



NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH (NEW)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Freetown, 7th March, 2018: Mid-Day Statement on the Set-up and Opening of Polling Stations

This mid-day statement focuses on the setup and opening of polling stations and the findings are based on reports National Election Watch (NEW) has received from 97% out of the 506 Priority Observers deployed to polling stations proportionally nationwide and 507 supervisors across the country. Percentages reported do not cover all 11,122 polling stations but are statistically representative of the country as a whole and do provide credible data on emerging national trends and patterns.

Preliminary Findings:

Polling Stations Set-Up and Opening:

1. Polling stations opening:

Between 7:00am to 7:30am, 81% of polling stations where observers were assigned had opened. However, 11% opened between 10:00 to 10:30am.

2. NEC officials present:

Observers noted that 93% of polling stations had at least one female staff member present.

3. Party agents present at opening of polling stations: At all polling stations observed, agents of political parties were present and 94% had at least three party agents.

4. Availability of equipment and election materials at opening: 94% of polling stations observed reported that all sensitive materials (including the ballots, ballot stamp, booths and screens, indelible ink, and voter list were available). However, 4% reported that there were not enough voting screens.

5. Suitability of polling stations: 80% of observers reported that polling stations were suitably located. 4% noted that polling stations were not easily accessible to people with disabilities. A further 4% reported that polling stations were far to reach.

6. Organization of polling stations: 88% reported that polling stations were adequately organized.

Critical Incidents: District incident reporters noted the following:

Bonthe Island: Ballot papers for the Mayoral Election were not available. However, ballot papers for the other elections were available. NEC has taken a decision on this matter that the Mayoral election has been postponed.

There was also a report from MOS Koinadugu in Koinadugu District (Polling Center 6130) of disruption attributed to the lack of crowd control. The incident led to a brief interruption of voting but the situation was brought under control.

We continue to receive other incident reports from the field and we shall subsequently report on the same.

NEW congratulates the people of Sierra Leone for a peaceful and successful start of the elections, noting in particular a high turnout.

National Election Watch (NEW) is a Coalition of Local and International Organizations in Sierra Leone with a common objective of supporting free, fair and peaceful elections. NEW will continue to observe the Electoral processes and report accordingly.

NEW is part of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium supported by UKAID. Further support is also received from the European Union Delegation in Sierra Leone and the Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA) to enhance technology in Elections Observation.