Report on the Electoral Process

National Election Watch (NEW)

2008 Local Council Election
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Executive Summary

The July 5, 2008 Local Council Election, conducted by the National Electoral Commission (NEC), marked the second time since the Lomé Peace Accord was signed in July 1999 that Sierra Leoneans have been able to choose their local officials. Local government in Sierra Leone revolves around a system of 19 councils, five city councils, one Municipal Council in the Municipality of Bonthe, and thirteen District Councils. Local council is the development engine for the nation, as the government sector closest to the people and the communities. As such, fairly electing local council representation is an important process in the development and sustainable peace of Sierra Leone.

National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of civil society organizations and international and national NGOs established primarily to observe the electioneering process. NEW’s main purpose of observing elections is to ensure the electoral process is transparent and to increase the public’s confidence in the election and how it is run. NEW has observed elections since 2002. NEW fielded 3200 observers and 106 supervisors on Election Day, covering all the polling centres. In addition to Election Day, NEW also observed and reported on the boundary delimitation exercise, nomination of candidates, update of voter registration and exhibition of the provisional voters register, and campaigning.

Overall the election established a credible process including the logistics and the management aspects raising the standard for operations of elections processes. NEC displayed an organisational capacity and internal governance that is new and welcomed. There are, however, significant areas that civil society and other stakeholders need to follow up and that require more insights and further improvement to advance the democratic process in Sierra Leone. Supporting an open process that is managed by Sierra Leoneans and owned by the population, which seeks also to advance the peace building framework is important and will reap the most benefits for Sierra Leone in both the short and long run.

It was clear that the nomination process is where the real contest is, which reflects that the electoral structure is designed for political parties, and that achieving the party’s symbol is where the actual contest lies. As such, the real issues of district development that are at the heart of the elections get lost in the contest for the symbol. Also NEW observed the campaign rhetoric ensured that access to national resources was a key issue on the agenda and feeds into the politics of exclusion played out ensuring that the real development issues are buried.

Democratic political processes are inherently divisive, as they are grounded on competition between individuals and parties. We have to raise the standard on election practice indeed on political practice in Sierra Leone. Intimidation, harassment and violence representing a lack of political tolerance and disrespect for diversity should become old news and we should leverage the opportunity that National Election Commission has provided, through the management of the electoral processes, to instill a sense of fair play and good governance generally. NEW recognizes that most Sierra Leoneans want this. The standard that Sierra Leone is searching for is one in which a fair and clean process gives people the opportunity to make choices in a tolerant and informed manner. By supporting the electoral process with critical observations, NEW hopes that Sierra Leone has the opportunity to enhance not only the elections process, but the status of political representation and engagement as a whole.

NEW proffers the following recommendations that will help achieve the aims and aspirations of the local councils:
General

- Sierra Leoneans are discouraged to support the notion of uncontested seats. The competition of multiple candidates ensures that registered voters can make a choice, which is a fundamental right of being a citizen in any nation. Making a choice around the representation of your citizens enhances participation in this developing democracy.
- Voter education should be an active and sustained campaign of civic education that goes beyond how to vote, addressing the key issues of the benefits of citizen participation and development. It should be sustained between elections to educate people on the issues of good governance and democratic leadership;
- Local and traditional authorities should not interfere in the right of each registered voter to exercise that right freely and without harassment and intimidation
- The PPRC must be more assertive in its role in ensuring political pluralism, fair play and tolerance, and equally in serving as a deterrent to violence. The Commission should also institute sustained and popularized mechanisms for mediation, intervention and problem solving on election issues by the PPRC as well as on campaign finances and Code of Conduct enforcement;
- Registration of voters should be undertaken before the nomination of candidates, as this would deter possible fraud, especially under-age registration;
- The Code of Conduct for political parties should be revisited to ensure that enforcement mechanisms and self regulation are built into it to ensure the Rule of Law is maintained; and,
- The local council structure should be reexamined with a view to how the political nature of the structure affects the main function and role as the development engine.

Political Parties

- Internal democracy and governance of political parties should be improved;
- To be a national political party candidates should be fielded in all the seats available;
- Parties should declare campaign finances; and
- Political parties should respect PPRC Code of Conduct by instituting internal regulatory procedures, ensuring that party stalwarts are held culpable for elections misdemeanor and violence.

PPRC

- Re-visit the rules of engagement with political parties as sanctions for non-compliance to PPRC Code of Conduct is of essence;
- Enact the inclusion of a women’s agenda in the party’s manifestos as a party regulation; and
- Should make a public report to government and civil society on their activities and interventions.

NEC

- As the gate keeper to election process,
  - NEC should institutionalize election observation and monitoring into the electoral process;
  - The nomination process should be revisited to ensure that criteria for nomination are supporting development and that communities are involved in identifying their candidates for Local Council;
  - The dead line for candidates to step down should be aligned with the scheduling of printing of the ballots and penalties should be levied against candidates who step down too close to Election Day;
Ensure that voter ID processes are conducted in such a way that they are realistic and accessible to the large part of the voting population

- Employees of NEC whether short term or permanent should be held accountable for responsibilities, especially election-related fraud;
- Increase partnerships at district and chiefdom level for more effective voter education; and
- Institute regular meetings with civil society and political stakeholders at district, regional and national level and;
- Convene a committee including civil society, other electoral stakeholders and government to explore issues of electoral reform.

**Civil Society**

- Implement a coordinating point for electoral activities at national and district level;
- Develop self-regulation tools for the observation code of conduct and penalties levied for non-compliance;
- Monitor the Sierra Leone Police Force to ensuring neutrality in the discharge of their responsibilities;
- Monitor the media and reporting during election processes; and
- Undertake post-election monitoring in order to ensure fair play in cases relating to electoral petitions and offences.

**Government**

- To support a larger percentage of the budget for elections to ensure national ownership;
- Enforce the Government orders which specifies that whilst in office, Public officials should ensure that they represent the interest of all Sierra Leoneans and refrain from being overly partisan during electoral processes, as this may prove intimidating and thereby undermine space for democratic political representation; and
- Ensure that reform processes vis a vis legislation and the constitution related to elections are conducted in such a way as to gather all the stakeholders in consultation keeping to the spirit of the Lomé agreement.
Acknowledgements

The National Election Watch (NEW) is grateful to DFID who provided financial support through NDI and guidance through its PIVOT strategy to ensure that local government elections are observed by local observers. NDI provided technical support to NEW by reframing the election checklist to capture data to inform NEW reports and expert advice. NEW also appreciates support from the UNDP which enabled NEW to deploy more observers. NEW is grateful to the Canadian Government who through their Embassy Fund supported important meetings and other costs.

Bravo to all civil society groups and other stakeholders whose participation and support as NEW members contributed to a successful observation process namely:

3 L Development Foundation; 50/50 Group; A B U; A F Y I D- SL; A I M; Action for Community Task Sierra Leone; Action for Peace and Development; Action Plus; ACT-SL; Agbomumma Organization; Agip Youth Social Club; Agriculturist; Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School Student Union; Ammogan; Amnesty International; Amulema Development Association; Assurance Youth; Awareness Social Club; B B A ; B P T U; B Y D O; B Y S; Bajito Onda Africa; Bagruwa Youths Organization; Bambara Town Women; Baptist Women's Association; Bat Kanu Football Organization; Ben Hirsh; Bike Riders Association; Bo Anglican Peace Network; Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement; Bo-Pujehun District Association (BPDA ; Boat Owners Association; Bombali Driver Union; Bonthe; Cultural Heros Association; Bonthe District Human Right Committee; Bonthe District Traders Union; Bonthe Drama Group; Bottom Mango Youths with a Vision; Bum Descendants Association; C C F; C C Y E –SL; C O J A; C R T P D; C W A; C Y G; Campaign for Good Governance; Caritas Kenema; Cassettes Sellers Association; Catholic Community Njala University College; Catholic Community Njaluahun; Catholic Youths Organization; CEFCOD; CEM; Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR), Centre for Democracy, Human Rights and Development; Centre for the Coordination of Youths Activities; Children’s Forum; Children's Welfare and Development Program; Civil Society Movement Sierra Leone (CSM), Coalition for Civil Society and Human Right Activists; CODYA; CODEP; Community Animation Rural Development; Community Base Organization; Community Teachers Association; Community Bio Diversity (CBan); Concern for Development Human Rights (CoDHERA); Conciliation Resources; Council of Churches in Sierra Leone; Current Evangelism Ministries (CEM), Da Active and Progressive Youths in Development; DACASA; Dain Dem Bem Federation; Dama Youth Coalition; DAMSU; Defense for Children; Descrete Women Organization; Dibia Youth Development Organization; Dignity Now; Disabled Rights Movement; E F A; E P T; Eastern Polytechnic; Eastern Polytechnic Association of Journalists; F C M P I; FAFA; Falaba Student Association; Father Forgive; FFO; Forum For African Women Educationalists; Foundation for Development, Democracy and Human Rights (FoDDHR); Forum of Conscience; Gender G P A; Gbangbama Youth Development Association; Gbotima Development Association; Gbotima Farmers’s Association; Gender Awareness Program; Generating Group Empowerment (GEL); Girls Wing; Grace Land Counseling Services; Grassroot Empowerment for Self Reliance; Gumbu Youth; Health for All; HIV/AIDS Awareness Club; Humanist Watch; ; Initiative for Community Empowerment (ICE); Independent Radio Network; Initiatives For Community Development; Institute of Public Administration and Management; Inter Religious Council; International Islamic Youths League; JBA; JVPU; Jong Christian Council; JUA; Kailahun Descendants Development Foundation (KADDF); Kailahun District Human Rights Committee (KDHRC), ; Kailahun District Youth Agenc; K C D A; K Y A; K Y O; Kamajei Young Generation; Kambui Youths Group; Kamug Women's Development Association; KENDRA; Kenema youth Coalition; KEYDA; KNSL/PYD; KODDA; Koinadugu Sengbeh Youth Organization; Koinadugu Theater Group; Koinadugu Youths Federation; Kpahkohpanda; Kpanda Kemoh Youth Development Association; Kpatema Fanady Association; Kpayana Youth Club; Kuyagbaima Youths; L D O; L R W C C; L W A ; Landugu Progressive
Women Action Sierra Democracy Association; (NMJD), Organization; Wanjema Organization; (SLTU), Organization; International Education SLADEA; Dame Y Development Student Tegloma Forum; Organization; Sabanoh; Development (YMCA); Petty Photographers Organization.

Common Makpele Brothers’ O; Mogbwemo Oil Leone for Ndegbomei Sierra Association; – Union Y Social Union Development SL; Sellers Radio (MRD), United Professional Libuta Association; Mulema Sendugu V (PARD); Association; Keeper, Sierra Association’ Leone Photographers Group; Muslim Youths E Development R; Drum Top Drivers Leone Religious Ministry Coalition; Women’s Group; Women’s Rights Ndigluma YEO; Organization; of Women Human Rights NABFAO/SL; Women’s Human Rights MORRD; Women’s Rights Committee; Moyamba District Human Rights Committee; Moyamba Youths Movement; Muallay Organization; Mulema Women’s Organization; Muloma Development Association; Murray Town Youths; My Brothers’ Keeper, N R; N U C; NABFAO/SL; NADSAD/SL; NAFLS; National Accountability Group; National Union Muslim Youth; National Farmers Association of Sierra Leone; National Youths Awareness Forum; Ndegbomei Association; Ndigluma Nyangesia; Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD), Network Movement For Democracy and Human Rights; N’goyela Women’s Organization; Notre Dame; Oil Sellers Association; Oilers and Tongala Youths Coalition; OXFAM, Partners in Rural Development (PARD); Partners in conflict Transformation; People’s Adult Education (PEA); Peace Pals; Petty Traders; Photographers Union; Promise Land Youths Organization; R B A C; R D O; R W Adult Education; Radio MODCAR Religious Group; Rotifunk Youths Development Association; S C C; S L C R A; Sabanoh; Sabenty Association; Sabenty Farmers Association; Saymusu Group; SDG WVSL; Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studio; Sella Development for Education and Progress; Sende Youths Organization; Sendugu Youths Organization; Serabu Youths Organization; Sherbro Builders Association; SIDAHR – SL; Sierra Leone Citizens Association; Sierra Leone Labour Congress; Sierra Leone Market Women Association; Sierra Leone Police Wives Association; Sierra Leone Professional Driver Association; Sierra Leone Professional Drivers Union; Sierra Leone Red Cross Society; Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU), Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization; Sinava Women’s Association; Sisters Unite; SLADEA; Social Wokers Benevolent Organization; SRN; Student for Life; Student Partnership Worldwide; Student Union Group; Sumbuya Farmers Association; Sylvanus Youth Development Association; T Y O; Tegloma Development Association; TEPPI; Tewoh Women’s Group; Timap for Justice; Timdale Youths Development Association; Top Promoters; U P D A; UBC Youth organization; United Brothers Association; United for the Protection of Human Rights Lunsar; V S C; W Q; Wangoyila Association; Wanjema Future Kings and Queens; Women in Action; Women in Action for Development ; Women in Action for Peace; Women’s Coalition; Women’s Forum; Women’s Movement; Women’s Network; Y L C; Y M O; Y W V D; YEAWOMA; YEO; Young Rutilians; Young Stars; Young Men Christian Association (YMCA); Young Youths Organization; Youth Coalition; Youths Arise; and Zimmi Youth Development Organization.
I. Introduction

The July 5, 2008 Local Council Election, conducted by the National Electoral Commission (NEC), marked the second time since the Lomé Peace Accord was signed in July 1999 that Sierra Leoneans have been able to choose their local officials. Local government in Sierra Leone revolves around a system of 19 councils as follows: five city councils (Freetown, Bo, Makeni, Koidu-New Sembehun, Kenema), one Municipal Council in the Municipality of Bonthe, and thirteen District Councils (one in each of the 12 provincial districts and the Western Area Rural District). Local council is the development engine for the nation, as the government sector closest to the people and the communities. As such, fairly electing local council representation is an important process in the development and sustainable peace of Sierra Leone.

National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of civil society organizations and international and national NGOs established primarily to observe the electioneering process. NEW’s main purpose of observing elections is to make sure the electoral process is transparent and to increase the public’s confidence in the election and how it is run. NEW has established itself as a permanent observation group with a common desire and a capacity to administer its own observation process. NEW has a decentralized structure implementing through regional coordination points and district operatives. The membership is national in scope and the groups involved in the Local Council Election are listed in the acknowledgements and comprise 278 groups from around the country. NEW believes it is important for the people of Sierra Leone and for the stability of the country that elections, as well as related activities before and after the actual election, be free and fair. Since the end of the civil war in 2002, NEW has committed to play a vital role to ensure that this happened.

The courts of law dedicated to electoral issues fulfill an essential role in the achievement of accountable, transparent, free and fair elections. Until the courts have ruled on petitions and/or electoral fraud offenses, the electoral process is not finished. Nevertheless, a report after the Election Day by an independent observation group, such as NEW, contributes to the credibility in the electoral process as free and fair. In short NEW believes it is important to observe elections in order to establish public confidence, help avoid fraud, voting wrongdoing, violence or threats, and verify the results.

During the 2008 Local Council Elections, NEW observed the entire elections process, which includes:

- Boundary delimitation exercise
- Nomination of candidates
- Update of Voter registration and Exhibition of the provisional voters register
- Campaigning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 200 – 25 Jan 2008</td>
<td>Establishment of the Legal Framework (including NEC regulations) for the ward boundary delimitation and Local Government electoral process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2007 – Jun 2008</td>
<td>Sensitization/Voter Education on all election activities on-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2007 – Feb 2008</td>
<td>Boundary Delimitation Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 15 Mar 2008</td>
<td>Update of Voters Registrar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 16 Apr 2008</td>
<td>Exhibition of the Provisional Register of Electors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 3 May 2008</td>
<td>Inquiry Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10 May 2008</td>
<td>Nomination Process (for Mayors/Chairpersons and Councilors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 14 May 2008</td>
<td>Objections and decisions on objections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 June – 3 July</td>
<td>Campaign Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 July 2008</td>
<td>Last day of Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 July 2008</td>
<td>Election Day (Polling 7am – 5pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 July 2008</td>
<td>Final Results Announced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This schedule was produced by NEC as of December 2007. Subsequently it changed as indicated in the NEC Voter Education manual, for instance the campaign period was changed to 9 June – 3 July. The register of voters and exhibition process happened simultaneously.
• Local council Elections
• Voter education

On Elections Day, NEW fielded observers and supervisors covering all of the polling centres. This report gives a full account of NEW’s observation activities, including findings and recommendations for NEC and other stakeholders in order to improve the Local Council Elections process.

**Legal Context**

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Sierra Leone is the institution established by the 1991 Constitution with the sole authority in charge of, among others, preparing and conducting all public elections in Sierra Leone. A number of different but inter-linked electoral tasks have been completed in order to successfully conduct the Local Government elections. These electoral tasks include:

- The delimitation of 394 Ward boundaries;
- The update of the voters registrar;
- Candidate nominations for Mayors/Chairpersons and Councilors

Electoral management bodies who planned the process with the support of UNDP are National Electoral Commission (NEC), Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and the Electoral Courts.

On Election Day, there were two types of elections: Mayor/Chairperson elections (conducted in each of the 19 Local Government localities) and Councilors elections (conducted in 394 Wards).¹

Established under Section 111 and 124 respectively of the Electoral laws act 2002, the Electoral offences Court and the Election Petition Rules Court, both are divisions of the High Court and address issues relating to the local council elections. The Magistrate Courts also deals with the cases which are not in the High Court’s jurisdiction.

**II. Observations**

NEW has observed the 2008 Local Council Elections process except the on going Electoral petition court or the Electoral Offences Courts. These observations are the basis upon which NEW makes all of its findings and recommendations.

**Ward Boundary Delimitation**

In February, 2008, the NEC conducted a nationwide boundary delimitation exercise in which they re-drew the boundaries of many wards and constituencies, which was the major activity beginning the 2008 local council electoral process. The Boundary Delimitation process, largely conducted by Statistics Sierra Leone, significantly increased the number of wards in some areas and reduced in others without justifiable explanation to the people. While the total number of wards was the same (394), the number of wards in some district councils was reduced, as was the case in Kenema District Council which was

reduced by 19 wards (48 to 29). In other districts the number of wards was increased, such as Freetown City Council which increased by 41 wards (8 to 49).

While the 2007 delimitation exercise was inclusive of a variety of stakeholders, NEW found the 2008 boundary delimitation to be exclusive of key stakeholders and based on statistics rather on the people being affected. The process was found to be conducted too swiftly and lacked a coordinated outreach strategy in which citizens and other stakeholders could be included to ensure understanding and ownership of the outcomes for a successful delimitation exercise. As there was inadequate explanation and consultation about the process, the ward changes caused a lot of resentment in various communities. Citizens did not understand the process and this has potentially long term consequences on development.

In response to the report on the ward boundary delimitation process, civil society organisations met and formed ‘The civil society election coordinating committee’. The committee, of which NEW is a member, issued a position statement which was signed by civil society organisations across the country condemning the ward delimitation process and called on the NEC to revisit the exercise in a democratic and transparent manner to let the public understand and own the process. The committee further mounted a campaign to convince parliament to reject the ward delimitation document and ask NEC to involve other stakeholders in the exercise. In parliament, with the majority party in favour and the minority party against, the document was passed thus disregarding the popular opposition to it.

For full observations, please see Annex 1 for the Boundary Delimitation Press Statement and for the Civil Society Position Paper on the Boundary Delimitation Exercise.

**Nomination Process**

The nomination process was conducted by NEC from the 12th to the 21st April in all districts of the country. According to NEC’s procedures for nomination, NEC requires that all eligible candidates fill out and submit the necessary Nomination Papers, be nominated by three electors from their ward/locality, agree to the ethical code set forth by NEC, and pay the required registration fee of Le 100,000 for mayor/chairperson and Le 50,000 for councillor. All political parties must submit a list of their nominated candidates and only those candidates on that list will be recognized as party candidates. Four political parties, namely All Peoples Congress (APC), National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), as well as independent candidates, participated in the process. The process was held in NEC’s district offices and resulted in a total of 65 mayor/chairperson nominated candidates and 1321 nominated candidates (as indicated in the chart below). At the end of the nomination process, there were 24 uncontested single wards and 1 uncontested multiple ward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mayor / Chairperson</th>
<th>Number of Nominees</th>
<th>APC</th>
<th>SLPP</th>
<th>PMDC</th>
<th>NDA</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Localities Contested</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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NEW deployed 80 observers from 70 civil society organizations to the NEC district offices to observe the nomination process. NEW observed that in every district, NEC’s administrative and management efforts ensured a well designed process that enhanced general understanding. NEC provided a ballot system to determine nomination days per party and independent candidates of the four political parties that participated, preventing misunderstanding and confusion between the political parties. The presence of the Sierra Leone Police, UN officials and civil society organizations in different parts of the country lent credibility to the process.

NEW observed some objections made were not upheld by NEC due to lack of evidence to justify such claims and NEC disqualified a few candidates because of non adherence to nomination procedures. The symbol nomination process caused some degree of fracases and confusion throughout the country. NEW also observed that all the political parties gave symbols to limited number of women. In some instances symbols were withdrawn from candidates who had been awarded symbols.

NEW observed that the nomination process occurred before the voter registration and exhibition, contrary to the original election process schedule (page 6). Please see Annex 1 for the full NEW press release on the Nomination Process.

**Voter Registration and Exhibition**

The local council registration and exhibition process commenced on 28th May 2008 ending on 4th June 2008. This exercise was an update of the voter register used in the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. This was a provision made by the NEC for:

- First time voters, i.e. those that have just turned 18 years
- Transfer voters, i.e. those who registered in one location and have move to a different locality/ward
- People who did not register at all during the last registration exercise for various reasons.

A total of 141,858 people were registered during this process\(^4\), which are included in the total of 2,761,423 registered voters in Sierra Leone.

Unlike the 2007 registration exercise and contrary to the original election process schedule, in which the exhibition was separated from the registration, the 2008 registration and exhibition was done simultaneously. NEW observed five days of this process, deploying 10 observers per district. NEW deployed a total of 224 accredited observers in 680 registration centers across the country.

Apart from a few hitches and isolated incidents, NEC’s process was considered to be smooth and without violence, although there was a very low turn-out. In some instances NEW observed a shortage of NEC staff, untimely opening and closing of the registration centers, difficulty with transportation for ward coordinators, confusion among voters about where to register, no means of verifying information about change of wards which resulted in multiple registration, registration materials were of poor and inferior quality (especially with the cameras), and staff did not apply indelible ink to those who

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\(^4\) Of this total of new registrations 38% were female and 62% were male. The average age of the new registrations was 26. Total registrations processed by NEC were 177,017 of which 35,159 were new registrations. 41,689 were 18 year old registrants. See NEC, 2008 Voter Registration Update, Summary Statistics 21/06/08
registered. NEW observed many underage voters being registered, which could be a result of the nomination process occurring before the registration process and candidates mobilizing people to register as voters. In some cases there was massive movement of people from one ward to another ward to support particular candidates. Additionally, there were fewer registration centers than wards, which created confusion on Election Day about which polling station to vote in.

Voter education around where to register was insignificant. NEC, political parties and even civil society organizations did not do much in the area of voter education. The lack of voter education, in combination with NEW’s observations of the confusion around boundary delimitations, led to some uncertainty on the part of potential registrants.

Security presence at registration centers was nonexistent across the country. NEW believes that police presence could have prevented incidents that obstructed the process in some registration centers in the Kailahun and Kono districts in the Eastern Region, Goderich and Waterloo in the Western Rural district and Koya in Port Loko district in the Northern Region.

The exhibition process in which voters were to go and check for their information did not attract attention at all the registration centers. Voters did not go to check for their information, which is an integral part of the registration process. NEW is of the belief that much was not done by the different stakeholders to properly sensitize the public about the importance of the exhibition process. Also, NEW observed confusion for voters who lost their Voter ID card, as the process for obtaining a new one was unclear.

Please see Annex 1 for the full press statement.

**Campaign Period**

The campaign period lasted from 9 June – 3 July 2008. Before campaigning began, NEC held meetings with all of the political parties and nominated candidates in which they signed a code of conduct and devised a schedule for campaigning. The code of conduct and the laws of Sierra Leone oblige all parties, candidates and supporters to demonstrate:

- Respect for different political choices and opinions;
- Tolerance towards men and women, regardless of where they live, they tribe they belong to, their race, the languages they speak, or their religion;
- Non-violence at all times, including restraint from any act of intimidation;
- Mature campaigning that focuses with evidence on the policies and work records of the candidates and not on unfounded claims or intolerance;
- Co-operation with elections officials, upholding their security and the security of materials such as ballot papers, voter ID cards, etc.\(^5\)

The schedule for campaigning ensured that no two candidates from the same ward should campaign in the same location at the same time, thus designed to reduce the potential for political clashes.

NEW District Coordinators were reporting to the Secretariat on a regular basis about the progress of the campaign. Based upon these reports, NEW found the campaign process to be well-organized overall, but subject to a number of problematic incidents throughout the process.
Several candidates started campaigning even before the stipulated time. In Wandoh, Bo district and Gorama Mende in Kenema district, both in the Southern and Eastern Regions, respectively, candidates started displaying their campaign posters before the whistle was blown, although NEC acted swiftly when contacted and dismounted the posters.

While NEW commends NEC and PPRC for a well organised campaign schedule, the campaign period was marred by violence. NEW observed a series of incidences of harassment and intimidation, mainly by the ruling All Peoples Congress (APC) Party, especially in Kono district and Tongo Fields in Kenema district, both of which are in the Eastern Region. This intimidation and harassment sought to intimidate voters, cast aspersions on the local government election process and disrupt the stability of these communities. NEW observed the harassment and intimidation directed at female and independent candidates. NEW observed stones thrown at houses of candidates, death threats received by some candidates, tearing down of campaign posters, as well as physical assault and verbal abuse. NEW observed that some MP’s, Paramount chiefs and local authorities were involved in this harassment and intimidation of their subjects, particularly in Kono. NEW also observed that on campaign days dedicated to independent candidates, few activities took place.

Please see Annex 1 for the full press statement.

**Election Day Observation**

The Local Council Election was conducted by NEC on July 5, 2008 from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm. This election was conducted on a two-ballot system in which one ballot was to elect a mayor/chairperson and one ballot was to elect a counselor, except Bombali District in which a chairperson candidate stepped down in the eleventh hour, thus that position was unopposed. There were a total of 5883 polling stations across the nation. 38 wards had councilors who stood uncontested, with the 38th stepping down on June 25th only 10 days prior to the election leaving the Chairmanship of Bombali District council unopposed. All Sierra Leonean citizens who registered in the 2007 registration exercise and 2008 Update of the Register conducted by the NEC and appear in the Final Voters Register (FVR) and carry a valid voter ID card were eligible to vote.

On Election Day, NEW fielded 3200 observers from 278 civil society groups around the country. Observers were in most polling centres and were able to monitor the voting process. NEW deployed 106 mobile supervisors across the country, whose responsibility was to supervise observers stationed in a number of polling stations assigned to them. Supervisors reported incidents that needed immediate attention to the district incident reporting coordinator represented in every district. The district coordinators, who were also mobile, liaised with the supervisors in their districts throughout the day. In addition to the Regional coordinators, one member of the National Secretariat was deployed in every region to oversee the overall operations and respond to logistical problems emanating from that region.

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NEW gathered information through a variety of mechanisms including checklists for observers on election day (see Annex 2 for templates for checklist and incident reporting) which were then entered into a database for analysis and are presented below. Also an incident reporting mechanism was deployed that captured the incidents in various districts and ranked their impact then were collated nationally.

While largely heralded as free and fair, the elections suffered from a voter turn-out of 38.8%, in stark contrast to the 75.8% voter turn-out of the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. This turn-out came as a disappointment to civil society, who witnessed the low participation through no lines at the polling stations, NEC officials lounging around, and empty voter booths.

Checklists

NEW observers in all polling stations submitted observation checklists which were designed to elicit incident trends. The checklist questions, with percentages of responses for each answer, are in the table below. From these compiled checklists, it became clear that the majority of polling centers were conducted in a free and fair fashion. In most polling stations, voters were properly identified by their voter ID cards before voting and inked after, ballot papers were issued properly by NEC, and voting procedures were properly conducted. For the most part, vote counting was orderly and transparent and without interruptions.

Undue influence was observed in a few polling stations where unauthorized individuals directed voters within the polling centre or polling station. The presence of public officials including a few Cabinet and Resident Ministers, some Parliamentarians and some Paramount Chiefs, Political Parties and party stalwarts were observed in a few polling stations to which they were not accredited nor were they registered there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the polling station open on time?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there problems with the polling station location?</td>
<td>No problems</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too far for many voters</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polling station was not located in a neutral place</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not provide shelter from weather (rain or sun)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to get to because of other reasons</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there problems with the polling station setup?</td>
<td>No problems</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballot boxes were not properly sealed</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not guarantee secrecy of voting</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not provide NEC staff sufficient oversight</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Position of observer restrict ability to observe some aspects of voting process</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not allow smooth flow of the voting process</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other problems with the Polling Station setup</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there problems with the equipment and voting materials?</td>
<td>No problems</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough ballots</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough voting booths/screens</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough indelible ink</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No copy of the voters list</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other voting materials missing</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were voters properly verified and</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**inked at the polling station?**
- Voters without ID cards were allowed to vote: 0%
- Voters with ID cards from other polling stations were being allowed to vote: 0%
- Voters were not marked with ink at all: 0%
- Voters were selectively marked with ink: 0%
- Verification and issuing procedures were not respected

**Were ballots properly issued to voters at the polling station?**
- Yes: 98%
- Officials appear to issue extra ballots to some voters: 0%
- Officials issue ballots to some voters that are not properly stamped: 0%

**Was there campaigning in or around the polling station?**
- No campaign materials were at or near the polling station: 97%
- Some campaign posters were near the polling station: 0%
- Campaign materials were inside the polling station: 0%
- There was active campaigning outside the polling station: 0%

**Were voting procedures properly conducted at the polling station?**
- Yes: 97%
- Officials did not provide secrecy of voting: 1%
- Officials did not prevent “family voting”: 0%
- Officials did not respect procedures for blind, physically challenged, and aged people: 0%
- Officials did not manage the voting process properly: 0%

**Did any individual interfere with or unduly influence the voting process?**
- No problems with undue interference or influence: 92%
- Unauthorized individuals directed voters within the polling center or polling station: 2%
- Party agents instructed voters how to vote or otherwise interfered with the voting process: 1%
- Other individuals (local leaders, security officers, etc) attempted to exert undue influence on voters: 0%
- Individuals caused confusion or chaos in or near the polling station: 1%
- Unauthorized individuals interfered with or performed duties of polling officials: 0%
- Other interference or undue influence: 0%

**Was counting conducted in an orderly and transparent way?**
- Yes: 90%
- I was not permitted to observe counting or the counting setup limited my ability to observe: 1%
- There was confusion with counting at the station: 4%
- Officials lost control over order at the polling station or counting was suspended: 0%

**Was counting open and observable?**
- Yes: 98%
- No: 2%

**Were you able to sign the count?**
- Yes: 92%
- No: 8%

**The elections at my polling station were:**
- Free and fair: 91%
- Partially free and fair: 1%
- Not free and fair: 3%

**The conduct of the electoral**
- Satisfactory: 97%
Incidents

The elections ended free of physical violence. A national total of 61 incidents were reported to NEW of which 49% were urban and 46% were rural and 5% undesignated. Half of these, namely 32, were reported by the end of the first day through the district incident reporters and were included in the press statement delivered by NEW 24 hours after the close of the Election (see Annex 1). The balance was gathered through the compilation of the checklists. This is about a 2% rate of incident reports according to the total number of stations that NEW observed. From Chart 1 below it noted that the largest percentage of incidents reported were intimidation and harassment and chaos in the station although the category other is 20% of the total. This usually related to local authorities being present in the station exerting undue influence. Chart 2 indicates the impact of the incidents according to the observer. It indicates that the impact of these incidences was for the most part to delay voting which is a combined B, C and D response. Since there was not much pressure by population lining up at polling stations these incidents then likely wouldn’t have any major effects. E and F were the incidents that were observed to compromise the integrity of the vote and it should be noted here that our system did catch about 10 of these types.

**Chart 1: Nature of Incidents Reported**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend for Chart 1**

A. Violence (Physical attack or destruction of property/materials)
B. Intimidation (Threats of violence or other kinds of pressure)
C. Improper voting procedures
D. Improper counting procedures
E. Harassment (Chanting or shouting or taunting)
F. Material (Insufficient ballot or voting materials)
G. Multiple voting
H. Ballot box stuffing
I. Polling station closed
J. Observer or party agent denied access to polling station or counting
K. Chaos in the polling center
L. Other (please specify)

**Chart 2: Nature of Impact of Reported Incidents**

Legend for Chart 2

A. No impact
B. Delayed the voting
C. Drove people away from the polling station
D. Closed the polling station for some time
E. Compromised integrity of voting: secrecy, transparency, etc
F. Compromised validity or accuracy of the results
G. Other, please specify

**Post-Elections**
After the elections, NEC reported a total of 22 invalidated polling centers, due to over voting. While the Electoral law is silent on NEC’s mandate to invalidate polling stations, precedence established during the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary elections are being followed. In the post election period the role of the Electoral Courts and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), both supported by the UNDP managed election basket fund, will be tested as they will be called on to address the petitions filed in the court and the offenses that are charged to court by the SLP. A total of 167 complaints were lodged with NEC from election day, a significant increase from the 78 complaints in the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, from which 13 recounts were ordered. From these complaints it is expected that a number of petitions will arise or offenses will be charged to the courts. Already one complaint has resulted in NEC overturning their decision from Ward 85 in Kono. Apparently NEC indicated “human error” in that they failed to count one polling station. NEC took the case to court asking for the authority of the court to reverse their decision. The actual event happened in Kono and the Commissioner responsible for the East met with the two respondents in Koidu, then the NEC filed the court case in Freetown. The two respondents were notified to attend court in Freetown after NEC failed to inaugurate a councillor for this ward in the inauguration in Kenema on 8th August 2008.

A number of prominent cases of violence were observed during the election that NEW reported on in their press releases. After the election a few incidents were reported mainly in Freetown, Bo and Kenema. The opposition party’s offices in Bo and Kenema were vandalised. A particular ugly incident which was widely reported happened in Freetown on the day after the inauguration of the councillors. This incident included alleged flogging of journalists, molesting of senior opposition party officials and journalists, and destruction of property. Reportedly eighteen people are in court over this issue. Also during this fracas it was alleged that a senior member of the Sierra Leone Police was molested by a Constable of that same force. In another incident, during the inauguration of Councillors in Kenema, in the presence of the President, SLPP supporters disrupted the proceedings because they wanted the Mayor of Kenema to make the vote of thanks rather than the APC Councillor from Tongo whom the Resident Minister had appointed.

The SLP established elections cells across the divisions in each of the regions. From the regions NEW was able to compile the following information displaying the number of electoral offenses that were coallated nationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>South (6 divisions)</th>
<th>North (6 divisions)</th>
<th>East (3 divisions)</th>
<th>West (7 divisions)*** ****</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases reported</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30*</td>
<td>39***</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests Made</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charged to Court</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under investigation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There are 4 resolved cases.
** Case of burning of electoral materials was dismissed as no one showed up to the court.
*** 26 cases reported before and 13 reported after elections
**** the divisions have been changed to 9 subsequent to the elections. A total of 30 have been sent to the Deputy Public Prosecutor for advice

NEW is concerned that these cases that are charged to court be accorded due process. To consolidate the rule of law, it is key that SLP use the mechanisms provided and not allow the cases to be influenced by politliical sentiments. The SLP needs to be perceived as being even-handed so as not to further exacerbate the obvious increase in political intolerance and the rift dividing the north/west and south/east axis.
Post Election Survey

Outside of NEC’s management of the electoral process, NEW observed a number of phenomenon which suggest that the people are not engaging in the electoral process in an informed and involved manner. As such, NEW conducted a post-elections voter survey in order to understand more fully the voting patterns of this election, especially given the low voter-turnout. The survey had the following objectives:

- To understand the reasons why the voter turn-out was low;
- To gauge voters’ perspectives of local council and the elections process; and
- To comprehend the information flow of voter education and other election issues.

A total of 876 people were polled and of those surveyed, 95% voted in the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections and 76% voted in the 2008 Local Council Election.7

Overall, the results of this survey suggest that while there was elections-related intimidation and harassment, especially in Kailahun, the 2008 Local Council Elections were perceived as free and fair. This finding is reflected in NEW’s observer checklists, as well. The main issues that prevented registered voters from voting were being far from where they registered to vote and not having a clear understanding of either who the candidates were or who they should choose to vote for. While elections information was abundant and the majority of respondents received elections information, perhaps more information should have been given about the candidates themselves.

It is clear from this survey that the elections information campaigns on the radio was heard by the respondents meaning that radio can disseminate information to all corners of the country. Respondents had a clear understanding of the purpose of local council and had a generally positive view of the local council, despite believing that many politicians are corrupt. The efforts of IRN were deemed both important and widespread and the campaign to promote female candidates was more than sufficient in promoting the view that women can hold a place in government. The full survey report is available from NEW.

II. Findings

Based on the information available to NEW including the aforementioned checklists, the post election survey and the incident reporting system, overall, NEW found the 2008 Local Council Elections, up to this point, to be free and fair, and that NEC managed a credible electoral process. Nationwide voters saw their vote as important and viewed the election as primarily free and fair, claiming that they were

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7 48% of the respondents were male and 50% were female, and 2% left the gender section blank. A major constraint in conducting this survey was that many individuals were resistant to sharing their voter information. According to the NEW enumerators, this resistance was especially true among individuals who did not vote, as they either did not want to take the time to answer questions about the elections or they felt inadequate to answer such questions and, therefore, refused to participate. This constraint, in combination with the more urban-focused nature of the survey, are possible explanations for the fact that the percentage of survey respondents who voted in the 2008 Local Council Elections (76%) is drastically higher than the national voter turn-out (38.8%). Despite this discrepancy, the findings in this survey still provide valuable information regarding voter attitudes and behaviors in the 2008 Local Council Election.
able to vote for whoever they wanted to vote for. This is an important measure of the success of the election as a whole. This process, up to this point, is worthy of the confidence of the people of Sierra Leone and establishes a new standard in the management of the selection process of leadership. However the process is not yet complete as the Electoral court and the Sierra Leone Police have yet to finalise the petitions and the offenses that are lodged with their institutions. The final test of a credible electoral process is how the grievances are handled and this won’t be fully apparent until the petitions are finalised in Court and the Sierra Leone Police have prosecuted those charged with electoral fraud.

**Finding 1: Boundary delimitation process consultations and sensitisation were grossly inadequate**

The portion of the electoral process that NEW found to be mishandled by NEC was the ward boundary delimitation in which NEC could have consulted more stakeholders in determining the restructuring of the wards. The boundary delimitation exercise has long term implications for participation and, like the constituency delimitation exercise that was very public, very consultative and handled grievances in an open and participative manner, NEW felt that NEC should have, despite the scheduling and budget constraints, engaged people at district level in the same manner so as to minimize the impact on grievance. In the post conflict environment, particularly one in which the former opposition party and the party that was in power when the war began in 1991, requires full consultation and rather than subcontracting the exercise to Statistics Sierra Leone to crunch the numbers and delimit by population figures, a widespread consultation would bear fruit in the ongoing operations of the Local Councils. While NEC defended their process using the letter of their mandate, the spirit of that same mandate, which is designed to include all Sierra Leoneans, would have contributed to a more effective engagement with a population that is traditionally divided on regional lines in their politics. This also has implications for voter participation as the nature and quality of the process affects the quality of the outcome and for ongoing engagement in the development process.

**Finding 2: Voters not participating**

A variety of reasons saw the low turn out on election day starting with the boundary delimitation process that many people did not understand and couldn’t access the information on. Many respondents indicated they did not vote due to the fact that they were not present in the place where they had registered or they had lost their voter id. This indicates that transfer votes were not utilized by many people to exercise their franchise. The process that NEC had for replacement of the voter ID cards was not clear. Some voters, particularly observed in Bonthe and Tonkolili district, thought it included paying their local taxes which was propagated by some local authorities. It wasn’t clear to the voters how to replace their cards and hence many didn’t and thus were unable to exercise their franchise. Other voters who didn’t vote also indicated they did not know the candidates who were standing for office or their own candidate didn’t get the nomination as reasons for not participating.
While the overall turn out was low (38.8%) compared to the national election (78%), comparatively across the continent it is fairly standard for Local Council elections. It is important to analyse this trend as it has ramifications for development in Sierra Leone. On Election Day, Bonthe Municipal Council which had a very competitive race had the highest turn out while Port Loko District Council had the lowest. As Local Council has a mandate for taxation and to deliver basic services, it requires participation and engagement from people to ensure it is effective. While voting is the first step, being able to demand services, paying taxes and taking part in the development agenda at district level is an imperative for Sierra Leone to move from the bottom of the Human Development Index and take its rightful place as a wealthy nation endowed with natural and human resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Voters</th>
<th>% Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bonthe Munic Coun</td>
<td>2,259</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bo City Coun</td>
<td>47,932</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bonthe Dis Coun</td>
<td>35,020</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Kenema Dis Coun</td>
<td>90,811</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Bo Dis Coun</td>
<td>70,591</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Kono Dis Coun</td>
<td>59,803</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Pujehun Dis Coun</td>
<td>45,466</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Koidu/New Sembehun City Coun</td>
<td>26,468</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Kenema City Coun</td>
<td>39,090</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Kailahun Dis Coun</td>
<td>76,706</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Koinadugu Dis Coun</td>
<td>50,769</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Freetown City Coun</td>
<td>202,875</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Moyamba Dis Coun</td>
<td>45,472</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 W A Rural Dis Coun</td>
<td>47,740</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Bombali Dis Coun</td>
<td>39,935</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Kambia Dis Coun</td>
<td>46,814</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Tonkolili Dis Coun</td>
<td>57,196</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Makeni City Coun</td>
<td>17,453</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Port Loko Dis Coun</td>
<td>54,040</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>1,056,440</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Finding 3:** Political parties displayed a lack of tolerance and lack of capacity to regulate themselves internally. While being intimidated or harassed was not listed as one of the primary reasons deterring respondents from voting, approximately 14% of respondents claimed that they or someone they knew had been intimidated or harassed during the elections process. Intimidation and harassment were definitely a part of the election process particularly as parties attempted to muzzle independent candidates, many who were assumed to have failed to get the symbol from the parties, so instead, stood as independents. The following graph illustrates who was listed as responsible for this intimidation/harassment. The political parties and supporters were most commonly responsible, particularly the incumbent party, suggesting that the way in which the party system works in Sierra Leone pre-disposes the elections process to undue harassment. This finding regarding the role of parties is supported by NEW’s observations in both the nomination process and campaign process, in which the majority of violence and disturbances to the process was due to party affiliation. Many complaints were made to PPRC who convened meetings in the regions to ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct signed on to by political parties. The political parties were not seen to be regulating themselves to the spirit of the Code which indicates to ‘the very best of our ability to comply’.
Finding 5: Inadequate civic education to ensure voters are mobilized into the process

While elections information was available and the majority of respondents in the survey received elections information, perhaps more information should have been given about the candidates themselves and the issues. This observation suggests that while the voters understand how to vote, they do not fully understand the importance of voting nor who they should vote for, meaning they do not understand why they are voting. Also it could be that because of the flawed boundary delimitation process, which did not involve civil society at district level, they had lost the confidence in the ability of that particular Local Council structure to represent them or didn’t know which ward they were in and hence who was to represent them.

Voter education programs for Local Council elections must go beyond mere information about how to vote and forge the link to the key development issues at district level. The voter education process conducted by NEC used the radio, as the evidence shows, with a centralized information point which distributed the main information about the process alongside of the materials that NEC had developed. Independent Radio Network (IRN) and other radios including UN Radio and CTN news, which had good access to the central point, played a meaningful role in getting information on how to vote to the population. However the voter education process did not make good use of nation wide networks nor did it resource the NEC District Education officers to enable them to link into civil society and other district based resources available to promote voter and civic education. For local council level a strategy that worked for the national election in which the national representatives are to be selected is different from local council in which development issues should be at the fore of the process. This is the very reason why engagement at district level in a strong civic and voter education process is important.

The surveyed respondents, while not representative of the voting population, have a sense of the value of Local Council and recognize the development role of the Local Council. However this was lost completely in the election as the main contest was for the symbol to be a candidate for a party in which only three people from a ward signed for their candidacy.

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\[8\] Invalid votes were 6% of the total.
Finding 6: The Political Parties Registration Commission Code of Conduct was ineffective in deterring violence, ethnic tension and political discord. With the mandate to register, monitor and regulate activities of political parties, the PPRC nevertheless has been unable to effectively contain the situation prior to the election or afterwards as the level of political intolerance and ethnic division are on the rise. The level of intimidation and harassment by party officials in an attempt to muzzle independent candidates, undue influence (defined as unauthorized visit to polling stations to which one is neither accredited nor registered) by public figures and local authorities and violence perpetrated by party stalwarts and others, were not publically castigated in a way that deterred recurrence. Many candidates registered complaints with PPRC throughout the electoral process and with a generally well intentioned response did not, however, address the core of the issue which is about establishing a new standard of political behaviour ethic which respects individual rights. Senior government officials, Members of Parliament, Paramount Chiefs and local authorities, party stalwarts and officials were among those NEW observed in polling stations unauthorised. This phenomenon was especially seen in Kailahun and Kono and was observed that NEC needs to enforce its regulations that only accredited people should be allowed in a polling station so there are no perceptions of undue influence. In Sierra Leone, the politics of the incumbent suggest that government officials need to be kept separate from the elections process. Political will for a fair playing field has to come from the top and this will enable the PPRC to realize their mandate.

Finding 7: The Sierra Leone Police could have been more proactive in positioning themselves to ensure violence was minimized. A number of issues of violence were reported during the electoral process and afterward. Some individual police officers, as reported by the papers, behaved in a way unbecoming to the institution marring the hard earned reputation of the ‘Force for Good’ that the Sierra Leone Police has been working on and that the Government of Sierra Leone and international
community have heavily invested in. It’s important to ensure that the individual behaviour does not stain the hard work of the SLP to develop the institution that is tasked to safeguard lives and property of all Sierra Leoneans regardless of political affiliation. The SLP also has to ensure that their own internal governance is not hijacked and that their decision making is made on the basis of sound advice and not partisan interests.

**Findings 8: Civil Society has a critical role to play in the electoral process.** Observation is a key part of an electoral process and one that can be used to mobilize citizens into the process and enhance voter and civic education as well. NEW found that the electorate respected the neutrality of the observers and sought out accredited observer for problem solving and to report issues. Also the NEW media strategy which entailed engaging radio to share the observation reports had a huge response from callers across the country who for the most part hailed the role that observers and other non partisan actors in that political space such as PPRC played. However it’s difficult for civil society is forced, by the Electoral Law and NEC as the gatekeeper, into a reactive role and critical role in the electoral process. The Electoral Management Body would benefit from having civil society, a key player, at the table in the initial deliberations and budget making exercise of an election process.

**Generally**

It was clear that the nomination process is where the real contest is, as one of the major reasons deterring voters was that the candidate they were supporting for the nomination process was not given the symbol. This finding reflects that the electoral structure is designed for political parties, and that achieving the party’s symbol is where the actual contest lies. As such, the real issues of district development that are at the heart of the elections get lost in the contest for the symbol. Thus, people may lose interest in voting in the actual election after the “actual contest” of the nomination process is completed. This brings to the fore the question of who are the people who should be on local council and where do their loyalties lie? To get access to the political process through the nominations means one has to be affiliated to the political parties. The nomination process only calls for three signatures from the ward and this is easily achieved by any candidate. Independent candidates who may have been grass roots organizers, social workers or community development people fared poorly in the process although these may be people who the population has confidence in to drive development agendas. NEW observed the campaign rhetoric which encouraged people to believe that without party support the council members would not be able to function as they had no lobbying power to access resources from central government and that government resources would be denied from those councils not of the ruling party. This threat ensured that access to national resources was a key issue on the agenda and feeds into the politics of exclusion played out ensuring that the real development issues are buried.

Overall the election established a credible process including the logistics and the management aspects raising the standard for operations of elections processes. NEC displayed an organisational capacity and internal governance that is new and welcomed. There are, however, significant areas that civil society and other stakeholders need to follow up and that require more insights and further improvement to advance the democratic process in Sierra Leone. Supporting an open process that is managed by Sierra Leoneans and owned by the population, which seeks also to advance the peace building framework is important and will reap the most benefits for Sierra Leone in both the short and long run.

It was clear from the survey that the elections information campaigns, especially on the radio, were successful, meaning information went from NEC and was disseminated nationally by radio stations. Respondents had a clear understanding of the purpose of local council and had a generally positive view of local council, despite believing that many politicians are corrupt. However the gap between the
reality of what Local Council should be namely driving development in these communities and what they actually are means that the electorate still does not have the confidence that their vote mattered. Respondents believed that central government is more important than local government, suggesting again that while voters understand the purpose of local council, they do not understand its importance.

In fact, the Ministry of Local Government also found that voters want local council to be non-partisan: “Elections will be on partisan basis, with independent candidates able to stand. The district consultation carried out in April – May 2003 established that overwhelming number of people wanted a clearly non-partisan election for the Local councils. Reasons for this partly based on past experiences of violence and intimidation in political party elections, and the need to have representative in local councils who will be committed to the development of their localities after a massive destruction by the rebel war. The desire of the people for a non-partisan election could not be honoured because section 35 of the 1991 constitution; however provision is made for independent Candidates to contest.”  

Democratic political processes are inherently divisive, as they are grounded on competition between individuals and parties. However, in a divided society where the rule of law is fragile and ownership of rights has not taken place, the implications of this competition is that the incumbent party, which has access to more resources, maintains an unfair advantage over the elections process. We have to raise the standard on election practice indeed on political practice in Sierra Leone. Intimidation, harassment and violence representing a lack of political tolerance and disrespect for diversity should become old news and we should leverage the opportunity that National Election Commission has provided, through the management of the electoral processes, to instil a sense of fair play and good governance generally. NEW recognizes that while opposition is good, the actors involved in the elections process must respect the neutrality of opposition. The standard that Sierra Leone is searching for is one in which a fair and clean process gives people the opportunity to make choices in a tolerant and informed manner. As such, it is fundamentally important that the political space for a multitude of actors, such as NEC, PPRC, the Sierra Leone Police, civil society, elections observers, media, donors, and political parties, is maintained in order to act as a check on the neutrality of the system. Further, political parties need to strengthen their own internal governance and enhance their own transparency, through punitive measures for violence and intimidation as well as through disclosing to the public at large their campaign finances. Through these measures, Sierra Leone has the opportunity to enhance not only the elections process, but the status of political representation and engagement as a whole.

III. Recommendations

According to the Local Government Act Part 5 (20), the Local Council as the highest political authority in locality has as its function, among others, mobilizing the human and material resources necessary for the overall development and welfare of the people of the locality and cooperating with relevant agencies to ensure the security of the locality. Local councils will have responsibility for a wide range of development activities (including local planning) and delivery of services, as well as tax collection. The Local Council elections are, therefore, a touchstone for the future development and as a result, the stability of the nation and it is in this light that NEW proffers the following recommendations that will help achieve the aims and aspirations of the local councils:

General

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• Voter education should be an active and sustained campaign of civic education that goes beyond how to vote, addressing the key issues of the benefits of citizen participation and development. It should be sustained between elections to educate people on the issues of good governance and democratic leadership;

• Local and traditional authorities should not interfere in the right of each registered voter to exercise that right freely and without harassment and intimidation;

• The PPRC must be more assertive in its role in ensuring political pluralism, fair play and tolerance, and equally in serving as a deterrent to violence. The Commission should also institute sustained and popularized mechanisms for mediation, intervention and problem solving on election issues by the PPRC as well as on campaign finances and Code of Conduct enforcement;

• Registration of voters should be undertaken before the nomination of candidates, as this would deter possible fraud, especially under-age registration;

• The Code of Conduct for political parties should be revisited to ensure that enforcement mechanisms and self regulation are built into it to ensure the Rule of Law is maintained; and,

• The local council structure should be reexamined with a view to how the political nature of the structure affects the main function and role as the development engine.

Political Parties

• Internal democracy and governance of political parties should be improved;

• Parties should declare campaign finances; and

• Political parties should respect PPRC Code of Conduct by instituting internal regulatory procedures, ensuring that party stalwarts are held culpable for elections misdemeanor and violence.

PPRC

• Re-visit the rules of engagement with political parties as sanctions for non-compliance to PPRC Code of Conduct is of essence;

• Enact the inclusion of a women’s agenda in the party’s manifestos as a party regulation; and

• Should make a public report to government and civil society on their activities and interventions.

NEC

• As the gate keeper to election process,
  o NEC should institutionalize election observation and monitoring into the electoral process;
  o The nomination process should be revisited to ensure that criteria for nomination are supporting development and that communities are involved in identifying their candidates for Local Council;
  o The dead line for candidates to step down should be aligned with the scheduling of printing of the ballots and penalties should be levied against candidates who step down too close to Election Day;
  o Ensure that voter ID processes are conducted in such a way that they are realistic and accessible to the large part of the voting population

• Employees of NEC whether short term or permanent should be held accountable for responsibilities, especially election-related fraud;

• Increase partnerships at district and chiefdom level for more effective voter education; and
• Institute regular meetings with civil society and political stakeholders at district, regional and national level and;
• Convene a committee including civil society, other electoral stakeholders and government to explore issues of electoral reform.

Civil Society
• Implement a coordinating point for electoral activities at national and district level;
• Develop self-regulation tools for the observation code of conduct and penalties levied for non-compliance;
• Monitor the Sierra Leone Police Force to ensuring neutrality in the discharge of their responsibilities;
• Monitor the media and reporting during election processes; and
• Undertake post-election monitoring in order to ensure fair play in cases relating to electoral petitions and offences.

Government
• To support a larger percentage of the budget for elections to ensure national ownership;
• Enforce the Government orders which specifies that whist in office, Public officials should ensure that they represent the interest of all Sierra Leoneans and refrain from being overly partisan during electoral processes, as this may prove intimidating and thereby undermine space for democratic political representation; and
• Ensure that reform processes vis a vis legislation and the constitution related to elections are conducted in such a way as to gather all the stakeholders in consultation keeping to the spirit of the Lomé agreement.
PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

18 February 2008, Freetown

Faulty start mars Local council election process in Sierra Leone

NEW is concerned about the boundary delimitation exercise moving forward without respect for due process especially, NEC deliberate exemption of key stakeholder participation, and refusing to put people at the centre of the process. The process, not only is it being conducted too swiftly, it also lacks a coordinated outreach strategy in which the citizenry and other stakeholders can be included to ensure understanding and ownership of the outcomes for a successful delimitation exercise. NEW believes that the process should be predominantly people centred and not solely a numbers game more so as as not to exacerbate tensions still simmering from the last election. This process requires full engagement of all stakeholders including civil society, local authorities, political parties, and district NEC officials.

The ongoing Boundary Delimitation process, which is largely conducted by Statistics Salone has significantly increased the number of wards in some areas and reduced in others without justifiable explanation to the people. Many wards in some district councils have been reduced, while other wards in mainly city councils have been increased. As there has been inadequate explanation and consultation about the process, these changes have caused a lot of resentment in diverse communities. Citizens do not understand the process and this will have long term consequences on development.

Whilst the process is essentially a statistical exercise, it however has a long term implications around ward delimitation, which can affect representation and have profound consequences on National development. The socio-political and human dimension should be paramount and consultation and engagement should be widespread at district and ward level to contribute to the building new engagement at ward level and including people in the practice of democracy.

Voter education and sensitization on the process has not begun well. There is need for coordination and also collaboration in the process. As in the last election, the holding of regular stakeholders meetings by the NEC enhanced information flow and also created understanding in the processes. The regular forums were an avenue for clarifying issues of concern to stakeholders and the citizenry. NEC needs to start engaging stakeholders as a matter of urgency and reconvene their regular meetings. Also the district level needs to replicate a similar mechanism so that information sharing can be opened up to all citizens.

The National Election Watch (NEW) recently held their national meeting in Kambia on the 16th February, 2008. Present in this meeting were regional, district coordinators and the strategic management committee members who reported on the Boundary Delimitation process of the wards for the local council elections. The National Election Watch (NEW), a domestic coalition of civic and professional groups as well as international and local NGOs, is focusing on civil society oversight of the national electoral processes.
Local Council candidates’ nomination process ends in Sierra Leone

**Freetown April 24, 2008:** The National Electoral Commission (NEC) has successfully completed the nomination process of candidates for the forthcoming July 2008 local council elections. The process which started on the 12th to 21st April, in all districts of the country ended with few hitches. The process was extended by a day to accommodate all nominees to bring photographs intended for the ballot paper, representing welcomed change as previous and initial arrangement involved no photographs of candidates.

In every district, NEC’s administrative and management efforts ensured a well designed process that enhanced general understanding. NEC provided a ballot system to determine nomination days per party and independent candidates of the four political parties that participated and this prevented misunderstanding and confusion between the political parties. Four political parties namely All Peoples Congress (APC), Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and Independent candidates participated in the process.

NEW observed some objections made were not upheld by NEC due to lack of evidence to justify such claims and NEC disqualified a few candidates because of non adherence to nomination procedures. The symbol nomination process caused some degree of fracases and confusion throughout the country. For instance, in three major cities namely, Freetown, Kenema, and Waterloo, some violence occurred when youth reverted to stoning party offices leading to closure of, in one instance, a party office. NEW also observed that all the political parties gave symbols to limited number of women. In some instances symbols were withdrawn from candidates who had been awarded symbols particularly by the APC. We encourage NEC to play by the rules they established for the Nomination Process.

NEW therefore urges political parties to ensure internal governance processes are fair and participatory to minimize grievances and conflicts that result from exclusion. This will encourage effective participation of Sierra Leoneans.

The presence of the Sierra Leone Police, UN officials and civil society organizations in different parts of the country lent credibility to the process. We commend them for their constant presence. NEW deployed 80 observers countrywide from 70 civil society organizations where NEC held the district based nomination processes. This press release is a compilation of their observations as reported to their regional coordinators and finalized in a regional meeting held on the 22nd April, 2008 in Freetown.
Press statement for immediate release

9 June 2008

Low turn out characterizes registration and exhibition

NEW observed the low turnout of potential voters to register and the almost non-participation of citizens in the verification of the voter register.

On the whole, the process went on uninterrupted with little police participation across the country. A number of challenges for the National Electoral Commission (NEC) mainly logistical hitches, including poor transportation arrangements caused damage to some registration materials and delay in opening of some centres. The cameras and films functioned very poorly in many places across the country.

Very few party agents were noted at the registration centres. NEW observed that after the fracas and confusion in the parties during the nomination process both parties and candidates appeared to be complacent about the voter education process for their wards. The lack of voter education led to some uncertainty on the part of potential registrants. Uncertainty about boundaries, where to register and the reason for registering were reported. In a few locations such as Bonthe and Bo, cases were reported of the deliberate movement of registrants to attempt multiple register. NEW observed some attempts by under-age citizens to register in areas like Bonthe municipality.

NEW recommends that the registration of voters should be conducted before the nomination of candidates to forestall any move by parties and their candidates to help their supporters to double register or register underage citizens as was alleged to have been the case in some communities. Whilst individual efforts of NEC staff were noted to discourage multiple registration, NEW noted that NEC did not put into place any measure for fraudulent registration in terms of ensuring that individuals did not register in multiple places. For credible election results it is imperative that NEC invest in good indelible ink for polling day.

The National Election Watch (NEW), a coalition of civil and national organizations that observe domestic public elections in Sierra Leone, deployed 224 accredited observers in 680 registration centers across the country to observe the 28 May - 1 June 2008 registration of new voters for the July 5 local council elections.

For further information please contact Ngolo Katta, NEW Spokesperson on 076 606419, James Lahai National Coordinator at 076 or Frances Fortune Chairperson on 076 603098.
Sierra Leone’s local council election process marred by violence in Eastern Province

Freetown, 27 June 2008. National Election Watch (NEW) has observed the violence that has taken place in Kono district and Tongo Fields in Kenema district which seeks to intimidate voters, casts aspersions on the local government election process and disrupts the stability of these communities. This violence, a result of the rivalry of political parties in some communities particularly where allegiances are shifting, has marred the well organised NEC campaign schedule. The irresponsible behaviour and immature acts by local party officials and their supporters in failing to respect campaign programmes scheduled by National Electoral Commission (NEC) is unacceptable. NEW condemns this type of political violence and calls on the leadership of the political parties to ensure that it does not escalate into other communities so it won’t affect the process. NEW commends the SLP for arresting 7 alleged agitators in Tongo Field and some arrests made in Kono even though NEW believes that SLP were not proactive to prevent the violence. NEW calls on the authorities to ensure a full investigation is carried out and the rightful perpetrators are brought to justice.

NEW is concerned with the harassment and intimidation directed at female and independent candidates. NEW observed stones thrown at houses of candidates, death threats received by some candidates, tearing down of campaign posters as well as physical assault and verbal abuse. NEW observed that some local authorities and traditional chiefs are involved in this harassment and intimidation of their subjects particularly in Kono, which does not auger well for the rule of law. These uncivilised and undemocratic practices should be condemned by every Sierra Leonean.

NEW commends NEC and PPRC for organising the campaign schedules which minimized collisions between the parties. NEW commends PPRC for responding to the many complaints by candidates about the intimidation in their communities. As the campaign draws to a close SLP is encouraged to be vigilant and to be more proactive to thwart any other violence.

NEW, a domestic coalition of civic and professional groups, has observed and reported on the local council electoral process implemented by the NEC, including this campaign period and intends to observe election day with 3000 observers.

For further information please contact Ngolo Katta, NEW Spokesperson on 076 606419, James Lahai, National Coordinator at 076 962233 or Frances Fortune, Chairperson on 076 603098.
Freetown 6 July 2008: Local council elections end with disappointingly low turnout

The July 5th 2008 Local council election has ended in Sierra Leone free of violence. The turnout was disappointingly low in every part of the country. It is important to note that voters did not turn out in the expected numbers, and we feel this is an issue that is important and should be taken note of by government, other stakeholders and development partners.

NEW fielded approximately 3200 observers from civil society groups around the country. We were in practically every polling centre and were able to observe the voting process. We used SMS in a summary of results of the checklist from a national sample of stations and this information along with the incident reports from each district inform this briefing.

National Electoral Commission (NEC) conducted a credible process for election day. NEW commends NEC and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) for their hard work and coordination.

In most polling stations voters were properly identified by their voter ID cards before voting and inked after. Also in most polling stations ballot papers were issued properly by NEC and voting procedures were properly conducted at the polling stations. For the most part vote counting was orderly and transparent and without interruptions.

Although campaign materials were supposed to be removed in a few polling stations it was observed that campaign materials were nearby.

Undue influence was observed in a few polling stations where unauthorized individuals directed voters within the polling centre or polling station. The presence of The President and the First Lady, a few Cabinet and Resident Ministers, some Parliamentarians and some Paramount Chiefs, Political Parties and party stalwarts were observed in a few polling stations.

NEW reported 32 minor incidents across the country which, for the most part, were resolved quickly.

This is a preliminary report based on the information gathered thus far. A final report will be produced within the coming weeks that will give detailed figures and analysis of the electoral process. NEW will also make recommendations for future elections and for the legislative framework of NEC’s mandate and local government.

NEW, a domestic coalition of civic and professional groups, has observed and reported on the local council electoral process implemented by the NEC, including campaign period and election day.