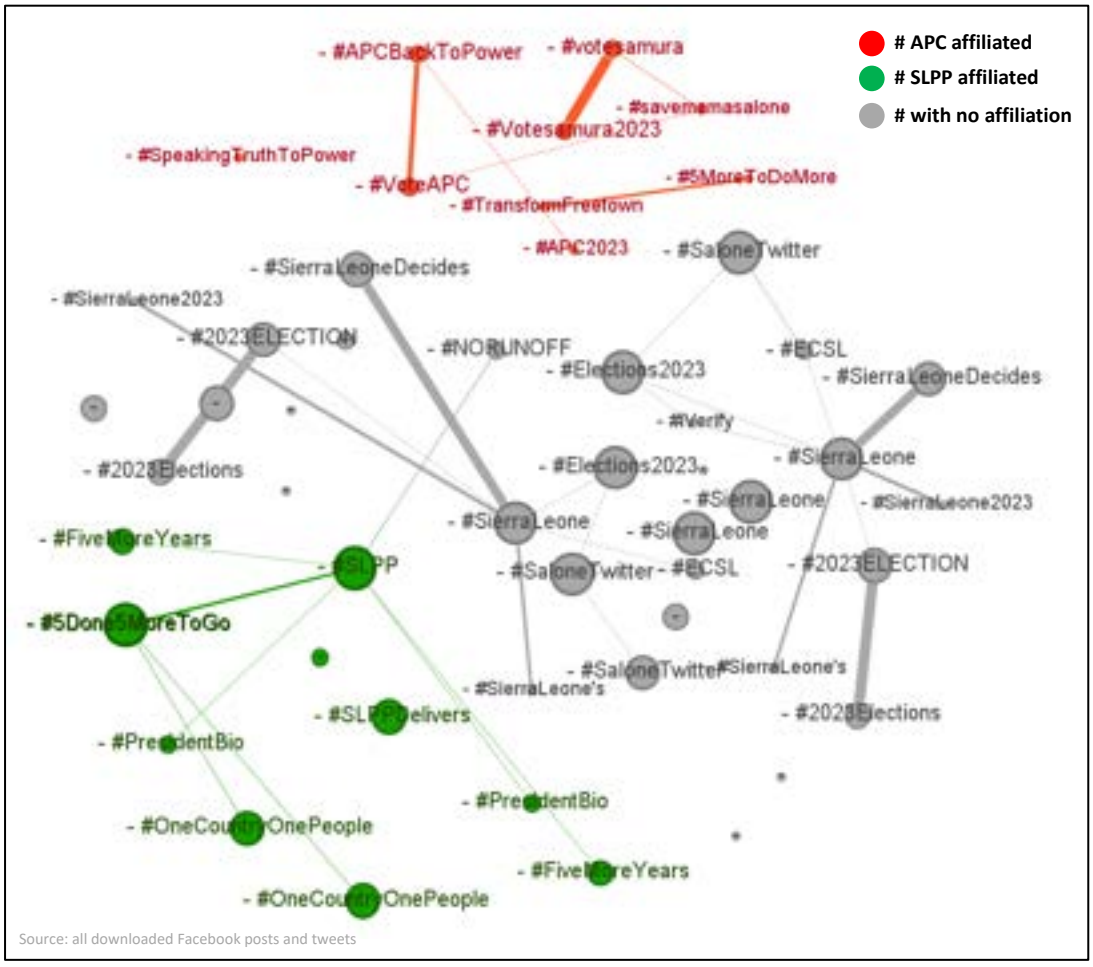


The ECSL was not very visible on the Facebook and Twitter, with only a small portion of overall communication being devoted to voter information. On Twitter 16 per cent of tweets could be considered as voter information and only 1 out of 10 posts on Facebook touched this topic. The rest of the posts were featuring various ECSL activities such as trainings, meetings and voter education posters with sample ballots for various races from across the country. Qualitative analysis of the posts evidence lacked detail and precision. For example, there is a post informing

about a delayed delivery of ballot papers, but no information on when the ballot papers to be expected.

6. Additional analysis

Chart19. Usage of hashtags on Facebook and Twitter



Hashtags were not used in a consistent and organised manner either by the APC or SLPP to reach out to voters beyond the already established online base of followers.[126] As this Gephi map shows, SLPP affiliated hashtags were very often not connected with each other. Strongest connections were between #5Done5MoreToGo and #SLPP, but, for example those two were not connected with #SLPPDelivers. From the APC side strongest connections was observed between #votesamura and #VoteSamura2023. Strong connection is also between #APCBackToPower and #VoteAPC. Some election-related hashtags did not have any connection to others at all.

126 Hashtags are created to hyperlink messages that feature the same topic, political party, candidate or event. Even a slight change in the hashtag redirects the recipient to a different type of message. Hashtags, if used consistently, can play a key role in political online campaigning, linking posts by political supporters, influencers, and politicians, reaching voters who usually do not follow the respective party or the political figure.

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AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE 24 JUNE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

FREETOWN, 26 JUNE 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Republic of Sierra Leone held its Multi-tier Elections on 24 June 2023 to elect a President, Members of Parliament, and Members of the Local Council.

2. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, deployed the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) led by H.E Hailemariam D. Boshe, former Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and comprised of 50 Short Term Observers (STOs). The observers were drawn from African Ambassadors accredited to the African Union (AU), the Pan African Parliament, Election Management Bodies (EMBs), Independent Electoral, Academic and Governance Experts, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from 26 African countries.[1] It was supported by the technical team from the African Union Commission and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).

3. Observers were deployed in 22 teams to six regions in Sierra Leone to observe key processes including the final phases of the electoral campaigns, Election Day and limited post-election activities.

4. The Mission engaged with key stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), Representatives of the Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Candidates and Political Parties, the Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC), the Office of National Security (ONS) and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Members of the Diplomatic Corps, and the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC).

5. The Mission was charged with the responsibility of observing, assessing and reporting on the preparations for the elections in line with the relevant international instruments for democratic elections including; the African Union (AU) Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG); the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation (PEMMO); and the legal framework for elections in Sierra Leone.

6. Through this Preliminary Statement, the Mission offers a summary of its key findings, conclusions and recommendations on the electoral process up to the closing and counting of the polls. The statement is issued while the collation of election results is still ongoing. The Mission will continue to closely follow the electoral process and provide a detailed final report within a month from the date of announcement of final election results.

II. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Context of the Elections

7. The 24 June election was the fifth to take place in Sierra Leone since the end of the civil war in 2002, and the third elections that were fully self-administered.

[1]Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

8. Thirteen (13) political parties contested the presidential election, but the landscape was dominated by the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All-People's Congress (APC).

9. The electoral environment was characterised by heightened tensions and reported incidents of violence in some parts of the country.
10. The Mission was informed of high levels of misinformation, disinformation, fake news and hate speech mainly conveyed via social media platforms and radios.

11. The electoral context was also characterised by mistrust of the ECSL by some political parties with regard to its neutrality.

12. AUEOM commends Sierra Leone for implementing some of the electoral reforms in line with previous AUEOM recommendations.

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

13. The 2023 elections were conducted based on the following legal instruments of the 1991 Constitution (as amended as to 2008), 2022 Public Elections Acts (as amended 2023), 2022 Political Parties Acts, 2022 Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, 2022 Local Government Act and the other regulations and procedures.
14. The 24 June 2023 General Elections were conducted using both the First-past-the-post system to elect the President and Mayors, and the District Block Proportional Representation System.

15. The Mission notes key reforms in the Electoral Act, which introduced the District Block Proportional Representation (PR) system for the Parliamentary and Council elections; to promote women's political participation and representation. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act allows 30% of seats in public elections for women, while Persons with Disability Act 2011 covers the special needs of Persons with Disability in public elections. The Mission commends the introduction of the District Block Proportional Representation to promote broad representation of Sierra Leoneans.

IV. PREPAREDNESS OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISION OF SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

16. The Mission notes that the ECSL received the requisite funding to conduct the election on time and conducted all pre-election activities as per the election calendar. Despite delays in delivery of sensitive election materials, this did not significantly affect the roll-out of activities.

17. The Mission commends the ECSL for introducing the braille jacket specially designed to support the blind voters to effectively participate in the elections.

18. The Mission received reports that voters and stakeholders were not informed on time about the Early voting, hence only 231 voted. The Mission was informed that no observers were accredited to observe the Early Voting.

19. The Mission notes the absence of provision for Early Voting for Electoral Staff, security agencies and other essential staff on duty.

V. VOTER REGISTRATION

20. The Constitution provides for universal suffrage, with citizens who have attained the age of eighteen (18) being eligible to vote.

21. A total of 3,374,258 were registered, an increase of 195,595 from 2018. However, the Mission notes that the ECSL did not provide comprehensive disaggregated voter register data as requested by some electoral stakeholders.

22. Some stakeholders consulted raised concerns on the quality of the cards which did not show voters' pictures accurately and the delay in delivering voters cards in some areas.

VI. ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

23. The Mission noted with concern that campaigns in some parts of the country were marred by politically motivated violence spurred by the general mistrust especially between the two main political parties (SLPP and the APC). Violence incidents included torching of party offices and physical attacks, resulting in injuries and a reported death in Freetown.

VII. SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

24. The Mission was informed that several measures had been put in place to ensure peace and security. Through the Office of National Security (ONS), a total of 17000 security personnel were deployed, drawn from the different security clusters of whom 80% were from the Police Force. The primary role of the security personnel was to ensure the safety of voters, stakeholders, and election officials, as well as election materials.

25. The Mission observed that elections took place amidst a politically tense environment and insecurity in some parts of the country, particularly in the strongholds of the two major political parties (SLPP and APC).

VIII. ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ELECTION OBSERVERS

26. The Mission commends the active role played by various Civil Society Organisations in championing advocacy for reforms for marginalised groups, civic and voter education, peace initiatives and election observation.

27. The Mission also observed efforts by the CSOs in setting up of situation rooms to ensure peaceful elections through data collection, and efforts were focused on peace messaging, mediation all aimed at promoting a culture of political tolerance and dialogues.

IX. POLITICAL PARTY REGISTRATION AND NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

28. In line with the legal provisions, the nomination of presidential candidates was conducted from 30 April to 09 May 2023. Out of the seventeen (17) registered political parties only 13 presented presidential candidates, of whom only one is female.

29. Three hundred (300) candidates were gazetted for the Parliamentary elections. The Mission noted that the final list of candidates was only gazetted on 20 June 2023 with only three days to the elections.

X. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATION

The Mission observed that voting was largely peaceful although a few polling stations experienced tension due to the late arrival of materials. The Mission however noted that voting was slow which could be attributed to inadequate training.

The AUEOM deployed 50 observers in 12 districts across the country, namely Bo, Bombali, Kambia, Karene, Kenema, Koinadugu, Kono, Port Loko, Pujehun, Tonkolili, Western Area Rural, And Western Area Urban.

On Election Day, the observers visited 219 polling stations to observe the opening, voting, closing and counting procedures in urban 44.3% (97) and rural 55.7% (122) areas.

a. Opening of polling

30. The AUEOM observed opening procedures at 17 polling stations across all six regions and 12 districts. The AUEOM noted that 53.9% (118) of the polling stations visited opened on time, at 07h00.

31. A total of 46.1% (101) of the polling stations visited by the AUEOM opened late due mostly to the late arrival of polling materials: 69.3% (70), poor preparations by polling officials: 27.7% (28), late arrival of polling officials: 5.0% (5), violence/security concerns: 4.0% (4), and other reasons: 9.9% (10) such as delocalisation of the polling station as the security personell could not contain the crowd.

32. There were controlled queues outside the polling stations visited before and during the opening of the poll. However, chaotic queues/poor crowd control and unruly voter behaviour were also reported in a few instances.

b. Election materials

33. Essential election materials were available in adequate quantity in 85.8% (188) of the polling stations visited. Essential materials such as Validating Stamps, Ballot papers, Register of Voters, Indelible ink, Ballot box(es), Security Seals, Tamper Evident Envelope, Presiding Officer's Journal, and Polling Centre Manager's Journal were missing in 15% of the polling stations.

34. The AUEOM also noted the late arrival of the materials which caused the late opening of polls in some visited polling stations.

35. While Ballot boxes were sealed properly in 94.5% (207) of the voting stations visited, the leads (covers) of the ballot boxes were not matching the boxes which were incorrectly sealed particularly in 11252 SDA Primary School Sembehun polling station in Bo district.

a. Polling stations

36. The AUEOM noted that most polling stations were easily accessible to the voters. Where accessibility was challenged (34.2%), polling station ground not levelled or flattened appropriately,

crowds obstructing the entrance, and polling stations located upstairs were reported as the main causes.

b. Election personnel

37. The opening process raised concerns about the training of the polling personnel and their preparedness as 66.7% of AU observers reported late opening of polls due to poor preparation. The polling staff were not easily identifiable and shortage of the ECSL kit and was reported.

c. Observers and party/candidate agents

38. The AUEOM noted the presence of other international observers and citizen observers in most stations visited. The participation of citizen observers contributed to enhancing the credibility and transparency of the electoral process.

39. The AUEOM noted that party and candidate agents were present at most polling stations visited and could carry out their mandate without hindrances and with a high degree of tolerance.

d. Participation of women and youth

40. The AUEOM noted the participation of women and youth as polling officials and as party/candidate agents.

e. Voting procedures

41. Voting proceeded uninterrupted in most polling stations visited throughout the day. Where there was an interruption (5.5% (12), it was due to bad weather, insufficient materials, or unrest.

42. The secrecy of the vote was guaranteed in most polling stations visited. The AUEOM noted that priority and assistance were extended to persons living with disabilities (PWDs), the elderly, expecting women, mothers with infants, and other persons with special needs.

43. Despite a few cases during closing and counting where security officers were inside the polling stations, the AUEOM noted that they conducted themselves professionally.

f. Closing of the polls

44. Most stations (78.6% (11)) closed on time, at 17h00. All voters in the queue at the closing time were allowed to cast their vote. The stations that opened late closed also late to compensate for time lost at the opening.

45. The Mission reported that there were voters in the queues at the closing of polls in centres visited, and they were allowed to cast their vote.

g. Counting of votes

46. Closing and counting processes took place in a generally peaceful atmosphere.

47. Observers reported compliance with the closing and counting procedures at the majority of polling stations. However, in Njala Campus polling center, Bo district in the Southern region, certain steps were skipped such as the reconciliation of ballots. In the same polling centre, unused ballots were also left unattended and unsupervised on the table at closing.

48. There was insufficient lighting during the counting. However, the Mission noted efforts by ECSL to provide a mini solar lamp at all polling centres.

49. All the necessary documentation at the end of the processes was completed and results were published at most polling stations and candidate agents provided with a copy of the results form.

XI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

50. Overall, AUEOM observed that elections were conducted in a generally peaceful, transparent, and credible manner, up to the counting on polling day, despite reported incidents of violence particularly during the pre-election period.

51. The AUEOM commends the people of Sierra Leone for their enthusiasm, commitment and resilience to express their will at the polls and their unwavering commitment to maintaining democratic stability.

The Mission further proffers the following preliminary recommendations for consideration in improving future electoral processes:

- The government should put in place measures to ensure the peace and stability of the country to safeguard the security of all citizens.
- The ECSL adopt continuous improvement and transparency in engaging stakeholders to avoid mistrust and enhance confidence in the electoral process.
- Provide comprehensive voter register data to allow for targeted interventions in the electoral process to improve participation.
- Provide the gazetted list of candidates before official campaigns season to allow them sufficient time to campaign.
- The ECSL to make provision for Early voting for ECSL staff, media and security personnel working on election day.
- Political parties should refrain from violence, hate speech and any other acts that could undermine the stability of the country.
- Channel electoral disputes through the legally instituted mechanisms under the law.

I Thank you!