



**National Election Watch
(NEW)**



**OBSERVATION REPORT
OF THE
2018 ELECTORAL CYCLE
IN SIERRA LEONE**

July, 2018



ABOUT NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH (NEW)

NEW is a coalition of over 400 national and international civil society and non-governmental organizations, established in 2002 primarily to observe and monitor the fairness, transparency and credibility of public elections in Sierra Leone; towards increased public confidence in the legitimacy of the results. In the spirit of volunteerism and neutrality, NEW has observed polling since 2002. In 2007 and 2012 NEW monitored the entire electoral cycle processes and introduced the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT). In 2018, NEW fielded more than 12, 190 observers in various categories.

NEW operates through a decentralized structure from the Center with the Chairperson and Strategic Management Committee (SMC), Regional Coordinators, District Coordinators, District Teams, and Chiefdom Focal Persons. Coordination and activities are channeled through the National Secretariat. NEW's work has led to increased civil society visibility and enhanced participation in electoral processes; and contributed to clearer rules of engagement with political parties and politicians in local communities in the country.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADP	Alliance Democratic Party
AG	Attorney General
APC	All Peoples Congress
APPYA	All Political Parties Youth Association
APPWA	All Political Parties Women Association
AU	African Union
BD	Boundary Delimitation
BDMCs	Boundary Delimitation Monitoring Committees
BVR	Biometric Voter Registration
CDP	Citizens Democratic Party
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
CR	Civil Registration
CS	Civil Society
CSEEP	Civil Society Engagement in Electoral Cycle Processes
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Citizens Situation Room
CVR	Civil and Voter Registration
DEMOS	District Elections Material Movement Observers
DFID	Department for International Development
DHRC	District Human Rights Committee
DIR	District Incident Reporter
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EMBs	Elections Management Bodies
ECOWAS	Economic Community for West Africa States

EUEOM	European Union Election Observation Mission
FVR	Final Voter Register
IESPC	Integrated Elections Security Planning Committee
IGR	Institute for Governance Reform
IMC	Independent Media Commission
IRC	Inter Religious Council
IRN	Independent Radio Network
ISAT	International Security Advisory Team
IT	Information Technology
MACP	Military Aid to Civil Power
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRCG	Media Reform Coordinating Group
MPs	Members of Parliament
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
NCVR	National Civil and Voter Registration
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NEW	National Election Watch
NGC	National Grand Coalition
ONS	Office of National Security
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
PCMP	Paramount Chief Member of Parliament
PEA	Public Elections Act
PPLC	Political Parties Liaison Committee
PPRC	Political Parties Registration Commission
PVR	Provisional Voter Register

PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
PWD	Persons with Disability
RRF	Results Reconciliation Form
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SLAJ	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists
SLCB	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone Peoples Party
SLTU	Sierra Leone Teachers Union
SMC	Strategic Management Committee
SNEC	Support to National Electoral Commission
STOs	Short-Term Observers
TEEs	Tamper Evident Envelopes
UP	Unity Party
VHE	Village Head Election
VIC	Voter Identity Card
VIU	Voter Identification Unit
VRC	Voter Registration Centre
WANEP	West African Network for Peace Building
WFD	Westminster Foundation
WEMMOS	Ward Elections Material Movement Observers

INTRODUCTION

National Election Watch (NEW) 2018 elections monitoring and observation work was more encompassing than in previous years; demanding greater resources, technical expertise, logistical, coordination and related requirements. NEW rose to these challenges largely because of its early engagement with the electoral process. Credit is given to the European Delegation in Sierra Leone for supporting the Project ‘Strengthening NEW Towards Effective Monitoring of 2018 Electoral Cycle and Media Engagement’. With this project, NEW was able to restructure its secretariat, strengthen its leadership and communication structures, mobilize the membership across the country; and as a result, was able to deploy an observer in every Polling station. Equally, NEW was able to observe the entire electoral cycle activities including the Boundary Delimitation (BD) Process, National Civil and Voter Registration (NCVR), Exhibition of the Provisional Voters’ Register, Distribution of Voters’ Identity Cards, Nomination of Candidates, the campaign period and polling.

NEW’s strategic objective in the elections observation effort was to ensure that every activity was fully observed and citizens sensitized to participate in a manner that guaranteed the transparency of the electoral process. To achieve this objective, NEW became more proactive than reactive in dealing with issues in the electoral process. NEW was therefore a member of the Elections Steering Committee, the Support to the National Electoral Commission (SNEC), National Civil and Voter Registration Committee and Task Force, Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC), Integrated Elections Security Planning Committee (IESPC) and National Elections Commission’s (NEC) Stakeholders Forum. NEW was also a member of the Boundary Delimitation Monitoring Committees (BDMCs) at National as well as district levels serving as chair in some districts.

NEW undertook a Parallel Boundary Delimitation Exercise to ensure increased citizens’ engagement with the process, as well as enhance their understanding and acceptance of the outcome. NEW equally did an assessment of conflicts flash point across the country to inform its incident reporting strategy. This effort was coordinated from a “Citizen Situation Room” (CSR) set up at NEW Brookfields Hotel in Freetown.

For the other activities, NEW deployed observers as follows:

Electoral Activity	No of Observers Deployed	Comments
National Civil and Voter Registration (NCVR)	900	NEW deployed a statistically representative sample out of the 3,300 Centers and 14 out of the 28 Registration Days were observed.
Adjudication	2	On the first week of the data Adjudication process at NEC's national Data Centre Wellington, NEW deployed two observers to monitor the whole process. During the second week, NEC decided to create another centre at National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) in a bid to work towards the stipulated date for the Exhibition process. NEW thereon, deployed one observer per each centre.
Exhibition	900	NEW deployed a statistically representative sample out of the 3,300 Exhibition Centers. 3 out of the 6 Exhibition days plus 3 days of Inquiry were observed.
Distribution of Voter Identity Cards	64	The Distribution of Voter Identity Cards (VIC) took place from the 25 th November to 4 th December 2017. NEW deployed 2 teams of roving observers per district for the process. 4 Districts Team Members were engaged; 2 in each team across the 16 districts. The teams observed 5 alternate days out of the 10 distribution days. (Days 1, 3, 5, 7 &10).
Polling (First Round)	11,668	10,616 ordinary stationed Observers, 506 PVT Observers and 546 Supervisors were deployed.
Polling (Presidential Run-Off)	12,114	10,616 ordinary stationed Observers, 506 PVT Observers, 546 Supervisors,

		446 Ward Election Material Movement Observers (WEMMOs), 17 District Material Movement Observers (DEMMOs).
Regional Tally Center Observers	15	3 Observers were deployed in each of the Tally centre in the 5 Regions.
Incident Reporters	22	NEW moved reports on incident from polling stations to relevant authorities for timely intervention and for this purpose NEW deployed 1 observer per district, 5 deployed at the national secretariat representing each region and 1 national incident coordinator.
Village Head Elections (VHE)	500	This election is conducted only for the Western Rural District where Paramount Chieftaincy does not exist.
Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMP)	180	These elections are meant to have representation of Paramount Chiefs from each district in Parliament.
Differed Local Council Elections	255	NEC observed under nomination of councilors in 3 local councils (Bonthe Municipal, Port Loko city and Makeni city). Elections for these councilors were conducted on June 16, 2018. NEW deployed 237 observers, 1 in each polling station and 3 roving teams of 6 as supervisors in each location.

This report is produced to attest what was achieved. NEW wants to take this opportunity to express profound thanks and gratitude to the UK Department for International Development for funding the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium as NEW's main funding window through which the 2018 elections were observed. NEW further wishes to express profound thanks to Open Society for West Africa (OSIWA) for the support to set up the Citizens' Situation Room (CSR) which enhanced the use of technology in observing the 2018 elections.

Through interfaces, interactions, and coordination, many local interest groups and state agencies directly and indirectly impacted the quality and quantity of what NEW was able to achieve. NEW wishes to thank the NEC for the unfettered access to its processes, through the

signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the commencement of the electoral cycle. NEW appreciates International Security Advisory Team (ISAT) for the invitation to observe the different levels of trainings for security personnel. NEW particularly acknowledge the collaboration with the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium Organizations; ¹the West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), the Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU) whose membership was the major pool from which observers were recruited especially in difficult and hard to reach communities, the District Human Rights Committees, the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) and the BBC Media Action for supporting trainings for NEW's incident Reporters and Media Monitors. In addition, NEW collaborated with other international observation groups, from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), the Commonwealth, European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM), Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and The Carter Center (TCC). In these collaborations, background information, contextual analysis and opinions were shared. NEW is grateful for the interactions. Over 400 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) supported the operations of NEW in a highly collaborative and productive manner. NEW expresses gratitude for their services. NEW acknowledges all heads of member organizations for their unwavering support.

NEW congratulate NEC for the independent, transparent and neutral way the entire elections exercise was conducted. NEW acknowledges the interventions and mediation role of the International Community and the leadership of the international observer missions which helped keep the electoral process on schedule and also ensured NEC was funded to conduct the elections.

NEW congratulates all those citizens who registered to vote, promoted peaceful campaigns and voted on the 7th and 31st March, 2018 respectively. You are all true patriots.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

¹ DFID for the support of civil society election work for 2018 elections granted funding to the consortium of 7 organizations, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) as the lead organization, NEW, Independent Radio Network (IRN), Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), 50/50 Group, Institute for Governance Reform (IGR) and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

1.0.1 SCOPE OF NEW'S ELECTIONS OBSERVATION

NEW monitored and observed all key activities in the 2018 electoral processes, including constituency and ward delimitation, the National Civil and Voter Registration (NCVR), Exhibition of the provisional voters' register and rectification of anomalies, Nomination of Candidates, Political Campaigns and Polling day processes among others. The results of these observation efforts are summarized in this report.

1.0.2 GENERAL STATEMENT ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTIONS

Overall, NEW concludes that the 2018 elections were free, fair and transparent; reflecting the will of the people though NEC was constrained due to the seeming lack of political will for the elections to be conducted within schedule as prescribed by the 1991 Constitution and the Public Elections Act (PEA) 2012. This lack of political will resulted in the almost late announcement of the dates for the elections. NEW had to mobilise the wider civil society across the country and mounted pressure on NEC and the Presidency before dates for the elections were proclaimed. Attached as annex to this Report is a Press Statement released by NEW that called for the elections date. Another indication of lack of political will was the enactment of the Provinces Act CAP 60 2017 after BD has been concluded and document submitted to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice. Additionally, the NEC was initially starved of finances which also adversely affected planning and timely operations.

Attempts were also made to disrupt the electoral process through the courts. This was evidenced with the slamming of an injunction stopping NEC activities to the conduct of the Presidential Run-off elections. The expression of public dissatisfaction and anger at this action demonstrated the resolve of citizens to have the elections conducted. As a result, the injunction was vacated on the basis of public interest.

NEW concludes that there were no constraints or influences severe enough to have compromised the people's free will. NEW observers reported several critical incidents; but these were not widespread nor did they present a pattern that would have undermined the integrity of the outcome of the elections.

1.0.3 BOUNDARY DELIMITATION

BD is the most difficult, complicated, time consuming, expensive and a controversial exercise in the elections cycle activities. This activity takes into consideration the population as the major

factor in delimiting boundaries for wards and constituencies. Other factors also considered include: means of communication, geographic features, density of the population, the distribution of different communities and the areas and boundaries of the chiefdoms and other administrative or traditional areas. These issues necessitated the need for stakeholders' sensitization for clear understanding of the parameters used in the process.

The NEC in its bid to enhance the transparency of the process set up Boundary Delimitation Monitoring Committees (BDMCs) at both national and district levels. NEC also undertook consultations and validation meetings that allowed stakeholders at district level to participate in decisions on where the boundaries should be drawn. NEC in this consultation targeted mostly Members of Parliament (MPs), Councilors, Paramount Chiefs (PCs) and Civil Society (CS). This category targeted by NEC were interested more in what gains they could influence in drawing the boundary rather than how to build an inclusive community. This targeted group therefore was a challenge, as each category had vested interest that made consensus difficult. For MPs, their interest was more on how the boundaries would be drawn to have their support base as a constituency. The councilors wanted limited areas for their wards and for those areas to include economically viable communities. The PCs did not want sections of their chiefdoms to be removed and attached to other chiefdoms to make up constituencies. Noting this gap in the process, NEW undertook a parallel Boundary Delimitation exercise, reaching out to more communities and targeting people who had good knowledge of their community boundaries. Amidst all these complications, NEC was able to conclude the BD process with each district validating and accepting the outcome of the boundaries drawn.

1.0.4 REDISTRICTING

In November 2016 NEC submitted the BD Report to the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to convert it into bill. After this, the bill was to have been laid in the well of Parliament for debate. This document was not laid in Parliament rather a bill titled 'the Provinces Act Cap 60 2017 'was passed through the Ministry responsible for Local Government, and it became law in February 2017. This law brought into being one additional Province (North Western Province, two additional districts (Falaba and Karene) and three Local Councils (Port Loko City Council, Falaba District Council and Karene District Council). As a result of this development, the BD Document in the office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice became redundant for the purpose of the Voter Registration. This necessitated a redistricting exercise resulting in re-doing the BD. This activity created the potential for confusion in voter registration exercise which had already commenced. Codes which were used for demarcated wards and constituencies changed, leaving voters confused over which ward or constituency they actually belonged to.

While some communities welcomed the fact that the re-districting was an advantage to them, for example Kamakwei which felt deprived in the Bombali District; some other communities were aggrieved for example Tonkolili district where the economically viable chiefdom Mara, was detached from the district and added to Bombali district.

1.0.5 NATIONAL CIVIL AND VOTER REGISTRATION (NCVR)

The Civil and Voter Registration (CVR) process had six (6) phases including:

- Field Data Capture at Registration Centres
- Data Backup, Export and Import and Data Transmission to Central Servers
- Consolidation, Matching and De-duplication
- Adjudication of Duplicate-Using software application and Human intervention
- Production and Exhibition of Provisional Voters Register and
- Production of Final Voters Register and distribution of Voter's ID Cards

The 2017 voter registration planning process kicked off with uncertainties on who will be responsible for the voter registration exercise. While the NEC had the mandate by the 1991 constitution to undertake the voter registration exercise, the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) established by an Act of Parliament in 2017 was given the responsibility to undertake all registration activities including the voter registration. Several conflicting information and messages were given to the public to the extent that citizens did not know which information to believe. The date for the start of the registration exercise was deferred 3 times creating doubts as to whether the exercise would take place at all and by whom. A consensus was reached for the voter registration to be jointly done by NCRA and NEC; with NEC leading the process from the 20th March to 30th April 2017 including a 14 day extension period. NEW deployed 1 observer in each of the 900 registration centers out of the 3,300 registration centers in 423 wards covering 50% of the registration days. Though the exercise ended successfully the process was faced with serious challenges.

1.0.6 ADJUDICATION, EXHIBITION, INQUIRY AND OBJECTION

After the conclusion of the field data capture for the voter's register, NEC launched the adjudication process on the 7th June 2017 inviting representatives from all registered political parties, EMBs, NEW, the Inter Religious Council, the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and Media. Initially, 53,000 cases were flagged by the system for adjudication. NEC deployed 60 Information Technology (IT) Operators and 10 supervisors to handle the cases. NEW also deployed observers permanently at the adjudication centers. The process was very slow and warranted the opening of another adjudication Center at the NCRA head office. The adjudication process involved the development of a software that was an essential tool for decision making especially in resolving conflict cases, identification of management systems, automated finger prints, identification of methodology that use digital image in technology to obtain, store and analyze finger print data. The tool provided users with three options:

- Duplicated- when the applicant/conflict case is the same person as the citizen compared in the conflict
- No Match- i.e. when the applicant/conflict case is not the same person as the citizen compared in the conflict
- Update-i.e. when the applicant is a newer version that he/she is in conflict with.

NEW observed that political parties and other EMBs showed little or no interest in the process which was to lead the generation of a Voters' Register with Integrity.

NEC started the **Exhibition of the Provisional Register** on 22nd August and concluded on the 27th August 2017, followed by the inquiry process from the 29th to 31st August 2017. There were 3,300 Exhibition Centers and 1 Inquiry Center per Ward. NEW deployed Observers to 900 statistically selected centers and observed for 3 days. NEW observed Day 1, 4 and the final day of the Exhibition and all 3 days of inquiry. 5 days of the Re-registration process were observed.

Prior to the commencement of the Exhibition process, the NEC informed elections stakeholders that all the data in one of the registration centres in the Western Area were lost. It was however later discovered that there was data loss and misplaced data in other areas in the country. NEC therefore transformed such Exhibition centers into Re-Registration Centers to allow Voters who had earlier registered in those centers the opportunity to re-register using the CVR duplicates to deter any form of new registration. Misplaced data were later traced to the VIU 820 kits used for registration at those centers and the situation rectified.

1.0.7 VOTER IDENTITY CARD (VIC) DISTRIBUTION

Unlike the 2012 electoral process, where the voter's identity cards were distributed during the Exhibition Period; the 2018 voter identity cards were distributed way after the Exhibition period. This was due to the fact that during the exhibition, re-registration was also taking place warranting additional inclusion in the provisional voters register. Voters were disappointed about the laminated cards given to them, given that they had been promised biometric voter identity cards that was to be ECOWAS compliant. This notwithstanding, over 90% of voter identity cards were collected across the country.

1.0.8 NOMINATIONS

The Nominations Period in the electoral process is when political parties submit candidates that have been awarded party symbols to be recorded by the NEC to contest the various elections. Interested persons wishing to contest outside political party tickets can go through the nomination as independent candidates. All aspiring candidates are expected to pay a nomination fee as recommended by the NEC and approved by Parliament. NEC in consultation with political parties proposed nomination fees that were worked out on a formula based on the minimum wage. Parliament did not approve these consensus figures and so political parties through the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) made a representation to the President for government's intervention. Candidates were then asked to pay the nomination figure of the 2007 elections and government to offset the difference. This situation requires rectification as it appeared candidates were been nominated on the good will of the government.

Nominations of mayoral candidates of the two major political parties were refused by NEC claiming they were registered outside the locality for which they sought nomination. This issue was later resolved in court. There were also objections in cases where candidates had dual citizenship sighting a provision in the 1991 constitution denying eligibility of dual citizens to contest for president or member of parliament.

1.0.9 CAMPAIGN

Despite intimidation and constraints, politicians and political parties generally campaigned without fear. Political party representatives participated in radio and television discussions together; where they voiced their personal or party positions on various issues. Generally, political parties maintained and defended positions to the advantage of their parties. In many instances, there were harassments and threats to citizens. NEW came across evidence that political parties and their leaders were unable to reach particular communities due to denial of access by another party or local authority. Political parties engaged in activities that created and aggravated tension on the basis of ethnicity, language and region. Evidence was gathered that political party presidential, parliamentary and local council candidates indulged in hate

speech. By the second round elections, campaign degenerated into ethnic and tribal sentiments for support. The media remained free and unconstrained to report events or present political parties' ideas. However, media institutions and media practitioners particularly newspapers, demonstrated political biases in their work; but not with any intensity that disturbed the peace of the country.

1.0.10 THE CONDUCT OF THE FIRST AND SECOND ROUNDS OF POLLS

The 2018 multi-tier elections were conducted on the 7th March 2018 and 17 registered political parties and independent candidates contested the elections. However, only 16 political parties nominated candidates for the presidential elections. No Presidential candidate attained the 55% threshold prescribed by the constitution for a winner to be declared. A presidential Run-off election was held on 31st March 2018 contested by candidates from the SLPP and APC who scored the highest and second highest respectively. NEC established 11,122 polling stations across the country, allowing voters to cast their ballots in all constituencies and wards. 4 ballot boxes 1 for each category of election with a matching ballot paper were provided in every polling station. Polling started at 7am and closed at 5pm, allowing all voters who were in the queue at 5pm to cast their ballots. The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in order to ease the security of the elections imposed limitations on vehicular movement.

NEW observed that for both the first and second round of elections, polling stations across the country generally opened on time and NEC officials were present in all polling stations observed. In addition, agents of political parties were present at polling stations and polling stations had all the materials; including the ballots, ballot stamp, booths and screens, indelible ink, and voter list. Polling stations were generally accessible to voters, except for a few stations that were far to reach by voters. Overall, NEW observed that polling stations were well organized with little reports that the secrecy of the ballot was compromised. Once the votes were cast, NEW observed that for the first rounds of elections, counting and tallying of election results were done in plain view of national and international observers as well as agents of political parties. NEW deployed an observer in each of the 11, 122 Polling stations of which 506 were PVT or quick count observers, selected from a statistically representative sample. NEW also employed a problem- solving mechanism using Citizens Situation Room (CSR) to capture incidences for the attention of relevant EMBs for intervention.

In the second round, serious issues emanated from a High Court order on procedures for counting and tallying that were unclear. This warranted the intervention of the international community in negotiating how the tallying process should be done in agreement with the APC and SLPP.

1.0.11 ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES (EMBs)

The NEC, despite immense pressure from individuals and political actors to play the game by their rules remained steadfast in its decision-making processes on contentious issues and demonstrated professionalism, neutrality and independence. In many instances Civil Society especially NEW, had to reinforce the independence and protection of NEC to ensure free and fair elections.

In the wake of allegations of electoral irregularities after the first round of the polls that had the potential of undermining the electoral process, NEC made a decision that allowed political parties and CSOs to accompany the movement of elections materials to all polling stations across the country during the Presidential Run-off elections. NEW as a result deployed 17 District Election Material Movement Observers (DEMМОs) and 428 Ward Elections Material Movement Observers (WEMМОs) to accompany the elections materials across the country.

While it is true that NEC conducted its activities in a transparent manner, there were instances of inconsistencies in the application of various regulations and procedures by some officials contracted by NEC.

Redefining and strengthening the PPRC's regulatory role in the electoral process will help underpin peaceful elections. The commission mediated in several inter and intra party disputes and created opportunities for parties to sign up to peace pacts for peaceful co-existence in the elections. There were however several instances of non-adherence to campaign regulations by political parties, for example the Citizens Democratic Party's (CDP's) failure to bring down posters with religious messages when instructed by PPRC. Evidence abounded of incumbency abuse and political parties recruiting private security; which factors contributed to the fragility of the electoral context.

1.0.12 THE JUDICIARY IN THE 2018 ELECTIONS

The Judiciary in Sierra Leone is one of the EMBs dealing with grievance emanating from the elections and also prosecuting elections offences. It is the only body that interprets electoral constitutional issues and also takes decision where the constitution is silent on an electoral event or matter. It has the responsibility to hear and pass judgement on petitions, miscellaneous applications and also adjudicates on electoral offences as stated in the Public Elections Act, 2012. The Elections Offences Court was especially established to adjudicate elections offences in 2018 elections. In October 2017, the Chief Justice appointed 12 Judges to the elections offences Court; 4 in the Provinces (Kono, Makeni, Kenema and Bo) and 7 in the Western Area. These courts were established to ensure speedy trials of electoral offences charged to the court.

NEW observed that with the many violations and offences, including cases of double registration committed in the 2018 elections only 4 matters were brought before the Elections

Offences Court. The cases of double registration are yet to be charged to court. For the first time in the history of elections in Sierra Leone, the actions of the judiciary especially the imposition of an injunction stopping the conduct of the Presidential Run-off elections posed serious threats to the conduct of the elections and by extension the stability of the state at the time.

1.0.13 SECURITY

The SLP is the leading institution responsible for the security of elections. The Office of National Security (ONS) is charged with the overall coordination of the security of the elections. Due to inadequate police personnel, other forces are brought in as an integrated security for the elections. The ISAT provided training to improve on police performance in the security of the elections, through exhibiting independence and professionalism. This effort however, was undermined by lack of adequate resources for the execution of the security strategy for the elections.

The SLP especially during the Presidential Run-off elections was observed to be serving the interest of the ruling APC Party further eroding public trust in the institution. The invocation of the Military Aide to Civil Power (MACP) was somehow re-assuring to the citizens though carrying heavy weapons within the polling area was intimidating. The decision to allow security personnel deployed for the elections to vote in Polling Centers where they were not registered and without a register of police personnel to vote in specific polling stations was open to abuse.

1.0.14 POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

A total of 17 Political Parties registered for the 2018 elections of which 2 had female leaders².

Agents of the political parties were present at polling stations during the voting of the first and second round elections; 94% had at least 3 Party agents. Political parties did not demonstrate similar interests in deploying agents to observe other aspects of the electoral process such as the BD, Voter Registration, Adjudication, Exhibition, Inquiry and Distribution of the Voter ID cards.

Like in the past, multiparty elections, the 2018 election was based on regional affinity with an ethnic undertone that politicians notably from the two traditional Parties APC and SLPP used to mobilized supporters through divisive and inflammatory speeches. The consistency in the patterns of voting along regions is a demonstration of this.

1.0.15 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

² Women led both the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Unity Party (UP)

Women constitute 52% of registered voters. NEC has a gender policy in place that guided them in the conduct of the elections, 2 out of the 5 commissioners are women. NEW introduced an added dimension that ensured 30% of observers were women. There are however no legal provisions for affirmative action for political parties to ensure quotas for women in party nominations. Of the 16 presidential candidates only 2 were women. None of the 4 top parties had women candidates for both presidency and running mate. For the Parliamentary out 795 only 100 were women. NEW observed that women were verbally and physically attacked during the campaigns and in some instances male secret societies threatened female politicians.

1.0.16 PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)

According to NEW's observation data of the CVR in the 900 sample stations, the percentage of PWDs that registered was in single digits in every districts. Koinadugu recorded the highest percentage of registered PWDs with 7%, while Kailahun, Western Rural and Western Urban recorded the lowest with 3% each. The average percentage of PWDs registered nationwide was 5%. NEW observed ramps were built in inaccessible polling stations in all districts to enable physically challenged voters access polling stations. In addition, tactile ballots for visually impaired voters were provided but these were under-utilized as most of them opted to be assisted to vote instead. As a strategy for PWDs to participate in elections observation NEW provided a quota in each district for them to serve as observers.

1.0.17 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Sierra Leone has varying legal frameworks guiding the conduct of the elections including the 1991 Constitution, the Public Elections Act, 2012 and the Local Government Act. The existence of these varying legal instruments was exploited by legal practitioners, referencing the legal instrument that best served their positions on issues that emanated from the electoral process. The citizens in this situation did not have the opportunity of an impartial interpretation or clarification to establish their understanding of the processes as legal bottlenecks unfolded in the elections. This fact was further substantiated by the actions of the High Court in slamming an injunction on the Presidential Run-off election, and the challenge as to whether the High Court had the authority to preside over the matter. The Supreme Court as at the time of writing this report had not given ruling on this question of the authority of the High Court to preside over matters relating to Presidential elections.

The 1991 Constitution gives authority to Parliament to determine the candidates' nomination fees, whilst the Public Elections Act, 2012 gives NEC the authority to prescribe. There is inconsistency in the laws governing Voter registration, particularly the institution that has the mandate to do voter registration. While the 1991 constitution (section 33) mandates NEC to do voter registration, the Act establishing NCRA gives the sole responsibility of registrations

including voter registration to the NCRA. Similarly, the legal provision to carry out BD every 5-7 years as against the census that takes place every 10 years complicates the process.

NEW also observed that the government through the Ministry responsible for local government enacted the 'Provinces Act 2017 Cap 60' while work on the BD had already been concluded by NEC and documents with the Attorney General and Minister of Justice for its passage to Parliament for debate.

1.1 CONCLUSIONS

The 2018 elections turned out to be declared free, fair and credible by both domestic and international observers albeit, there were moments of discomfort. In the course of the 2018 elections, a number of high profile CSOs and state institutions involved with public order, human rights and democratic governance voiced concerns over perceived and real political tensions, threats of insecurity and uncivil campaigns. The political tensions, threats of insecurity and uncivil campaign did not unravel at levels that could have compromised people's expression of their choice of political leadership. However, they certainly left government, EMBs and CS with pointers as to the need to further undergird free, fair and credible elections free from fear.

1.1.0 THE PPRC'S INABILITY TO HOLD PARTIES TO ACCOUNT FOR VIOLATIONS OF ELECTIONS RULES

In the course of the elections the majority of the political parties were in violation of some sections of electoral laws of the country; particularly those that have to do with campaign conduct, internal democracy and elections financing. The majority of political parties were in violation of the Political Parties Code of Conduct in many respects. Beyond issuing Press Release, the PPRC was not able to hold any party to account for any wrongful behavior.

1.1.1 TROUBLING CITIZENS CIVIC ORIENTATION FOR MULTI-PARTY POLITICS

The 2018 elections clearly pointed to the fact that citizens should imbibe civic competencies and habits for multi-party politics and election. Ordinary people, without evidence that they were prodded or directed by politicians, were found to be most at fault in uncivil and troubling behaviors; including destruction of campaign posters, attempts to disrupt opponents' peaceful assembly, hateful speech and intimidation. In addition politicians were observed orchestrating violence using thugs. Absence of adequate orientation on multiparty politics resulted in voters focusing more on which party or candidates they should vote for than why they were voting heightening the uncivil behavior of political parties and candidates supporters. The incident of

void ballots was high totaling 139,427 (5.2%) in the first round of the multi-tier elections which NEW observed was due mainly to poor civic and voter education. This figure in the Presidential Run-off dropped to 31,694 (1.24%) of the total ballots cast when the 2 contesting political parties engaged in a massive civic and voter education campaign.

1.1.2 ELECTORAL JUSTICE FOR INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY IN ELECTIONS

While many respected CSOs and state institutions lamented a seeming rise in electoral violence and hate speech, it turned out that accountability for such actions was almost absent. Impunity around elections offences is gradually becoming entrenched because even though elections offences court are set up for the purpose of addressing issues of electoral offences, these offences are mostly not prosecuted. The SLP has recorded several reports from the EMBs and citizens in general about electoral offences but have failed to prosecute.

1.1.3 DISCRETIONARY AND AD HOC RULE MAKING AROUND SENSITIVE ELECTIONS PROCESSES

Although Sierra Leone has made progress in generating electoral laws supportive of free and fair elections, the 2018 elections remind us of critical remaining work to be done. In the course of NEC's work towards announcing the results of the Presidential Run-off elections, NEC either came out with new rules, or negotiated new processes with political parties, or was directed by the courts to adopt new rules and processes around counting, tallying, and announcing results. This behavior has a tendency to become permanent in elections management in Sierra Leone if not checked. Discretionary new rules and processes by EMBs have the tendency to undermine public confidence, or provide pretext for ill-motivated politicians to cry foul. Ill-motivated officials of EMBs can even seek to use opportunities for discretionary rules to avert the will of the people. It marks no progress that after 4 elections, NEC has to be directed or instructed on matters that fall purely within their remit. From NEW's observation, only the interlocation by eminent persons from the international community including the leadership of the International Elections Observer Missions averted chaos in the country.

1.1.4 PERSISTENT INADEQUATE AND LATE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS FOR ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone's elections continued to be highly funded by international development partners and friendly countries; suggesting that without such help routine elections as a habit of democracy is not yet guaranteed. Towards the 2018 elections, 42% of NEC funding came from international support. Government's funding constraints meant that funds were not disbursed on a timely basis. As a result, NEC was faced with huge logistical challenges including movement of registration materials and staff, payment to registration staff, vendors and contractors and even full-time employees of the Commission.

1.1.5 SECURITY FORCES POOR IMAGE CHALLENGE

It appeared that among EMBs and critical state institutions with direct and auxiliary responsibilities for elections, the SLP faces the most suspicion, criticisms, innuendos and charges of biasness and unprofessionalism. It turned out that in the face of all the suspicion, criticisms, innuendos and charges of biasness and unprofessionalism the institution faced in the course of the 2018 elections, no evidence emerged of a behavior pattern that could avert the will of the people. The perception challenge since 2007 and 2012 elections still remains.

1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

URGENT ACTIONS REQUIRED

1.2.0 PROMOTE MASSIVE CIVIC EDUCATION ON MULTI-PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

Government of Sierra Leone should undertake massive civic education so that ordinary citizens would imbibe the civic attitudes and habits that underpin multi-party politics and elections.

NEW calls on PPRC to ensure political parties commit themselves to civic education on multi-party politics and elections as a permanent activity on their party programmes.

1.2.1 PURSUE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO ADDRESS HATE SPEECH AND VIOLENCE IN ELECTIONS

A dangerous political culture based on ethnic divide, violence, reprisals and inciting social media messages unfolded in the 2018 elections. Government, CS and other relevant actors should reflect on how hate speech, ethnic tensions and violence bedeviled the 2018 elections and develop strategies to curb them in future elections. This would promote national cohesion and peaceful co-existence in communities.

1.2.2 SPEEDY INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF ELECTORAL OFFENCES AND GRIEVANCES TO ADDRESS IMPUNITY

EMBs, law enforcement agencies, CS, and the media should pursue an agenda for investigating and reporting with evidence, for pursuing accountability of electoral offences.

NEW calls on the SLP to step up investigations to ensure speedy prosecution of election offences to address impunity.

NEW also calls on the Judiciary to carry out speedy and fair hearing of elections grievances and petitions.

To strengthen transparency, accountability and increase public confidence on the adjudication of electoral offences, NEW calls on the judiciary to publicize all verdicts on elections offences and petitions.

1.2.3 ACHIEVE ELECTIONS FINANCING SECURITY TO GUARANTEE ROUTINE ELECTIONS

Sierra Leone needs to address elections financing so that there is no scrambling for resources during elections period. A debate and advocacy should be mounted to secure from government and development partners strategies and solutions to elections financing.

1.2.4 ENHANCE POLICE NEUTRALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM IN ELECTIONS

The SLP should work to promote an image as an unbiased, non-partisan, non-political and professional institution that contributes to free, fair and credible elections in Sierra Leone. NEW calls on the SLP to undertake programmes in-between elections that would foster mutual understanding, respect and build trust in the public on their work around elections. As a force for good the SLP should submit their deployment list around elections early enough for NEC to prepare a list of deployed police voters to avoid the incidents of double voting.

1.2.5 ELECTORAL LEGAL REFORMS

EMBs, civil society and the international development partners should work on electoral legislations, rules and regulations to address challenges that were encountered in course of the 2018 elections.

Urgent action should be taken to guarantee the independence of NEC and the security of Tenure for the Commissioners.

NEC should protect its independence as provided for in the 1991 constitution to discourage the undue interference of government and the judiciary in their processes³.

In order to strengthen the independence of the electoral commissioners, NEW calls for a review of the current 5 year renewable contract for commissioners to guarantee their tenure of office as is the case for judges of the Superior Court. Removal of commissioners from office apart from exhausting their tenure of office must be subject to the same condition of judges of the Superior Court as provided for in Section 137 (5) and (7) in the 1991 constitution⁴.

³ Chapter 4 Section 32. (11) In the exercise of any function vested in it by this constitution, the electoral commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.

⁴ Part 5 Section 137.(7) A Judge of the Superior Court of the Judicature shall be removed from the office of the President –

- a. if the question of his removal from office has been referred to a tribunal appointed under subsection (5) and the tribunal has recommended to the President the he ought to be removed from office; and

NEW calls for the enactment of fixed dates for free, fair and credible Presidential and Parliamentary elections: to avoid the commission having to consult with the President before the proclamation of election dates. This will strengthen transparency, fairness and a level playing field for all intending to aspire for elective positions. NEW further calls for a schedule of transfer of power that would allow aggrieved parties seek redress in the courts.

Specific actions should be taken for affirmative action for Women's and PWD's participation and representation in elections. Government should enact a bill to have a special seat for women at district level for the purpose of Parliamentary representation.

1.2.6 ENFORCEMENT POWERS TO PPRC TO CHECK THE CONDUCT OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Systems, including legal and process reforms should be undertaken to get political parties to account for their violations of electoral laws of the country, and violation of the Political Parties Code of Conduct. A particular focus should be placed on campaign conduct, internal democracy, and elections financing.

b. if his removal has been approved by a two-thirds majority in Parliament

2.0 BACKGROUND

Sierra Leone has held multi-party elections since 1996. The 2018, Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council elections were the country's third since the end of civil conflict in 2002. Sierra Leone deserves praise for accepting routine elections as the only road to political power. However, while all past elections were declared free and fair, under-currents of mobilization of violence, coercion, and compromise of key state institutions, have been discomfoting. Elections matter only for democracy if no other mechanisms are used by political parties and politicians to negate the citizens' free-will, and free conscience ballot.

The 2018 elections were being held in the difficult context that it was a transition one, in which the incumbent President who had served two terms was stepping down. The rhetoric from both the ruling and opposition parties showed desperation to win. The elections were also coming at a time of socio-economic down-turn in the country. Between 2014 and 2015, the country was hit by the twin unhelpful events of an Ebola outbreak and closure of iron ore mines; the critical source of government revenue. The twin problems had left in their wake massive economic difficulties at both government and household levels. In 2017, another tragedy struck in the form of the massive landslide in Freetown that took away over 1000 lives. Certainly, Sierra Leoneans were holding elections in desperate times; which had implications for their behaviors, attitudes, and engagement; and implications for the behaviors, attitudes, and engagement of politicians and political parties.

NEW's approach to observing and monitoring the elections, as part of the Standing Together Consortium, reflected considerations for the aforesaid context. Fortunately, a preparedness framework for NEW's enhanced approach to the 2018 elections already existed. A key element of NEW's preparedness was prior restructuring that had been done to enhance its coordination mechanisms for strategic engagement around elections. Second, a system was in place for civil society contributions to elections to flow from chiefdom, district to national level; bringing along the voices and concerns of ordinary community people. Thirdly, emphasis had been laid on activities that reflect pro-action priorities, rather than reactions to events and issues.

At the core of NEW's enhanced approach were the design of activities to increase civil society's participation beyond observation on Election Day; to encompass other thematic areas of the electoral process. This report conveys the outcomes of civil society engagement in the 2018 electoral process, through the structure of NEW.

3.0 APPROACH TO OBSERVING AND MONITORING THE 2018 ELECTIONS AND KEY PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

3.0.1 THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK FOR NEWS'S ELECTION OBSERVATION WORK

In preparing for the 2018 elections, NEW undertook nationwide consultations among civil society organisations, towards a more broader and strategic engagement in the electoral cycle in Sierra Leone. Under the DfID funded ' Standing Together for free fair and peaceful Elections in Sierra Leone' project, these consultations resulted in the development and adoption of strategic entry points namely; pursuing increased participation of the marginalized and most vulnerable citizens; and ensuring effective civic and voter education, community dialogues to address violence in conflict flashpoints, leveraging technology, and broadening the scope of observation.

3.0.2 TRAINING FOR SPECIFIC ELECTION CYCLE ACTIVITY

Observing and monitoring broadened electoral cycle activities required new skills and knowledge, to avert costly mistakes. Against this background, NEW in the course of the 2018 elections provided targeted training for specific electoral cycle activity for their observers and local community members and others. These trainings were always done as the indicated activity was about to be held. These trainings are mentioned in the relevant sections of this report.

3.0.3 COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROCESSES ON EMERGING ISSUES FOR REDRESS ACTIONS BY EMBs

Towards the 2018 elections, it was a key strategy of NEW to work with communities to gauge their apprehensions, note their concerns, and investigate any early markers and under-currents that stood to negate the citizens' free-will, and free conscience vote. NEW did this through community dialogue sessions at district levels. The sessions were intended for NEW and communities to jointly diagnose and foretell serious problem areas that had the potential to compromise an environment of peace, and the fairness, transparency and credibility of the elections. The findings of NEW's investigations through community dialogue sessions in the course of the elections were shared with relevant state institutions, with the singular purpose of seeking their redress interventions.

3.0.4 MEDIA MONITORING

NEW undertook media monitoring as a new activity in elections observation. The purpose of the media monitoring was to gauge levels of fairness or balance from media outlets; and track the incidence of hate speeches, inflammatory and inciting statements, personal attacks, insult and defamation, unprofessional conduct of host and reference to violence. The decision to undertake media monitoring in the 2018 elections was borne from past experiences where the election period was like a license in the hands of political parties to use the media to propagate hate messages. NEW introduced media monitoring in a bid to check politicians and ordinary citizens' resort to actions and utterances that had the potential to stir violence.

For the media monitoring exercise, a consultant, working alongside the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG), provided training to the monitors. During the training, the monitors were provided with all the relevant laws and other documents that pertain to media and elections ethics; including the Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Code of Ethics and the Political Parties Code of Ethics. The media monitors were tasked to monitor television, radio and newspapers. They were also provided with mini recorders, headphones and a checklist.

The Media Monitoring work was done in the six selected districts of Bo, Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, and Western Area. In enhancing the process NEW identified a team of ten monitors one each from the districts of Bo, Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, Makeni, and five others recruited from the Western Area. The districts were selected based on NEW's findings and independent reports from other CSOs of repute like the West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP); which placed them as hot spots.

3.0.5 CITIZENS SITUATION ROOM

The Citizens' Situation Room (CSR) was established in January 2018 with support from OSIWA and DFID. The CSR was established as a problem-solving mechanism, to ensure that elections related incidents were resolved; before unfolding into bigger crisis. Essentially, the CSR ensured that NEW remained at the helm of situation in observing the March 7th and 31st 2018 Elections in Sierra Leone. The CSR has 4 main components namely; the Data Centre, Incident Reporting, Decision Platform and Media Monitoring. Incident Reporting had 17⁵ District Incident reporters who reported to the 5 National Incident Reporters at the Incident Reporting Centre. The Decision Room comprised of the Political Chamber, Intermediary Chamber, Technical Chamber and a Data Analyst.

⁵ Bonthe District was divided into two mainland and island

In the run-up to the 7th March, 2018 elections, the Incident Reporting department received 23 incident reports from the field on campaign processes and events leading to the polling day. These reports were processed and crosschecked to ensure accuracy. The media wing closely monitored radio, television and newspapers coverage of the elections across the Country and recorded unethical behavior. The information was sent to the Decision Room for further processing and analysis and these informed NEW's position and stand points in communicating to the public through press releases or engagement and interface with EMBs to resolve issues.

On elections days (First-round and Run-off), NEW's PVT exercise was anchored in the Data Center of the CSR receiving information on processes from the field through 506 PVT Observers. In addition to the 506 PVT observers another 10,616 Regular Observers communicated reports on incidences. The information from these observers were processed in the various components of the CSR as described earlier enabling NEW to provide real time update on situation and incidents in the field on polling day.

3.0.6 PARALLEL VOTE TABULATION

For the 2018 elections, NEW for the third time conduct PVT in Sierra Leone. The elections laws of Sierra Leone grants only NEC the powers to announce official elections results. NEW had observed from past elections however, that high levels of anxiety and tension always surrounded the period during which elections results were awaited. The period during which results were awaited was often prone to trickery, insinuations and scare-mongering by politicians and political parties. It was to ward-off these anxieties and tensions and check politicians' behavior that NEW embarked on the PVT.

Deployment of the PVT process involved training across the entire NEW structures; including the National Secretariat, Strategic Management Committee (SMC), Regional Coordinators, the District Coordinators, Supervisors and PVT observers. In all, 1,100 people received PVT focused ICT training. Training was also conducted on how to send information on to the PVT platform for the 11,200 observers and 546 supervisors. On Election Day, the Data Center in Freetown received certified results from NEW's PVT Observers for processing. Once all the results were received and process at the Data Center, NEW had at hand the projected first-round elections results.

PVT was conducted on **506** statistically representative samples of polling stations and included over **113,000** votes cast across the country. Since the precise information on the polling centers, polling stations and registered voters were available prior to the elections, NEW was able to use the best sampling technique for this purpose known as **Probabilistic Systematic Sampling**, which makes sure that there is no bias in selecting the sample. This sampling technique has been tested in many countries in similar circumstances and yielded highly accurate results, with Margins of Error of around 1-2%.

It was based on the projected results from the PVT where no candidates scored 55% threshold that NEW made a public announcement in a Press Release dated 8th March, 2018, that there will be Run-off Presidential election.⁶ The projection of a Presidential Run-off made by NEW eased tension mounted by the two main political parties (APC and SLPP): who were both making claims and celebrating to have clearly won in the first rounds. This projection tallied with the NEC results and served as a conflict mitigation strategy. NEW also conducted a PVT for the 31st March 2018 Presidential Elections and the projection was shown to the leadership of international elections observer missions and other stakeholders who used this information to engage the leadership of the 2 parties for the acceptance of the result.

⁶ See details on how the PVT was done in the main body of this report under 4.4: Vote day vote counting and announcement of results.

4.0 FINDINGS ON ELECTORAL CYCLE ACTIVITIES

4.1 BOUNDARY DELIMITATION

4.1.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The 1991 Constitution establishes that Sierra Leone be divided into constituencies for representation in Parliament. The constitution lays the criteria for BD; among which is the stipulation that population equality be the paramount consideration. The law also directs that means of communication, geographic features, density of population, the distribution of different communities and the areas and boundaries of the chiefdoms and other administrative or traditional areas be considered in drawing constituency boundaries. The formula for allocating constituencies involved dividing the total population of the country by the number of seats to be in the next parliament using the 2015 population census is provided for in the 1991 Constitution.⁷

4.1.1 OBSERVATION APPROACH, ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

NEW followed the NEC's constituency and ward delimitation work to have in-depth knowledge of the process: to be able to form an informed independent opinion. To ensure the observation was effective, NEW collaborated with NEC in the roll-out of the BD process and was a member of the BDMCs set up by the NEC at national and district levels. This provided NEW the opportunity to be trained on the principles involved, the legal provisions, the formulae and calculations and the GIS software used in the delimitation process. NEW also accompanied NEC in its sensitization that was done only at district level to increase knowledge on the process. Overall, NEW was able to monitor the constituency and ward delimitation process, from the training of field staff, to the validation of the distributed constituencies and wards in all the 16 electoral districts.

NEC's efforts to educate people on the constituency and ward delimitation process stopped at district level meetings. Due to this gap of reaching out to more communities and the inability to involve more community people on the BD process, NEW decided to conduct a parallel BD exercise targeting four sample districts, 1 from 4 regions.⁸ The purpose of the parallel boundary delimitation exercise was to let community people have good knowledge of their community boundaries, what was involved in doing boundary delimitation and be in an informed position to not only educate the wider majority on the process but also evaluate the work of NEC.

⁷ See section 38 (1-9) of the 1991 Constitution

⁸ These were Moyamba in the South, Kenema in the East, Kambia in the North, and Western Rural.

Participants for the parallel boundary delimitation were drawn from various categories of people including the NEW district team, Chieftom administrative clerks, Village Head in the Western Rural District, PWDs, Youth Leaders and Women Leaders. Personnel from Statistics Sierra Leone worked with NEW in conducting the parallel constituency and ward delimitation. Maps of constituency boundaries were created in each of the 4 sample districts independent of work done by NEC.

4.1.2 CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE, ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, GOOD PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

NEC followed all the rules and stipulations regarding how to conduct constituency and Ward demarcations. As a result, the entire exercise was devoid of controversies and contestations. NEC's constituency and ward delimitation exercise took place between May and December 2016. NEC held two consultative stakeholders' meetings in all districts. At the first consultative meeting NEC educated stakeholders on the boundary delimitation process and presented a draft distribution of constituencies and wards to the districts. NEC conducted consultations targeted key stakeholders to let them get clear understanding of parameters used in the process.

4.1.3 INCIDENTS, OBSTRUCTIONS AND DEVIATIONS

NEC's consultation on the constituency and ward BD mostly targeted people who were MPs, Councilors and PCs. Had NEW not undertaken parallel activities to educate a wider community of people, down to chieftom levels, the risk existed that politicians and political parties could have attempted to create self-serving controversies.

4.2 NATIONAL CIVIL AND VOTER REGISTRATION AND VOTER LIST EXHIBITION

4.2.1 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Chapter 4 Section 31 of the 1991 Constitution requires voters to be registered. The details of the registration process are also stated in Part 3 of the PEA 2012. Among the key elements, the laws places obligations that a provisional list of voters that is produced be displayed, that revision, objections, inquiries and inclusions be done to arrive at the Final Voters Register (FVR). The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone gives the mandate to NEC as the sole authority to undertake voter registration.⁹ Whilst this legislation is still in force the National Civil

⁹ See Section 33 of the 1991 Constitution.

Registration Act of 2016 section 14 (a) gives mandate to the NCRA as the sole institution to undertake registrations including voter registration.

4.2.2 OBSERVATION APPROACH, ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

The NCVR exercise took place from the 20th March to 30th April 2017. NEW observed the activity in a sample of 900 out of the 3,300 Voter Registration Centres (VRCs) located in the 423 Wards. NEW recruited and deployed observers within the wards that they reside to allow them register and are able to cast their ballot in the elections. One observer was deployed to each of the 900 sampled registration centres. The observers were deployed for 18 days across the country. All STOs were provided with relevant training, briefing materials and a detailed checklist to record and report daily observation information.

In addition to the observers deployed, NEW also had roaming supervisors who provided quality assurance and consistency of reported observations. When the registration period was extended by 2 weeks: NEW in its observation strategy, observed 4 out of the 14 days extension period- 2 days in each week April 21st, 22nd and April 28th and 29th 2017. NEW deployed 2 observers at NEC's National Data Centre, Wellington to observe the Adjudication Process. Due to the slow pace of the process, an additional centre was created at NCRA and NEW had to split its observers to cover the exercise over the 2 week period. NEW also deployed 1 observer in all the centres that had to do re-registration due to data loss in the affected 8 districts. 1 observer was deployed in each of the 446 centres, 1 in each ward to observe the Inquiry process. 60 supervisors (overseeing 15 observers each) were deployed for the Exhibition exercise whilst 30 were deployed for Inquiry.

4.2.3 CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE, ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, GOOD PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

The NCVR was successfully conducted from 20th March to 30th April 2017 despite some challenges at the start. For the first time, the voter registration process was merged with the National Civil Registration which saw several questions on the registration form not related to voter registration which many viewed as cumbersome. For the second time the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) technology was used and the VIU 800 and 820 kits introduced. The NCVR process consisted of field data capture at the Registration Centres, data backup, export and import and data transmission to central servers, consolidation, matching and de-duplication, adjudication of duplicate, production and exhibition of Provisional Voters Register (PVR) and production of Final Voter Register (FVR).

On average, Voter Registration Centres (VRCs) opened on time across the country. For most of the centres NEW observed, NEC officials were organized and followed registration procedures.

However, the distance between some registration centres was far, especially in the rural communities, making it difficult for registrants with special needs to access the centres. The first week of the NCVR however revealed a number of difficulties. Some centres opened late whilst others did not open at all due mostly to late arrival of materials and the malfunctioning of the VIU 820 kits.

Upon the completion of the 28th day that marked the end of the initial period of the NCVR process, it turned out that NEC did not capture the number of voters they had estimated. NEC consequently, announced a 14 day extension (17th – 30th April 2017) of the registration period. Following its compilation, NEC conducted the Exhibition of the PVR on 22nd - 27th August and Inquiry on the 29th – 31st August, 2017. The process entailed the display of PVR for objections, corrections, omissions and inclusion claims. In the course of the Exhibition and Inquiry process, the NEC identified 23,000 out of the 3,178,663 (0.7%) registrants' data whose photos were missing from the database. NEC made provision for these registrants' photos to be captured during the Voter Identity Card Distribution process. Re-registration was also conducted simultaneously for registrants whose data were missing in the PVR during the Exhibition period.¹⁰

NEC officially launched the voter registration data adjudication process on the 7th of June 2017, at the NEC National Data Center, graced by representative from all political parties, other EMBs, Inter-Religious Council, SLP and the media. The process continued on the 8th and 9th of June where suspected cases were displayed on a projector for proper judgment by NEC, Political Parties and other EMBs. There were an initial 53,000 suspected cases that were flagged by the system for adjudication.

The distribution of the Voter Identity Cards (VICs) was the final stage of the Voter Registration exercise. The distribution exercise involved verification of registrant's identity; distribution of Voter Identity Cards to voters; possible photo re-capture and Issuance of Attestation Forms.

4.2.4 INCIDENTS, OBSTRUCTIONS AND DEVIATIONS

The existence of separate legal instruments granting powers to both NEC and NCRA respectively to conduct registration initially posed challenges. The ensuing arguments, contestations and settlements between the 2 agencies caused delays in starting the CVR process. This contributed to the shifting of registration timelines. The promised made of a Biometric ECOWAS compliant voter ID Cards influenced high registration turnout. This promised was however not fulfilled.

¹⁰ Re-registrations were conducted in Bombali, Kambia, Koinadugu, Kono, Port Loko, Moyamba, Bonthe and Western Urban.

NEW also observed that political parties and EMB's showed little or no interest in the NCVR process. NEC invited all political parties and other EMBs but they showed up for only the first 3 days of the exercise without further follow up. Security presence was also limited at the registration centre.

4.3 CAMPAIGN CONDUCT

4.3.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The PEA, 2012 set out the rules on how public elections campaign are to be conducted; including obligations on the EMBs to announce the period for campaign, obligations to undertake civic and voter education, and the rule for political party rallies and display of campaign materials.¹¹ The law also guarantees political parties' equal access to public radio and television and private media through terms negotiated by political parties with the owners.

4.3.2 CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE, ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, GOOD PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

NEW was generally satisfied with the way NEC met the constitutional provisions regarding the management of elections campaigns. NEC announced Sunday 4th February to Monday 5th March 2018 as the campaign period. The declaration was made after consultations with all the political parties that were registered to take part in the elections. In the Press Release NEC urged all the parties and citizens to observe the rules and laws on the conduct of political campaigns. NEC subsequently issued a calendar allotting specific days to each of the 17 parties to hold rallies around the country.

Once the campaign calendar was announced, NEC and PPRC's role was to watch for violations of the rules and laws on the conduct of political campaigns. The elections laws grant both NEC and the PPRC, powers to hold defaulters to account. NEC and PPRC played their role in observing the campaign conduct and raising the red flag. In one instance, NEC issued a Press Release condemning incidents of violence in Bo city, during the campaign in the second round elections.¹² When one party, the CDP openly espoused religious symbolism as a campaign strategy, with the phrase "Allah is One", on the billboards and posters of the presidential candidate, the PPRC ordered the party to bring down the offending billboards and posters within 48 hours but this was not enforced.¹³

¹¹ The Public Elections Act, 2012 is a consolidation of elections related laws of Sierra Leone; including the Electoral Laws Act, 2002.

¹² NEC's Press Release of 16th March, 2018.

¹³ PPRC's Press Release 8th March 2018.

Generally, political parties' conduct during their campaigns undermined multiparty democracy. Political parties' activities created and aggravated tension on the basis of ethnicity, language, and region. NEW captured several incidences of political parties' leaders and supporters using radio, television and open air/town hall meeting to propagate and spread hateful ethnic sentiments. Representatives of political parties' also participated in radio and television discussions together; were they voiced their party positions on contested elections and political issues. Generally, political parties' supporters harassed and threatened each other. There were instances where Paramount Chiefs restricted supporters from other parties to campaign in their chiefdoms. There was equally an instance where the PC had the campaign posters of all the political parties indicating that all political parties were welcome to campaign in the chiefdom.

There were instances where political parties and their leaderships offered pecuniary and material incentives to voters for their votes. For instance, Political parties' leaders and supporters made public show and distribution of money during campaigns. The presidential candidates for the National Grand Coalition (NGC) and Alliance Democratic Party regularly called on their supporters to accept monies offered by their opponent parties and candidates and not to vote for them.

All political parties campaigned with no regard that a campaign calendar was yet to be issued under the guise of sensitization and thank you tours. Campaign fliers and large bill boards were seen everywhere. NEW noted that CDP never took down their religiously worded posters and billboards which was against the PPRC code of conduct.

4.3.3 INCIDENTS, OBSTRUCTIONS AND DEVIATIONS

The campaign environment was sometimes tense, with people engaging in uncivil and intolerant behaviours that had the potential to disturb the peace of communities. News of physical and verbal attacks abounded. Ordinary citizens bore the greatest responsibility for the uncivil and intolerant behaviours. NEW did not capture any serious evidence that a political party leadership directed or ordered the uncivil and intolerant behaviours of their supporters. Uncivil and intolerant behaviours included provocative songs and hate speech. Social media was the most widely used platform for activities promoting hate speech and ethnic tensions. Supporters of APC, NGC, and SLPP were particular guilty of uncivil and intolerant behaviours. APC, SLPP and NGC supporters, through songs and on Facebook and WhatsApp mocked each other's presidential aspirant, using unfounded claims regarding their private lives.¹⁴ It was mostly, if not exclusively ordinary citizens who were guilty of such behaviours. Intimidation

¹⁴ APC taunted the SLPP's flag-bearer as having participated in the past National Provisional Ruling Council military regime's human rights abuses. APC also taunted the SLPP's flag-bearer that he could not travel to the United States. On their part, SLPP indulged in claims that the APC flag-bearer did not have a Doctor of Philosophy degree as he claimed. The SLPP executive claimed, without evidence, that the flagbearer of the NGC had sold the state-owned oil refinery in the 1990s.

mostly involved person-to-person incidence, a group's physical and verbal attack, or social media outbursts.

Equally, supporters of the APC, SLPP, and NGC indulged in destruction of posters and billboards of their opponent parties. In the widely publicized instance, on 20th February, 2018, in Kamalo, party officials and supporters of APC and SLPP were involved in tearing down each other's posters and billboards in the town; resulting in serious fracas.

4.4 VOTING DAY, VOTE COUNTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

4.4.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The management of voting day activities, the obligations on political parties and citizens relating to voting day activities and processes are spelt out in the PEA, 2012. Regarding the management of the voting process, the legislation covers such key issues as voting hours, manner of voting, precautions to ensure secrecy, management of ballot boxes, counting and re-counting.

4.4.2 OBSERVATION APPROACH, ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

NEW trained and deployed different categories of observers. 1 regular stationed observer deployed at every polling station across the country.¹⁵ 1 PVT observer was deployed each, at 506 randomly identified polling stations across the country. At every polling station, NEW deployed a lead texter. NEW deployed 17 District Incident Reporters (DIRs): 1 in each electoral district and Bonthe Island. Reports of incidents were sent to the DIRs from the voting centres. The DIRs analyzed the reported incidents to determine whether they fell under the category of agreed incidents and which EMB or stakeholder had the authority to intervene in resolving the incident. Incidents were reported to the relevant authorities at national and district levels for their intervention to ensure there were no adverse effects on the outcome of the elections.

The CSR actively monitored the incidents data coming from observers in the field, calling observers to verify error messages and also get additional information from other sources relating to incidents. Data from observers in the field were received from observers at 3 intervals (7:30am, 1:00pm and 5:00pm). Analyses triangulated from data received informed

¹⁵ In all, NEW had 11, 122 regular stationed observers across the country.

NEW's press statements and also facilitated engagement with the various EMBs when necessary to address incidents in real time.

One of the high points in NEW's 2018 elections observation was the PVT. For the 2018 elections, NEW for the first time publicly announced the PVT results for the presidential counts for the first round. The elections laws of Sierra Leone grants only NEC the powers to announce official elections results. The PVT enabled NEW to make projections of the presidential results within 24 hours after the polls closed though the pronouncement for both first and second round of elections were made later. NEW's projection of results included calculated margin of error of ± 3 . NEW's formula for calculation of margin of error reflects size of the sample and variations in voting patterns between polling stations. Since in Sierra Leone, districts have distinct voting patterns, the calculated margin of error is somewhat high. This margin of error is calculated with 95% confidence interval. This means that the PVT projection for each candidate was expected to statistically differ from the total NEC official results within the stated margin. Margin of Error was not the only indicator of accuracy of the results. Convergence in distribution of voting pattern was another indicator. The convergence graph shows clear stabilization of voting patterns.

The PVT was based exclusively on results of the vote count of each polling station in the sample. NEW observers recorded the official vote counts from the Results Reconciliation Forms (RRFs) that were validated by the NEC officials and political party agents present at every polling station. NEW also observed the complete voting process at each polling station, to ensure that the official results used in the PVT were legitimate. It did not ask voters, or anyone else, how they will vote or how they voted. No opinions were expressed and none were requested from anyone.

NEW's projected result for the first round was Samura Kamara of the APC will poll **42.92%** while Julius Maada Bio of the SLPP will poll **43.05%** of the total valid votes cast. When NEC announced the results of the first round, Kamara-APC actually polled **42.70%** while Bio-SLPP polled **43.30%**, a difference of **-0.22%** and **0.25%** respectively.

In the second round, NEW projected that Kamara-APC will poll **47.46%** while Bio-SLPP will **52.54%** compared to the NEC official results of Kamara-APC **48.19%** and Bio-SLPP **51.81%** representing a difference of **-0.73%**. NEW's projections for both elections were way within the margin of error of $\pm 3\%$ set forth for these elections and also the 1-2% accuracy rate for the international standard of PVT

The PVT became one of NEW's biggest achievements in the 2018 elections; bringing added credibility, trust and respect from Sierra Leoneans and the international community.

4.4.3 CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE, ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, GOOD PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

The conduct of the polls was generally without seriously disturbing incidence. From the observation of elections day, NEW noted that 90% of polling stations across the country opened on time. NEC officials were present in all polling stations. 98% of polling stations reported that all sensitive materials, including the ballots, ballot stamp, booths and screens, indelible ink and voter list were available. Polling stations were generally accessible to voters, except for a few stations that were far to reach by voters. Overall, NEW observed that polling stations were well organized with minor reports that the secrecy of the ballot was compromised.

From NEW's observation data, 93% of polling stations had voters in the queue at least by 7:00am. There was security presence at all the polling stations observed. At all the polling stations that NEW observed, polls closed at 5:00PM, as officially demanded by NEC. NEW observers did not witness any situation where a person was allowed to vote after polls closed.

Following completion of counting and tallying of the vote counts, NEC declared the result of the first round with Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio leading and Dr. Samura Mathew Wilson Kamara in second place. Since both candidates failed to secure the constitutionally mandated 55% threshold, NEC announced a Presidential Run-off election slated for March 27.¹⁶

Following the preliminary announcement of the elections results of the first round and while preparing for the Run-off on March 27, 2018, a member of the ruling APC filed an application for injunction in his personal capacity at the High Court against the NEC alleging irregularities in the first round and requesting for forensic audit. The High Court slammed an interim injunction against the NEC preventing the Commission from continuing preparations for Presidential Run-off between the APC and opposition SLPP candidates. But the NEC contended that the issue borders on the presidency and should be heard in the Supreme Court. Following legal arguments, the High Court ruled and ordered that the interim injunction placed on NEC from organizing the Run-off elections be vacated. The Court issued 9 instructions regarding among other issues, how security of sensitive materials were to be handled, and the conduct of counting and tallying.¹⁷ After the High Court's ruling, NEC applied to the Supreme Court for

¹⁶ Section 42 (2e) of the 1991 Constitution provides that in the event that no presidential candidate secures 55% of the total votes cast, a run-off election will be held between the two candidates with the highest votes.

¹⁷ The Court's 9 instructions to the NEC in conducting the second round of voting were:

- 1) The first and second defendants shall ensure that both political parties' agents to the run-off are given Tamper Evident Envelopes (TEEs) containing signed copies of elections results from polling stations across the country.

more time to better prepare to conduct the Run-off elections. The Supreme Court granted the application and the Run-off date was change to March 31, 2018.

4.4.4 INCIDENTS, OBSTRUCTIONS AND DEVIATIONS

In the period following the first round elections, NEW observers reported several disturbing incidents. There was heightened hate speech on social media and sporadic low-level violence. A lot of top party stalwarts made references to violence, drawing on the Rebel war and blaming it on the bad governance of the APC. Many recalled violent elections related incidents as part of their narratives. On the programme 'Elections Talk', ran on 29 March, 2018 on the SLBC Radio, the Deputy Minister of Information and member of the APC Media Team reiterated his dissatisfaction over NEC's handling of the First Round Elections and results. He went further to advice the electorate that after voting on Saturday they should stay around so that no malpractice will take place. He further accused some Civil Society members of playing dubious games in the running of the elections. He said that the APC would not accept any computerized results and that if NEC insisted on computerized results; the elections would not be conducted. These statements were misleading and inciting and contributed to heightened tension leading up to the Run-off elections.

On Radio Democracy 98.1 FM, on 28 March, 2018, the flag-bearer of the Alliance Democratic Party, said that he had told the SLPP Presidential candidate in his face that he the ADP flag bearer was aware of the "filthy politics" that the SLPP Presidential candidate by misinforming the people in the south and east that the ADP was part of the APC. He further asserted that if the SLPP candidate could engage in such a lie then he would have the tendency to steal state resources if elected President.

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- 2) The results from the districts and or regions be manually transferred to the 2nd defendant's Tallying Center and or headquarters in a transparent and all-inclusive manner.
 - 3) The political parties' accredited agents shall monitor the transportation and transfer of all election sensitive materials.
 - 4) That at the close of polling, every center counting shall be done manually in the presence of the security forces and representatives of political parties.
 - 5) All ballot boxes containing the counted ballot shall be sealed in the presence of the political parties' agents and returned to the 2nd defendant's headquarters accompanied by security forces.
 - 6) All election results shall be published at every polling station immediately after the counting and the published results must be signed by political parties representatives present during the counting.
 - 7) That all political parties agents, security personnel on duty and 2nd Defendant's election officials working at a particular station on the day shall have the right to cast their vote at that particular station and whose names shall be written on a list to explain the issue of possible over voting in any polling station.
 - 8) The 2nd Defendant shall send a full list of the Ballot Boxes and the serial numbers of their tags to each of the two political parties prior to election.
 - 9) That the provisions of Section 94 of the Public Elections Act of 2012 shall be complied with to the letter.

4.5 PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF ELECTIONS

4.5.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The 1991 Constitution lays the legal basis for holding a Run-off presidential elections. In terms of the process, including eligibility of voter, voting procedure, counting, tallying and announcement of results, the provisions in the PEA, 2012 as cited under the previous section apply without exception to a Run-off presidential election.

4.5.2 OBSERVATION APPROACH, ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

After the first round and ahead of the second round, NEW held a national reflection meeting in Freetown, on Friday 23rd March 2018. This meeting brought together all 17 District Coordinators, 5 Regional Coordinators, members of the Strategic Management Committee and members of the secretariat. The purpose of the meeting was to identify successes and challenges faced by NEW in observing the first round of voting and to use the lessons learned to plan for the observation of the Run-off Presidential Elections.

Separate refresher trainings were conducted for the different categories of observers. On Saturday 24th March 2018, refresher trainings were simultaneously done in all districts for the 506 PVT Observers. Additional trainings were conducted for the 10,616 regular observers at chiefdom level across the country.

NEW noting lessons learned from the 7th March 2018 and changed its strategy with the objective of increasing the transparency in the movement of election materials. Activities under the revised strategy included trailing the movement of sensitive elections materials from the arrival of the sensitive materials at the airport to NEC district offices on to the different polling stations in every ward. Consequently, in advance of the Presidential Run-off NEW recruited and trained 17 DEMMOs and 446 WEMMOs to undertake the trailing of the sensitive materials. These categories of observers were provided with logistics that included mobility to ensure the tracking of the movement of the sensitive materials at every level before and after voting in the Run-off elections.

The monitoring of sensitive elections materials started on the 22nd March 2018 at the Freetown International Airport where they were to be received by NEC. DEMMOs followed the sensitive materials to the various NEC Warehouses at district levels. On Election Day on 31st March, during the second round of voting, NEW deployed the same number of priority and regular observers as the first round. NEW observed the vote counting and tallying of results at the Polling Station level and consolidation of results at the district center levels. From 2nd April to

4th April, 2018 NEW observed the movement of Tamper Evident Envelopes (TEEs) from voting stations to regional tally centres. The return of TEEs and other sensitive elections materials from Wards to Districts office started immediately after counting in all the Districts. WEMMOs that monitored the distribution ensured close contact with NEC ward coordinator who provided timely information to WEMMOs on the return of TEEs and sensitive elections materials back to the NEC District Offices for onward movement to the regional tally centres.

4.5.3 CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE, ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, GOOD PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

NEC officials received elections materials for the Run-off election on 22nd March, 2018, at Lungi International Airport. NEC moved straight to distribute them to all 16 districts; completing the exercise the following day, 23rd March 2018. The NEC distribution teams were escorted by either police or military security from the NEC warehouses to the different wards in all the districts.

The Run-off elections took place on 31st March as planned, without major incidents. As with the first round of voting, turn-out was very high. NEC officials were present in all polling stations observed by NEW. 98% of polling stations observed reported that all sensitive materials, including the ballots, ballot stamp, booths and screens, indelible ink, and voter list were available. Polling stations were generally accessible to voters, except for a few stations that were far to reach by voters. Observers and party agents were present at polling stations. There was also security presence stationed and roving, NEW particularly notes armed security around polling stations which was intimidating. Overall, NEW observed that polling stations were well organized with minor reports that the secrecy of the ballot was compromised.

After polling and counting, observers reported that NEC Ward Coordinators started returning sensitive elections materials just after counting. All 17 DEMMOs confirmed that the 446 WEMMOs moved with NEC Ward Coordinators to safely return the sensitive elections materials to the NEC District offices by 2nd April 2018. The DEMMOs followed the movement of the sensitive materials from the district offices to their regional tally centres.

4.5.4 INCIDENTS, OBSTRUCTIONS AND DEVIATIONS

The Run-off election was generally peaceful; inspite of many protestations of minor issues by mainly the APC, SLP and NGC; scare-mongering and news of intimidations around the country. NEW observers reported several critical incidences but they were not widespread nor did they present a pattern that would have undermined the integrity of the outcome of the elections. NEW observers reported that tallying and counting of election results were done in plain view of national and international observers as well as agents of political parties.

In the observation of the second round of elections, NEW observers did not observe irregularities or fraud that questioned the integrity and credibility of the outcome. However, the APC demanded a vote audit from the opposition (SLPP) stronghold before the National Electoral Commission (NEC) announce the results. In their complaint through a letter dated April 2, 2018, the APC alleged electoral malpractices which it said had the tendency of impacting the final results. The party claimed that it had discovered that in many areas in the stronghold of the SLPP. The standard bearer of the APC also threatened a legal challenge of the results alleging that the results were distorted, due to massive ballot stuffing, over-voting and fraudulent voter registers. This threat did not come to materialize. On 4th April, 2018 NEC announced, SLPP's Retired Julius Maada Bio the winner of the election, securing 51.8% of the votes.

5.0 COLLATERAL ISSUES

5.1 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Women's participation in elections in Sierra Leone has always been measure in terms of the number of those that register to vote, and contest for the presidency, Parliament or local council. Regarding registration, it was a success that 51% of those who registered to vote were women. With the exception of Western Rural district, more women than men registered to vote in every district in Sierra Leone.¹⁸

NEW tried to introduce an added dimension to look at women's participation in elections in Sierra Leone. The new dimension was the level of women in elections activities management within EMBs and civil society. Regarding this, NEW ensured that women constituted 30% of all the observers deployed; although NEW does not have a specific gender goal for observers. NEW observed that at least one of the seven NEC officials in 94% of polling stations was a woman.

Regarding their pursuit of elective office, it was disappointing that only two the 16 political parties had a female presidential candidate; who secured only 0.5% and 0.2% of votes. None of the 4 top parties had woman candidate for either the presidency or running-mate. Women secured only 12% of parliamentary seats; marking no progress from the past situation. Out 489 local councillors elected, only 73 were women.

In previous elections, it was common for male secret societies to threaten female politicians. The practice was not widespread in 2018, partly because a ban had been placed on all secret society activities in the period leading to elections. However, in selected places the use of male secret societies to intimidate women aspirants for elective office was common. In Kono, Port Loko, Kailahun, Kenema and Tonkolili, people reported at open meetings that male secret societies were being used for political intimidation.¹⁹ In the Lower Bambara Chiefdom Kenema, it was pointed out that men are using secret society activities to intimidate female aspirants. Male secret societies parade certain communities when female aspirants are scheduled to campaign forcing them to stay indoors.

¹⁸ In Western Rural, women constituted 45% of the registered voters.

¹⁹ These reports were captured through the Community Dialogue meetings across a number of districts in the course of the elections.

5.2 PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The percentage of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) that registered was in single digits in every district. Koinadugu recorded the highest percentage of registered PWDs with 7%, while Kailahun, Western Rural and Western Urban recorded the lowest with 3% each. The average percentage of registered PWDs nationwide was 5%. There was no data on the total number of PWDs in every district from which to extrapolate whether these were high or low figure. It was also impossible to know the percentage of PWDs that registered as against those that registered because elections results do not make such disaggregation.

In the 2018 elections, NEC for the first time introduced Tactile Ballot papers for the vision-impaired. This was a welcome development; although the extent of its usage was not impressive from NEWS's observation. NEW's observers suggest that majority of instances witnessed, people with vision impairment preferred to be assisted to vote.

5.3 THE ROLE AND CONDUCT OF THE MEDIA

Media freedom in Sierra Leone is guaranteed by law. In practice, scores of privately-owned media houses exist, alongside those owned by government. NEW undertook media monitoring as a new activity in elections observation. The purpose of the media monitoring was to gauge levels of fairness or balance from media outlets; and track incidences of hate speech, inflammatory and inciting statements, personal attacks, insult and defamation, references to violence and any unprofessional conducts. The decision to undertake media monitoring in the 2018 elections was borne from past experiences where election period was like a license in the hands of political parties to use the media to propagate hate messages. NEW introduced media monitoring in a bid to check politicians and ordinary citizens' resort to actions and utterances that had the potential to stir violence.

For the media monitoring exercise, a consultant, working alongside the Media Reform Coordinating Group, provided training to the monitors. During the training, the monitors were provided with all the relevant laws and other documents that pertain to media and elections ethics; including the Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Code of Ethics and the Political Parties Code of Ethics. The media monitors were tasked to monitor television, radio, and newspapers. They were also provided with mini recorders, headphones and a checklist.

The Media Monitoring work was done in the 6 selected districts of Bo, Kono, Kenema, Port Loko and Western Area. In enhancing the process NEW identified a team of 10 monitors 1 each from the districts of Bo, Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, Makeni and 5 others recruited from the Western Area. The districts were selected based on NEW's findings and independent reports from other CSOs of repute like the WANEP which identified them as hot spots.

In the course of the 2018 elections, the media's conduct was generally satisfactory. NEW did not get evidence that any political party or party agent tried to stop an opponent party or agent from accessing and using state media. Generally, media practitioners did their work without intimidation. Furthermore, there was great improvement in the area of opposition parties' access to the public broadcaster.

Major TV and radio stations like AYV TV and Radio, Star TV and Radio, SLBC TV and Radio, Radio Democracy 98.1 prominently allotted free airtime for political parties to profile themselves and campaign. Many other stations also focused their programming on elections and election related issues. The major Political Parties in particular, paid for jingles and other promotional items; although the contents of some had some implied infraction.

Notwithstanding, the media had some serious blemishes. NEW Media Monitoring work captured major infractions that deserved mentioning. Firstly, it was notable that newspapers in particular were heavily partisan. Global Times and Watch newspapers gave more favorable coverage to the Opposition SLPP; while the New Citizen and Standard Times newspapers did the same for the APC. Both the SLPP owned Unity and APC's We Yone Newspapers continuously traded calumnies and propaganda. The March 9, 2018 edition of the Global Times Newspaper carried a special commentary in which the writer said that the SLPP Presidential Candidate should not accept the results of the election if it was not credible and transparent.

Star TV frequently featured calumnies against the SLPP Presidential candidate. In particular, the station continually featured old videos attacking the personality of the Presidential candidate of the party by one Alpha Saidu Bangura who incidentally was a member of the SLPP. In Koidu Town, a moderator on Eastern Community Radio aided and abetted panelists of the Coalition for Change (C4C) to say inflammatory things about an APC's publicity personnel.

At the Radio Democracy 98.1 FM, a Presenter of the "Good Morning Salone" Program told the Deputy Minister that he lied by saying that there was no law allowing citizens to arrest. In the particular program, the Minister made reference to relevant statutory provisions. The presenter faced with evidence referenced by the deputy minister failed to apologize at that moment. She however later apologized.

NEW noted 1 instance of violence orchestrated against journalists by politicians. In the course of the Run-off presidential elections, physical attack was meted out on one Patrick Kamara of

Concord Times newspaper and Ibrahim Samura of new Age newspaper by individuals described as “very senior members of the APC party”.

NEW noted on 2 occasions, the spokesperson for the SLPP use threatening language on radio and television against people he perceived as opposed to his party. The SLPP Presidential candidate on one occasion made statements in Freetown on radio and television, which media houses and other political parties condemned as threatening.

5.4 THE ROLE AND CONDUCT OF THE SECURITY FORCES

From innuendos and outright claims from opposition parties, the work of the SLP around the elections was considered as bias and unprofessional. At one point NEC joined the criticism when it charged in a Press Release that the Police’s incessant visit to their premises was unwarranted and constituted interference.²⁰ NEC notes that certain actions by the SLP tended to reinforce perceptions of non-neutrality; In Kenema, the Police neutrality was so heavily questioned that when the final elections results were announced, people reportedly attacked the city Police Station.

With respect to elections specific activities, NEW observed that the SLP provided security for all the presidential candidates. SLP provided sufficient security personnel for the movement of Sensitive Election Materials. Police personnel were highly visible during rallies of all the political parties; and in many of them acted to avert violent situations.

²⁰ See NEC’s Press Release of 21th March, 2018.

5.5 POLITICAL PARTIES' LACK OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AND THE IMPACT ON THE ELECTIONS ENVIRONMENT

In furtherance of section 35, sub-section 2 of the 1991 Constitution, the Political Parties Registration Commission Act, 2002 grants the PPRC a mandate to ensure that the internal organization of political parties conforms to democratic principles. This means primarily, regular free and fair elections of their leadership and candidates. None of the 17 political parties that contested the 2018 could be said that have conformed to internal democratic principles and best practices. Amidst initial internal wrangling within the SLPP, the party was able to conduct 2 elections to elect elected party executives and the presidential candidates respectively. The SLPP however deviated from their previous system of awarding symbols to parliamentary candidates which was done by delegates from section level and transferred that function to party executive at constituency, district and national level. The APC on the other hand conducted their party convention and chose the option of selecting the presidential candidate and a running mate as against having an election which agrees with their party constitution. The APC party moved the process of awarding symbols for parliament from their party headquarters to the presidential state lodge and action that was viewed as an abuse of incumbency. Furthermore, a constitutional provision that has previously not been considered in the award of parliamentary symbols was invoked eliminating several aspirants with dual citizenship. The process of awarding symbols did not follow democratic principles and best practices.

The other parties held conventions to appoint presidential candidates and award parliamentary symbols. In most cases the founder of the party invariably became the presidential candidate.. The system of awarding symbols in some of these parties was not clear resulting in factions, claims and counter claims within the same party.

It was this lack of respect for internal democracy that resulted in the unprecedented high incidence of intra-party violence. In the course of the 2018 elections, violence among supporters and members of the same party became a very common occurrence. Violence has mostly erupted over the award of party symbols to aspirants for the various elective offices. Violence tended to erupt when ordinary supporters suspected or alleged that their party's leadership was awarding symbols to candidates who were not the popular choice of the people.

The awarding of symbols caused security challenges in Madina, in the Kambia district. The youths threatened that, if their preferred candidate was not awarded the symbol, they would

burn down houses in that community. There were similar incidences in Rokupr and Mambolo, in the same Kambia district. In the Kaffu Bullom Chiefdom, Port Loko district, APC youths threatened to burn down houses if their preferred aspirant was refused the APC symbol in constituency 076. In Mile 91, two youth groups, Fuel Stars (a trading group) and the Backtalla (a clique) all part of the APC party constantly clashed causing unrest in the community. SLPP faced similar challenges, often leading to clashes out at the party's headquarters in Freetown, and around the country particularly in the South and Eastern regions. In Kenema, an SLPP supporter lost his life during one of such intra party squabbles.

6.0 OTHER PUBLIC ELECTIONS IN 2018

6.1 PARAMOUNT CHIEF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

6.1.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone provides that each of the administrative districts of Sierra Leone is represented in Parliament by a Paramount Chief; known as Paramount Chief Member of Parliament (PCMP). PCMP elections are public elections as stated in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and in the PEA of 2012. PCMP elections are conducted under Sections 74 of the 1991 Constitution, the Chieftaincy Act of 2009, and of the PEA Act, 2012 which provides for the nominations, campaigns, voting systems and election of PCMP. PCMPs are elected by an electoral college known as Chieftom Councilors; and they are not elected on a party basis.²¹

6.1.2 OBSERVATION APPROACH, ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

Preparations for observation of the PCMP elections began with training of trainers. On the 23rd of February 2018, 20 people were trained at the Hill Valley Hotel to serve as trainers. The PCMP elections were to take place in 10 out of the 16 districts. The PCs in the 6 districts where elections were not to take place had arrived at a consensus on whom to represent the district in parliament and so no need for an election. 2 trainers were assigned to each of the 10 districts to train the observers for the PCMP election. Tools were developed at the secretariat including an observation manual, checklist, incident report form, and NEW code of Conduct. Observers were trained on this instrument to enhance their effective observation of the election. NEW's chieftom focal persons served as observers in the chieftom. A total of 150 observers and 26 supervisors were deployed.

²¹ Chieftom Councilors are also known as Tribal Authorities. In the compilation of the Chieftom Council list, for every 20 tax payers in a chieftom, the 20th person becomes the Tribal Authority (TA). NEW observed, that in some Polling Stations voters presented more than one tax receipt bearing different names.

6.1.3 CONDUCT OF THE EXERCISE, ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, GOOD PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

The PCMP elections were conducted on the 27th February, 2018 in ten districts. Generally, the polls opened on time with NEC officials, Observers and Candidates Agents present at the polling center. NEW observes that voter turnout was also very impressive. Supporters and candidates however, in many places campaigned around the polling centres, in contravention of NEC's regulations against such practice. The campaigns were however, peaceful. The police were present in most of the Polling Centers nationwide, and the entire process was peaceful and orderly.

6.1.4 INCIDENTS, DEVIATIONS AND DISRUPTIONS

While the PCMP elections ended without serious arguments and contestations, NEW had reservations regarding the way some people were deprived of the right to vote. There was lack of consistency in the application of the rules on eligibility to vote in PCMP elections. For instance, instead of using the government gazette which lists the members of the Chiefdom Councilors that were eligible to vote in a particular chiefdom, some NEC Polling staff insisted on possession of the 2017 Local Tax receipt. It meant that in some places, even where a member of a Chiefdom Council had his/her name in government gazette, such person was not allowed to vote for merely failing to show a tax receipt.

Generally, voter turnout for the PCMP election was very low across all the districts observed. In Gbense Chiefdom, in Kono District, for example, voters were given the impression that they were going for a meeting. They were unaware that an elections for PCMP was been conducted and were expected to be a part. As a result, they went without their tax receipts and so were refused the opportunity to vote. This was against the rule that as long as your name is in the gazette you had the right to vote as long as you could be identified not necessarily having your local tax receipt. This led to protest by the affected voters.

6.2 VILLAGE HEAD ELECTIONS IN THE WESTERN RURAL DISTRICT

6.2.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal instruments and provisions governing the VHE are the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, section 33; The Local Government Act, 2004 and Statutory Instrument No 6 Of 2005 section 16. There are no chiefdoms in the Western Area of Sierra Leone; and therefore, no Paramount Chiefs. Villages are led by heads.

6.2.2 OBSERVATION APPROACH, ACTIVITIES, AND STRATEGIES

NEW observed the conduct of VHEs on the 29th, 31st December 2017 and 2nd January 2018, in 89 out of the 122 villages in the Western Rural District where elections were to take place.²² The elections were meant to be conducted on the 29th of December 2017 but some villages could not have their elections because of violence emanating from contentions around the voter list and changes in the locations of polling stations. 1 observer was deployed in each of the 505 polling stations established by NEC for the elections. Since NEW had never deployed that number of observers in the Western Rural District for elections observation, the task was challenging. A thorough process of mobilization was therefore required to ensure the right persons were recruited for the observation. Series of consultations were done with Western Rural district team to recruit and deploy observers. NEW developed training and observation tools which included an observation Manual, observation Checklist, pre and post-test, training Evaluation Forms, code of conduct and observers' contracts. NEW for the very first time developed a 4-page customized checklist which had the name of the Village, Polling Centre Code, Polling Station Number, Polling Station Location and NEW Polling Station Identity Number. The checklists were divided into 4 categories: Opening and setup; Voting; Counting and Incident Reporting. It was in the course of the VHE that NEW piloted the PVT, with all the 505 observers in preparation for the 2018 presidential election.

6.2.3 INCIDENTS, DEVIATIONS AND DISRUPTIONS

There are 122 villages in the Western Rural District where VHEs were to be held. Elections were conducted in 89 of these Villages whilst 33 of them were uncontested. The candidates for the 33 uncontested villages went unopposed. The VHE went well in a number of villages but in other villages the elections were marred with serious incidents. A total of 106 incidents were reported to the CSR, some of which were promptly resolved by NEC and or the Police; while others led to either the suspension of polling for a while or total halt and eventual postponement.

²² In 33 villages, the head position was not contested.

From NEW's observation data, 23% of the polling stations witnessed incidence of violence; including at Waterloo and Kissi Town; 17% of the polling stations closed due to unavailability of ballot papers or wrong voting slip or ballot box. Voting did not take place at Nyandehun centre code B150172 because ballot papers were not available. Voting did not take place at Kissi Town centre code A150181 because the wrong voting slip was supplied. No voting took place at Baw Baw centre code A150741 because the ballot box that was supposed to be at the station was interchanged with the one that was supposed to be at another location.

From NEW's observation data, 25% of the polling stations witnessed chaos; including Adonkia centre codes A150852 and A150851; Hamilton centre code A150891 and Lakka centre code A150878. At the end of the counting, 3% of the polling stations reported candidates agents and observers who did not sign the results slip. 3% of the polling stations observed reported stealing and damaging of elections materials. For example; at Kissi Town 1, a candidate's agent forcefully grabbed the ballot register from a NEC official in view of NEW's observers. The agent was taken into custody at the Kissi Town police post. 2% of the polling stations did not allow observers.

7.0 MOVING THE NEXT AGENDA TO UNDERGIRD CONTINUED FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

The 2018 elections turned out to be declared free, fair and credible by both domestic and international observers of the process. This is not to say that there weren't moments of discomfort. In the course of the 2018 elections, a number of high profile civil society organizations and state institutions involved with public order, human rights and democratic governance voiced concerns over perceived and real political tensions, threats of insecurity and uncivil campaigns. The political tensions, threats of insecurity and uncivil campaign did not unravel at levels that could have compromised people's expression of their choice of political leadership. However, they certainly left government, EMBs and civil society pointers as to the need to further undergird free and fair elections.

7.0.1 THE INABILITY TO HOLD PARTIES TO ACCOUNT FOR VIOLATIONS OF ELECTIONS RULES

The majority of the political parties were in violation of some sections of electoral laws of the country; particularly those that have to do with campaign conduct, internal democracy and elections financing. The majority of political parties were in violation of the Political Parties Code of Conduct in many respects. Beyond issuing Press Releases, the PPRC was not able to hold any party to account for any wrongful behavior. This was largely due to the fact that PPRC do not have enforcement authority.

7.0.2 TROUBLING CITIZENS CIVIC ORIENTATION FOR MULTI-PARTY POLITICS

The 2018 elections clearly pointed out that citizens have not imbibed enough civic competencies and habits for multi-party politics and election. Ordinary people were found to be most at fault in uncivil and troubling behaviors; including destruction of campaign posters, attempts to disrupt opponents' peaceful assembly, hateful speech and intimidation.

7.0.3 A LACK OF ACTION TO EVIDENCE TROUBLING BEHAVIORS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

While many respected civil society organizations and state institutions lamented the seeming rise in violence, rhetoric of violence and hate speech, it turned out that there is no agenda to avail hard evidence so that accountability can be pursued. NEW observes that the manner of reporting citizens and political parties' uncivil and troubling campaign conduct is hardly useful in enforcing accountability. Civil Society, the media and other elections observation bodies mostly reported breaches without essential hard evidence that point who did what, when and where.

7.0.4 DISCRETIONARY AND AD HOC RULE MAKING AROUND SENSITIVE ELECTIONS PROCESSES

Although Sierra Leone has made progress in generating electoral laws supportive of free and fair elections, the 2018 elections remind us of critical remaining work to be done. In the course of NEC's work towards announcing the results of the Presidential Run-off elections, NEC either came out with new rules, or negotiated new processes with political parties, or was directed by the courts to adopt new rules and processes around counting, tallying and announcing results. This behavior has a tendency to become permanent in elections management in Sierra Leone if not checked. Discretionary new rules and processes by EMBs have the tendency to undermine public confidence, or provide pretext for ill-motivated politicians to cry foul. Ill-motivated officials of EMBs can even seek to use opportunities for discretionary rules to avert the will of the people. It marks no progress that after 4 elections, NEC had to be directed or instructed on matters that fall purely within their remit. From NEW's sensing of the atmosphere, only the interlocution by eminent persons from the international community averted chaos in the country.

7.0.5 PERSISTENT INADEQUACY AND LATE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS FOR ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone's elections continued to be highly funded by international development partners and friendly countries; suggesting that without such help routine elections as a habit of democracy is not yet guaranteed. Towards the 2018 elections and according to NEW's analysis 47% of NEC funding came from international support. Government's funding constraints meant that funds were not disbursed on a timely basis. As a result, NEC was faced with huge logistical challenges including movement of registration materials and staff, payment to registration staff, vendors and contractors and even full-time employees of the Commission.

7.0.6 SECURITY FORCES POOR IMAGE CHALLENGE

It appeared that among EMBs and critical state institutions with direct and auxiliary responsibilities for elections, the SLP faces the most suspicions, criticisms, innuendos and charges of biasness and unprofessionalism. It turned out that in the face of all the suspicions, criticisms, innuendos and charges of biasness and unprofessionalism the institution faced in the course of the 2018 elections, no evidence emerged of a behavior pattern to avert the will of the people. The perception challenge is however there, as it was in the 2007 and 2012 elections. NEW notes that the SLP has never made any effort to calm down nerves over their role in elections; through purposive image making and confidence building exercise. NEW notes that investment has been directed mainly to capacity building in the SLP's core duties.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

URGENT ACTIONS REQUIRED

8.0.1 PROMOTE MASSIVE CIVIC EDUCATION ON MULTI-PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

Government of Sierra Leone should undertake massive civic education so that ordinary citizens would imbibe the civic attitudes and habits that underpin multi-party politics and elections.

NEW calls on PPRC to ensure political parties commit themselves to civic education on multi-party politics and elections as a permanent activity on their party programmes.

8.0.2 PURSUE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO ADDRESS HATE SPEECH AND VIOLENCE IN ELECTIONS

A dangerous political culture based on ethnic divide, violence, reprisals and inciting social media messages unfolded in the 2018 elections. Government, CS and other relevant actors should reflect on how hate speech, ethnic tensions and violence bedeviled the 2018 elections and develop strategies to curb them in future elections. This would promote national cohesion and peaceful co-existence in communities.

8.0.3 SPEEDY INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF ELECTORAL OFFENCES AND GRIEVANCES TO ADDRESS IMPUNITY

EMBs, law enforcement agencies, CS, and the media should pursue an agenda for investigating and reporting with evidence, for pursuing accountability of electoral offences.

NEW calls on the SLP to step up investigations to ensure speedy prosecution of election offences to address impunity.

NEW also calls on the Judiciary to carry out speedy and fair hearing of elections grievances and petitions.

To strengthen transparency, accountability and increase public confidence on the adjudication of electoral offences, NEW calls on the judiciary to publicize all verdicts on elections offences and petitions.

8.0.4 ACHIEVE ELECTIONS FINANCING SECURITY TO GUARANTEE ROUTINE ELECTIONS

Sierra Leone needs to address elections financing so that there is no scrambling for resources during elections period. A debate and advocacy should be mounted to secure from government and development partners strategies and solutions to elections financing.

8.0.5 ENHANCE POLICE NEUTRALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM IN ELECTIONS

The SLP should work to promote an image as an unbiased, non-partisan, non-political and professional institution that contributes to free, fair and credible elections in Sierra Leone. NEW calls on the SLP to undertake programmes in-between elections that would foster mutual understanding, respect and build trust in the public on their work around elections. As a force for good the SLP should submit their deployment list around elections early enough for NEC to prepare a list of deployed police voters to avoid the incidents of double voting.

8.0.6 ELECTORAL LEGAL REFORMS

EMBs, civil society and the international development partners should work on electoral legislations, rules and regulations to address challenges that were encountered in course of the 2018 elections.

Urgent action should be taken to guarantee the independence of NEC and the security of Tenure for the Commissioners.

NEC should protect its independence as provided for in the 1991 constitution to discourage the undue interference of government and the judiciary in their processes²³.

In order to strengthen the independence of the electoral commissioners, NEW calls for a review of the current 5 year renewable contract for commissioners to guarantee their tenure of office as is the case for judges of the Superior Court. Removal of commissioners from office apart from exhausting their tenure of office must be subject to the same condition of judges of the Superior Court as provided for in Section 137 (5) and (7) in the 1991 constitution²⁴.

NEW calls for the enactment of fixed dates for free, fair and credible Presidential and Parliamentary elections: to avoid the commission having to consult with the President before the proclamation of election dates. This will strengthen transparency, fairness and a level

²³ Chapter 4 Section 32. (11) In the exercise of any function vested in it by this constitution, the electoral commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.

²⁴ Part 5 Section 137.(7) A Judge of the Superior Court of the Judicature shall be removed from the office of the President –

- c. if the question of his removal from office has been referred to a tribunal appointed under subsection (5) and the tribunal has recommended to the President that he ought to be removed from office; and
- d. if his removal has been approved by a two-thirds majority in Parliament

playing field for all intending to aspire for elective positions. NEW further calls for a schedule of transfer of power that would allow aggrieved parties seek redress in the courts.

Specific actions should be taken for affirmative action for Women's and PWD's participation and representation in elections. Government should enact a bill to have a special seat for women at district level for the purpose of Parliamentary representation.

8.0.7 ENFORCEMENT POWERS TO PPRC TO CHECK THE CONDUCT OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Systems, including legal and process reforms should be undertaken to get political parties to account for their violations of electoral laws of the country, and violation of the Political Parties Code of Conduct. A particular focus should be placed on campaign conduct, internal democracy, and elections financing.

8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1.0 GOVERNMENT

NEW calls on the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL)

- To reopen discussions on the Constitutional Review Report with the aim to bring out recommendations that will improve on Elections, Democracy and Good Governance.
- To set aside every year funds for the conduct of succeeding elections.
- To protect the complete independence of NEC in compliance with chapter 4 section 32 (11) of the 1991 constitution.

8.1.1 NEC

NEW calls on the National Electoral Commission (NEC)

- To guard its independence and its function in compliance with chapter 4 section 32 (11) of the 1991 constitution.
- To review the policy of 25% +/- variance of the population quota in the BD with the aim to bring down the percentage variance to reflect a near equity in the population per constituency.
- To set the criteria/formula for determining number of seats in parliament reflecting population.
- To take overall responsibility for voter registration until there is a repeal of the legal provision that gives NEC the mandate to avoid the conflict in roles with the NCRA.

- To strengthen timely civic and voter education on the different stages in the electoral cycle for citizens understanding and participation.
- To pay particular attention to its preparatory arrangements for activities so as to improve on its time management this is crucial especially for the planning needs of other stakeholders.

8.1.2 PPRC

NEW calls on the PPRC

- To advocate for a review of the criteria to be a retired justice to be appointed as chair of the commission
- To establish institutional presence and set up mediation structures at district level.
- To mount pressure for the Political Parties Registration and Regulation Bill to be enacted
- To strengthen All Political Parties Women’s Association (APPWA) and All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA) by including funds for their support in the PPRC subvention.
- To set a standard for the registration of political parties that will ensure the registered parties function in between elections.
- To incorporate political education as a core responsibility.

8.1.3 SLP/ONS

NEW calls on the SLP/ONS

- To develop and publicise the police rules of engagement around elections well in advance of the key electoral activities. This will avoid the imposition of vehicular restriction which is effected as a strategy to minimize violence on elections day.
- To display neutrality, independence and professionalism in the execution of policing the electoral process.
- To speedily investigate and charge to court electoral offences, complaints and all matters emanating from the electoral process.
- To immediately without further delay charge the alleged double registration cases to the Elections Offences Court.
- The ONS to devise ways to secure funding for the implementation of elections strategy well in advance of the electoral activities.

8.1.4 POLITICAL PARTIES

NEW calls on all Political Parties

- To understand that they are operating within the democratic arrangement and should respect alternative political affiliation and views thereby exhibit political tolerance.
- To reactivate the All Political Parties Association (APPA) as a platform to push common interest and goals for democratic survival in Sierra Leone.
- To completely desist from attacking members of the international community and observers helping Sierra Leone's democracy promotion.
- To reflect on the low level of women and PWDs representation in the 2018 elections and institute voluntary party quotas as an affirmative action for their inclusion.

8.1.5 IMC

NEW calls on the IMC

- To review the media code of ethics on elections taking into account the role of social media in spreading of hate speech during elections and to enforce all necessary provisions.

8.1.6 MEDIA

NEW calls on the media

- To make public their media time allocation and general rules of engagement with political parties during elections.
- SLAJ and the Guild of Editors to institute a self-assessment mechanism as a check on the proliferation of hate speech in the media.

NEW recognize that the Bar Association of Sierra Leone has a role to play to advise the public on legal matters and since the elections are guided by constitutional and legal instruments, it is prudent that the Bar shows more pro-activeness in reaching out to the public with clarity on the interpretation of contentious and conflicting areas in the electoral laws.

NEW calls on all Sierra Leoneans to safeguard our young and fledgling democracy: by participating and contributing positively to the various phases of the electoral cycle.

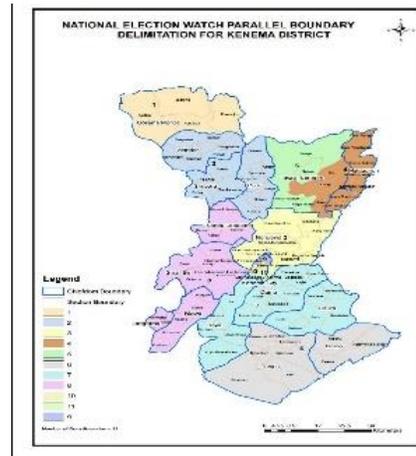
9.0 THE ELECTORAL CYCLE IN GRAPHS AND DIAGRAMS

9.0.1 BOUNDARY DELIMITATION

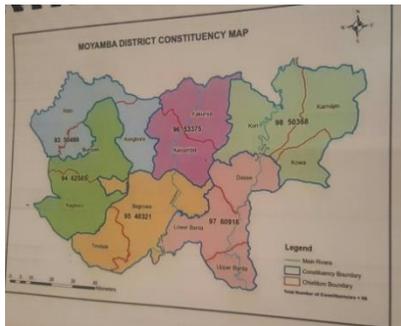
The following maps NEC's Viz-a-viz NEWs parallel BD representing communities in constituencies in each of the sample districts.



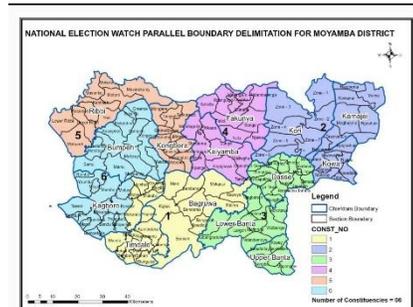
NEC Kenema District Map



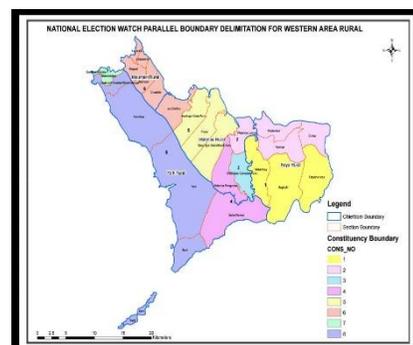
NEW Kenema District Map



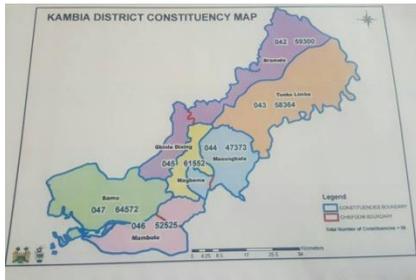
NEC Moyamba District Map



NEW Moyamba District Map

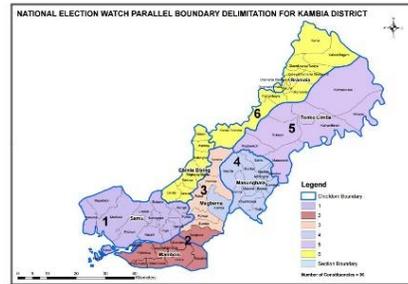


NEC Western Rural District Map



NEC Kambia Map

NEW Western Rural District Map

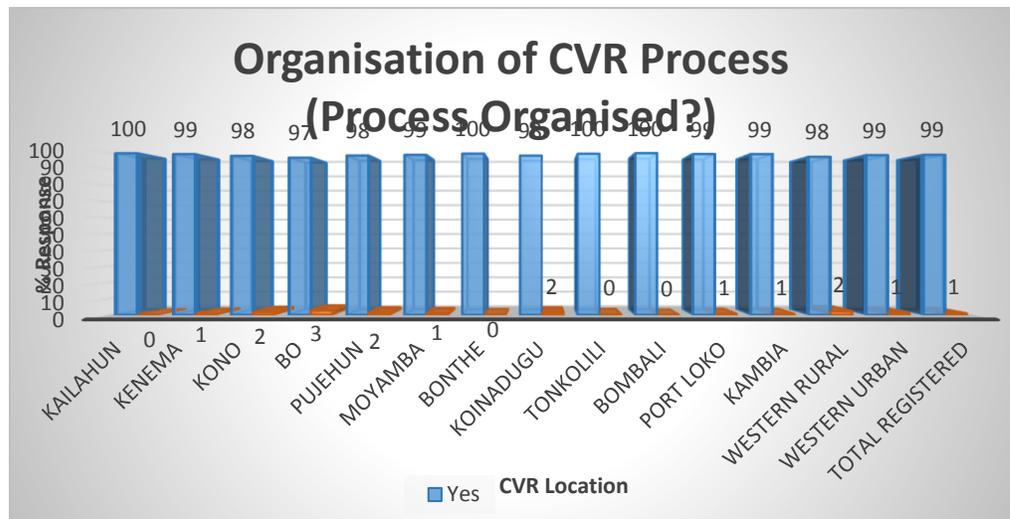


NEW Kambia Map

9.0.2 NATIONAL CIVIL AND VOTER REGISTRATION

Chart 1: Organization of the Process

The data in chart 1 depicts how organized the CVR process was in the sample registration centres that NEW observed in all districts across the country. The data shows that the registration process was 99% organized in all fourteen districts.

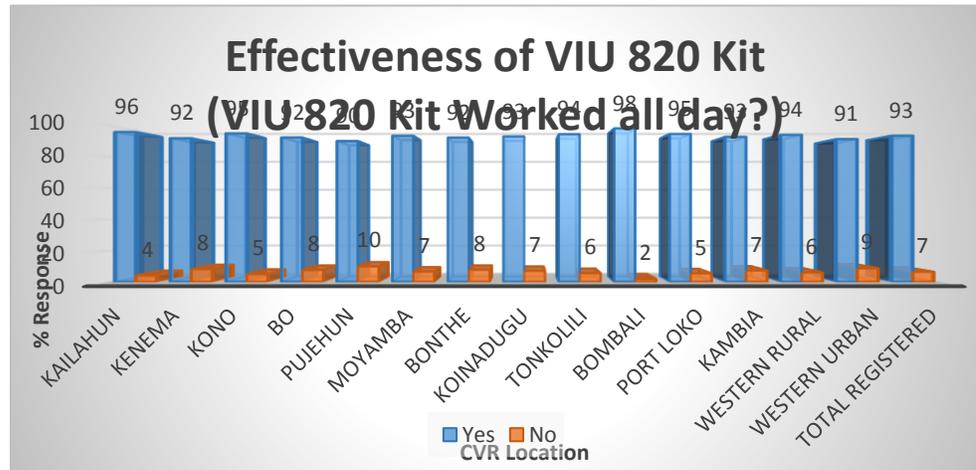


Effectiveness of the VIU 820 Kit

The VIU 800 and 820 kits used for the registration process comprises of a camera, scanner, computer, Battery Termer Printer and Solar Panel. Some of the machines froze intermittently during the registration while others completely shut down causing delays in the process. In some instances, especially cloudy or rainy days (absence of sunlight), the solar panels were not effective and unable to charge the batteries of the scanner, computer and printer. In some areas community people obliged the use of their generators.

Chart 2: Effectiveness of VIU 820 Kit

The effectiveness of the VIU 800/820 kit is measured in the Chart 2. Generally, the VIU 800/ 820 Kits worked effectively all day at most centres in all the districts. However the data indicates that an average of 7% of the kits at the centres NEW observed in all fourteen districts did not work properly all day.



Availability of the CVR Forms

Below is a chart showing the availability of the CVR forms during the registration process.

Chart 3: Availability of Registration Forms

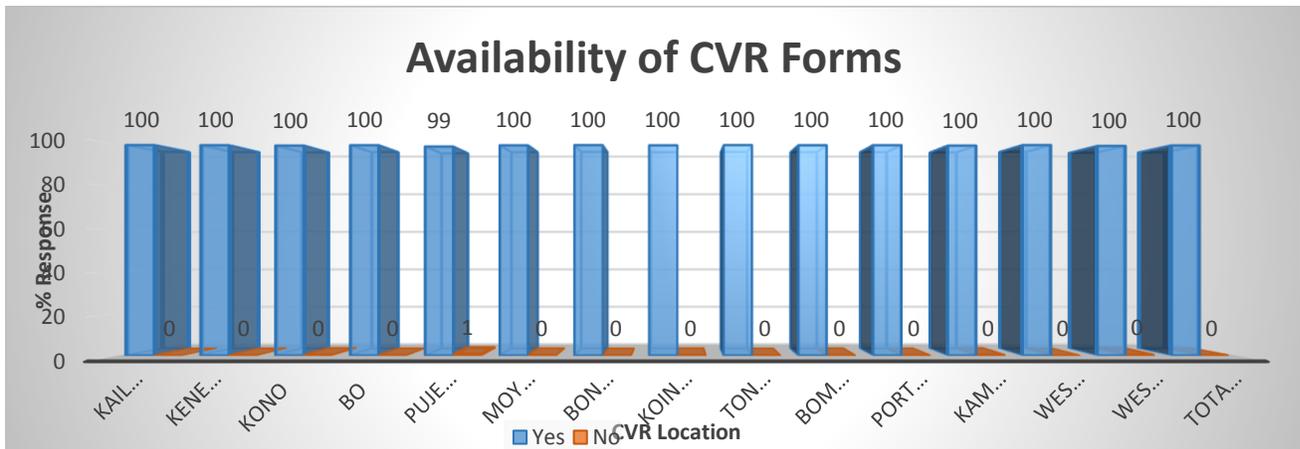
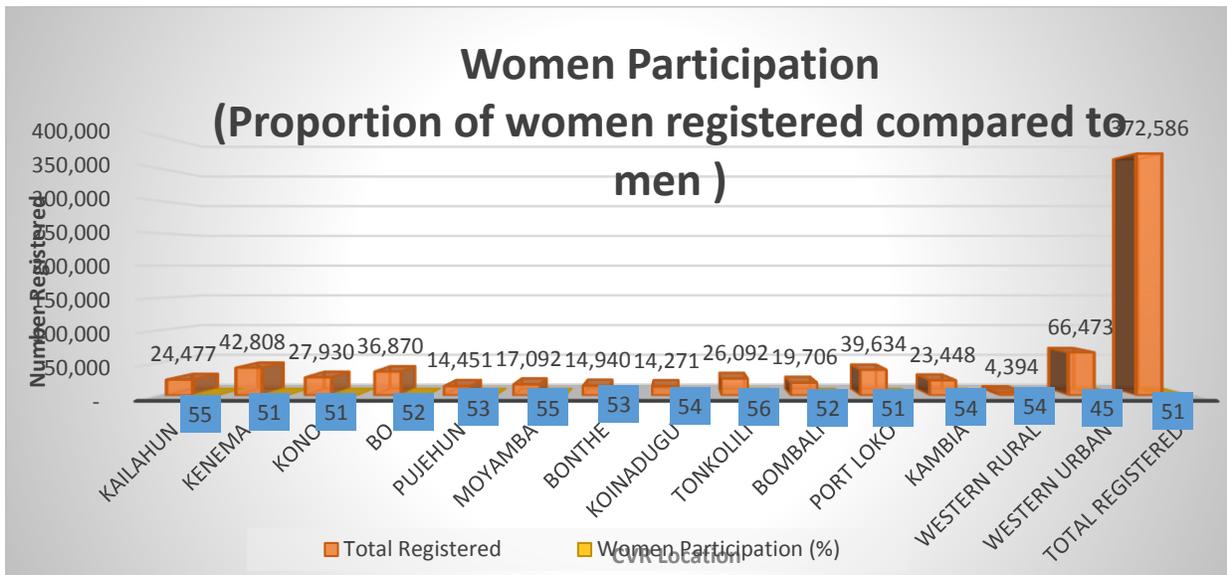


Chart 3 above, captures the availability of CVR forms at the registration centres during the process. The data shows that the CVR forms were available throughout the process in all fourteen districts across the country.

9.0.3 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND PWDs

Citizens’ turnout especially in urban areas was high. These include women, the aged and Persons with Disability (PWDs) who turned out in their numbers with enthusiasm and a sense of fulfilling their civic commitment to register.

Chart 4: Percentage of Registered Women



The chart above represents the number of women (and their corresponding percentages) that participated/ registered in the sample registration centres that NEW observed across the fourteen districts during the Civil and Voter Registration (CVR) Process. The study shows, as indicated in the figure above, that a considerable number of women participated / registered during the (CVR) process. Across the country in all fourteen districts but one, Western Urban Area where 45% of the total registration are women, more women are shown to have registered/ participated than men. An average of 51% of the total registered voters across the country are women.

Percentage of Registered PWDs

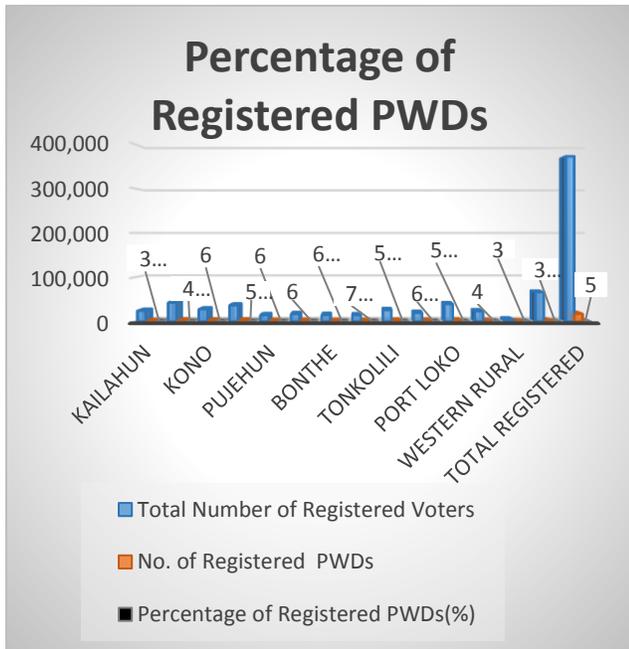


Chart 5: Percentage of Registered PWDs

Chart 5 represents the percentage of PWDs that were registered in the sample registration centers that NEW observed across the fourteen districts during the Civil and Voter Registration (CVR) Process. The study shows, that the percentage of PWDs that registered across the fourteen districts are all in single digits. Koinadugu recorded the highest percentage of

registered PWDs with 7% while Kailahun, Western Rural and Western Urban recorded the lowest with 3% each. The average percentage of registered PWDs nationwide is 5%.

Upon the completion of the 28th day that marked the end of the initial period of the National Civil and Voter Registration (NCVR) process, National Electoral Commission (NEC) announced a fourteen (14) days extension (17th – 30th April 2017) of the registration period. National Election Watch (NEW) in consultations with and approval by the Department for International Development (DFID) observed the extension period.

NEW, in its observation strategy, observed four (4) out of the fourteen (14) days extension period- two days in each week April 21st, 22nd and April 28th and 29th 2017. The chart below show registration centres that recorded zero registration during the extension period.

Chart 6: Centers that recorded Zero Registration during the Extension Period.

This chart records days when zero registration was done at the registration centres across the country.

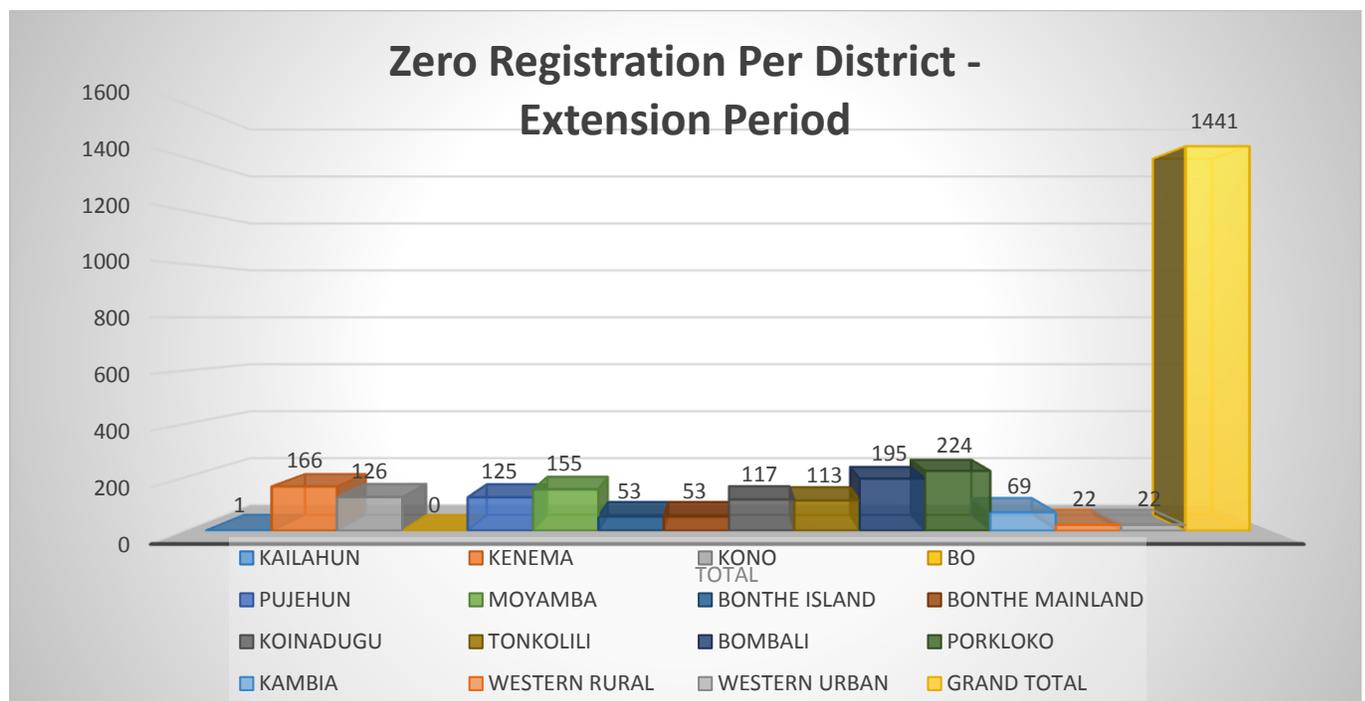
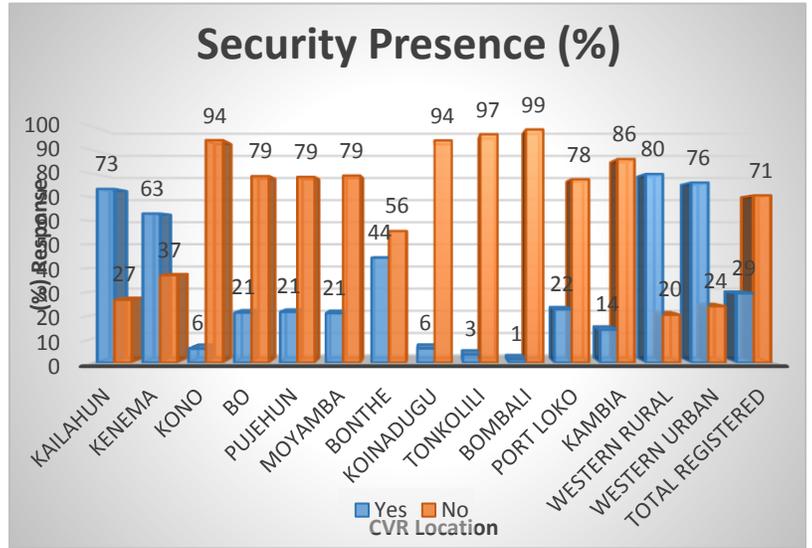


Chart 7: Security Presence

NEW noted with dismay the absence of security personnel who were for the first time assigned the role of queue controllers, while maintaining peace at the registration centers. Only 24% of all checklists recorded security presence in the centers NEW observed. Their absence caused a lot of tensions in some centers especially in the Western Urban District where community youths were selling their spaces in the queue



Gives information of the security presence at the sample registration centers

9.0.3 ELECTION DAY

PVT for Presidential Elections Results

Distribution of Votes per District in First-Round Presidential Elections

	Kamara	Mansaray	Sum-Samana	Tarawally	Bah	Yumkella	O'Dweyer	Sandy	Conteh	Margai	Williams	Ngobeh	Bio	Sowa	Kabuta	Cole
Kailahun	12.3%	1.4%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	1.9%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	1.1%	80.6%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%
Kenema	11.1%	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	1.7%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.7%	83.8%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Kono	20.0%	0.7%	50.2%	0.7%	0.8%	2.8%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	21.8%	1.0%	0.3%	0.4%
Bombali	87.8%	1.3%	0.6%	0.3%	0.1%	2.7%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	6.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Falaba	50.8%	1.7%	1.0%	0.5%	0.6%	11.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%	30.1%	0.3%	0.9%	0.7%
Koinadugu	61.5%	2.2%	0.8%	1.1%	3.0%	11.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	18.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
Tonkolili	77.4%	2.2%	0.7%	0.8%	0.3%	7.9%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	9.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Kambia	40.4%	1.3%	0.6%	1.0%	2.3%	39.7%	0.5%	0.4%	1.0%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	11.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
Karene	81.4%	1.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%	8.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	5.8%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
Port Loko	71.9%	4.3%	0.7%	0.9%	0.4%	10.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	9.6%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
Bo	7.8%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	2.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	1.0%	0.0%	0.6%	87.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
Bonthe	5.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	1.1%	0.1%	0.6%	90.7%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%
Moyamba	18.9%	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%	1.8%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	4.1%	0.2%	0.8%	70.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%
Pujehun	5.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	0.8%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	1.3%	0.1%	1.3%	88.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%
Western Area Rural	54.6%	0.7%	1.5%	0.3%	0.2%	5.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	36.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Western Area Urban	57.3%	0.3%	0.8%	0.2%	0.2%	7.9%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	32.8%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%

NEW's 1st Round PVT Presidential Elections Results Compared to NEC

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%

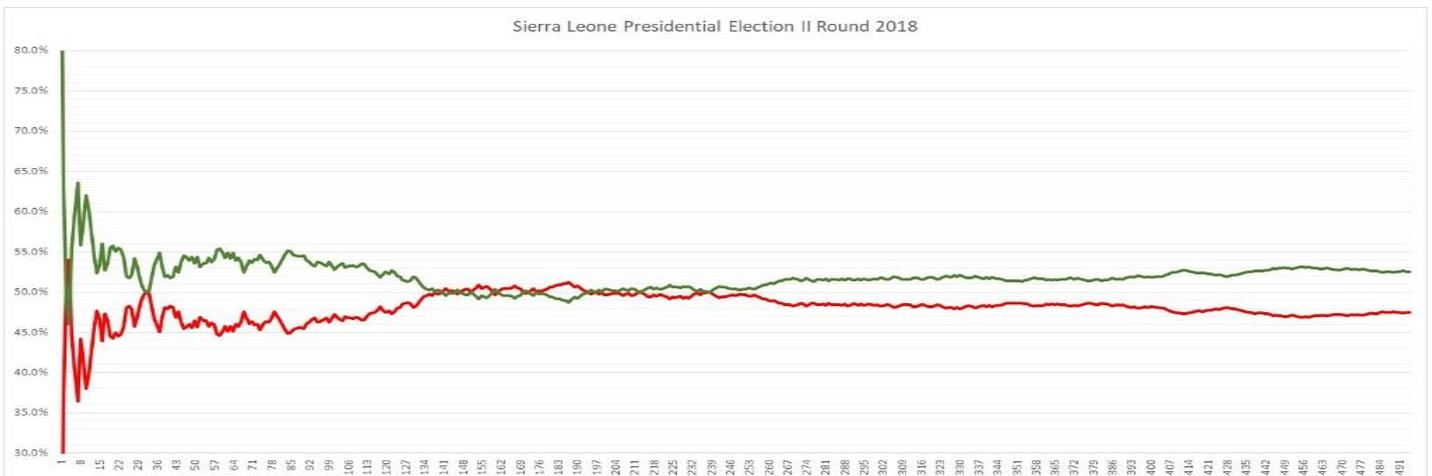
Presidential Run-off - Comparative analyses of NEW's PVT projection against NEC's official results

District	NEW Kamara	NEW Bio	NEC Kamara	NEC Bio	Difference NEW/NEC
Kailahun	10.5%	89.5%	10.04%	89.96%	0.50%
Kenema	11.7%	88.3%	11.45%	88.55%	0.22%
Kono	27.9%	72.1%	27.39%	72.61%	0.51%
Bombali	92.2%	7.8%	90.68%	9.32%	1.53%
Falaba	57.2%	42.8%	57.23%	42.77%	-0.01%
Koinadugu	74.5%	25.5%	67.91%	32.09%	6.61%
Tonkolili	86.5%	13.5%	86.31%	13.69%	0.18%
Kambia	63.8%	36.2%	69.75%	30.25%	-5.99%
Karene	83.6%	16.4%	88.94%	11.06%	-5.32%
Port Loko	86.0%	14.0%	85.01%	14.99%	0.97%
Bo	8.6%	91.4%	10.66%	89.34%	-2.02%
Bonthe	4.1%	95.9%	4.76%	95.24%	-0.65%
Moyamba	19.5%	80.5%	17.91%	82.09%	1.57%
Pujehun	6.4%	93.6%	8.39%	91.61%	-2.03%
Western Area Rural	57.5%	42.5%	59.31%	40.69%	-1.77%
Western Area Urban	60.2%	39.8%	60.98%	39.02%	-0.78%
NATIONWIDE	47.46%	52.54%	48.19%	51.81%	-0.73%

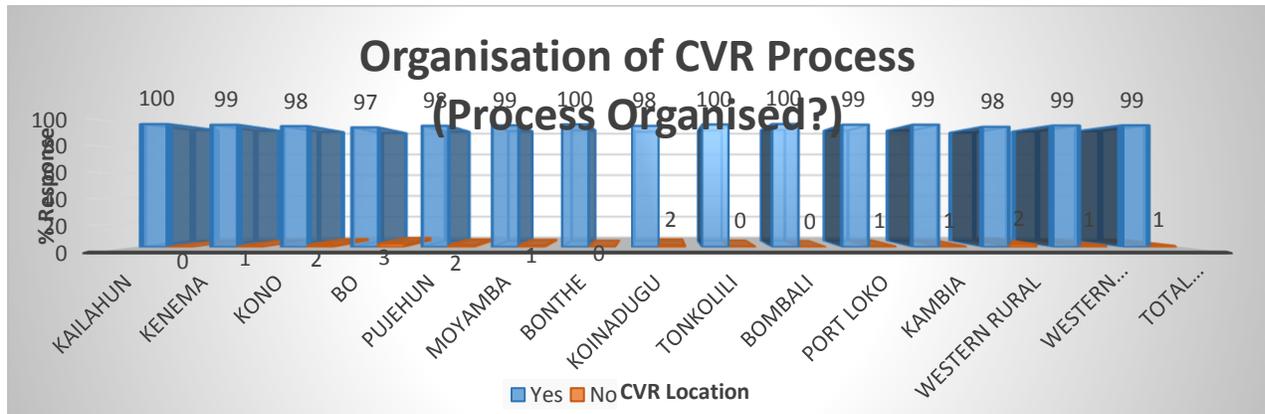
Run-off Indicative Results per district

	Kamara-APC	Bio- SLPP
Kailahun	10.5%	89.5%
Kenema	11.7%	88.3%
Kono	27.9%	72.1%
Bombali	92.2%	7.8%
Falaba	57.2%	42.8%
Koinadugu	74.5%	25.5%
Tonkolili	86.5%	13.5%
Kambia	63.8%	36.2%
Karene	83.6%	16.4%
Port Loko	86.0%	14.0%
Bo	8.6%	91.4%
Bonthe	4.1%	95.9%
Moyamba	19.5%	80.5%
Pujehun	6.4%	93.6%
Western Area Rural	57.5%	42.5%
Western Area Urban	60.2%	39.8%

Convergence Graph

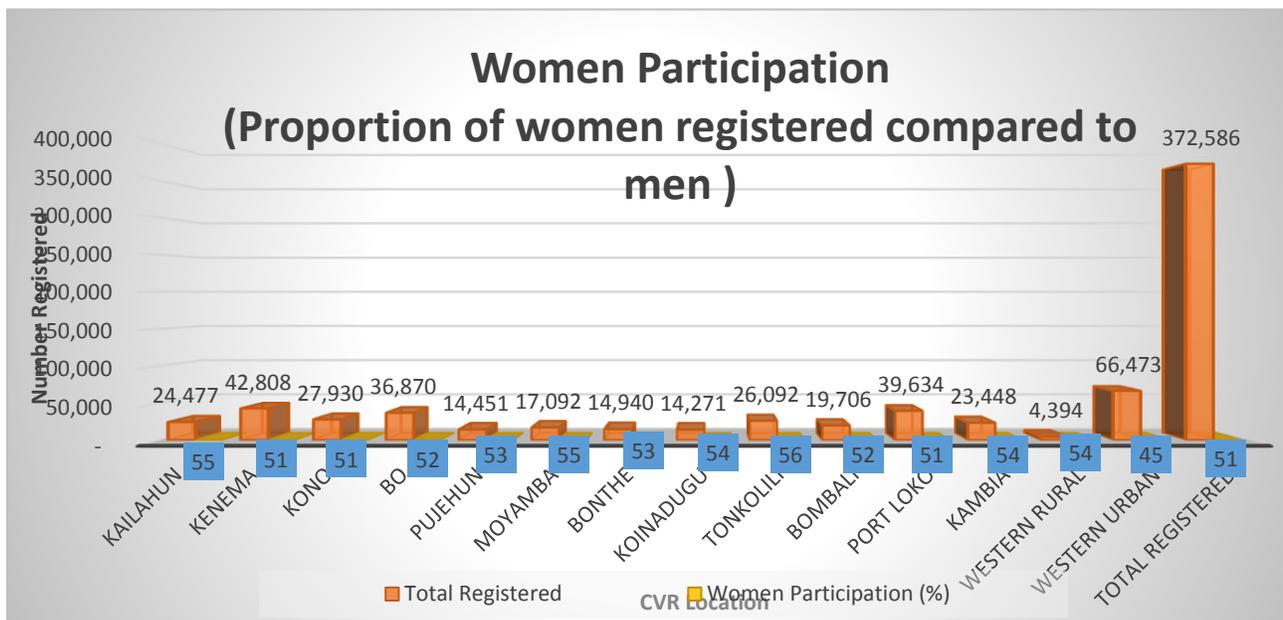


Organization of the process

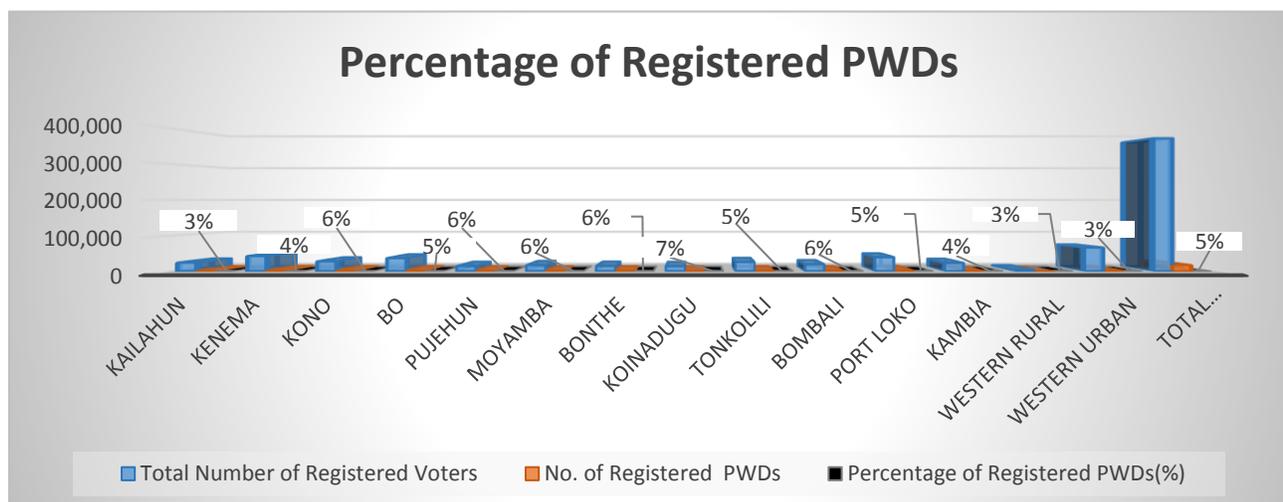


PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN PWDs IN THE ELECTION

Percentage of Registered Women

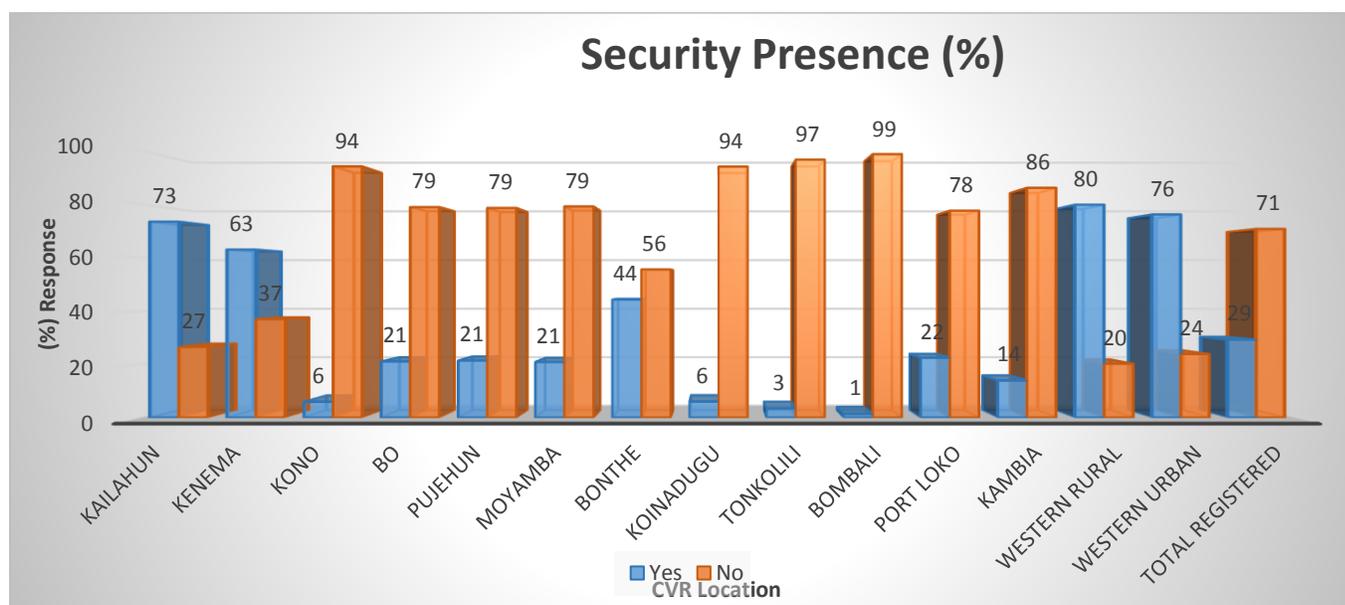


Percentage of Registered PWDs



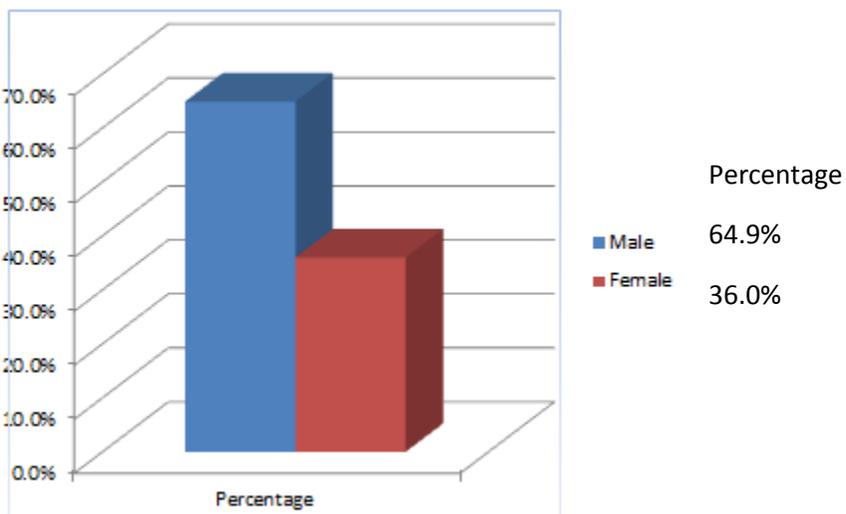
THE PERFORMANCE OF SECURITY FORCES

Security Presence



DISAGGREGATED OBSERVERS DEPLOYMENT BY DISTRICT						
NO	DISTRICT	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL
1	PVT	379	74.9	127	25.1	506
2	SUPERVISORS	401	70.6	167	29.4	568
3	DEMMOS	9	52.9	8	47.1	17
4	WEMMOs	384	86.1	62	13.9	446
	INCIDENT REPORTERS					22
5	REGIONAL TALLY CENTER OBS.	9	60.0	6	40.0	15
6	KAILAHUN	398	70.6	166	29.4	564
7	KENEMA	642	67.9	304	32.1	946
8	KONO	402	64.3	223	35.7	625
9	BO	694	72.7	260	27.3	954
10	BONTHE	219	69.1	98	30.9	317
11	MOYAMBA	286	57.1	215	42.9	501

12	PUJEHUN	237	68.9	107	31.1	344
13	BOMBALI	352	55.4	283	44.6	635
14	KOINADUGU	183	64.0	103	36.0	286
15	FALABA	151	66.2	77	33.8	228
16	TONKOLILI	442	65.3	235	34.7	677
17	KAMBIA	352	66.9	174	33.1	526
18	KARENE	278	79.9	70	20.1	348
19	PORTLOKO	412	52.7	370	47.3	782
20	W/RURAL	577	63.1	338	36.9	915
21	W/URBAN	1085	55.1	883	44.9	1968
	TOTALS	7,892	64.7	3,906	32.0	12,190



10.0 ANNEX



NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH (NEW)

A Coalition of Civic and Nongovernmental Organizations
8 Sawi Drive, Off Kingharman Road, Freetown.
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www.nationalelectionwatchsl.org

Press Statement for immediate Release

FREETOWN, 28th November, 2016: NEW calls on NEC to release the specific date for Elections in 2018 now

National Election Watch (NEW) has closely monitored preparatory activities for the 2018 Presidential, Parliamentary and the postponed Local Government Elections and now calls on the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to declare by proclamation the specific date the elections will be conducted in February 2018. This call underscores the fact that the date for the elections has implications for would be aspirants in public office. By law for anyone to contest the election as member of parliament such a person if paid from the consolidated fund must resign his/her employment twelve (12) months before Election day. NEW is equally concerned that the undue delay in pronouncing the actual election date does not create a level playing field in the electoral arena, since the date is set by the Chief Electoral Commissioner in consultation with the president. NEW urges that this important phase is completed and the date declared without further delay.

NEW commends NEC for the transparent manner in which they have conducted activities leading to the elections so far including the boundary delimitation exercise for which Boundary Delimitation Monitoring Committees were set up at national as well as district levels with composition from other Election Management Bodies, election stake holders and civil society representatives. NEW is however concerned that the electoral calendar is under potential threat of not been respected due to government's current engagement with re-districting (i.e. dividing districts and creating new districts). This action has serious implications for the electoral calendar and will nullify the work done on the boundary delimitation so far; it would mean re-doing the exercise all over again. The cost implication by no means speaks to the

current economic situation where austerity measures have imposed so much suffering on the people of this country. The time involved in re- doing the boundary delimitation will also require a new electoral calendar that will undermine the constitution of this country.

Furthermore, NEW wants to call for the appointment of a substantive chairman for the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) as this must be addressed immediately. NEW wishes to restate the important role of the PPRC as the Institution responsible for registering and regulating the conduct of political Parties and their supporters. They also mediate intra and inter party conflicts to ensure political tolerance and a violent- free election.

NEW is happy that NEC is now taking the lead in the development of the voters register and their participation in the ongoing recruitment process of registration staff for the 2018 elections is welcomed. Noting however that too much conflicting information on the process have gone out to the public, NEW urges NEC to immediately engage in a rigorous civic education campaign so that citizens are not disenfranchised because they could not get the correct information on the voter registration exercise. NEW also notes with concern the continuing shift of the registration date, moving from October 2016 to December 2016 and now to February 2017. This signals an indication of unpreparedness and therefore NEW calls on government who has taken 100% responsibility to fund the exercise, to honour this commitment in order to ensure the voter registration is done in time respecting the constitutional provision.

NEW would like the public to know that its electoral observation effort is to add value to the entire electoral cycle through activities that allow for greater participation of citizens in the process to ensure citizens' ownership and confidence. As a way to engage with the entire electoral cycle activities in an organized and focused manner, NEW is in the process of developing a consultative 2017 -2021 Strategic Plan. A national consultative meeting has been held bringing together representation from all 14 electoral districts with participants drawn from NEC, PPRC, Office of National Security (ONS), Sierra Leone Police(SLP), National Commission for Democracy (NCD),Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone (HRCSL), All peoples Congress (APC), Sierra Leone Peoples Party SLPP),All Political Party Women's Association (APPWA), All Political Party Youth Association(APPYA), NEW membership and other civil society organizations. A broad framework was developed in a two day national consultative meeting. Regional consultative meetings have also been held capturing regional specific issues and a final national validation meeting with different stakeholders will be held in December 2016.

NEW appreciates the European Delegation in Sierra Leone for providing funds to support NEW in positioning itself to meaningfully engage with the 2018 electoral process.

NEW wishes to restate its resolve to continuously engage stake holders in the electoral processes on a constructive basis and therefore have built strong collaboration with different actors whose activities have bearing on the electoral processes.

National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of local and international organizations in Sierra Leone with a common objective of supporting free and fair elections.

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