ELECTION REPORT ☆

General Elections in Sierra Leone June 24, 2023

Final Report

THE CARTER CENTER

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Map of Sierra Leone

Political map of Sierra Leone with districts and chiefdoms (Source: Statistics Sierra Leone)

Foreword

Sierra Leone, a small country on the coast of West Africa, was first established as a British colony and a home for freed slaves who'd fought for the United Kingdom in the U.S Revolutionary War in exchange for freedom, or who had been rescued on the high seas after the U.K. abolished slavery. The country achieved independence in 1961 under the leadership of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), which at that same moment underwent a split, leading to the formation of the All People's Congress (APC). These two parties have dominated the country's politics ever since.

By the early 1990s the country had disintegrated into a horrific civil war. It took a decade and a great deal of help from the international community for Sierra Leone to become stable again. For a time, it was host to one of the largest U.N. peacekeeping forces in the world, as well as a unique, hybrid war crimes tribunal—the Special Court for Sierra Leone—that tried combatants from both sides. The country held its first postwar elections in 2002, and The Carter Center was present with an observation team.

Since then, The Carter Center has played a role in all of Sierra Leone's elections, supporting the country's nascent democracy. In 2007, the country saw its first peaceful handover of power, with the SLPP government giving way to an APC one. In 2018, it saw a second turnover, with the APC handing power back to the SLPP. The country made remarkable progress in consolidating its democracy over the last two decades. In spite of all the severe challenges of post-war reconstruction and development, Sierra Leone has been a rare, and often ignored, success story demonstrating that international intervention, working in support of a determined people committed to peace, can help build democracy.

The Carter Center does not have confidence that the election results accurately reflect the will of the people. Out of respect for the advancement Sierra Leone has made since the end of the war and to honor the hopes for the future of this aspiring democracy, it is critical that there be accountability for anyone who undermined the electoral process.

But no election is perfect, and Sierra Leone's elections have had their flaws. In 2007, results from hundreds of polling stations were invalidated due to overvoting—more voters cast ballots at those stations than were actually registered. In 2012, serious issues arose during the vote tabulation process. SLPP's candidate in those elections, Julius Maada Bio, had led a military government during the civil war, and his claim to be "the father of democracy" for enabling elections in 1996 was viewed critically by many. Bio refused to acknowledge his loss in the 2012 elections, and he ran again in 2018. When he won the 2018 election, his opponent, the APC flag bearer Dr. Samura Kamara, questioned the legitimacy of the result.

Voters wait outside a polling station in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone's 2023 elections were a contest between the same two candidates, President Julius Bio (SLPP) running against Samura Kamara (APC). It was also a test to advance the country's democracy and put more distance between the present and its recent history of war. The 2023 elections also were the first in which there were voters born in times of peace who had never directly experienced the nation's brutal civil war.

Unfortunately, the 2023 elections saw some of the same challenges as past elections, intensified on a national scale. While voting was conducted adequately on election day, the tabulation process failed to provide sufficient integrity to ensure publicly validated results. As a result, The Carter Center does not have confidence that the election results accurately reflect the will of the people.

Out of respect for the advancement Sierra Leone has made since the end of the war and to honor the hopes for the future of this aspiring democracy, it is critical that there be accountability for anyone who undermined the electoral process.

West Africa has seen real democratic gains over the last two decades. However, those gains are now facing serious threats. The most recent elections in Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have all been failures marked by coups. The last elections in Nigeria were contested and marked by a range of serious problems. And now the 2023 elections in Sierra Leone have concluded with results that lacked transparency and credibility. These are the front lines of the struggle for democracy. The Carter Center stands ready to continue to be a partner to those working to protect and advance democracy.

Barbara J. Smith

Vice President, Peace Programs
The Carter Center

Executive Summary

The Carter Center was honored to observe the June 24, 2023, elections in Sierra Leone, with voters casting ballots for president, members of parliament, city mayors, and local councilors. The elections—the fifth general elections in the country since the end of the decade-long civil war—were an important opportunity to further consolidate Sierra Leone's democracy. Unfortunately, the 2023 national elections proved to be a significant setback for Sierra Leone's fragile democracy and an important warning to other democracies in the region.

The years leading up to the elections were marked by some important democratic advancements. The government dispensed with both the death penalty and criminal libel provisions that had historically been used to intimidate the press and civil society. Important legislation was passed establishing affirmative action measures to promote women's political participation.

However, a national census and subsequent voter registration process were questioned by opposition parties and some in civil society. Civic space in the period leading up to the elections was restrictive. Protests in August 2022 over economic conditions took on an anti-government character, and clashes between protesters and security forces led to deaths and the detention of political prisoners.

Sierra Leoneans nonetheless came out in substantial numbers on election day, waiting patiently despite delays and demonstrating their determination to exercise their franchise, ultimately casting votes in an atmosphere that was largely peaceful. Voting was conducted according to procedure.

The Carter Center's election observation team assembles before their deployment.

While election day itself was generally well administered, there were important irregularities and a significant lack of transparency during the tabulation process that severely undermined the credibility of the results announced by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL). Barring the release of more information that can be assessed and verified, it is difficult to ascertain what the will of the people of Sierra Leone expressed on election day was.

The Carter Center observed significant irregularities during the tabulation process at all five of the tabulation centers in the country. However, The Carter Center was not granted sufficient access to fully observe data entry operations at the tabulation centers. In addition, Carter Center observers directly witnessed inappropriately open ballot boxes with cut seals in three tabulation centers.

The National Election Watch (NEW), a domestic observation organization, conducted a process and

Former U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume (center), leader of the Carter Center delegation, visits a polling site in Freetown, along with other observers.

results verification for transparency (PRVT) exercise that also raised serious questions about the presidential results' credibility, particularly when weighed alongside the Carter Center's direct observations in the five tabulation centers. The Carter Center also notes that there were substantial variances between the presidential results and the parliamentary elections, particularly in turnout and invalid votes.

Overall, therefore, The Carter Center does not have confidence that the results of the June 24, 2023, national elections reflect the will of the people of Sierra Leone. The Carter Center called on the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) to release election results at the polling station level to enable the cross-checking of results, consistent with widely recognized and well-established practice for good elections. However, at the time of this report (December 2023), six months after the elections, polling station-level results still had not been released. Given the variances in the results and the violations of the integrity of ballot boxes, The Carter Center is not confident that if the ECSL ever publishes polling station results it will be possible to credibly resolve any discrepancies with results recorded by party agents and other observers.

The APC, the largest opposition party in parliament and the primary opponent of the SLPP's incumbent president, lacked faith in the independence of the judiciary and chose not to officially challenge the results announced by the ECSL. Concerns about the judiciary's independence are widely shared, and parties that have electoral complaints do not trust the judiciary to provide a fair and impartial hearing.

The immediate post-election period was characterized by an atmosphere of intimidation and misinformation to discredit election observers. International and national observers were threatened by the Office of National Security (ONS), which contributed to the Carter Center's decision to quickly leave the country after the election.

Election reform to strengthen Sierra Leone's legal framework in advance of future elections is required to significantly enhance their credibility. It is especially important for reforms to include a legal provision that requires the ECSL to publish final results by polling station to facilitate their independent verification.

While election reform is important, equally important is the enforcement of current law and ensuring accountability for anyone who undermined

Sierra Leone's electoral process. Any persons who tampered with the tabulation process should be held accountable.

Legal Framework

In many respects, Sierra Leone's legal framework is conducive to the conduct of democratic elections. Important revisions were made to the legal framework in advance of the 2023 elections, including the introduction of a requirement that 30% of a party's candidates should be women and the repeal of a portion of the Public Order Act that had criminalized libel and defamation, and sedition. However, while a new Cyber Security and Crime Act introduced in 2021 was perceived as progressive by some, many interlocutors in the media and civil society noted the law introduced significant new restrictions on freedom of expression online.

Electoral System

While recent elections had been conducted via a first-past-the-post electoral system, in late 2022 President Bio took a controversial decision that the 2023 national elections would be conducted under a proportional representation system. The decision to change key aspects of the electoral system was taken less than a year before the next election and without broad stakeholder input. Although the decision was challenged, it was upheld by Sierra Leone's Supreme Court.

In addition, electoral constituency boundaries were delimited following a political compromise based on a mix of data from 2016 (compiled when the APC was in power) and a 2021 census (conducted by the SLPP government). Decisions taken regarding the electoral system and boundary delimitation were not widely understood by citizens and were largely made without public input.

Election Management

The ECSL is composed of a chairperson and five commissioners representing Sierra Leone's five regions, with five of the six current commissioners appointed by the SLPP government that was in power from 2018 to 2023. Administration of the elections was characterized by a lack of communication and transparency that undermined public confidence in the ECSL and its work. While the SLPP expressed confidence in the ECSL, most opposition parties—including the APC, the largest opposition party in parliament going into the 2023 elections—expressed a lack of confidence in the ECSL's independence and capacity. Importantly, the ECSL commissioners declined to meet with The Carter Center while its international election observation mission was deployed in Sierra Leone.

Voter Registration

The Carter Center does not have confidence that the results of the June 24, 2023, national elections reflect the will of the people of Sierra Leone.

The 2023 elections were the second to be conducted in Sierra Leone following a legislative change that provided for the voter registry to be extracted from a civil registry through cooperation between the ECSL and the National Civil Registry Authority (NCRA). A total of 3,374,258 persons appeared on the final voter registry for the 2023 elections. The Carter Center notes that the APC contested the validity of the voter registry in the courts, claiming there had been an unreasonable increase in the number of

Citizens hold identity documents outside a polling location on election day.

A voter displays her inked finger after casting her ballots.

voters in SLPP strongholds and decreases in APC strongholds.

The Carter Center did not observe the voter registration process in advance of the 2023 elections and therefore cannot assess that process nor the integrity of the voter registry used for the elections. However, The Carter Center noted on election day that in 55% of polling stations observed, voters' pictures on the registry were inadequate for identification purposes. The Center also noted that voters at some polling stations reported that while they were registered at a polling station, their names could not be found on the copy of the Final Registration Roll that was provided to polling staff.

Candidate Nomination

As in past elections in Sierra Leone, The Carter Center noted that both the requirement that candidates for election resign from civil servant positions 12 months prior to elections and the prohibition against independent candidates for the presidency served to undermine the right to participate in public affairs.[1] The Center also noted that political parties did not disclose their candidate lists for the public. While candidates did campaign and actively solicited voters' support, the switch to proportional representation meant that, given the absence of the candidate list, the public could not know for sure where candidates appeared on the list. Final candidate lists for parliamentary elections were only gazetted four days prior to the elections, and the lists for local elections were not available until after the elections.

Campaign Period

The campaign period was dominated by debates about the financial situation of the country and legal complaints filed regarding the elections and in particular the quality of the voter list. While there were reports of intimidation and election-related violence targeting both of the main parties, Carter Center observers reported a pattern of intimidation directed against the APC, particularly in the south and east, which undermined the party's ability to exercise its right to freedom of assembly in some cases. Despite serious limitations and violations of the right of assembly in the run-up to election day and restrictions on campaigning by political parties, contestants were able to exercise fundamental freedoms and conduct their campaigns.

Participation of Women

After years of advocacy, Sierra Leone introduced a requirement, mandated under the historic 2022 Gender Empowerment and Women's Equality Act (GEWE), that women must be at least 30% of the candidates on a given party's list.[2] Although the passage of this act was widely applauded, the late publication of candidate lists in the 2023 elections made it difficult to assess its application and impact. Women made up 37% of the total candidates in the 2023 elections for parliament and currently hold 19% of parliamentary seats.[3] However, The Carter Center was unable to verify allegations that political parties identified some male candidates as female on their lists during the candidate nomination

1 ICCPR, Art. 25, Para (c) "To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country." ICCPR, HRC GC 25, para.17, "The right of persons to stand for election should not be limited unreasonably by requiring candidates to be members of parties or of specific parties."
2 Although 2022 is in the official title of the GEWE law, it's important to note that it wasn't signed into law until January 2023.
3 As of December 2023, women hold 28 of the 149 parliamentary seats (including those held by paramount chiefs). https://www.parliament.gov.sl/members-of-parliament.html

period as a way to evade the new law and ensure the acceptance of their lists. While the passage of the 2022 law was a historic step, more needs to be done to address social barriers and support the full realization of women's right to equal political participation.

Citizen Observation

Transparency provided by election observation is an important component of electoral integrity. Election observation is a widely recognized form of citizen participation in public affairs and a crucial transparency measure to promote confidence in the electoral process. In Sierra Leone, the National Election Watch (NEW), a Sierra Leonean nonpartisan civil society organization, conducted a long-term, nonpartisan, nationwide observation of the entire electoral process, deploying 6,000 citizen observers on election day and covering all polling centers. NEW conducted an important process and results verification for transparency (PRVT) exercise, also known as a parallel vote tabulation (PVT). The PRVT indicated that while SLPP's Bio obtained the most votes, no candidate secured enough votes to avoid a runoff election. NEW's data from polling station results collected on election night revealed other discrepancies with ECSL data regarding figures for turnout and invalid votes. Overall, NEW's PVT data suggested that the presidential election results announced by the ECSL were not consistent with the data gathered by NEW, nor the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box on election day. Following NEW's release of its PRVT data highlighting discrepancies with ECSL's presidential results, NEW and members of its leadership faced increased harassment and death threats, leading to the ultimate evacuation of several key members. The Carter Center strongly condemns these threats and the harassment of nonpartisan citizen observers. Further, The Carter Center is confident that NEW's observation work around the elections was conducted within the law and in accordance with international standards, and commends NEW for its contribution to Sierra Leone's democracy.

Election Day

The vote was conducted in 3,630 polling centers comprising 11,832 polling stations nationwide. Over the course of election day on June 24, 2023, The Carter Center observed polling in every district in the country. Voting took place in a generally peaceful environment, although there were isolated disturbances in several areas. The morning of the election saw long lines at the polls, particularly in Freetown, as the ECSL worked to deal with shortages of polling materials. Citizens demonstrated remarkable patience, and when voting got underway, on the whole the process went smoothly. The polling environment was assessed as very good or reasonable in 100% of polling stations observed by The Carter Center, and observers reported that they had full access to the polling stations and were allowed to observe all aspects of the process.

Overall, NEW's PVT data suggested that the presidential election results announced by the ECSL were not consistent with the data gathered by NEW, nor the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box on election day.

Tabulation

Key parts of the tabulation process were conducted in a manner that lacked transparency. The Carter Center directly observed irregularities during the tabulation process, including inappropriately open ballot boxes. Calls for increased transparency during the tabulation process went unheeded. The tabulation process and immediate post-election period was marked by unfortunate incidents of violence and unrest, including the use of live ammunition and tear gas on June 25, 2023, at the APC political party headquarters in Freetown while senior party officials were inside.

Results

The Carter Center does not have confidence that the results of the presidential election reflect the

will of people due to the lack of transparency during tabulation. The lack of transparency was found in irregularities directly observed by The Carter Center during tabulation, as well as in data from the process and PRVT conducted by the National Election Watch, which showed irregular variances in results data across the presidential and parliamentary elections. Results of the presidential elections contain mathematical inconsistencies when compared with the results of the parliamentary elections in particular. International and citizen observers have noted that there are substantial variances in turnout and invalid votes, which suggest results were tampered with during the opaque tabulation process. As of the publication of this report, the ECSL has not implemented a key recommendation made by The Carter Center, NEW, and a wide range of other actors to release election results at the polling station level, and in accordance with recognized good practice.

Electoral Dispute Resolution

In the pre-election period, a number of cases were handled in the court system, including challenges from the APC contesting the voter registration process and preparations for elections, as well as a case filed against the leading opposition candidate questioning his eligibility to stand for office. The majority of stakeholders interviewed by The Carter Center expressed a lack of confidence in the judiciary—and in particular the Supreme Court and chief justice—to handle electoral matters with independence and neutrality. In the post-election period, the APC declined to submit a post-election complaint despite questions from international and domestic observers regarding the results due to a

The Carter Center's Brett Lacy (left) meets with Kholipha Koroma of the National Election Watch to discuss observations at its data center in Freetown.

lack of confidence in the neutrality of the courts. The lack of an adequate remedy for election-related disputes was an important deficit of these elections.

Voters wait outside a polling location on election day.

Conclusions

While the years leading up to the 2023 elections were marked by positive changes to the electoral legal framework—including the introduction of affirmative action measures to promote women's political participation and the revocation of a controversial libel law—the pre-election period was marked by disputes around the census and voter registration process, threats against civil society, and protests that resulted in deaths and the detention of political prisoners. Attempts by political parties to have complaints addressed neutrally and effectively in the pre-election period were unsuccessful. While voting was conducted largely according to procedure and in a peaceful manner, there were some isolated disturbances on election day.

Most importantly, The Carter Center found that the tabulation of votes was conducted in an atmosphere that lacked transparency. Carter Center observers directly witnessed multiple instances of irregularities during this stage of the process. In addition, the NEW's PRVT exercise showed with statistically relevant data that the SLPP's Bio obtained the most votes, but not enough to avoid a runoff election. NEW's data highlights other inconsistencies, including in turnout and invalid votes. When combined with the Carter Center's observation of irregularities during tabulation, NEW's statistical data suggests the final results announced by the ECSL do not appear to reflect the will of the people as expressed at the ballot box. To date (December 2023), the ECSL has not been responsive to calls to release results by polling station in accordance with international best practice. The Carter Center also notes that there are important variances in the presidential results compared to the parliamentary elections, particularly in turnout and invalid votes.

Another serious concern reported by Carter Center observers was that the immediate post-election period was characterized by an atmosphere of intimidation and deliberate misinformation to discredit election observers. International and national observers were summoned and questioned by the Office of National Security (ONS), contributing to a decision by The Carter Center to leave the country. Many members of the public have raised questions regarding the independence of the judiciary, and parties that have electoral complaints do not trust the judiciary to give them a fair and impartial hearing.

Overall, The Carter Center does not have confidence that the published results of the June 24, 2023, national elections reflect the will of the people of Sierra Leone. While discussion around electoral reform is always welcome in a democratic society in the period between elections, it is critical that any future reform effort in Sierra Leone be genuinely inclusive. The Carter Center also notes that regardless of whether any future election reform takes place, it is important to ensure that those who have undermined democracy in Sierra Leone are held accountable.

The Carter Center in Sierra Leone

The Carter Center has a long history of commitment to West Africa, including extensive activities in Liberia and election observation missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, and Nigeria.

The Carter Center has been involved in Sierra Leone since 2002, when it was invited to observe the first presidential and parliamentary elections since the end of Sierra Leone's civil war.

2002

The Carter Center has been involved in Sierra Leone since 2002, when it was invited to observe the first presidential and parliamentary elections since the end of Sierra Leone's civil war. A peaceful transition of power in Sierra Leone offered hope to the rest of conflict-ridden West Africa. The Carter Center was the only U.S.-based organization that monitored the 2002 elections, and the Center reported that the process was peaceful and relatively well-managed. The Center fielded a delegation of 22 observers, led by former Benin President Nicéphore Soglo, which included nine civil society leaders from Liberia and Guinea. The 2002 delegation commended the voters of Sierra Leone, political party agents, and polling station workers for their impressive commitment to peaceful voting under very challenging conditions. On election day in 2002, observers saw massive crowds waiting to cast ballots early in the morning. Later, an announcement from the National Electoral Commission (NEC) caused confusion by instructing that all individuals with voter cards should be allowed to cast ballots even if their names were not on registration lists. For this reason and because some districts received large numbers of transferred votes from refugees and displaced people, some districts reported more than 100% turnout. In its post-election public statement, The Carter Center noted the need for increased transparency in election rules and decisions by the NEC and for improving the voter registration process and voter education.

2007

In 2007, The Carter Center provided technical assistance to the African Union international election observation mission to Sierra Leone around presidential and parliamentary elections. The Center provided two staff members to establish an office in Freetown, draft briefing materials, develop a deployment plan, and make logistical preparations for accommodation, transport, and delegation support. The mission was responsible for its own observations and assessment of the election. Following the mission, the Center produced an internal report for the African Union with suggestions for the administration of future missions.

2012

Sierra Leone held presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections on Nov. 17, 2012. The presidential elections were the third to take place since the end of the devastating war in Sierra Leone, and the first elections that were fully self-administered. This represented a significant step for the country toward a functioning post-conflict democracy.

At the invitation of the National Election Commission, The Carter Center observed the elections, deploying eight long-term observers and 40 short-term observers from 18 countries across Sierra Leone's 14 districts. The Center found the process to be orderly and transparent and in general accordance with Sierra Leone's legal framework and obligations for democratic elections. While the Center noted some limited administrative shortcomings, observers reported that election commission officials conducted the process well, that polling staff performed admirably in difficult conditions, and that the people of Sierra Leone turned out in high numbers to cast their ballots freely.

2018

The Carter Center was present for the 2018 elections with a small expert mission deployed to Freetown around election day and issued a comprehensive report with its observations and recommendations. A four-person expert team was deployed to Freetown in early February, arriving immediately before the formal campaign period. Originally, the Center had anticipated that this team would support the deployment of a full observation mission, including both long-term and short-term observers. However, due to funding constraints, in the end it was not possible to deploy a full mission. As a result, the Center's team acted as an "expert mission" and focused on several key issues exclusively during the first round, including the legal framework, the role of the judiciary in the electoral process, the planning and training for the security forces and other actors to maintain peace during the election period, and the role of civil society in promoting the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.

The Carter Center's Nicholas Jahr talks with voters outside a polling location on election day.

Election Observation Methodology

The Carter Center observed the 2023 presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections in Sierra Leone in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which has been endorsed by more than 50 intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations. The Declaration of Principles is a commitment to assure integrity and transparency in election observation missions and guides decisions by these organizations in determining the purpose, scope, and conduct of their missions. In all countries in which The Carter Center conducts election observation, it assesses the electoral process based on relevant parts of national legal frameworks as well as regional and international obligations for democratic elections. Sierra Leone has ratified a series of international and regional human rights treaties whose provisions are relevant to the electoral process. Table 1 provides an overview of the relevant international and regional treaties that Sierra Leone has acceded to, signed, or ratified.

The Carter Center believes that an assessment of the pre-electoral environment and preparation for the election are essential to fully determining the extent to which all aspects of the electoral process, including voter registration, campaigning, and voter education, fulfill the obligations of the country in its ratified or endorsed international and regional treaties. In accordance with this methodology, The Carter Center conducted a preliminary assessment of the political context and pre-election environment in September 2022. This assessment led the Center to respond positively to encouragement by the ECSL, political parties, and other national stakeholders to observe the elections.

Upon securing funding, the Carter Center election observation mission arrived in Sierra Leone on May 7, 2023. Eight medium-term observers (MTOs) from seven countries were deployed immediately prior to the official start of the campaign period in mid-May to assess campaigning and election preparations. Carter Center observers met regularly with representatives of political parties, civil society organizations, the international community, and domestic election observers to assess electoral preparations and the pre-election environment throughout the country. Observation was conducted of the activities of the election administration, campaigning, and voter education as well as other issues pertaining to the electoral process.

The Carter Center's MTOs were the first international observers to deploy across the country. They spent time in every one of the country's 16 districts, meeting with local election officials to assess the state of preparations, and also seeking out candidates, political party officials, and civil society representatives to hear their concerns about the process. The MTOs observed the training of polling staff and the distribution of polling materials, and they followed candidates on the campaign trail.

For the period surrounding election day, The Carter Center deployed 38 observers from 15 countries. Carter Center observers visited 119 polling stations across Sierra Leone's 16 electoral districts to assess the voting and counting processes. The Carter Center's election day delegation was led by former U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume.

Former Ambassador Cameron Hume and legal analyst Despina Efstathiou listen to voters on election day.

Following the conclusion of polling, short-term observers monitored the first portion of tabulation prior to returning to Freetown for debriefing. Long-term observers remained in the regions to observe the counting and tabulation process as well as post-election developments, including the announcement of results and processing of electoral complaints. At times, Carter Center observers were the only observers present at tabulation centers.

Over the course of the electoral process, The Carter Center released seven public statements (included in the appendices of this report) based on assessments from its MTOs and short-term observers and analysis of the core team. This included public statements that shared observations of irregularities, questioned the credibility of election results, and called for the release of results at the polling station level in accordance with international best practice.

After careful deliberation, The Carter Center withdrew its observers and core team members from Sierra Leone between July 5 and 13, 2023, amid an increased atmosphere of intimidation and a decline in the integrity of the electoral process.

Table 1: Relevant International and Regional Treaties

Treaty/Declaration	Status	Date
African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG)	Ratified/Acceded	Feb. 17, 2009
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)	Ratified/Acceded	Sept. 21, 1983
African Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption	Ratified/Acceded	Dec. 03, 2008
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Ratified/Acceded	Nov. 11, 1988
Convention on the Political Rights of Women	Ratified/Acceded (with reservations)	July 25, 1962
Convention on the Rights of the Child	Ratified/Acceded	June 18, 1990
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Ratified/Acceded	Oct. 4, 201
ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance[4]	Signed	Dec. 21, 2001
ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight Against Corruption	Signed	Dec. 21, 2011
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Acceded	Aug. 23, 1996
International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	Ratified/Acceded	Aug. 23, 1996
International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	Ratified/Acceded	Aug. 2, 1967
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	Signed	Sept. 15, 2000
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	Ratified/Acceded	Dec. 9, 2023
Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security	Ratified/Acceded	Aug. 10, 2004
United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)	Ratified/Acceded	Sept. 30, 2004
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Ratified/Acceded	Oct. 4, 2010
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Adopted[5]	1948

4 The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight against Corruption have not yet entered into force.
5 As a declaration the UDHR has not undergone a process of ratification; however, it is widely considered binding as an example of customary international law. The UDHR was originally adopted by 48 countries in 1948.

Historical and Political Background

Sierra Leone is a small country on the coast of West Africa, first established as a British colony and a home for freed slaves who'd fought for the Crown in the U.S. Revolutionary War in exchange for freedom or been rescued on the high seas after the U.K. abolished slavery. The country achieved independence in 1961 under the leadership of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), which at that same moment underwent a split, leading to the formation of the All People's Congress (APC). These two parties have dominated the country's politics ever since.

Sierra Leone is a parliamentary republic with a presidential political system and a unicameral

Citizens vote at a polling location in Freetown.

legislature. The president and parliamentarians are elected by popular vote. The president is the head of state and has expansive powers.[6]

On March 14, 2022, the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, in keeping with the legally prescribed procedure, called a presidential election for June 24, 2023. These were the fifth national elections to take place in Sierra Leone since the end of the civil war in 2002.

Since independence in 1961, the country's politics have been dominated by two major political parties: the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All People's Congress (APC). The former was first established under colonial rule a decade prior; the latter was founded in the months leading up to independence by Minister of Mines and former labor leader Siaka Stevens, after his dismissal from the government. Elections were held in 1962 and SLPP secured a majority in the new parliament; the party's leader, Milton Margai, became Sierra Leone's first prime minister.

Elections came around again in 1967, and this time APC claimed victory by a narrow margin, only for the military to intervene and prevent Stevens from being inaugurated. A year later, another faction within the military staged a countercoup, restoring Stevens and the APC to power. It would be another 17 years before Stevens would relinquish control, and Sierra Leone's nascent democracy steadily eroded during that period. Constitutional reform in 1971 established Sierra Leone as a republic with Stevens as president. Further reform in 1978 officially made the country a one-party state.

By 1992, a rebel organization called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was running rampant in the country's east. Frustrated by a perceived lack of support for the military, soldiers descended on Freetown for a protest that quickly transformed into a coup when Stevens' successor fled. The officers who assumed command of the government styled themselves the National Provisional Ruling Council. A promised return to civilian rule was slow to materialize, and fighting with the rebels ground on as the state deteriorated and new paramilitary forces entered the fray. In 1996, one of the NPRC's officers, newly minted Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio, seized control. Elections were held later that year and returned SLPP to office for the first time in three decades.

The SLPP government finally brought the war to a close in early 2002. Elections were held in May of that year under a "district block" proportional representation system, in which each of the country's then 14 administrative districts served as a single electoral district in which members of parliament were elected proportionally. Incumbent President Tejan Kabbah swept all three districts in the Eastern Region and all four districts in the Southern Region by overwhelming majorities, earning solid majorities in the Western Region as well.[7] APC began to recover from its wartime nadir, netting equally solid majorities in three districts of the Northern Region.[8]

The Carter Center's international election observation mission found that the process "enabled voters to freely express their democratic choices and the official results reflected the will of the voters." Given the change in the electoral system, the Center called for a "national consultative process … to determine whether to return to the single-seat system under which voters in a constituency would elect a representative who is directly accountable to them."

For the 2007 elections, the government shifted from the district block and proportional system to adopt a first-past-the-post system. Ernest Bai Koroma ran again as APC's flag bearer, while SLPP was led into the elections by Vice President Solomon Berewa. A split within the ruling party led to the formation of a new contender, the People's Movement for Democratic Change, helmed by

6 Under the current (1991) constitution, the president is "Head of State, the supreme executive authority of the Republic and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces." Chapter V — Part 1 — Section 40 (1). The president is also responsible for, among other competencies, "all constitutional matters concerning legislation" 40 (4) a, and enjoys extensive powers of appointment (appoints all electoral commissioners and commissioners of the PPRC, subject to approval of parliament, and can remove electoral commissioners for "misbehavior"; justices of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, as well as justices of High Court 70; the cabinet; the clerk of parliament; the inspector-general of police 157 (1); can also remove paramount chiefs from office 72 (4)) Determine date parliamentary session begins 84 (1).

7 In the East, Kabbah won Kono (87.0%), Kailahun (89.2%), and Kenema (95.0%). In the South, Kabbah won Bo (95.0%), Bonthe (99.2%), Moyamba (90.4%), and Pujehun (99.4%). The president also won the 'West-East' (53.4%) and 'West-West' (56.9%).

8 APC's presidential candidate, Ernest Bai-Koroma, won Bombali (65.1%), Port Loko (57.6%), and Tonkolili (67.4%).

A poll worker assesses a voter's identity and locates her name on the voter list on election day.

Charles Margai. Koroma went on to sweep all five districts in the North in the first round, as well as both districts in the West.[9] SLPP retained its decisive position in the East, but PMDC cut into its margins in the South, winning Bonthe outright. The distribution of parliamentary seats followed this pattern. When no candidate obtained enough votes to win in the first round, Margai threw his support behind Koroma in the second. After results from 477 of 6,156 polling stations were invalidated due to overvoting,[10] Koroma was pronounced the winner with 55% of the vote.

Koroma stood for reelection in 2012. The SLPP chose as its flag bearer Julius Maada Bio, the retired military officer who had led the country under the NPRC. Voter registration for the 2012 election increased overall but dropped in the SLPP districts. As with Kabbah's 2002 reelection bid, Koroma won outright in the first round. The North and West voted for the APC by overwhelming margins.[11] The SLPP reconsolidated its support in the East and South, though for the first time it lost Kono to the APC,[12] an upset sometimes attributed to Koroma's vice president, Kono native Samuel Sam-Sumana.

9 Koroma's first round vote totals: Bombali, 83.9%; Kambia, 68.2%; Koinadugu, 59.0%; Port Loko, 78.6%; Tonkolili, 82.2%, Western Area Rural, 64.8%; Western Area Urban, 60.5%.

10 The vast majority of the polling stations for which results were invalidated—426 of 477—were in the South and East. Harris, *Civil War and Democracy in West Africa*, I.B. Tauris, 2012, p. 124.

11 In the North, Koroma won Bombali (93.2%), Kambia (82%), Koinadugu (86.4%), Port Loko (90.2%), and Tonkolili (92.6%). Koroma also won both the Western Rural (74.3%) and Western Urban (71.4%) districts.

12 In the South, SLPP won Bo (77.1%), Bonthe (80.6%), Moyamba (65.3%), and Pujehun (74.7%), while in the East it won Kailahun (73.35) and Kenema (77.9%). Kono, as mentioned, went for APC (58.2%) over SLPP (37.15).

Bio maintained that the SLPP had been deprived of its rightful victory in the 2012 elections, writing in a foreword to the SLPP's 2018 manifesto that "I believe we won the presidential elections."

An Ebola outbreak raged across the subregion in 2014, leaving almost 4,000 dead and the country reeling.[13] Koroma's administration undertook a regularly scheduled census the following year—the accuracy of which was challenged by SLPP—and initiated a controversial process of 'deamalgamation' of a number of chiefdoms (administrative subunits) which had been combined (amalgamated) by the British administration prior to independence. This exercise resulted in the establishment of two new administrative districts, both in the north of the country: Karene (which had existed prior to independence) and Falaba.

Koroma dismissed Vice President Sam-Sumana in 2015, in a fashion Sam-Sumana and others argued was unconstitutional. Sam-Sumana ultimately pursued his complaint to the ECOWAS Court of Justice, which ruled in his favor (though on the narrower grounds that the process by which he was removed from APC was unconstitutional).

Having reached the two-term limit on the presidency, Koroma anointed as his successor his former minister of finance and minister of foreign affairs, Dr. Samura Kamara, who faced off against the SLPP's Bio in 2018's presidential elections. Bio won the 2018 presidential election, but the APC retained a majority in parliament, with 68 seats to the SLPP's 49 seats. Tensions spiked between the first and second rounds of the elections. Results were never published disaggregated by polling station. Court challenges subsequently led to the nullification of results in 10 parliamentary contests, all won by APC candidates who were eventually replaced by SLPP candidates, giving the SLPP a one-seat majority in parliament.

The new government initiated wide-ranging anti-corruption probes that targeted, among others, both former President Ernest Bai Koroma and Bio's 2018 opponent, Dr. Samura Kamara. Kamara's prosecution continued into early May 2023, when the trial was adjourned until July 14.

As the Covid-19 pandemic receded and inflationary pressure swept across the globe, Sierra Leone's currency entered a serious decline. The government officially devalued the currency in July 2022. One month later, in August 2022, protests over economic conditions erupted in Freetown and other cities, escalating into serious clashes with security forces that left six state security personnel and at least 21 civilians dead.[14]

13 "2014-2016 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa," CDC, 8 March 2019. https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/history/2014-2016-outbreak/index.html

14 An official government inquiry found six state security personnel and 21 civilians were killed. In October 2022, Amnesty International reported the government buried 27 civilians. The U.S. State Department reported 30 protesters, "mostly unarmed youth," were killed in Freetown, Makeni (Bombali), and Kamakwie (Karene).

Electoral Institutions and the Framework for the General Elections

Legal Framework

A sound legal framework is essential to the administration of democratic elections and to ensuring that a country upholds its international obligations. Under its international and regional treaty obligations, Sierra Leone must take measures to promote the rule of law and ensure consistency between domestic law and international principles of human rights.[15]

Overall, Sierra Leone's legal framework is conducive for the conduct of democratic elections. Important revisions were made to the legal framework in advance of the 2023 elections, including the introduction of a requirement that 30% of a party's candidates should be women and the repeal of a portion of the Public Order Act that had criminalized libel, defamation, and sedition. While a new Cyber Security and Crime Act introduced in 2021 was perceived as progressive by some, many interlocutors in the media and civil society noted the law introduced significant new restrictions on freedom of expression online.

Sierra Leone has ratified all major international and regional instruments that relate to human rights and the conduct and inclusivity of democratic elections.[16] The 2023 elections were governed by the 1991 Constitution, 2022 Political Parties Act, and the 2022 Public Elections Act, the 1965 Public Order Act (as amended), the Cybersecurity and Cyber Crimes Act of 2021, and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE) of 2021.

Sierra Leone's international obligations come from the following conventions: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Sierra Leone is a member of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and has committed to meeting the human right standards of both organizations. Sierra Leone is also a state party to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

It is commendable that in advance of these elections important recommendations from past international observation missions have been implemented and that the constitutional review process was concluded in 2017, including the repeal of sections of the Public Order Act and GEWE's legal protections for women's political participation.

However, key recommendations from past election reviews remain unaddressed, including: repeal of racially discriminatory provisions that require Negro-Africa ancestry to be a citizen (which adversely impacts suffrage rights); facilitate the right to vote of Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora; eliminate parliamentary seats reserved for paramount chiefs

15 United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 2; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21(3); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25 (b).

16 Sierra Leone has signed but not ratified the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

that are indirectly elected (and create a separate national representative body for them); facilitate the representation of smaller parties (the new threshold undermines this); reduce the requirement for public officials to step down from 12 months before an election to six months, and exclude teachers; limit ECSL commissioners to two five-year terms and decentralize their work by locating commissioners in the regions; and mandate regional, ethnic and gender diversity in the appointment of ECSL commissioners. Important recommendations from the constitutional review process also addressed freedoms for the media and independence of the judiciary, both of which are important institutions in the electoral process. Other recommendations include reducing to below 10% the disparity in the number of registered voters per constituency to preserve the right of equal suffrage (see the boundary delimitation section of this report).

Although the legal framework is adequate for the holding of democratic elections, it would benefit from a thorough review and revisions to address past recommendations, ensure better cohesion between Sierra Leone's legislation and the constitution, and fully meet international standards for democratic elections.

As a result of the way in which the candidate lists were published, The Carter Center and others were unable to explore allegations that some political parties intentionally provided incorrect gender data for their candidates to circumvent the requirement.

Women and the Legal Framework

In 2022, Sierra Leone's parliament passed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, the nation's first legislative affirmative action measure aiming to enhance women's political participation and promote women as candidates. GEWE mandates that 30% of political party candidates must be women; it is supported by the Public Elections Act, which stipulates that political party nomination lists that do not include the required number of female candidates will be rejected.[17]

However, in the 2023 elections, the ECSL did not publish a final list of candidates in the official gazette until June 22, the last day of the campaign period and two days before polling. The gazette list did not specify a given candidate's gender nor which office they were contesting (parliament, mayor, local council). As a result, it was prohibitively difficult for the public or political parties to assess whether parties had nominated the required number of female candidates. As a result of the way in which the candidate lists were published, The Carter Center and others were unable to explore allegations that some political parties intentionally provided incorrect gender data for their candidates to circumvent the requirement.[18]

Right and Opportunity to be Elected and Participate in Public Affairs

The effective implementation of the right to stand for elected office ensures that citizens can participate directly in the political process and that voters have free choice of candidates.[19] International and regional treaties protect the right of every citizen to be elected, subject only to reasonable restrictions. To ensure voters have a free choice of candidates, international standards indicate that any conditions placed on political party and candidate registration processes should be reasonable and nondiscriminatory.[20] These conditions apply to age, citizenship, residence, and the holding of public positions, among others, and should not discriminate against candidates based on political affiliation or financial situation.

Sierra Leone's Constitution establishes the eligibility requirements for presidential and parliamentary candidates and includes a number

17 Parliament has 146 members in full composition; at the time of the passage of the GEWE, only 18 MPs, or 12%, were women.

18 The Carter Center heard allegations that political parties identified male candidates as female on their lists during the candidate nomination period as a way to evade the new law and ensure the acceptance of their lists. Once parties had met the deadline and their lists were accepted, they were then allegedly replacing male candidates identified as female with actual female candidates.

19 ICCPR, Article 25 (a). UNHRC, General Comment 25, para. 15.

20 UNHRC, General Comment 25, paras. 15–17.

of criteria that fall short of international standards on the right to participate in politics. Presidential candidates must be nominated by a political party, so independent candidates cannot run for president. Other requirements for presidential and parliamentary candidates serve to exclude persons who are naturalized Sierra Leone citizens, have dual citizenship, are not fluent in the English language, are disqualified from their profession, or have declared bankruptcy, among other conditions. Fees to register as a candidate are high and nonrefundable and thus restrict the capacity of smaller parties, independent candidates, and women to stand for office.[21]

Public servants who have not resigned from their posts at least 12 months prior to the election are also excluded from contesting elections, although a 2016 Supreme Cout decision exempts government ministers from this provision.

The Right to Vote

Article 31 of the constitution guarantees the right to vote to all citizens of Sierra Leone who have reached the age of 18. The legal framework also includes some restrictions on the right to vote which are inconsistent with international standards. The right to vote is denied by law to "persons of unsound mind/lunatics," undermining the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[22]

As there are no provisions in the law for voting outside of the polling stations and no mechanism for mobile voting, several groups of citizens effectively are disenfranchised.[23] These include the elderly or infirm that either are in hospital or cannot physically go to the polling station and those who are in pretrial detention. Additionally, Article 16(d) imposes a total ban on voting for those who are serving a sentence of incarceration.[24]

Electoral System

Sierra Leone is a presidential republic with three branches of government—the executive, the legislative, and the judicial—following the principle of separation of powers and a system of checks and balances.

Presidential Electoral System

The president and vice president are elected together on the same ticket. The presidency is a five-year term with a limit of two consecutive terms. Under the constitution, the president of Sierra Leone is elected in a two-round system. If no candidate receives 55% of the votes in the first round, the top two candidates proceed to a runoff election within 14 days of the announcement of first-round results. As described in the discussion of the legal framework, independent candidates are not allowed to run for president.

Electoral System for Parliamentary Elections

The Parliament of Sierra Leone is made up of 149 members who serve a five-year mandate. 135 seats are directly elected and were on the ballot in the June 24, 2023, elections, while the remaining 14 were reserved for paramount chiefs, who were elected through a different process in late May 2023.

While recent elections had been conducted via a first-past-the-post electoral system, in late 2022 the president of Sierra Leone took a controversial decision that the 2023 national elections would be conducted under a proportional representation system.

While recent elections had been conducted via a first-past-the-post electoral system, in late 2022 the president of Sierra Leone took a controversial decision that the 2023 national elections would be conducted under a proportional representation system. Contrary to best practice, these changes to the electoral system were made less than six months before the election, without the consultation of

21 ICCPR, HRC GC 25, Para. 16 *"[…] Conditions relating to nomination dates, fees or deposits should be reasonable…."*.
22 1991 Constitution. 2022 Public Elections Act. 1902 Lunacy Act.
23 See U.N. ICCPR, General Comment 25(1) and (11).
24 U.N. ICCPR General Comment 25 (14).

political parties, and with little time for parties or the public to understand their implications.[25]

The Constitution of Sierra Leone does not prescribe an electoral system by which the unicameral legislature is elected. Over the course of the postwar period, two electoral systems have been used to elect members of Sierra Leone's parliament. During the 1996 and 2002 elections, MPs were elected under proportional representation (PR) systems.[26] Since the 2007 elections, MPs have been elected under a first-past-the-post system in single-member constituencies. At the time, international observers applauded the shift to the FPTP system, noting that it would likely deepen the connection between MPs and the constituencies they represent.

For the 2023 parliamentary elections, the president made a controversial declaration to return to a proportional representation system. A postwar amendment to the Sierra Leone Constitution of 1991 provides the president with the right to choose an electoral system for parliamentary polls in case of simultaneously occurring exceptional circumstances.[27] The amendment stipulates that in the event the date of the parliamentary elections has been proclaimed but the boundaries of the constituencies have not been delimited by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), the president can decide that parliament will be elected through proportional representation.[28] In October 2022, the ECSL issued a statement informing the public that after updating the president on its progress in delimiting constituency boundaries, the president directed the ECSL to conduct the polls under a proportional representation system.[29]

Following the president's announcement of the return to proportional representation, in November 2022 the ECSL published a regulation on proportional representation that aimed to fill in gaps in the legislation, which provided little guidance as to which of the great variety of proportional representation systems should be used for this election.[30] The ECSL regulation provided for proportional representation through closed-party lists in 16 multi-seat constituencies, corresponding to the country's 16 administrative districts. The allocation of the seats to contestants at the district level would be conducted by the highest remainder method.[31] To distribute the 135 directly elected seats in the legislature among the districts, the ECSL used population data from a controversial census exercise conducted in December 2021.[32]

The ECSL produced a booklet on the new electoral system.[33] The publication failed to match its purpose as it was for the most part simply a reproduction of the very complex regulation and the attendant mathematical formulas. Moreover, if anything, it served as a pamphlet praising the new electoral system, stating on its back cover: "Let us use the proportional representation system to unite Sierra Leone." Rather than explaining how the new system works, the ECSL took a stand on the contentious issue of the system itself, unnecessary

25 It is important to note that this change to proportional representation applies only to the 2023 elections, and it is assumed that the next elections in Sierra Leone will be conducted via the first-past-the-post system unless a different decision is taken in advance of those elections.

26 As mentioned in the historical background section, in 1996 the country was treated as a single electoral district, while in 2002 a "district block" system was used.

27 The Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2001, Supplement to the Sierra Leone Gazette Vol. CXXXIII, No. 6 dated 7 February, 2002

28 The 2001 amendment giving the president the right to direct that elections be conducted through a proportional representation system was enacted to protect the right to vote in the event that the election management body may fail to delimit constituencies in Sierra Leone's complex postwar context. The nature of the amendment was to ensure that such a failure to delimit constituencies would not be an obstacle to periodic elections. Applying this amendment in Sierra Leone's 2023 elections after two elections utilizing the FPTP system and following a census intended to inform an updated delimitation of boundaries raises questions regarding the separation of powers and independence of the election management body. Furthermore, the amendment is an exception from the general norm by which Parliament establishes electoral laws. Invoking the amendment in the context of regular elections, in the absence of extraordinary circumstances, contradicts the international law codified under the ICCPR, which provides that the relation between a norm and exception cannot be reversed.

29 https://ec.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/PRESS-STATEMENT-ON-THE-ELECTORAL-SYSTEM.pdf

30 Statutory Instrument No. 14 of 2022, Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, Supplement to the Sierra Leone Gazette vol. CXLXIII, No. 83 dated 16 November 2022. Accessible in the public domain: https://sierralii.gov.sl/akn/sl/act/si/2022/14/eng@2022-11-16/source

31 This is sometimes also called the Hare-Niemeyer quota, and is a system used to distribute seats in proportional representation electoral systems.

32 The constitution does not prescribe the number of seats in the parliament, which can vary in each election. For this election, 135 MPs were being directly elected through universal suffrage. Another 14 MPs are selected by the Chiefdom Councils, bringing the total number of parliamentarians in the coming term to 149.

33 "Frequently Asked Questions on the PR System"

Despina Efstathiou (left) and Brett Lacy of The Carter Center record polling station observations.

amplifying the perception of the commission's partisanship.

The opposition APC and PMDC challenged the shift to proportional representation and exhausted domestic remedies with the ruling of the Supreme Court delivered on Jan. 27, 2023.[34] The court ruled in favor of the president and the ECSL's decision-making process.

Threshold for Political Party Representation

The ECSL's November 2022 regulation detailing the proportional representation system for the parliament also introduced an extremely high threshold, requiring political parties and independent candidates to obtain 11.9% of the vote to receive a seat in parliament. [35] This requirement is an undue restriction on the right to participate in political life, contravening Sierra Leone's commitments under the ICCPR. By further concentrating parliamentary power in the APC and SLPP parties, and reducing

34 S.C. Misc APP. NO. 06/2022.

35 The 11.9% was calculated by dividing the total number of districts with the total number of seats multiplied by 100.

their representation in each other's respective strongholds, the threshold could also negatively impact political divisions.[36]

While establishing legal minimum thresholds of votes to enter parliament is a common practice, such thresholds are instituted to minimize the risk of overly fragmented parliaments in systems in which the parliamentary majority elects the government. This is not the case in Sierra Leone. The threshold limits the opportunity of smaller parties and independent candidates to win seats in parliament, placing them at a severe disadvantage and departing from international standards.[37]

Importantly, the change in the threshold was introduced with little input and awareness from political parties, and its implications were not understood by the majority of political party leaders with whom The Carter Center met.

Future legal framework reviews should carefully reconsider the 11.9% requirement, its applicability, and any unintended consequence on the right to stand for public office, and should evaluate international best practices and other available options to strengthen political parties.

Election Management

A critical factor in enhancing the transparency of an electoral process and facilitating the active participation of citizens in the democratic process is an independent and impartial election management body (EMB). A transparent, accountable, and professional body is regarded as an effective means of ensuring that domestic and international obligations related to the democratic process are met.[38] The EMB should provide accountable, efficient, and effective public administration of elections and should ensure that the electoral process complies with Sierra Leone's national laws as well as its regional and international obligations for democratic elections and human rights.[39]

Administration of the elections in 2023 in Sierra Leone was characterized by a lack of communication and transparency that undermined public confidence in the institution and its work. Over the course of the electoral process, information was rarely made available to the public and voters were not provided with the information on commissioners' meetings, their agenda, or the decisions taken.

The ECSL is composed of a chairperson and five commissioners representing Sierra Leone's five regions, with five of the six current commissioners appointed by the government that was in power following the last elections in 2018.

While the SLPP expressed confidence in the ECSL, most opposition parties—including the APC, the largest opposition party in parliament—expressed a lack of confidence in the ECSL's independence and capacity. Two weeks before the elections, the APC called for the resignation of all commissioners. Importantly, the ECSL commissioners declined to meet with The Carter Center during the time its international election observation mission was deployed in Sierra Leone.

The ECSL is a constitutional body led by the chief electoral commissioner and five other

36 Throughout Sierra Leone's postwar presidential elections (postwar parliamentary results by district are not consistently available), only three parties besides APC and SLPP have ever cleared this threshold, and only in a handful of districts. In 2007, Charles Margai's PMDC would have cleared this threshold in five districts: Kailahun (14.9%), Kenema (21.6%), Bo (37.1%), Moyamba (35.6%), and Pujehun (43.5%). In 2018, Sam Sam-Sumana's Coalition for Change would have cleared the threshold in Kono, while Kandeh Yumkella's National Grand Coalition would have cleared this threshold in three districts: Falaba (16.2%), Koinadugu (14.8%), and Kambia (43.2%). Margai is the only presidential candidate ever to amass enough votes countrywide to meet the threshold, when in his 2007 campaign he won 13.9% of the total vote. In the 2002 and 2012 elections, not a single presidential contender besides those of APC and SLPP would have cleared this threshold at the district or countrywide level. Even APC and SLPP regularly fall below the threshold in districts considered the other's strongholds: in 2002, APC would have cleared the threshold in eight districts, while SLPP would have cleared it in all 14 districts. In 2007, APC would have cleared the threshold in 10 districts, while SLPP would have cleared the threshold in all but one district. In 2012, APC would have cleared the threshold in all but one district, while SLPP would have cleared the threshold in 10 districts. In 2018, both APC and SLPP would have cleared the threshold in 11 of the 16 districts. The threshold would therefore have the effect of reinforcing the parties' perceived strongholds, eliminating some opposition representation from these districts.

37 Useful sources on the study of thresholds include the following: Arend Lijphart. (1994). Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945–1990. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 25–56; International IDEA. (2008). Electoral System Design. The New IDEA International Handbook. Eds. Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly and Andrew Ellis; Elections and Conflict Management in Africa. (1998). Eds. Andrew Reynolds and Timothy Sisk. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press; Thomas Carothers Confronting the Weakest Link. (2006). Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

38 United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, General Comment 25, para. 20

39 Venice Commission, Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, Section II.3.1.c

commissioners appointed by the president and subject to the approval of the parliament. The law excludes members of the government (ministers), public officers, and members of parliament from being appointed as commissioners. Additionally, the law stipulates that to be an election commissioner one must fulfill the same legal qualification as a candidate for parliament. This includes a requirement of resigning from any public office in the government, its agencies, or any other public institution 12 months prior to appointment. While this requirement is strict, it concerns only the six highest posts in the electoral administration. Notwithstanding, it unnecessarily limits the pool of potential commissioners and suggests that professional experience in the public sector is a barrier to service as a commissioner.[40]

The chairperson of the ECSL is the national returning officer (NRO) and the five commissioners become regional returning officers (RROs), with areas of responsibility corresponding to the administrative division of the country. They oversee and are supported by 16 district election managers. Around election day, over 90,000 staff were employed to conduct all logistical, polling, and tabulation operations. Regrettably, only two out of 16 district election managers were women.

Boundary Delimitation

According to international standards, constituency boundaries should be drawn so that the principle of equal suffrage is preserved, affording every voter roughly equal voting power.[41] Notwithstanding strong concerns raised regarding the census, the ECSL decided to use census results and not voter registration data as a basis for identifying how many parliamentary seats each district would be electing.[42] As a result, electoral districts that have historically voted for the governing SLPP were apportioned eight more seats, and districts that have supported APC lost the same number of seats. Significantly, the capital district of Freetown (Western Urban), which in previous elections had 20 seats in the parliament, now has only 16.

Using the generally accepted method of evaluating equality of suffrage ("weight of vote") method, only four electoral districts meet the norm of not deviating from the voter-per-seat average by more than 10%.

The number of registered voters per member of parliament varies dramatically between the districts and ranges from 16,541 voters per seat in Pujehun to 54,366 voters per seat in the Western Urban (Freetown) district, distorting representation in parliament and undermining equal suffrage, which requires that voters have roughly equal voting power. Using the generally accepted method of evaluating equality of suffrage ("weight of vote") method, only four electoral districts meet the norm of not deviating from the voter-per-seat average by more than 10%.

40 U.N. ICCPR, GC 25, p. 23 (c) states must ensure that the criteria and processes for appointment, and promotion, suspension and dismissal of public servants are reasonable.

41 "The drawing of electoral boundaries and the method of allocating votes should not distort the distribution of voters or discriminate against any group and should not exclude or restrict unreasonably the right of citizens to choose their representatives freely." ICCPR. General Comment 25. Article 21

42 The ECSL chose to add another step to this calculation, and the final apportionment of seats to districts was based on obtaining the average of the current number of seats for each district (determined for the 2018 elections) and the number of seats suggested by the district's share of the total population according to the midterm census.

Table 2: Number of Registered Voters per Elected Legislative Seat Distortion

District	Registered Voters per Member of Parliament	Number of Seats (Excluding Paramount Chiefs)
Kailahun	19,358	10
Kenema	24,460	12
Kono	15,837	10
Bombali	29,426	8
Falaba	23,043	4
Koinadugu	21,315	4
Tonkolili	20,734	10
Kambia	25,425	6
Karene	20,029	5
Port Loko	26,325	10
Bo	24,430	12
Bonthe	21,506	5
Moyamba	25,035	6
Pujehun	16,541	7
Western Rural	28,480	10
Western Urban	54,366	16

Pre-Election Period

Census and Voter Registration

The 2021 Census

In December 2021, the government of Sierra Leone conducted the Mid-term Housing and Population Census, the results of which were published on Oct. 15, 2022.[43]

In the week prior to the commencement of the census exercise, the APC called on its supporters to boycott the census both by refusing to be counted and by not working as census takers or in other positions. In its Nov. 30, 2021, press release, the APC stated that it had exhausted all remedies and that "this proposed Mid Term Census serves no useful purpose other than to fuel the unfortunate desire of the President Bio led SLPP government to unconstitutionally create more districts and constituencies; distract the populace and international community from the burning issues plaguing our beloved nation; undermine the timing and credibility of the scheduled 2022 and 2023 elections; and further risk plunging this country into insecurity and anarchy."[44]

The survey process itself and the population shifts it identified in some areas generated controversies.[45] Notably, the census concluded that the capital city of Freetown, historically an APC stronghold, lost half of its population. Civil society organizations and the mayor of Freetown issued analyses finding that Freetown's population had actually increased.[46]

Overall, the census results showed a correlation between population increase and support for the governing SLPP on one hand and decrease in population of the areas that previously voted predominantly for the APC on the other.[47]

The National Election Watch (NEW) conducted an evidence-based observation of the census process and raised important concerns over both the conduct and the quality of the data it generated, noting the data was flawed and not representative of Sierra Leone's population. In its press release, NEW called on the government to nullify the census results due to irregularities in the preparatory stage, the census process itself, and the data released.[48]

43 https://www.statistics.sl/index.php/statistics-sierra-leone-hands-over-final-census-results-to-president-bio.html. The results were released three days before the ECSL met with the president to update him on the status of boundary delimitation, and six days before the ECSL would announce the shift to proportional representation (21 Oct).

44 Awoko Publications. Dec. 12, 2021. "APC calls on membership to boycott national census". APC calls on membership to boycott national census – Awoko Newspaper. Last accessed Dec. 1, 2023.

45 The original sponsor of the census, the World Bank, withdrew financing of the process as it had concerns over the quality of data collection.

46 In a letter titled *"Concerns RE Accuracy Of Mid-term Census Results For Western Area Urban (Freetown)"* of 8 June, the mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, confronted preliminary results of the census, providing municipal and geospatial data that indicated an increase in Freetown population. Furthermore, a corresponding argument was presented by the Institute for Governance Reform: http://igrsl.org/igrs-response-sierra-leones-2022-mid-term-census/

47 The census found the total population of Sierra Leone to be 7,548,702. According to the census, the population of the electoral districts that voted in previous elections for the governing SLPP increased by 690,000. In comparison, the population of those districts that voted for APC decreased by 230,000.

48 For more details see National Election Watch's report of 2 June 2022: "NEW's Position on the Provisional Results of the Controversial 2021 Mid-Term Population and Housing Census".

Following a political compromise, the ECSL ultimately used an average of the census results in combination with the average of the 2016 parliamentary seats to delimit boundaries for the 2023 national elections, resulting in an increase in seats in SLPP strongholds and a decrease in seats in opposition APC strongholds. See the boundary delimitation section of this report for further discussion.

Overall, the census results showed a correlation between population increase and support for the governing SLPP on one hand and decrease in population of the areas that previously voted predominantly for the APC on the other.

Voter Registration

The rights of universal and equal suffrage are fundamental international obligations for democratic elections.[49] International standards provide that voter registration, if required, should enable the broadest possible pool of voters to participate, and voter lists should be prepared in a transparent manner with voters having easy access to review and correct their registration data as the need arises.[50]

The 2023 elections were the second to be conducted in Sierra Leone following a legislative change through which the voter registry is extracted from a civil registry through cooperation between the ECSL and the National Civil Registry Authority (NCRA). A total of 3,374,258 persons appeared on the final voter registry for the elections. The Carter Center notes that the APC contested the validity of the voter registry in the courts, claiming there had been unreasonable increases in the number of voters in SLPP strongholds and decreases in APC strongholds.

The Carter Center did not observe the voter registration process in advance of Sierra Leone's 2023 general elections and therefore cannot assess that process or the integrity of the voter registry used for the elections. However, The Carter Center noted on election day that in 55% of polling stations observed, voters' pictures on the registry were inadequate for identification purposes and that in others voters reported that while they were registered at a polling station, their names could not be found on the copy of the final registration roll provided to polling staff.

By law, the ECSL conducts voter registration and is responsible for the maintenance of the voter register. The "update to the register" for this election was carried out in September 2022. The ECSL used the extract of the civil register maintained by the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) as a basis for the update of the voter register (VR). Notwithstanding the existence of the civil register, the ECSL decided to conduct an active voter registration exercise to update the voter registry. Regardless of whether an eligible citizen was already included in the NCRA's civil register, they still had to appear in person at indicated locations and dates to confirm their data. While explainable as a requirement for eligible citizens who did not feature in the civil register previously, for those whose records were already included in the civil registry such a requirement, and condition to exercise their right to vote, appears burdensome and unnecessarily undermines benefits of the system to extract a voter registry from the civil registry.

Originally, the voter registration exercise was planned to take place in two phases covering different areas of the country. However, challenges were encountered in the first phase with insufficient voter information, and additional days were added. The provisional voter register was exhibited Nov. 24-28 and subject to corrections, allowing citizens to amend their data. The design of the voter register

49 ICCPR, Article 25(b); and UNHRC, General Comment 25, para. 11.
50 "The voters' lists shall be prepared in a transparent and reliable manner, with the collaboration of the political parties and voters who may have access to them whenever the need arises." Article 5, ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001).

is very comprehensive and consists of the personal data of the voter as well as a photo of their face.[51]

Although a voter ID card is not required for voting, one is provided by the ECSL. The voter register itself includes a photograph of the voter and therefore serves as sufficient proof of eligibility to vote. The law only requires that the voter identification officer at the polling station be satisfied with the identity claimed by the voter.[52] Although voter ID cards are not required to vote, after the voter registration process, voters were nonetheless asked to return to ECSL locations across the country to collect their voter ID cards.

The voter ID cards produced by the ECSL for these elections feature photos of poor quality in which voters are often difficult to recognize. The ECSL responded to concerns over the poor quality of the voter ID cards by declaring that it would improve the quality of the pictures on the hard copy of the voter register supplied to the polling stations on election day. The international community provided additional resources to enable the ECSL to print high-quality copies of the voter register.[53]

The ECSL provided a copy of the voter register to political parties on 8 June. APC pointed out that this copy only included a list of voters' names, photos, and polling precincts, and was of limited

A man shows his voter identification card.

51 Data on the voter roll includes names, date of birth, names of parents, voter ID serial number, voter registration receipt serial number, gender, and the voter's number on the given extract for their polling station.

52 The voter identification officer can accept other proofs of identity, including a passport or driver's license. Alternatively, voters can vote by attestation if members of the community confirm their identity.

53 The UNDP assisted ECSL in obtaining the necessary hardware.

On display are some of the civic and voter education materials from Sierra Leone's election commission.

The iVerify fact-checking program played an important role in combating misinformation around election day.

utility to political parties or independent analysts seeking to verify the data.[54] The ECSL distributed an updated version on June 9 in which some photos were printed in black and white and some in color.[55]

Several legal complaints were filed concerning the voter registration process, including a case filed by the APC just two weeks before election day contesting the integrity of the voter registry. (See the electoral dispute resolution section for further discussion).

Voter Education

Voter education is an essential part of the electoral process and is recognized as an obligation to ensure that an informed electorate is able to effectively exercise its right to vote.[56] In Sierra Leone, high rates of illiteracy and low levels of access to the media outside of the capital make voter education programming particularly challenging. In past elections in Sierra Leone, The Carter Center has consistently recommended that voter education activities be intensified, particularly in rural areas.

Sierra Leone's civil society worked to meet this challenge. The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) trained local reporters and journalists on conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive reporting and developed safety and security guidelines for female journalists.[57] The Campaign for Good Governance reached out to the public through media outlets to help explain the new electoral system. Advocacy Movement Network (AMNet) organized town hall meetings in localities across the country for local women's groups, first-time voters, and persons with disabilities. Other organizations, including the 50/50 Group and the Peace Commission, also contributed to the effort.

SLAJ, in partnership with the Independent Radio Network (IRN) and with the support of the UNDP, also set up a disinformation-debunking site called i-Verify.[58] The work of the i-Verify platform to address disinformation and misinformation and help citizens distinguish between fact and fiction was a valuable contribution to the electoral process.

The ECSL shared the design of the ballots with the public in a campaign titled "Know Your Candidate." This simple but clear and direct campaign is a positive example of election administration communication efforts. The unique ballot papers for each constituency were disseminated to the public through social networks and physically posted in public spaces across the country, providing

54 https://twitter.com/abdulrashid_99/status/1666932197217976321?s=20
55 https://twitter.com/ECsalone/status/1667278836843544583?s=20. https://x.com/ECsalone/status/1666931800470441984?s=20
56 ICCPR, Article 25 (b); UNHRC General Comment 25, para. 11: "the Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access in Public Service."
57 https://slaj.sl/
58 https://sl.i-verify.org/

voters with an opportunity to become familiar with the ballot.

Candidates, Parties and Campaigns

Equitable treatment of candidates and parties during an election and the maintenance of an open and transparent campaign environment are important to ensuring the integrity of a democratic election process. Sierra Leone's legal framework and its international and regional commitments create obligations related to campaign periods, including the right to freely express opinions and to participate in public affairs.[59]

Thirteen political parties contested Sierra Leone's presidential elections, with only a single female candidate standing for the office. By the time the monthlong official campaign period concluded, the Carter Center mission had observed 19 campaign events in 11 districts, with crowds as small as 40 people and as large as an estimated 6,000.

Despite serious limitations and violations of the right of assembly in the run-up to election day, and restrictions on campaigning by political parties, contestants were able to exercise fundamental freedoms and conduct their campaigns. The campaign period was dominated by concern over the financial situation of the country and legal complaints filed regarding the elections, in particular the quality of the voters list. While there were reports of intimidation and election-related violence targeting both of the main parties—the SLPP and the APC—Carter Center observers reported a pattern of intimidation directed against the APC, particularly in the South and East, which in some cases undermined the party's ability to exercise its right to freedom of assembly.

Candidate Nomination

Candidate registration took place May 1-9, 2023, before the arrival of the Carter Center observation mission. Presidential candidates were required to pay a fee of 36,000 SLL (at the time equivalent to USD $1,636). Parliamentary candidates were subject to a fee of 3,600 SLL ($164) each, while mayoral or chairperson candidate fees were 1,800 SLL ($82) and local council candidate fees were 600 SLL ($27) each.[60] These fees were set under the 2022 Public Elections Act and represent a significant reduction from the fees that were in place during the previous elections.

Although the candidate nomination fees were more reasonable than in past elections following the 2022 reduction, the ECSL's introduction of the proportional representation system required parties to register a full slate of parliamentary or local council candidates in any constituency they wished to contest. Furthermore, parties were required to nominate twice as many candidates in a given district as seats.[61] Fees were therefore no longer shouldered by candidates in single-member constituencies, but rather fell on the parties, for which they were double what they would have been otherwise. While the 2022 reform was intended to reduce fees to be more in line with regional standards, the new fee structure actually served to undermine its impact.[62] The manner in which the parties and candidates are listed on the ballots is not regulated in the election law or ECSL instruments. While some parties had preferred a lottery be conducted, the ECSL decided that the order would be alphabetical.

The Carter Center recommends that the ECSL adopt a regulation governing all issues related to the ballot—including format, order, security features, printing, and distribution—to provide a new legal basis for any decisions related to the ballots that will contribute to greater stability, transparency, and credibility in the electoral process.

59 ICCPR, Article 19(2); ACHPR, Article 13(2)

60 Previously fees established by a 2012 NEC statutory instrument had been 10,000,000 leones for parliamentary candidates and 100,000,000 for presidential candidates (at the time $1,300 and $13,000 U.S. dollars). There had been a previous attempt in 2017 to lower fees in advance of the 2018 elections that was ultimately unsuccessful.

61 E.g., if a party wanted to put forth MP candidates in Kenema, which was allocated 13 seats in parliament, it had to submit a list of 26 candidates, and pay nomination fees for all 26. The requirement to nominate twice as many candidates as seats was ostensibly intended to ensure that in the event candidates/MPs resigned, died, etc., they could all be replaced without resorting to by-elections.

62 The cost for a party to contest all local council elections actually increased by 20% over the previous standard.

Campaign Finance

The state is obligated to take measures to prevent corruption, particularly in the context of the financing of campaigns.[63] International best practice requires that financing of political parties be fully transparent. To this end, accounts of all income and expenditures should be maintained by contestants. To ensure transparency and the voter's ability to make an informed choice, campaign finance reports should be published well before election day.

In Sierra Leone, the financing of political parties and campaigns remains largely unregulated. A lack of transparent campaign finance regulation—particularly the lack of a ceiling on campaign expenditures—and a lack of enforcement creates an uneven playing field and therefore undermines the right of all to participate in political affairs. While the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) does have some regulatory authority, its mandate is not supported by enforcement powers, not even for breaches of campaign finance rules, except for the far-reaching recourse of applying to the Supreme Court for cancellation of the party's registration for any infractions, regardless of the severity of the violation.

The law does not prescribe any limit on expenditures, further skewing the playing field. Reasonable limitations on campaign expenditures help ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined or the democratic process distorted by disproportionate expenditures on behalf of a candidate or party.[64]

The Political Parties Act of 2022 obligates political parties to disclose their assets, liabilities, and expenditures, including donations.[65] In spite of these reporting requirements, only three of the parties contesting the election submitted a statement of their assets and liabilities to the PPRC prior to elections.[66] The lack of pre-election publication of campaign financial reports limits transparency and the voter's opportunity to make an informed choice about the candidates. In advance of future elections, the PPRC could build its capacity to review and analyze campaign finance reports and to monitor and enforce campaign finance regulations.

Carter Center observers heard allegations that the ruling SLPP was using state resources to campaign. Carter Center observers reported the presence of government vehicles at three observed SLPP campaign events, although the president himself traveled in his personal vehicle at one of those events. Domestic citizen observers also reported seeing government vehicles at other SLPP campaign events.

Campaign Period

Despite serious limitations on and violations of the right of assembly in the run-up to election day, and restrictions on campaigning by political parties, contestants were able to exercise fundamental freedoms and conduct their campaigns. The campaign period was dominated by debates about the financial situation of the country and legal complaints filed regarding the elections and in particular the quality of the voters list. While there were reports of intimidation and election-related violence targeting both the SLPP and the APC, Carter Center observers reported a pattern of intimidation directed against the APC, particularly in the South and East, which undermined the party's ability to exercise its right to freedom of assembly in some cases.

While candidates did campaign and actively solicited voters' support, final candidate lists for parliament were only gazetted four days prior to elections, and the lists for local councils were not available until after the elections. In the absence of these candidate lists, the switch to proportional representation meant that the public could not know for sure where any given candidate appeared on the list, and therefore their likelihood of being elected, diminishing voters' capacity to make an informed choice at the polls.

Despite serious violations of the right to assemble in the run-up to election day, and restrictions on campaigning by political parties, contestants were

63 UNCAC, Article 7
64 ICCPR, General Comment 25, para. 19.
65 The Political Parties Act of 2022, sections 35 & 36.
66 These are the APC, NGC and SLPP; prescribed in section 37 of the Political Parties Act of 2022.

able to exercise fundamental freedoms and conduct their campaigns.

On May 25, 2023, senior representatives from Sierra Leone's political parties signed a peace pledge at an event facilitated by the Inter-religious Council and the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) and supported by a wide range of international actors. The presidential candidates of the SLPP and APC both signed the pledge and shook hands at the event in a public display of amicability and mutual respect that was widely reported in the press.

Historically, election campaigns in Sierra Leone have been subject to restrictions, for example that a given contestant was only entitled to campaign on given days, on which their opponents would be barred from campaigning. This practice is derived in part from a longstanding concern over election-related violence, specifically that campaigning by parties in the same place at the same time could lead to clashes. This practice is generally accepted by contestants, but does not encourage them to develop restraint or practice tolerance, and falls short of international standards that call for contestants to be able to campaign without restrictions.[67]

In past elections in Sierra Leone, if a party registered a candidate for president, it was entitled to participate in a lottery through which the party was assigned days to campaign across the entire country. For the 2023 elections, campaign days were assigned district-by-district depending on whether parties had registered MP or local council candidates in a given district. This effectively linked the allocation of campaign days to the payment of MP or local council candidate registration fees, thereby increasing the burden on parties.[68] Multiple political party officials reported to The Carter Center that they were only informed of this change in how campaign days would be allocated at the meeting at which the lottery was conducted.

The campaign period officially began on May 23. By this time, Freetown was already blanketed in campaign posters and billboards lauding the two historically dominant parties, as well as some of the other contestants. SLPP officials acknowledged that the party had been promoting itself and its candidates in advance of the campaign's official start date. As election day approached, the party and the president in particular adopted "No Run Off" as a slogan; a first-round victory, and the implied mandate it would deliver, was clearly a pressing imperative.

On May 25, 2023, senior representatives from Sierra Leone's political parties signed a peace pledge at an event facilitated by the Inter-religious Council and the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) and supported by a wide range of international actors.

Both of the historically dominant parties published lengthy manifestos detailing their programs, as they did in 2018. These were highly detailed and reflect an increasing sophistication on issues relative to the past. However, these programs are a hodgepodge of technocratic proposals that do little to distinguish the parties from one another; both parties ostensibly support pragmatic approaches to development.[69] Formal candidate debates could have helped elucidate differences between the parties' priorities and agendas. Serious attempts were made to organize such a forum, but unfortunately while both APC and SLPP's flag bearers professed their willingness to participate in a debate, no debate was held.

The Carter Center election mission's medium-term observers (MTOs) observed 19 campaign events in 11 districts. Eight of these events were organized by APC, nine by SLPP, one by PMDC, and one by an independent candidate. These events

67 ICCPR, Article 19(2); ACHPR, Article 13(2).

68 When viewed from the perspective of MP fees, the cost of access to any single one of the five districts with more than 10 MPs (Kenema, Kono, Bo, and both districts of the Western Area), and accordingly the country's largest pools of voters, was therefore greater than the cost of registering a presidential candidate. Of course in principle standing for local council offered a cheaper alternative.

69 As in 2018, SLPP's manifesto, titled *The New Direction*, declares that "The New Direction Manifesto of the People is based on the political ideology of Social Democracy" and that it "is based on free market neo-liberal economic development principles."

A campaign sign sits outside a Freetown neighborhood.

ranged in size from as few as 40 people to as many as an estimated 6,000, with a median attendance of 450. Estimated youth participation was frequently high, with young people on average amounting to more than half the crowd at a given event. Women represented about 40% of participants at campaign events observed by The Carter Center. Carter Center MTOs occasionally observed indications that participants in campaign events had been paid to attend.

As the figures by party suggest, overall the campaign period appeared dominated by the APC and the SLPP. Carter Center MTOs reported that the visibility of other parties was extremely limited. The Carter Center election mission met with leadership of several smaller parties, who reported their capacity to campaign was dramatically restricted due to limited financial resources.

There were some allegations that the ruling SLPP used state resources to campaign. Government vehicles were reportedly present at three SLPP campaign events observed by Carter Center MTOs (though the president himself traveled to one of these events in his personal vehicle), and domestic observers reported seeing them at other campaign events. In Kambia, on May 24, 2023, the president himself delivered two industrial generators to supply the district with power. Similarly, on June 10, 2023, the mayor of Freetown activated a new power supply to provide lighting to two communities in the capital. However, this is the only such incident that The Carter Center was aware of in which the APC arguably benefited from state resources. The prevailing pattern suggested the SLPP enjoyed a more tangible advantage.

The campaign period was marred by more serious allegations of intimidation and a significant

number of incidents of election-related violence. Both the APC and the SLPP accused the other of attempting to prevent them from campaigning in their respective strongholds. On June 15, the SLPP released a statement alleging that in the second week of the campaign period alone the party's supporters had been targeted by the APC in 33 incidents. Ten of these alleged incidents were instances of intimidation, but the total included four alleged assaults on SLPP candidates or supporters in Bombali, Karene, and Moyamba.[70] The Office of National Security also reported several incidents of violence targeting SLPP supporters, including a potentially extremely serious incident in the Northwest. The Carter Center's observation mission repeatedly requested further details and documentation concerning this incident, which though promised was ultimately not delivered.

APC officials consistently claimed the party's campaign efforts in the South in particular, long a bastion of support for the SLPP, were subject to a campaign of intimidation.[71] APC campaign posters and billboards in the region were allegedly torn down and had minimal visibility. In Bonthe, the district chapter of SLPP allegedly organized a group of young male supporters dubbed the "Soldier Team" who some opposition supporters found intimidating, particularly given the country's history of civil conflict and paramilitary violence. The SLPP district chapter in the Eastern district of Kailahun organized a similar group, the "Benghazi Unit," who were directly observed repeatedly driving by the APC offices on June 6, an APC campaign day. Local party officials felt compelled to confine their campaigning to their office. A local chief in the district who has publicly supported APC reported he and his family were attacked on two separate occasions by SLPP supporters. In Kono, on May 29 the house of the former Eastern region chair of APC was burned down.[72] Allegations of intimidation were not confined to the South and East: in Magburaka, Tonkolili, in the Northern region, APC officials alleged local police dispersed a party meeting and locked the party's offices on May 31, as it was an SLPP campaign day.

The most serious incidents of intimidation all took place in the South, and the tempo increased as election day neared. Prior to the start of the official campaign period, APC supporters gathered in Pujehun at a house belonging to one of the party's female MP candidates on May 7, the day allotted to the party to nominate its candidates in the district, to celebrate the event. The SLPP supporters allegedly insisted the festivities cease and then attacked the house and those present, injuring a number of people, one of whom allegedly died afterward. On June 19 the APC district office in Bo was allegedly attacked and burned by SLPP supporters along with the house of an APC official in the same compound, and the following day a fire broke out in Bo at the house of another APC supporter. On June 23, the APC district office in Pujehun was allegedly attacked by SLPP supporters, leading an APC official to flee across the Liberian border for her safety. The Sierra Leone Police did not make any arrests related to these incidents before the Carter Center's mission departed the country on July 14, 2023.

On June 10, as APC presidential candidate Samura Kamara's convoy arrived in Koidu, the district capital, Sierra Leone Police officers deployed large quantities of tear gas on and around Kamara's vehicle.[73] Carter Center observers were present at the rally. SLP officers gave contradictory accounts of the incident, but one said tear gas had been used in response to APC supporters who had been throwing stones at SLP officers. On June 21, as APC supporters gathered at the party's headquarters in Freetown, security forces deployed copious amounts of tear gas to disperse the crowd and fired live rounds, killing at least one civilian.[74] On June

70 Bombali has long been identified as an APC stronghold, with the party's presidential candidates winning an average 82% of the first-round presidential vote since 2002. Karene was only (re-)established in 2018, and Kamara went on to win 81.2% of the first-round vote in the district.

71 Along with the East, the South has historically been one of SLPP's strongholds; since 2002, the party's presidential candidates have won an average of 74% of the region's first-round presidential vote. This, however, includes the 2007 election, in which the split with PMDC hampered SLPP's performance. Excluding that election, the party's average first-round presidential vote in the region rises to 85%.

72 MTOs heard an account that suggested the attack might actually have been the result of intra-party tensions within APC.

73 There were also reports of his convoy being tear-gassed on April 3, 2023, upon Kamara's return to Sierra Leone from abroad.

74 On the campaign calendar for the Western Urban district, June 21 was allocated to independent candidates. Security forces alleged they were fired upon, and that they only returned fire.

25, the day after election day, security forces once again unleashed substantial amounts of tear gas around the party headquarters and allegedly opened fire with live rounds on the building itself, while APC flag bearer Samura Kamara and incumbent Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr were inside. Taken together, these incidents clearly constitute a pattern of intimidation that undermined the APC's exercise of its right to freely assemble.

Nevertheless, the APC did campaign on the party's assigned day in the Eastern district of Kenema, historically a stronghold of the SLPP, without incident. Similarly, the Carter Center mission observed the SLPP campaigning on days assigned to the party in the Northern districts of Bombali and Tonkolili, which historically are APC strongholds, which transpired unmolested.

After years of advocacy, Sierra Leone introduced the historic 2022 Gender Empowerment and Women's Equality Act (GEWE) which includes a requirement that women must amount to at least 30% of the candidates on a given party's list.

A campaign silence period was in place for the 24 hours before election day on June 23. The day beforehand, June 22, was allocated to peace marches organized by the PPRC, effectively amounting to an additional day of campaign silence. No campaign activity was observed during this period.

Women

According to the principle of universal suffrage, international standards require that countries must ensure that all people entitled to vote are able to exercise that right. Further, states should consider "taking appropriate measures to encourage publicly and promote the importance of participation of all citizens in political and public affairs, in particular women, persons belonging to marginalized groups or to minorities, and persons in vulnerable situations, including by engaging them in designing, evaluating and reviewing policies on participation in political and public affairs."[75]

Sierra Leone is signatory to a number of international treaties that obligate the government to take specific positive action to ensure the equal participation of women in political life.[76] As a party to CEDAW, Sierra Leone is also committed to eliminating discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, and to ensuring that women have the right to vote, to be candidates, to participate in public policy, and to participate in nongovernmental organizations, all on equal terms with men.[77]

After years of advocacy, Sierra Leone introduced the historic 2022 Gender Empowerment and Women's Equality Act (GEWE) which includes a requirement that women must amount to at least 30% of the candidates on a given party's list. Although the passage of this act in 2022 was widely applauded, the late publication of candidate lists in the 2023 elections made it difficult to assess its application and impact. Women made up 37% of total candidates for parliament and following the elections hold 19% of parliamentary seats.[78] However, The Carter Center was unable to verify

75 Para. 4d of the UNHRC Resolution 27/24 (2014). United Nations Human Rights Committee. 196. General Comment 25: Article 25 (The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service).

76 The United Nations. (1953). Convention on the Political Rights of Women. Treaty Series, 2, 1–28. African Union. (2003). Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Maputo: African Union. "State Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that: a) women participate without any discrimination in all elections; b) women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes; c) women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programmes."

77 "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure women, on equal terms with men, the right (...) to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies." Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

78 As of December 2023,women hold 28 of the 149 parliamentary seats (including those held by paramount chiefs). https://www.parliament.gov.sl/members-of-parliament.html.

allegations that political parties identified male candidates as female on their lists during the candidate nomination period as a way to evade the new law and ensure the acceptance of their lists.[79] While the passage of the 2022 law is a historic step, more needs to be done to address social barriers and support the full realization of women's right to equal political participation.

People With Disabilities

International standards for democratic elections call for accommodations to be made for people with disabilities, and polling places must be accessible.[80] An inclusive election process requires that all voters be entitled to vote, unimpeded by physical barriers at the polling stations. Likewise, reasonable accommodation measures should be put in place to ensure that the secrecy of the vote is guaranteed for voters with disabilities.[81]

People living with disability in Sierra Leone face difficult stigmas and are often marginalized. While the percentage of the population living with disability is unknown, it is thought to be high in part due to the number of citizens left disabled following the country's decades-long civil war. On election day The Carter Center noted that 68% of polling stations observed were accessible.

Voters wait outside a polling location on election day.

79 Once parties had met the deadline and their lists were accepted, they were then allegedly replacing male candidates identified as female with actual female candidates.

80 U.N., CRPD, Article 29.

81 U.N. CCPR, General Comment 25.

Tactile ballot guides were produced for all four ballot papers to enable visually impaired voters to cast their votes independently and in secret.

In the 2023 elections the ECSL provided tactile ballot guides for all four ballot papers so visually impaired voters would be able to cast their votes independently and in secret in accordance with international standards. Carter Center observers noted the presence of the tactile ballot guides in 80% of polling stations observed. While the procurement of these guides is commendable, very little voter education was done to ensure visually impaired voters were able to utilize the tool and in some cases polling station staff seemed unfamiliar with the use of tactile ballot guides.

Civil Society

The transparency provided by election observation is an important component of electoral integrity. The right of citizens to participate in the public affairs of their country is a key international obligation for democratic elections. International obligations for democratic elections require that all people have the right to participate in the public affairs of their country.[82] This includes the right of citizens to participate in nongovernmental organizations.[83]

Election observation is an established form of citizen participation in public affairs and is a crucial transparency measure to promote confidence in the electoral process. Sierra Leonean law provides for citizen and international observation, in line with best international and regional practice.[84]

The National Election Watch (NEW) conducted a long-term, nonpartisan, nationwide observation of the entirety of the electoral process including the census, extraction of the voter registry, the reform process that led to changes in the legal framework, various legal challenges to the elections, candidate nomination, the campaign period, election day, tabulation, and the post-election period. NEW is the only nonpartisan organization to observe and report on the entire electoral process, particularly the census and voter registration period.

On election day, NEW deployed 6,000 citizen observers covering all polling centers. On election day and during the count, NEW conducted an important process and results verification for transparency (PRVT) exercise, also known as a parallel vote tabulation (PVT). The PRVT distributed 750 of NEW's election day observers across a statistically relevant sample of polling stations to collect sound statistical data of the voting process itself as well as the counting process and polling station-level results. Following the ECSL's announcement of presidential results, NEW shared data from its PRVT which suggested that the ECSL's data did not appear accurate. NEW's PRVT data showed that while SLPP's Bio secured the most votes, no candidate secured enough votes to avoid a runoff election. NEW's data from polling station results collected on election night highlighted other discrepancies with ECSL data, including in turnout and invalid votes, suggesting a manipulation of presidential election results. NEW's data is discussed further in the counting and tabulation section of this report.

Following NEW's release of its PRVT data highlighting discrepancies with ECSL's presidential results, NEW and members of its leadership faced increased harassment and death threats, leading to the ultimate evacuation of several key members.

82 U.N., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25(a); AU, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 13(1); U.N., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21(a).
83 U.N., Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Article 7; African Charter on Democracy, Governance and Elections, Articles 12 and 27.
84 African Union, Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa (2002)

The Carter Center strongly condemns these threats and harassment of nonpartisan citizen observers. NEW's observation work around these elections was conducted within the law and in accordance with international standards, and the Center commends the organization for its contribution to Sierra Leone's democracy.

Members of Sierra Leone's National Election Watch receive and analyze reports from nonpartisan observers on election day.

Election Day

The quality of polling operations on election day is crucial to determining how closely an election falls in line with a country's democratic obligations. According to Sierra Leone's international and regional commitments, all citizens should enjoy the right to universal and equal suffrage, subject only to reasonable and objective limitations.[85]

The voting process stands as the fundamental pillar in ensuring the fulfillment of the people's right to freely express their will through genuine and periodic elections.[86] The manner in which polling operations are conducted on election day plays a pivotal role in assessing whether an election has been held in accordance with international standards for democratic elections. Both national and international law recognize the significance of conducting elections through the use of secret ballots, as it serves as a vital mechanism to guarantee the free expression of the people's will.[87]

Handwritten signs help direct voters to their precise station within the polling center on election day.

The vote was conducted in 3,630 polling centers comprising 11,832 polling stations nationwide. Over the course of the June 24 election day, the Carter Center mission observed polling in every district in the country. Carter Center short-term observers, or STOs, were at the polls before they opened and then moved from polling station

85 U.N., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25(b); U.N., United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 25 on "The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service," para. 21; U.N., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21(3); IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, Article 2(6).

86 United Nations (General Assembly) pp. art. 25(b) "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Treaty Series, vol. 999, Dec. 1966.

87 United Nations (General Assembly) pp. art. 25(b) "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Treaty Series, vol. 999, Dec. 1966, p. 171.

to polling station throughout the day. The Carter Center deployed 38 observers across Sierra Leone's 16 electoral districts.

Opening

The morning of the election saw long lines at the polls, particularly in Freetown, as the ECSL worked to deal with shortages of polling materials. But people demonstrated remarkable patience, and when voting got underway, on the whole the process went smoothly.

Carter Center observers assessed the process of the opening of polling stations as good or very good in 100% of stations observed. Thirty-eight percent of observed polling stations opened more than 30 minutes later than the 7 a.m. start time due to issues of preparedness or missing materials.

Carter Center observers listen to voters on election day.

Polling

Over the course of election day on June 24, 2023, the Carter Center observed polling in every district in the country. Voting took place in a generally peaceful environment, although there were isolated instances of disturbances in several areas.

The polling environment was assessed as very good or reasonable in 100% of polling stations observed by The Carter Center, and observers reported that they had full access to the polling stations and were allowed to observe all aspects of the process.

Carter Center observers did not observe any major irregularities during the polling process. In several polling stations, observers received reports of voters not being allowed to vote as they didn't appear on the voter registry, though the voters were adamant that they had registered at the station and had received confirmation that this was their polling station during the exhibition exercise. In 50% of polling stations observed by The Carter Center, the quality of some photos provided in the register of voters was not sufficient to identify voters.

No incidents were reported inside or outside the majority of polling stations. International and domestic observers were present in 66% of observed stations. In particular, nonpartisan domestic election observers from the National Election Watch (NEW) were observed at polling stations across the country and performed their responsibilities professionally. The polling center manager in 73% of polling centers was male. Sixty-nine percent of polling stations were assessed as accessible to the physically disabled.

Closing

Implementation of procedures during the closing process was assessed as very good or good in 80% of observed polling stations in which Carter Center observers were able to follow the count through to its conclusion. Similarly, the overall environment was assessed as very good or reasonable in 100% of the poll closings observed.

Post-Election Period

While election day went well, the immediate post-election period was characterized by an atmosphere of intimidation and intentional misinformation targeted at undermining election observers.

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Vote Counting and Tabulation

Counting

Accurate and fair vote counting plays an indispensable role in ensuring that the electoral process is democratic and reflects the will of the voters. International commitments require that votes be counted by an independent and impartial electoral management body. The counting process must be public, transparent, and free of corruption.[88]

The Carter Center observed counting in all 16 electoral districts. The counting process was observed to be good or very good in 100% of polling stations observed.

Tensions rose in some locations as closing and counting progressed, with a visibly increased security presence as counting took place. Political party agents from both APC and SLPP were present in all polling stations where counting was observed. The Carter Center noted a high percentage of invalid ballots in some polling stations observed, with numbers of invalid ballots higher in the presidential race than on the other three ballots. In one polling station in Kenema, an unknown person who did not appear to be ECSL staff arrived toward the end of the count and took over the presiding officer's duties.

All observed polling stations had domestic observers and candidate agents present during the closing and counting, an important level of transparency. Notably, party agents from both the APC and the SLPP were present in all polling stations observed by The Carter Center during this phase.

Tabulation

Tabulation of results is an integral phase of the electoral process that ensures the will of voters is accurately and comprehensively reflected in final results.[89] During the tabulation process, the election management body collates and verifies the results from individual polling stations to determine the result. In Sierra Leone, Carter Center observers witnessed a tabulation process that was characterized by unduly restrictive limits to transparency and at times was conducted in tense environments with increased security presence.

The Carter Center observed tabulation at all five tabulation centers established by the ECSL across the country, maintaining a 24-hour-a-day presence at

88 U.N., Human Rights Committee, General Comment 25, para. 20; U.N. Convention Against Corruption, Article 18.
89 U.N., International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(b); AU, Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, art. 1.

the tabulation center in the Western Area. Thirty-eight observers from The Carter Center observed the tabulation of results at the five regional tally centers in Port Loko, Makeni, Bo, Kenema, and the Western Area. The Carter Center observers noted that party agents, domestic observers, and international observers had a limited presence at tally centers, particularly on the first night of tabulation. On the first night of tabulation on the eve of June 24, the Carter Center observers were the only observers present at the Western Area tabulation center in Freetown when they directly witnessed open ballot boxes with cut seals.

In all five tabulation centers, a double-blind data entry process appeared to be taking place in which a given Reconciliation & Results Form (RRF) was entered by two separate data entry clerks. According to the ECSL's procedures, if there is a discrepancy in the data entered by the clerks, the RRF was to be flagged for review. RRFs that were flagged for review during the double-blind data entry process were set aside and did not seem to be reviewed during the time of The Carter Center's observation at all five tally centers. ECSL staff declined to answer questions regarding procedures for handling RRFs that were flagged for review.

In the pre-election period, the ECSL procured a controversial results tabulation application (app) that was to be utilized by polling staff to submit results from their polling stations upon completion of the counting process at the polls. However, Carter Center observers did not witness the application being utilized anywhere across the country. In addition, while the ECSL procured projectors to display results at the regional tabulation centers, which would have greatly enhanced the transparency of the process, Carter Center observers did not observe the use of projectors at any point to display data entry or results at any of the tally centers as had been anticipated.

The tabulation process began around midnight on election night. At that time, the Carter Center observers found that they were the only international observers present at the tabulation center in Freetown. For extended periods on that first night, Carter Center observers were the only observers of any kind—international, domestic, or political party—present at the center.[90]


SIERRA LEONE PASSPORT TOPS MRU RANKINGS

SALONE COMPASS NEWSPAPER

MOTTO: Serving Humanity

MONDAY 24TH JULY, 2023 Vol:4. No:152 LE, 2000

JUNE 24 POLLS...

CARTER CENTER FURTHER DENTS CREDIBILITY

BIO NEGLECTS PWDs

ORANGE SL DONATES COMPUTERS TO ROGBANEH SECONDARY SCHOOL

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A local newspaper headline draws attention to the Carter Center's observations in the tabulation period.

Unfortunately, the Carter Center soon started to observe problems that appeared orchestrated. As tabulation proceeded, Carter Center observers—along with other international observers, domestic observers, and party agents—found themselves consigned to areas of the tabulation centers

90 EON observers had been present at the tabulation center earlier in the evening, but departed before the Carter Center's observations of irregularities. LTOs from the EU arrived later in the night following a call from The Carter Center to other international observation organizations requesting they also observe tabulation that evening in Freetown.

that made it essentially impossible to adequately monitor the work of commission staff, particularly data entry operations. Carter Center observers had to press ECSL staff for basic information about the process, and in at least one tabulation center they were unable to observe the intake of the tamper-evident envelopes containing the RRFs to ensure they had not been opened prior to arriving at the center. On several occasions, Carter Center observers directly witnessed commission staff tampering with ballot boxes.

The tabulation process and immediate post-election period was marked by unfortunate incidents of violence and unrest.

The next day, June 25, The Carter Center was the first international observation mission to release a statement on the process, calling for the ECSL to provide greater transparency and for political parties and others to exercise patience. The EU mission followed with a similar statement shortly thereafter. The Carter Center mission issued a series of statements over the following days raising related concerns about the transparency of tabulation and noting that Carter Center observers and others had witnessed inappropriately unsealed ballot boxes in multiple regional tabulation centers.

Unfortunately, observers were not able to make an accurate assessment of tabulation procedures as the distance between the commission's data entry clerks and the area designated for observers was too great to see what was taking place. In some centers, observers were not allowed to approach the staff to ask questions. In cases where observers were able to view the work of data entry personnel, often only a small share of that work was visible. For example, at the tabulation center in Freetown, observers were able to view the screens of only eight of 40 computers in the room. However, during periods when Carter Center observers were directly observing data entry at the eight visible stations, those data entry clerks were at times not given RRFs to enter. In at least one instance the internet went down at a tabulation center upon the arrival of Carter Center observers, though it was eventually reinstated during the period of the Carter Center's observation.

The tabulation process and immediate post-election period was marked by unfortunate incidents of violence and unrest. The day after the election, on June 25, security forces fired live ammunition and tear gas at the APC headquarters in Freetown while senior party officials were inside, including presidential candidate Kamara and the candidate for the mayor of Freetown. In one instance in Makeni, APC party agents were removed from the tally center and later escorted back in by the military following a three-hour disruption of the process. Carter Center observers noted several instances of instability during the tabulation process on June 25 and 26, and received credible reports of APC officials and supporters being the targets of intimidation or attacks in Kenema, Kuala, Tonkolili, and Falaba.

Election Results

On June 26 and 27, the ECSL released batches of presidential election results that included discrepancies between the batch on June 26 and the batch on June 27 in some areas, including the numbers of valid votes, invalid votes, and turnout. The ECSL's results gave SLPP's Bio 56% of the vote with 41% to APC's Kamara.[91] As described previously, in Sierra Leone's presidential election a candidate must obtain 55% of the vote to avoid a runoff.

On the morning of Tuesday, June 27, Bio called for a meeting of the heads of international election observation missions. Bio was represented at this meeting by the attorney general, foreign minister, and the head of the Office of National Security.

91 The final report of the European Union goes into additional detail on these discrepancies, stating: "For example, for the presidential election the results data of the first batch (representing 60 per cent of polling stations) released by the ECSL for Kailahun district indicated that in 407 polling stations 153,668 votes were cast. This is mathematically improbable, even if all the biggest polling stations of the district were taken into account. There were also mathematically improbable results in the first batch from Bo and Bonthe district. The statistical inconsistencies between the first and second batch of presidential results included notable discrepancies in the number of average valid votes per polling station, varying from a decrease of 75 per cent in Karene to an increase of 31 per cent in Kono. There were also very high turnouts exceeding 95 per cent in three districts and 90 per cent in further two districts, as well as a strikingly low number of invalid votes nationwide of just 0.4 per cent, significantly lower than previous elections."

The tone of the meeting was aggressive and critical, and international election observation missions were warned to avoid interfering in the electoral process.

APC presidential candidate Samura Kamara responded to the ECSL's announcement of results on June 27 with a statement commenting that the results were "a frontal attack on our fledgling democracy. These results are NOT credible and I categorically reject the outcome so announced by the electoral commission." Kamara's statement went on to thank his supporters and added: "I acknowledge the efforts of our local and international partners who stood for transparency and democracy. I will rise above this travesty, and I commit myself to continue the fight for a better Sierra Leone."[92] APC party agents had already ceased to monitor the process at the regional tally centers by that morning, prior to the announcement of the result.

Later that same day, NEW released an important public statement sharing the results of their process and results verification for transparency (PRVT) effort. NEW deployed 6,000 observers on election day to every polling center in the country; 750 of these were given special training and collected data on election day from the count conducted at polling stations from a statistically relevant sample of locations. NEW's data would show that there were significant inconsistencies between the presidential results announced by the ECSL and the result projected by NEW's PRVT. While NEW's data would show that Bio won the most votes, it also showed that no candidate met the constitutional threshold of 55% to avoid a runoff election. NEW's data also highlighted other important inconsistencies in turnout and the numbers of valid and invalid votes.

Julius Mada Bio was sworn in for his second presidential term on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 27, by Supreme Court Chief Justice Desmond Babatunde Edwards in a ceremony attended by the

Table 3: Comparison of ECSL Official Results and NEW's PRVT Data

Candidate	ECSL	NEW PRVT				Assessment of Official Results
	Official	NEW PRVT Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimated Range		
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
BAH, Mohamed Chernoh	0.8%	0.8%	0.1%	0.7%	0.9%	Consistent
BIO, Julius Maada	**56.2%**	**50.4%**	**2.7%**	**47.7%**	**53.1%**	**INCONSISTENT**
COKER, Prince	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	Consistent
JONJO, Mohamed	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	Consistent
KABUTA, Saa Henry	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	Consistent
KAKAY, Iye	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	Consistent
KAMARA, Nabieu Musa	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.7%	Consistent
KAMARA, Samura Mathew Wilson	**41.2%**	**46.5%**	**2.7%**	**43.8%**	**49.2%**	**INCONSISTENT**
MARGAI, Charles	0.6%	0.6%	0.1%	0.5%	0.7%	Consistent
SACCOH, Abdulai Dougakoro	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	Consistent
SANDY, Jonathan Patrick	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	Consistent
SOWA-TURAY, Mohamed	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	Consistent
WILLIAMS, Beresford Victor	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	Consistent
Invalid Votes	**0.4%**	**4.8%**	**0.4%**	**4.4%**	**5.2%**	**INCONSISTENT**

92 Statement posted via Twitter. @samurakamara201. June 27, 2023, 1:06pm.

wives of the president and chief justice along with several top officials.

NEW's data also highlighted other important inconsistencies in turnout and the numbers of valid and invalid votes.

While tabulation continued in the parliamentary, local government, and mayoral races, concern increased around the process given the important data from NEW that was at odds with the presidential results announced by the ECSL, as well as the observations of irregularities in the tabulation process, and the process's pronounced lack of transparency.

On June 28, a joint statement from the diplomatic missions of the U.S., U.K., Ireland, Germany, France, and EU delegation noted, "We share the concerns of national and international observation missions about the lack of transparency in the tabulation process."

On June 29, the Office of National Security (ONS) issued a public letter that sought to discredit NEW and spoke of NEW's work and that of some in the international community as being unconstitutional. The ONS letter also responded to the joint statement of Sierra Leone's development partners from the previous day saying that the language regarding the lack of transparency in the tabulation process "contravenes the relevant sections in the national constitution that give sole responsibility to the ECSL to publish election results."[93] The national security coordinator, the head of the ONS, requested to meet with The Carter Center the following day (the EU election observation mission also met separately with the NSC beforehand on their own initiative). At this meeting the ONS reiterated its position that NEW had acted unconstitutionally and questioned the Carter Center's independence.

Many were now intensely scrutinizing Sierra Leone's electoral process, including the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which tweeted on June 29: "We are closely watching developments in Sierra Leone, including election-related violence, intimidation of observers, & [ECSL's] non-transparent vote tallying & results. We must hold accountable those who undermine the country's democratic process."

On June 30, members of the leadership of NEW left the country amid threats and intimidation.

Throughout the election process, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) partnered with the Independent Radio Network (IRN), with support from UNDP, to implement a project fact-checking allegations of misinformation and disinformation. The iVerify project was particularly busy during the post-election period and played an important role in fact-checking allegations made against NEW, The Carter Center, and other election observation groups.

The ECSL released final results for parliamentary, mayoral, and local government elections in the first days of July that displayed unusual variances compared to the results of the presidential race released on June 27. Parliamentary, mayoral, and local government election results were initially released by verbal announcements at a press conference on July 1. The actual numbers were then published over multiple days on social media. Results were released by district. Comparing the ECSL's data for the parliamentary elections with the presidential results, there are differences in turnout as well as differences in votes for key parties in many districts. These variances raise further questions about the credibility of the presidential election results.

On July 19, 22 days after President Bio had been sworn in for a second term, the ECSL Chairperson and National Returning Officer Mohammed Konneh presented a formal Certificate of Return to the president as required by the Public Elections Act.[94] In the formal ceremony, Konneh stated, "The commission is satisfied that the result is reflective of the votes of Sierra Leoneans. With pride and honor,

93 Office of National Security. Press Release. June 29, 2023.

94 Section S52 states that after the national returning officer (NRO) declares result, the NRO should issue a certificate to the winning candidate. Section 553 of the PEA states that a person elected president "shall... assume that office on the date upon which he is declared elected by the Returning Officer".

all the commissioners are hereby presenting you with the Certificate of Presidential Election."[95]

The Carter Center released a final public statement on the tabulation and announcement of results on July 21, 2023. In the statement, The Carter Center questioned the credibility of election results and again called on the ECSL to release results by polling station.

Ballot boxes. Amid these questions regarding tabulation and election results, it is important to note that in addition to its own stores of ballot boxes, for these elections Sierra Leone utilized a substantial number of ballot boxes that were borrowed from Guinea.[96] The initiative was applauded by some as a positive instance of regional coordination and a cost-saving measure. The ballot boxes were returned to

Press Release

Freetown Wednesday 28 June

Joint Statement by U.S., UK, Ireland, Germany, France and EU Delegation.

We applaud the Sierra Leonean people for their participation in the June 24th, 2023, general elections. We commend the commitment and dedication displayed by the citizens of Sierra Leone in exercising their democratic right to vote and engaging in the electoral process.

We note that significant logistical problems hampered voting on election day in certain areas. We share the concerns of national and international observation missions about the lack of transparency in the tabulation process.

Despite these difficulties, we remain committed to supporting democracy and the aspirations of the Sierra Leonean people. We urge everyone to exercise restraint, respect the rule of law, and engage in peaceful dialogue to resolve disputes.

David Reimer, U.S. Ambassador
Lisa Chesney MBE, British High Commissioner
Claire Buckley, Irish Ambassador
Jens Kraus-Massé, German Ambassador
Romain Vuillaume, French Chargé d'affaires
Manuel Müller, EU Ambassador

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An international delegation issued a joint statement on the Sierra Leone elections.

95 Statehouse of Sierra Leone. "Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio Receives Certificate of Return from Chief Electoral Commissioner, Who Confirms Elections Results Are Reflective of Voters' Expression." July 19, 2023.
96 https://x.com/ECsalone/status/1694685086640185460?s=20

A woman casts her ballot in Sierra Leone's presidential election.

Guinea on August 23.[97] No information is available regarding the process through which sensitive materials, including ballot papers, were handled when ballot boxes were emptied and prepared for their return, and no information is available regarding the current state or storage of those materials. In this context, it is not possible to consider any recount as a possible recourse to the outstanding allegations regarding the presidential election results.

In future elections the safety and storage of sensitive materials including ballot papers needs to be taken into account when considering whether to borrow or procure ballot boxes. If ballot boxes are borrowed again in the future, regulations should be developed with input from political parties and civil society regarding procedures for the emptying and return of ballot boxes in the post-election period. Appropriate safeguards should be in place when ballot boxes are opened, and the process should be done transparently in the presence of political parties and nonpartisan civil society observers.

Locally printed ballot papers and Record of Count (RoC) forms. There are a number of important gaps in the administration of the electoral process for which the ECSL shared little or no information with the public that undermine confidence in the counting, tabulation, and announcement of results.

The ECSL acknowledged to the NEW that the ECSL printed ballot papers for early voting in the country that were separate from ballots printed outside the country for election day. Little is known about these ballot papers, their serial numbers, or how they were accounted for, contributing to concerns about the integrity of the elections and their results. A Carter Center core team member was shown by the ECSL copies of the Record of Count (RoC) form that ECSL staff had to print in Freetown because they did not have them in sufficient quantity. A lack of adequate information about these forms and their use in the elections further undermines confidence.

Conclusion. Considering the lack of transparency during tabulation; the irregularities directly observed during tabulation; NEW's PRVT data which varies with the results announced by the ECSL; and the irregular variances in results data across the elections, the Carter Center does not have confidence that the presidential results as announced by ECSL reflect the will of the people as expressed on election day.

97 The return of ballot boxes was verified by the UNPD's iVerify project. Fact-Checked on iVerify Sierra Leone: Yes, the ECSL has returned the ballot boxes it borrowed from the Government of Guinea. (i-verify.org). Last accessed on Dec. 5, 2023.

Electoral Dispute Resolution

Effective, clear, and fair procedures for electoral dispute resolution are an essential part of a well-functioning electoral process and ensure that effective remedies are available for the redress of violations of fundamental rights related to the electoral process. According to international standards, individuals are entitled to have decisions affecting fundamental rights taken up by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal in a fair and public hearing.[98] Expeditious hearings for election matters are necessary to ensure an effective remedy, particularly given the relatively compressed time frame of electoral processes.

Sierra Leone's legal framework provides for the right to an effective remedy consistent with international and regional treaties.[99] The right to an effective remedy is fundamental to ensuring the fulfillment of all other human rights and is applicable throughout the electoral process.

An election official issues ballot papers at a polling station on election day.

Pre-election Period

Amendments to the Public Elections Act in 2022 introduced a new Election Offences and Petitions Court. In the pre-election period, technical support was provided by the UNDP to the chief justice to support training of judges and magistrates in dispute resolution techniques. However, these courts weren't

98 See Article 2.3 of the ICCPR, Article 8 of the UDHR, and Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
99 U.N., ICCPR, Article 2; ACHR, Article 25; ECOWAS, Protocol Article 7; AU, AfCHPR, Article 7.

established until May 2023, and election-related cases in the pre-election period were filed in the Supreme Court.

Interlocutors and citizens expressed low levels of confidence in the judiciary, expressing doubt about its overall capacity and neutrality.

Interlocutors and citizens expressed low levels of confidence in the judiciary, expressing doubt about its overall capacity and neutrality. The Supreme Court has no timelines for adjudication, undermining the right to a timely and effective remedy. Positively, the Public Elections (Petitions) Rules of 2022 introduced some case management provisions in an effort to ensure that election petitions are heard and adjudicated promptly.[100]

The pre-election environment was characterized by a number of cases related to the elections filed in Sierra Leone's courts, including cases filed by the government of Sierra Leone alleging corruption by Dr. Samura Kamara, the APC presidential candidate, and several cases filed by the APC contesting elements of the electoral process, including one filed weeks before election day contesting the voter registry and asking that the ECSL follow guidelines regarding the role of district officials in the counting and tabulation process. The PMDC and APC challenged the change in electoral system, but their cases were struck down in January 2023.

On May 17, 2023, a case was filed against the ECSL and Kamara objecting to his candidacy. The case was struck down on May 29 on procedural grounds.[101]

The PMDC also challenged several aspects of the elections with a case filed on June 12 that challenged various elements of the ECSL's preparation for elections and argued that the appointment of Mohamed Konneh as Chief Electoral Commissioner of ECSL was unconstitutional. Other components of the complaint included: arguing that the failure to publish candidate nomination deadlines in the gazette effectively disenfranchises voters; arguing that the unreliability of a new portal system introduced by ECSL undermined the fairness, credibility, and transparency of the electoral process; and challenges to the new procedure for allotting of campaign dates and failure to allot dates to some candidates. The PMDC also called for any cases to be heard by five Supreme Court justices, and argued that any case heard without five Supreme Court justices was done unconstitutionally.[102]

In the pre-election period, court decisions involving political parties and candidates were frequently reported in the media, but access to legal instruments and judgments is challenging as they are rarely publicly available. This lack of transparency further undermined public confidence in the judicial system.

Post-election Period

APC decision not to contest the elections in court. The APC did not file an official complaint in court contesting the election results despite its presidential candidate's rejection of results. The APC issued a public statement on July 3, 2023, following several days of internal party discussion and one day before the deadline to file a complaint regarding the presidential election results, notifying the public that APC would not contest the elections in court because "the APC has had a recurrent bad experience relating to the lack of impartiality and competence of the Sierra Leone Judiciary to provide redress for violations of electoral laws, processes and mandates."[103]

The three-page statement summarized the party's experience with electoral dispute resolution in the pre-election period. It noted that the APC believed it had strong evidence against the ECSL, but that the party lacked faith in the independence of the judiciary. The statement concluded: "We shall

100 Public Elections (Petitions) rules 2022, Part V, VI.

101 The case was filed by former APC members Paul Kamara and Alimamy Coleson Turay. The case was struck out for non-compliance with the Rule 90(1) of the Supreme Court Rules, Public Notice No.1 of 1982.

102 Patrick John, People's Movement for Democratic Party (PMDC) v. Mohamed Konneh, Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, Attorney General.

103 APC Public Statement. The APC Shall Not Go to Court Over the Disputed 24th June, 2023 Polls, has No Faith in the Judiciary. July 3, 2023.

stand on our decision of NOT recognizing the presidency of Julius Maada Bio and that we shall NOT participate in any level of governance until this unprecedented daylight electoral toppling of the people's mandate is amicably and satisfactorily addressed."

PMDC post-election complaint. While APC did not file a petition challenging the election results, former Attorney General and PMDC flag bearer Charles Margai stepped into the breach.

The Supreme Court held an initial hearing in the matter on July 6 with the chief justice presiding. The panel was further composed of four other judges, including Justice Ivan Sesay of the Appeal Court. Margai's first motion, presented orally, was to call for the chief justice and Justice Sesay to recuse themselves. Margai argued that the rapidity with which the chief justice swore in President Bio indicated he had been aware of the chief electoral commissioner's declaration in advance, and that it suggested a presumption on the chief justice's part that the process had been regular, and therefore that he could not be considered impartial. As for Justice Sesay, Margai argued that as he was not a Supreme Court justice, he was ineligible to sit on the panel. The chief justice declined to recuse himself and noted he would not allow Justice Sesay to do so either.[104]

At the time of publication of this report (December 2023), Margai's case has not yet been heard. A brief hearing was held on Nov. 16, 2023, during which the matters were postponed to March of 2024.

104 The chief justice cited S 121 of the constitution, stating it empowers him to appoint other judges of the Superior Courts. S 121 (1) states that "The Supreme Court shall consist of—a. the Chief Justice b. not less than four other Justices of the Supreme Court; and c. such other Justices of the Superior Court of Judicature... as the Chief Justice may, for the determination of any particular cause or matter... request to sit in the Supreme Court." The wording seems clear that any justices of the Superior Court appointed by the chief justice are in addition to the four justices of the Supreme Court, not in their stead.

Post-Election Developments

The post-election period in Sierra Leone has been marked by an initial APC boycott of government, a political dialogue process, and instances of tension, violence, and allegations of two coup attempts.

In the post-election period, the APC continued to reject the results of the election. The party declared that in protest of what they considered to be the election's fraudulent results, they would boycott government and refuse to take up any of the positions to which their candidates had ostensibly won election, a stance the party maintained until late October 2023.

On Sept. 1, 2023, the United States Department of State issued a new visa policy that pursues visa restrictions against those believed to be "responsible for, or complicit in, undermining democracy in Sierra Leone, including through the manipulation or rigging of the electoral process; intimidation of voters, election observers, or civil society organizations through threats or acts of physical violence; or the abuse or violation of related human rights in Sierra Leone." The visa restriction policy also extends to family members.[105]

Carter Center observers approach a polling center on election day.

105 United States Department of State. "Visa Restriction Policy on Undermining the Democratic Process in Sierra Leone." September 1, 2023.

There have also been questions about the status of a large compact of nearly half a billion U.S. dollars from the Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in development funding. While Sierra Leone remains under consideration for MCC funds, no funding has yet been approved and concern remains around the state of the country's democracy.[106]

In August 2023, the government of Sierra Leone hired a U.S.-based public relations firm, Mercury LLC, to help the government polish its image and improve its relations with foreign governments in the wake of the elections and reports from international and domestic observers questioning the credibility of the process and the results.

Dialogue. In October 2023, a dialogue was facilitated by the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion and supported by international mediators from the African Union, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the Economic Community of West African States.[107] It is notable that while APC's presidential candidate, Samura Kamara, participated in the dialogue, senior leaders from the SLPP did not. From the SLPP, neither President Bio nor the party's chairperson took part. The SLPP was instead represented in the dialogue by Chief Minister David Sengeh.

The dialogue culminated in the government of Sierra Leone and APC signing an Agreement of National Unity on Oct. 18, 2023. The process included a decision by APC to take up its elected seats in national and local government bodies. The agreement also included "consideration" of the release of political prisoners who remain in detention following the anti-government protests in August 2022.[108] The agreement also included a commitment to form a commission to review the conduct and results of the June 24, 2023, elections. While the Agreement of National Unity was applauded by international partners including the EU and the United States, some within civil society and the APC spoke negatively to The Carter Center and publicly about the dialogue and the agreement, arguing that its content won't be respected and important matters such as the composition of the ECSL were not discussed at all while other issues such as political prisoners were not discussed adequately.

> *On Sept. 1, 2023, the United States Department of State issued a new visa policy that pursues visa restrictions against those believed to be "responsible for, or complicit in, undermining democracy in Sierra Leone, including through the manipulation or rigging of the electoral process; intimidation of voters, election observers, or civil society organizations through threats or acts of physical violence; or the abuse or violation of related human rights in Sierra Leone."*

Following the agreement, and under significant pressure from the international community, elected APC officials took their oaths of office Oct. 26-28, three months after the elections.

Alleged Coup Attempts

In the post-election period, there have been two instances of alleged coup attempts in Sierra Leone. Some critics allege that both were orchestrated by the government to further crack down on political opposition. Some interlocutors reported to The Carter Center that they felt that the judiciary's lack of neutrality, its giving no adequate recourse for remedy of electoral complaints, disgruntlement around inadequacies of the dialogue process, and a lack of accountability for those who undermine the

106 While Sierra Leone was reselected in December 2023, MCC funding has not yet been approved. "Risch, Coons on MCC Decision to Reselect Sierra Leone for Potential Compact Agreement." Dec. 14, 2023.

107 The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion was established in 2020 by President Bio through an Act of Parliament with support from the UNDP.

108 Many in APC critiqued the dialogue process in part because it did not do enough regarding the acknowledgement and release of people they view as political prisoners. In November a number of the political prisoners in question were released during attacks on prisons in Freetown amid an alleged coup attempt.

A sign reading "We Stand for Peace" hangs on a Freetown wall.

electoral process all have contributed to instability in the nation.

August 2023. In early August 2023, the Sierra Leone Police arrested at least 19 people accused of conspiracy to commit state subversion and planning an alleged coup to take place between August 7 and 10. The arrests included members of the armed forces, officers of the SLP, and a retired chief superintendent of the SLP who was arrested in Liberia and extradited to Sierra Leone. Critics of Bio's government allege that the government fabricated the coup plot as a cover to further repress opposition.

November 2023. On Sunday, Nov. 26, attacks on military barracks in Freetown began in the early morning hours, followed by instances of gunfire in areas of Freetown. There were also attacks on the central prison in Freetown and a number of persons the APC has previously identified as political prisoners were released. That same day, there were further reports of other attacks at the presidential palace and a smaller attack in Murray Town, where the navy is located. A national curfew was issued and a number of arrests were made.

Many condemned the attack, including former APC President Ernest Koroma. Koroma issued a public statement condemning the fatal shooting at point-blank range of a senior military guard at his residence. In a public statement, Koroma wrote, "The path to peace, stability and national cohesion lies in our commitment to democratic values." In December 2023, Koroma was invited for several days of questioning surrounding allegations of his involvement in the coup attempt, and his daughter was named as a person of interest.

Some again alleged that the government of Sierra Leone orchestrated the coup attempts as a mechanism to support a crackdown on political opposition.

Two weeks after the coup attempt, ECOWAS ordered the deployment of a standby force to stabilize the country.[109]

Call for Arrest of Opposition APC Presidential Candidate Samura Kamara

On Dec. 13, 2023, Sierra Leone's Court of Appeal ordered the immediate arrest of APC presidential candidate Samura Kamara around allegations of corruption. The call for Kamara's arrest was made amid investigations of senior APC officials, including former President Koroma, following the alleged coup attempt two weeks prior, and the announcement by ECOWAS regarding the deployment of a regional military force to stabilize the country.

109 The decision was taken on Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, at the end of the 64th Ordinary Session of the Authority of the Heads of States and Government of ECOWAS meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Sierra Leone's 2023 elections were the first in which there were voters born in times of peace who never directly experienced the nation's brutal civil war. The elections offered an opportunity to advance the country's democracy and put more distance between war and a new dispensation founded in democracy and respect for human rights.

Unfortunately, the elections were characterized by a tainted tabulation process and results that leave considerable doubt regarding whether they reflect the true will of the people. These serious questions about the integrity of the election results come after allegations of a manipulated census and voter registration process, changes in the rules made without consultation, and when many allege there is no opportunity to exercise the international human right to an effective remedy.

Out of respect for the advancement Sierra Leone has made since the end of the war and to honor the hopes for the future of this aspiring democracy, it is critical that there be accountability for anyone who undermined the electoral process.

The Carter Center's election observation mission in Sierra Leone was a part of a decades-long commitment to the Mano River region, which has included observation of elections in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as work in Liberia with the government, civil society organizations, and community leaders to support access to justice, access to information, and mental health.

Going forward, and in the spirit of respect and support, the Carter Center's observation mission has identified several areas where steps can be taken to improve the conduct of future elections in Sierra Leone, as outlined below.

To the Government of Sierra Leone

Support reform to allow independent candidates. The right to be elected is an international human right which is undermined by the restriction that prevents independent candidates from contesting the presidency in Sierra Leone. In future elections, independent candidates should be allowed to contest the presidency in compliance with Sierra Leone's obligations to uphold the right of citizens to be elected.

Revise restrictions regarding the candidacy of public servants. The right to be elected is unnecessarily hindered by restrictions that public servants must resign one year in advance of elections, an unnecessarily long timeframe. While these restrictions were partially revised in advance of these elections, undue restrictions remain in place for many public servants.

Reform the Judiciary. The right to an effective remedy is a critical element of any democratic election. In Sierra Leone there is wide criticism of the capacity of the judiciary and widespread distrust in its ability to function without political influence. Extensive reform is necessary to establish an independent judiciary that can guarantee the right to an effective remedy in a democratic society.

Strengthen the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC). The mandate, power, and legal authority of the PPRC should be strengthened. The Center recommends that the incoming Parliament take up and pass the Political Parties Registration

Commission Act and consider amending the Public Elections Act to include provisions of the various codes of conduct so they are legally binding on stakeholders. All codes should be reviewed for compliance with the constitution and international standards before being incorporated into legislation. The provisions of the act that relate to campaign finance should also be reviewed and strengthened.

The necessity that political parties obtain at least 11.9% of the vote to obtain representation in parliament is an undue restriction on the right to participate in public affairs and is inconsistent with Sierra Leone's commitments under the ICCPR.

Revise the Threshold for Parliament. The necessity that political parties obtain at least 11.9% of the vote to obtain representation in Parliament is an undue restriction on the right to participate in public affairs and is inconsistent with Sierra Leone's commitments under the ICCPR. Future legal framework reviews should carefully reconsider the 11.9% requirement for political party representation, its applicability, and any unintended consequence on the right to stand for public office. Sierra Leone should evaluate international best practices and other available options to strengthen political parties.

Stagger Appointments of Commissioners on the ECSL. To preserve the commission's institutional memory and independence, The Carter Center recommends that commissioners be appointed on a staggered basis.

To the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)

Release Results by Polling Station. The ECSL should share the results of all four elections by polling station and publish them on its website as soon as possible. Making results publicly available by polling station is a critical element of transparency and credibility in democratic elections. In future elections, results should be made available by polling station at the time of the announcement of final results, empowering contestants and the broader public to be satisfied of their accuracy. Mandating the release of results by polling station level should be considered in future legal reform.

Reinforce the Transparency of Tabulation. To ensure the credibility of the results, the ECSL, in consultation with contestants and nonpartisan civil society observers, should revise its tabulation procedures to ensure that the receipt of results by tabulation staff along with data entry operations by which Records of the Count from polling stations are input and aggregated can be directly observed. Procedures should be clearly conveyed to the public in advance of tabulation.

Redraw Constituency Boundaries to Respect Equal Suffrage. To ensure respect for equal representation, constituency boundaries should be redrawn to minimize the deviations in constituency size and reflect the current demographics of the country.

Review Composition of the Voter Registry. In future elections, the ECSL should ensure that the voter registry truly reflects the eligible population of the nation.

Reinforce Transparency and Verification of the Voter Registry. Ensure that a final voter registry is published well in advance of elections with information including names, addresses, polling station, and polling center, and allow for citizen verification.

Elections and Prisoners on Remand. In future elections, ensure that prisoners on remand are able to exercise their constitutional and international right of suffrage and are able to register and vote.

Ballot Boxes and Regulations. If ballot boxes are borrowed again in the future, regulations should be developed with input from political parties and civil society regarding procedures for the emptying and return of ballot boxes in the post-election period. Appropriate safeguards should be in place when ballot boxes are opened, and the process should be done transparently in the presence of contestants and nonpartisan civil society observers. In future elections, the safety and storage of sensitive materials including ballot papers needs to be addressed in consultation with contestants and civil society when considering whether to borrow or procure ballot boxes.

Reassess Nomination Fees. Although the candidate nomination fees were more reasonable than in past elections following the 2022 reform, the introduction of proportional representation resulted in significantly increased fees for political parties as they were required to field a full slate of parliamentary or local council candidates in any constituency they wished to contest, and were required to nominate twice as many candidates in a given district as seats. The ECSL should ensure that nomination fees are equitable and do not undermine the right to contest elections, creating an unlevel playing field.

Reconsider Ballot Design. The manner in which the parties and candidates are listed on the ballots is not regulated in the election law or ECSL instruments. While some parties had preferred a lottery be conducted, the ECSL decided that the order would be alphabetical. The Carter Center recommends that the ECSL adopt a new regulation governing all issues related to the ballot—including format, order, security features, printing, and distribution—to provide a legal basis for any decisions related to the ballots that will contribute to greater stability, transparency, and credibility in the electoral process.

To the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC)

Campaign Finance. To ensure transparency and the voter's ability to make an informed choice, campaign finance reports should be published before election day. The lack of pre-election publication of campaign financial reports limits transparency and the voter's opportunity to make an informed choice about the candidates. The PPRC should be strengthened to implement and monitor campaign finance reporting, campaign spending, and the use of public resources. This recommendation includes passage of legislation that would strengthen the commission's mandate and authority as well as additional training and capacity-building to ensure that the commission can adequately implement and monitor campaign finance regulations.

Support Meaningful Consultation. The PPRC should support meaningful consultation between the ECSL and political parties and contestants in the period between elections. In particular, the PPRC should ensure political parties are meaningfully consulted regarding matters such as voter registration, the electoral system for elections, any threshold, and other important decisions regarding the process.

To Political Parties

Participation of Women. Political parties should strive to meet or exceed new legislation requiring that 30% of legislative candidates be women.

Campaign Finance. International best practice requires that financing of political parties be fully transparent. To this end, accounts of all income and expenditures should be kept. Political parties and candidates should comply with all campaign finance regulations and should submit reports in accordance with set timeframes.

To the International Community

Support Accountability. Sierra Leone's democracy and those across the globe are dependent upon enforcement of internationally accepted standards for democratic elections. If Sierra Leone's democracy is to be preserved and the country is not to slip back into internal strife, the international community must engage in more coordinated diplomacy to help secure the peaceful, democratic state it has invested so much to support. The international community should not waver in its advocacy that there be accountability for anyone who undermined Sierra Leone's electoral process. Anyone who undermined the electoral process must be held accountable.

Appendix A

Acknowledgments

The Carter Center's election observation mission in Sierra Leone would not have been possible without the support of several individuals and organizations. The Carter Center is primarily grateful to the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) for accrediting the Center to observe the elections. The Carter Center is grateful to all Sierra Leonean government institutions and civil society who graciously shared valuable information that informed some of our findings.

The Center is profoundly grateful for the leadership of former U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume for leading the Carter Center's short-term observer delegation. The Center appreciates the hard work and dedication of its mission leadership, whose insight and experience have supported the work of the Center's election observation mission. The Center recognizes the efforts of all the international observation organizations in supporting Sierra Leone's electoral process, including the AU, ECOWAS, Commonwealth, and EU. The Carter Center is particularly thankful for the strong collaboration with and significant contributions of the independent and nonpartisan citizen observers at NEW, whose work in this election was historic and heroic.

The Center benefited greatly from the efforts of skilled and talented Freetown-based staff: Nicholas Jahr, country office director, provided the mission with in-depth political analysis and staff leadership. Bartek Lech, deputy country office director, supported the director and contributed electoral analysis. Roselidah Andambi skillfully coordinated our observers while Despina Efstathiou provided expert legal analysis. Andrew Bhamra, security and logistics manager, provided valuable information to the mission regarding the security situation throughout the country. Special thanks are extended to the office staff in Freetown, including financial analyst Immanuel Bundor and operations manager Joseph Komba, as well as drivers who supported observer teams in the field.

The Carter Center also recognizes the invaluable contributions made by medium-term observers Tadzrul Adha, Jespa Ajerboh, Jacob Goma, Agnieszka Górna, Anne Kathurima, Shelley McThomas, Sithu Sou, and George Warui. The Center warmly appreciates short-term observers from around the world for lending their diverse experiences and exertise to evaluating election-day procedures. Their reporting, diligent collection of data on the electoral process, logistical support, and engagement with Sierra Leonean stakeholders across the country were crucial to the success of the mission.

The Center's efforts were supported by a team of hardworking staff in Atlanta who ensured the success of the mission to Sierra Leone. These include Faizat Badmus-Busari, Marcia Brown, Anthony DeMattee, Siju Falade, Brett Lacy, and Dan Richardson. Interns Margaret "Olivia" Leu and Anthony Xu provided valuable support with logistics, observer call-ins, data analysis, and countless other tasks in support of the mission.

The Center is further grateful for financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Their generous contributions allowed the Center to deploy independent nonpartisan international election observers who were present throughout the process.

Appendix B

Delegation and Staff

Delegation Leader

Cameron Hume, Former Ambassador, United States

Short-Term Observers

Viwemi Chavula, Civil Society Educator, Malawi

Oley Dibba-Wadda, Social Development Executive, The Gambia

Lyn Graybill, Observer, United States

Lennart Haggren, Observer, Sweden

James "Dorbor" Jallah, Country Representative, The Carter Center, Liberia

Randolph Kent, Consultant, The Carter Center, United States

Aklima Khondoker, Consultant, The Carter Center, United States

Geetha Lingham, Election Analyst, The Elections Group, United States

Flomo Mau Maiwo, Liberia Election Observation Network Officer, Liberia

Brooke Nagle, Observer, United States

Aloisious Nthenda, Observer, Malawi

Aleksandra "Sasha" Pajević, Observer, Montenegro

Claes Pile, Observer, Sweden

Maria Piotrowska, Kenya Programs Manager, Polish Humanitarian Action, Poland

Timothy Sandram, Political Analyst, Malawi

Tonya Wichman, Ohio Election Official, United States

Medium-Term Observers

Tadzrul Adha, Medium-Term Observer, Malaysia

Jespa Ajereboh, Medium-Term Observer, Cameroon

Jacob Goma, Medium-Term Observer, Zambia

Agnieszka Górna, Medium-Term Observer, Poland

Anne Kathurima, Medium-Term Observer, Kenya

Shelley McThomas, Medium-Term Observer, United States

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Margaret "Olivia" Leu, Intern, Democracy Program, United States

Dan Richardson, Program Associate, Democracy Program, United States

Anthony Xu, Intern, Democracy Program, United States

Appendix C

Press Releases and Statements

NEWS RELEASE

Carter Center Launches Mission to Observe Sierra Leone's National Elections

ATLANTA (May 10, 2023) — The Carter Center has launched an international election observation mission to Sierra Leone in advance of the country's national elections scheduled for June 24.

The Center was invited to observe this year's elections by the Election Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL).

A four-person core team of experts has arrived in Freetown from the United States, Poland, Kenya, and the United Kingdom. Additional electoral experts and medium-term observers from around the world will join them in advance of the campaign period, followed by short-term observers and high-level leadership around election day.

"We look forward to engaging with Sierra Leonean stakeholders across the political spectrum and providing an independent and impartial assessment of the electoral process. We hope that our observation and reporting will provide important information to Sierra Leonean citizens, key recommendations to stakeholders, and help uphold transparency for the remainder of the electoral process," said Carter Center Field Office Director Nicholas Jahr.

"The Carter Center has had a longstanding commitment to democracy in Sierra Leone, and we are honored to launch this International Election Observation Mission in support of the electoral process," said Barbara J. Smith, the Carter Center's vice president for peace programs.

The Carter Center conducts election observation work in accordance with the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and makes assessments based on relevant parts of national legal frameworks as well as regional and international obligations for democratic elections.

The Carter Center has been a force for peace in Sierra Leone since 2002, when it observed the first presidential and parliamentary elections following the end of Sierra Leone's devastating civil war. Since then, The Carter Center has played a role in the country's 2007, 2012, and 2018 national elections.

The Carter Center has observed more than 110 elections in 39 countries.

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NEWS RELEASE

Former U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume to Lead Carter Center's Sierra Leone Election Observation Mission

ATLANTA (June 20, 2023) — The Carter Center announced today that former U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume will lead the Center's international election observation mission in Sierra Leone.

"The June 24, 2023, elections will be an important moment for Sierra Leone, as they provide a critical opportunity for the citizens and leaders of the country to demonstrate their commitment to peaceful and democratic elections," Hume said. "I call on all political parties, candidates, and their supporters to participate peacefully and to adhere to their commitments in the Electoral Pledge. I am pleased to lead the Carter Center mission to observe this important election."

The Carter Center has had a core team of electoral experts and a group of medium-term observers in Sierra Leone since early May. Hume and the Carter Center's delegation of short-term observers are arriving in Freetown this week to meet with key stakeholders, including political party candidates, organizations, government officials, civil society organizations, and other international and citizen domestic observer missions. The Carter Center mission will deploy election observers for polling, counting, and tabulation on election day.

The Carter Center is observing Sierra Leone's elections at the invitation of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone. The Carter Center conducts its work in accordance with the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and will make any assessments based on relevant parts of Sierra Leone's national legal framework as well as regional and international obligations for democratic elections.

The Carter Center has been a force for peace in Sierra Leone since 2002, when it observed the first presidential and parliamentary elections since the end of Sierra Leone's devastating civil war. Since then, The Carter Center has played a role in the country's 2007, 2012, and 2018 national elections.

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NEWS RELEASE

Carter Center Calls for Transparency and Urges Patience as Vote Tallying is Underway in Sierra Leone Election

FREETOWN (June 25, 2023) — As the first day of tabulation draws to a close following the June 24 election in Sierra Leone, The Carter Center expresses concern about reports indicating a lack of transparency during parts of the tabulation process.

The Carter Center calls for maximum transparency in the days ahead as election officials complete the tabulation of votes and prepare to release final results. In particular, we urge the Election Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) to publish results at the polling station level to allow for cross-verification by party agents, citizens observers, and international observers, and in accordance with international best practices.

The Carter Center also urges all stakeholders to remain patient as the tabulation and results processes conclude. Only the ECSL can issue final results. We call on political parties not to release data on results gathered by their agents until after the ECSL.

On election day, Carter Center observers witnessed Sierra Leoneans turning out to vote across the country, sometimes waiting hours to do so, in a demonstration of their commitment to democracy. To ensure that the will of the voters is respected, it is essential to ensure maximum transparency and verifiability of the final results.

The Carter Center has been involved in Sierra Leone's elections since 2002. For the June 24 elections, the Center deployed observers across all of Sierra Leone's 16 electoral districts. Carter Center observers have been observing the tabulation process in the five regional centers, maintaining a 24 hours a day presence in the Western area and nearly 24 hours a day in other regions.

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NEWS RELEASE

Carter Center Expresses Concern About Transparency of the Tabulation Process in Sierra Leone Elections

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE (June 27, 2023) — In a preliminary statement released today, The Carter Center expresses concern about transparency and calls for calm as the tabulation of results is underway in Sierra Leone's June 24 election.

As the process continues, it is important for all Sierra Leoneans to await the announcement of final results by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), which has sole authority to declare results. The Center urges key political leaders to act responsibly and in the interest of all Sierra Leone's people, consistent with the spirit of the Peace Pledge signed by all parties.

The Carter Center mission visited 119 polling stations on election day and observed tallying processes in all five centers. Key findings of the Carter Center mission regarding the voting, counting, and tabulation process to date include the following:

- *Poll openings.* Carter Center observers report that some polling stations opened late on election day due to a lack of material.
- *Voting process.* The voting process was assessed by Carter Center observers as "reasonable" or "very good" in 93 percent of polling stations observed. In some polling stations prospective voters were noted who claimed to be registered at a polling station where their names could not be found on the list. Some polling stations in Freetown had insufficient ballot papers and ran out in the mid-afternoon.
- *Closing and counting.* Closing and counting procedures were assessed positively at 100% of poll closings observed.
- *Tabulation.* Carter Center observers reported that the tabulation process lacked adequate levels of transparency. Carter Center observers directly observed instances of broken seals and inappropriately open ballot boxes in three of the five tally centers.

The Carter Center offers the following priority recommendations:

- Results from any ballot boxes that were opened in violation of procedure and international best practice should be set aside for additional scrutiny and should not be included in the final results until a formal, transparent, and inclusive review can establish whether they can be considered credible.

- The ECSL should publish detailed results at the polling station level to allow for cross-verification in accordance with international best practice.

The Carter Center was honored to observe the elections in Sierra Leone, with voters casting ballots for president, members of Parliament, city mayors, and local councilors. The elections – the fifth general elections in the country since the end of the decade-long civil war – took place in an atmosphere that was largely calm, with the people of Sierra Leone demonstrating their enthusiasm and determination to peacefully express their will at the ballot box.

The Carter Center has been involved in Sierra Leone's elections since 2002. For the June 24 elections, the Center deployed observers across all of Sierra Leone's 16 electoral districts. Carter Center observers have been observing the tabulation process in the five regional centers, maintaining 24 hours a day presence in the Western area and nearly 24 hours a day in other regions.

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THE
CARTER CENTER

THE CARTER CENTER
SIERRA LEONE 2023 NATIONAL ELECTIONS PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

June 27, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Carter Center was honored to observe the June 24, 2023, elections in Sierra Leone, with voters casting ballots for president, members of Parliament, city mayors, and local councilors. The elections – the fifth general elections in the country since the end of the decade-long civil war – took place in an atmosphere that was largely calm, with the people of Sierra Leone demonstrating their enthusiasm and determination to peacefully express their will at the ballot box.

The electoral process is ongoing, as the tabulation and finalization of election results is still underway. As the process continues, it is important for all Sierra Leoneans to await the announcement of final results by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), which has sole authority to declare results. If there are disputes about the official election results, parties and candidates should use formal legal channels to resolve complaints and ensure that the will of the people is expressed. To ensure the transparency and verifiability of results, the ECSL should publish results at the polling station level.

This statement is a preliminary assessment of the process so far. The Carter Center mission visited 119 polling stations on election day and observed tallying processes in all five centers. Key findings of the Carter Center mission regarding the voting, counting, and tabulation process to date include the following:

- *Poll openings.* Carter Center observers report that some polling stations opened late on election day due to a lack of material.
- *Voting process.* The voting process was assessed by Carter Center observers as "reasonable" or "very good" in 93 percent of polling stations observed. In some polling stations prospective voters were noted who claimed to be registered at a polling station where their names could not be found on the list. Some polling stations in Freetown had insufficient ballot papers and ran out in the mid-afternoon.

- *Closing and counting.* Closing and counting procedures were assessed positively at 100% of poll closings observed.
- *Tabulation.* Carter Center observers reported that the tabulation process lacked adequate levels of transparency. Carter Center observers directly observed instances of broken seals and inappropriately open ballot boxes in three of the five tally centers.

At this time The Carter Center offers the following priority recommendations:

- Results from any ballot boxes that were opened in violation of procedure and international best practice should be set aside for additional scrutiny and should not be included in the final results until a formal, transparent, and inclusive review can establish whether they can be considered credible.
- As noted above, the ECSL should publish detailed results at the polling station level to allow for cross-verification in accordance with international best practice.
- Any complaints, including allegations of manipulation of results, should be addressed in established legal channels before any conclusions are drawn about the electoral process and its outcome.

As the country awaits the declaration of final results, the Center urges key political leaders to act responsibly and in the interest of all Sierra Leone's people, consistent with the spirit of the Peace Pledge signed by all parties.

The Carter Center election observation mission has been in Sierra Leone since May 7, 2023, at the invitation of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL). Eight medium-term observers from seven countries were deployed in mid-May to assess campaigning and election preparations. For the period surrounding election day, The Carter Center deployed 38 observers from 15 countries. Carter Center observers visited 119 polling stations across Sierra Leone's 16 electoral districts to assess the voting and counting processes. The Carter Center team was led by former U.S. Ambassador Cameron Hume.

The electoral process is still ongoing, and tabulation is continuing. This statement is preliminary. A comprehensive report will be released in the months after the elections.

The Carter Center's assessment of Sierra Leone's elections is based on obligations for democratic elections contained in Sierra Leone's Constitution, electoral law, and other relevant parts of the legal framework, as well as its commitments under international law. The Carter Center conducts its election observation mission in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which was adopted in 2005 at a ceremony at the United Nations.

The Carter Center has been a force for peace in Sierra Leone since 2002, when it observed the first presidential and parliamentary elections following the end of Sierra Leone's civil war. Since then, The Carter Center has played a role in the country's 2007, 2012, and 2018 national elections. Since 1989, The Carter Center has observed more than 110 elections in 39 countries.

The full preliminary statement is available at www.cartercenter.org (PDF).

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

In this statement, The Carter Center offers a preliminary assessment of the electoral process thus far, including the legal framework for elections, election administration, the campaign period, the political participation of women and marginalized populations, election-day voting, counting, and the ongoing tabulation to date.

Since the tabulation process and announcement of results are still ongoing, this is a preliminary statement and does not provide the Center's overall final assessment.

Legal Framework and Electoral System. A sound legal framework is essential to the administration of democratic elections and to ensuring that a country upholds its international obligations. Sierra Leone has ratified all major international and regional instruments that relate to human rights and the conduct and inclusivity of democratic elections.[1] The 2023 elections were governed by the 1991 Constitution, 2022 Political Parties Act, and the 2022 Public Elections Act, along with several new provisions including the revocation of the criminalization of libel under the controversial 1965 Public Order Act (which remains in force) and introduction of a Cybersecurity and Cyber Crimes Act of 2021 that introduced significant new restrictions on freedom of expression online. In January 2023 President Bio signed into law an important Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE) that advances protections for women's rights, including a 30% affirmative action measure for women's participation in politics for appointed positions (including cabinet, ministry, and ambassador roles) and elected positions (including parliamentary and local council seats).

The president of Sierra Leone is elected in a two-round system. If no candidate receives 55% of the votes in the first round, the top two candidates proceed to a runoff. Independent candidates cannot run for president. For the parliamentary elections, the President made a controversial declaration to apply a proportional representation system that had not been used since the country's first post-war elections in 2002. These changes were introduced by the ECSL at the president's directive on October 21, 2022, were challenged in the courts by APC and PMDC, and were upheld by a Supreme Court decision on January 27, 2023. Contrary to best practice, these changes to the electoral system were made less than six months before the election, without the consultation of political parties, and with little time for parties or the public to understand their implications.

In addition, a high threshold was introduced requiring political parties to obtain 11.9% of the vote to receive a seat in parliament. This requirement is an undue restriction on the right to participate in political life, contravening Sierra Leone's commitments under ICCPR. The threshold could also negatively impact ethnic political divisions through concentration of parliamentary power in the APC and SLPP parties.

Voter Registration. The rights of universal and equal suffrage are fundamental international obligations for democratic elections. International standards provide that voter registration should enable the broadest possible pool of voters to participate, and voter lists should be prepared in a transparent manner with voters having easy access to review and correct their registration data as the need arises.[2]

[1] Sierra Leone has signed but not ratified the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

[2] "The voters' lists shall be prepared in a transparent and reliable manner, with the collaboration of the political parties and voters who may have access to them whenever the need arises." Article 5, ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001)

A total of 3,374,258 persons were registered. The Carter Center notes that the APC contested the validity of the voter registry in the courts, claiming unreasonable increases in the number of voters in SLPP strongholds and decreases in APC strongholds. That case has not yet been heard.

The Carter Center did not observe the voter registration process in advance of Sierra Leone's 2023 general elections and therefore cannot assess that process or the integrity of the voter registry used for the elections. However, The Carter Center noted on election day that in 55% of cases voters' pictures on the registry were inadequate for identification purposes, and that in others voters reported that while they were registered at a polling station their names could not be found on the list.

Boundary Delimitation. According to international standards, constituency boundaries should be drawn in such a way that the principle of equal suffrage is preserved, so that every voter has roughly equal voting power.[3] Notwithstanding strong concerns raised regarding the census, the ECSL decided to use the census results and not voter registration data as a basis for identifying how many parliamentary seats each district would be electing.[4] As a consequence, electoral districts which have historically voted by a significant majority for the governing SLPP were apportioned eight more seats in the parliament, and districts which have historically supported the opposition APC by significant majorities lost the same number of seats. Significantly, the capital district of Freetown (Western Urban), which in previous elections had twenty seats in the parliament, now has only eleven.

At the time the ECSL took this decision, the Commission had completed the voter registration exercise, meaning that this data was available during the ECSL's apportionment process. However, as noted above, the ESCL used the controversial census data. The number of registered voters per Member of Parliament varies dramatically between the districts and ranges from 16,541 in Pujehun to 54,366 in the Western Urban (Freetown) district, distorting representation in parliament and undermining equal suffrage, which requires that voters have roughly equal voting power.[5]

Election Administration. A critical factor in enhancing the transparency of an electoral process and facilitating the active participation of citizens in the democratic process is an independent and impartial election management body (EMB). A transparent, accountable, and professional body is regarded as an effective means of ensuring that domestic and international obligations related to the democratic process are met.[6] The EMB should provide accountable, efficient, and effective public administration of elections, and should ensure that the electoral process complies with Sierra Leone's national laws as well as its regional and international obligations for democratic elections and human rights.[7]

[3] "The drawing of electoral boundaries and the method of allocating votes should not distort the distribution of voters or discriminate against any group and should not exclude or restrict unreasonably the right of citizens to choose their representatives freely." ICCPR. General Comment 25. Article 21

[4] Interestingly, the ECSL chose to add another step to this calculation, and the final apportionment of seats to districts was based on obtaining the average of the current number of seats for each district (determined for the 2018 elections) and the number of seats suggested by the district's share of the total population according to the mid-term census.

[5] Using the generally accepted method of evaluating equality of suffrage ("weight of vote") method, only four electoral districts meet the norm of not deviating from the voter-per-seat average by more than 10 percent.

[6] United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, General Comment 25, para. 20

[7] Venice Commission, Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, Section II.3.1.c

The ECSL is composed of a chairperson and five commissioners representing Sierra Leone's five regions, with five of the six-member commission appointed since the last elections in 2018. The 2023 elections were conducted with considerably less technical assistance from the international community than past elections. Administration of the elections was characterized by a lack of communication and transparency that undermined public confidence in the institution and its work. While the SLPP expressed confidence in the ECSL, most opposition parties – including the APC, the largest opposition party in parliament – expressed a lack of confidence in the ECSL's independence and capacity. Two weeks before the elections the APC called for the resignation of all commissioners.

Candidate Nomination and Campaign Period. Equitable treatment of candidates and parties during an election and the maintenance of an open and transparent campaign environment are important to ensuring the integrity of the democratic election process. Sierra Leone's legal framework and its international and regional commitments create obligations related to campaign periods, including the right to freely express opinions and to participate in public affairs.[8]

Thirteen political parties contested Sierra Leone's presidential elections, with only a single female candidate standing for the office.

Despite serious limitations on and violations of the right of assembly in the run-up to election day, and restrictions on campaigning by political parties, contestants were able to exercise fundamental freedoms and conduct their campaigns. The campaign period was dominated by debates about the financial situation of the country and legal complaints filed regarding the elections and in particular the quality of the voters list. While there were reports of intimidation and election-related violence targeting both of the main parties – the SLPP and the APC – Carter Center observers reported a pattern of intimidation directed against the APC, particularly in the south and east, which undermined the party's ability to exercise its right to freedom of assembly in some cases.

Carter Center observers heard allegations that the ruling SLPP used state resources to campaign. Carter Center observers reported the presence of government vehicles at three observed SLPP campaign events, although the president himself traveled in his personal vehicle at one of those events. Domestic citizen observers also reported seeing government vehicles at other SLPP campaign events.

Citizen and International Observers. The National Election Watch (NEW) trained and deployed 6,000 observers across the country. Out of these observers, 750 received specialized training to collect polling and results data from a statistically relevant sample using an advanced Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology. The PVRT methodology allows NEW to accurately project the results of the election utilizing data collected at the count in polling stations across the country on election night. On June 26, NEW announced it had gathered information from nearly 100% of these 750 specialized observers.

Women. In 2022, Sierra Leone's parliament passed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, the nation's first legislative affirmative action measure aiming to enhance women's political participate and promote women as candidates. The Act mandates that 30%of

[8] ICCPR, Article 19(2); ACHPR, Article 13(2)

political party candidates must be women.[9] The PEA supports the GEWE by stipulating that political party nomination lists that do not include the required number of female candidates will be rejected. The ECSL gazetted a final list of candidates on June 22, the last day of the campaign period. However, the list does not specify gender or which office candidates are contesting (parliament, mayor, local council). As a result, it is not possible for the public or political parties to assess whether parties nominated the required number of female candidates. Furthermore, The Carter Center heard allegations that some political parties intentionally provided incorrect gender data for their candidates in order to circumvent the requirement. However, these allegations cannot be confirmed based on the candidate list shared by the ECSL.

Regardless of whether the final candidate lists do include 30% women, The Carter Center notes that the distribution of seats will require that at least every third candidate who obtains a seat be a woman.

People with Disability. International standards for democratic elections call for accommodations to be made for people with disabilities, and polling places must be accessible.[10] People living with disability in Sierra Leone face difficult stigmas and are often marginalized. While the percentage of the population living with disability is unknown, it is thought to be high in part due to the number of citizens left disabled following the country's decades-long civil war. On election day The Carter Center noted that 68% of polling stations observed were accessible.

In the 2023 elections the ECSL provided tactile ballot guides for all four ballot papers so visually impaired voters would be able to cast their votes independently and in secret. Carter Center observers noted the presence of the tactile ballot guides in 80% of polling stations observed. While the procurement of these guides is commendable, very little voter education was done to ensure visually impaired voters were able to utilize the tool and in some cases polling station staff seemed unfamiliar with the use of tactile ballot guides.

Closing and Counting. The Carter Center observed the closing and counting process in all 16 electoral districts and reported that overall, the process was peaceful and orderly. The counting process was observed as "very good" or "reasonable" at 100% of polling places visited. Carter Center observers noted that the counting process was conducted with transparency in the presence of political party agents and national observers. Carter Center observers did not report any instances of someone refusing to sign the Reconciliation of Results Form (RRF). Carter Center observers also reported that the process to determine the validity of votes was conducted according to procedure.

ELECTION DAY

The quality of polling operations on election day is crucial to determining how closely an election falls in line with a country's democratic obligations. According to Sierra Leone's

[9] Parliament has 146 members in full composition; at the time of the passage of the GEWE, only 18 MPs were women.
[10] U.N., CRPD, Article 29

international and regional commitments, all citizens should enjoy the right to universal and equal suffrage, subject only to reasonable and objective limitations.[11]

The voting process stands as the fundamental pillar in ensuring the fulfillment of the people's right to freely express their will through genuine and periodic elections.[1] The manner in which polling operations are conducted on election day plays a pivotal role in assessing whether an election has been held in accordance with international standards for democratic elections. Both national and international law recognize the significance of conducting elections through the use of secret ballots, as it serves as a vital mechanism to guarantee the free expression of the people's will.[2]

The vote was conducted in 3,630 polling centers comprising 11,832 polling stations nationwide. The Carter Center deployed 38 observers across Sierra Leone's 16 electoral districts.

Opening

Carter Center observers assessed the process of the opening of polling stations as good or very good in 100% of stations observed. 38% of observed polling stations opened more than 30 minutes later than the 7:00 a.m. start time due to issues of preparedness or missing materials.

Polling

The polling environment was assessed as very good or reasonable in 100% of polling stations observed.

Carter Center observers did not observe any major irregularities during the polling process. Observers reported that they had full access to the polling stations and were allowed to observe all aspects of the process. In several polling stations, observers received reports of voters not being allowed to vote as they didn't appear on the voter registry, though the voters were adamant that they had registered at the station and had received confirmation that this was their polling station during the exhibition exercise. In 50% of polling stations observed the quality of some photos in the Register of Voters provided was not sufficient to identify voters.

No incidents were reported inside or outside the majority of polling stations. International and domestic observers were present in 66% of observed stations. In particular, non-partisan domestic election observers from the National Election Watch (NEW) were observed at polling stations across the country and performed their responsibilities professionally. The polling center manager in 73% of polling centers was male. 69% of polling stations were assessed as accessible to the physically disabled.

Closing

Implementation of procedures during the closing process was assessed as very good or good in 80 of the ten observed polling stations in which Carter Center observers were able to follow

[11] U.N., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25(b); U.N., United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 25 on "The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service," para. 21; U.N., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21(3); IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, Article 2(6).

the count through to its conclusion. Similarly, the overall environment was assessed as very good or reasonable in 100% of observations.

Counting

Accurate and fair vote counting plays an indispensable role in ensuring that the electoral process is democratic and reflects the will of the voters. International commitments require that votes be counted by an independent and impartial electoral management body. The counting process must be public, transparent, and free of corruption.[12]

The Carter Center observed counting in all 16 electoral districts. The counting process was observed to be good or very good in 100% of polling stations observed.

Tensions rose in some locations as closing and counting progressed, with a visibly increased security presence as counting took place. The Carter Center noted a high percentage of invalid ballots in some polling stations observed. In one polling station in Kenema, an unknown person who did not appear to be ECSL staff arrived towards the end of the count and took over the presiding officer's duties.

All observed polling stations had domestic observers and candidate agents present during the closing and counting, an important level of transparency.

Tabulation

Tabulation of results is an integral phase of the electoral process that ensures the will of votes is accurately and comprehensively reflected in final results.[13]

Thirty-eight observers from The Carter Center observed the tabulation of results at the five national tally centers in Port Loko, Makeni, Bo, Kenema, and Western Area. Observers witnessed a tabulation process that was characterized by limits to transparency and at times was conducted in tense environments with increased security presence.

Observers in some centers were not able to make an accurate assessment of tabulation procedures as the distance between the workspace and the designated place for observers was too great to see what was taking place. In some centers observers were not allowed to approach the staff to ask questions.

In all five tabulation centers, a double-blind data entry process appeared to be taking place in which a results form is entered by two separate data entry clerks. If there is a discrepancy in data entry, the results form is flagged for review. RRFs that were flagged for review during the double-blind data entry process were set aside and did not seem to be reviewed during the time of The Carter Center's observation at all five tally centers. ECSL staff declined to answer questions regarding procedures for handling results forms that were flagged for review.

In the pre-election period, the ECSL procured a controversial results tabulation application that was to be utilized during the tabulation process. However, Carter Center observers did not witness the application being utilized anywhere across the country. In addition, Carter Center

[12] U.N., Human Rights Committee, General Comment 25, para. 20; U.N. Convention Against Corruption, Article 18.
[13] U.N., International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(b); AU, Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, art. 1.

observers did not observe the use of projectors to display data entry or results at tally centers as had been anticipated in accordance with information from the ECSL, which would have greatly contributed to the transparency of the process.

Party agents, domestic observers, and international observers had a very limited presence at tally centers on the first night of tabulation in particular. In one instance in Makeni APC party agents were removed from the tally center and later escorted back in by the military following a three-hour disruption of the process. Carter Center observers noted several instances of instability during the tabulation process on June 25 and June 26.

Carter Center observers directly observed broken seals and open ballot boxes in three of the five tally centers. In two tally centers ballot boxes appeared to have been opened after they arrived. Results from any ballot boxes that were opened in violation of procedure and international best practice should be set aside for additional scrutiny and should not be included in the final results until a formal, transparent, and inclusive review can establish whether they can be considered credible.

THE
CARTER CENTER

Carter Center Calls for Results to be Released by Polling Station

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE (June 28, 2023) — In a follow-up to the preliminary statement issued yesterday on the Sierra Leone elections, The Carter Center once again strongly urges the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) to publish election results by polling station so that parties and observers can cross-verify data, in accordance with international best practice.

This is particularly important considering the report from National Election Watch (NEW) indicating that the results from NEW's verification exercise differ from the ECSL results, which show both significantly higher turnout and recorded votes for the SLPP presidential candidate. The Carter Center is familiar with and has great confidence in NEW's rigorous observation and verification methodology, and therefore is concerned that the ECSL's results do not correspond with NEW's data.

Publishing detailed polling station results is critical to ensuring that the final results announced by the ECSL genuinely reflect the will of the people as expressed on election day. This is especially true given that The Carter Center and other observers have expressed strong concerns regarding the lack of transparency during the tabulation process and have directly observed instances of serious irregularities at tabulation centers that call the integrity of the results into question.

The Carter Center continues to observe the tabulation process across the country. The Center reiterates its recommendation that results from any ballot boxes that were opened in violation of procedure and international best practice should be set aside for additional scrutiny and should not be included in the final results until a formal, transparent, and inclusive review can establish whether they can be considered credible. Lacking this, the credibility of the results is in question.

###

THE
CARTER CENTER

Carter Center Questions the Credibility of Sierra Leone Election Results and Calls for Release of Results at the Polling Station Level

ATLANTA (July 21, 2023) — Following the conclusion of the tabulation process, the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) released final results for parliamentary, mayoral, and local government elections in the first days of July showing unusual variances compared to the results of the presidential race released on June 27. This heightens doubts about the credibility of the tabulation process and the results from the June 24 election.

Parliamentary, mayoral, and local government election results were initially released by verbal announcements at a press conference on July 1. The actual numbers were then published over multiple days on social media. Comparing the ECSL's data for the parliamentary elections with the presidential results, there are differences in turnout as well as differences in votes for key parties in many districts. These variances raise further questions about the credibility of the election results.

The Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) exercise conducted by the National Election Watch raises similar concerns about the credibility of the presidential results, particularly when analyzed with The Carter Center's direct observations in the five tabulation centers. The Carter Center is familiar with and has confidence in the methodology of the PRVT conducted by National Election Watch (NEW). Sample-based observation methodologies have been conducted by NEW in elections in Sierra Leone since 2007 with a high degree of professionalism and have successfully projected electoral results with statistical confidence.

To ensure the credibility of the process, The Carter Center again calls on the ECSL to release results at the polling station level, consistent with international best practice, to allow for cross-verification of results recorded by party agents and observers on election day.

Where there are discrepancies in the results announced by the ECSL and those recorded by party agents and observers, reviews of ballot box seals and recounts can be conducted to affirm the credibility of the results announced by the ECSL. The publication of the original Reconciliation & Result Forms, retained by the ECSL, can also help establish the credibility of the results.
observers play a critical role in providing transparency, and their reports can help verify the credibility of the process.

###

Appendix D

ELMO Checklists

Opening v4

Sierra Leone IEOM 2023

elmo

User/Team		
Observation Time		
1. Location Details		
1.1. Geographic Area:	**Select One:** North Northwest West South East	[GeoArea]
1.2. Electoral District:	**Select One:** Bo Bombali Bonthe Falaba Kailahun Kambia Kenema Kerene Koinadugu Kono Moyamba Port Loko Pujehun Tonkolili Western Rural Western Urban	[ElecDist]
1.3. Center ID:		[CenterID]
1.5. Is the center in an urban or rural area?	**Select One:** Urban Rural	[UrbanRural]
3. Number of stations at the center:		[StationCount]
4. Were there obstacles or barriers on the way to the center that could have inhibited general access?	**Select One:** Yes No	[Barriers]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #4 is equal to "Yes" 5. If "yes", please describe:		[BarriersDesc]
6. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe OUTSIDE the CENTER?	**Select Multiple:** Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Bussing activities Other None	[DisruptOutCent]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #6 excludes "None" 7. If any issues, please describe:		[DisruptOutCentDesc]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 8. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the CENTER (but outside the stations)?	**Select Multiple:** Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None	[DisruptInCent]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #8 excludes "None" AND Question #3 is greater than 1 9. If any issues, please describe:		[DisruptInCentDesc]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 10. Polling Station ID:		[StationID]
12. Start of Observation (station) (please use 24 hour clock):		[StartTime]
14. If present, please indicate the polling center manager's gender:	**Select One:** Female Male Not observed	[POGender]
15. Number of staff working at the polling station (excluding polling center manager):		[StaffCount]
16. Number of FEMALE staff present (excluding polling center manager):		[FemaleStaff]
17. Number of registered voters:		[RegVoterCount]
18. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the STATION?	**Select Multiple:** Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None	[DisruptInStat]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #18 excludes "None" 19. If any issues, please describe:		[DisruptInStatDesc]
20. Were any of the following materials missing, insufficient, or incorrect?		
20.1. Indelible ink	**Select One:** A B C D	[Ink]
20.2. Booths/screens	**Select One:** A B C D	[Booths]
20.4. Ballot papers	**Select One:** A B C D	[BallotPapers]
20.6. Ballot box(es)	**Select One:** A B C D	[BallotBox]

20.7. Voter list(s)/FVR	**Select One:** A B C D	[VoterList]
20.8. Stamps	**Select One:** A B C D	[Stamps]
20.9. Forms	**Select One:** A B C D	[Forms]
20.10. Seals	**Select One:** A B C D	[Seals]
20.11. Tamper Evident Envelopes	**Select One:** A B C D	[TamperEnvelope]
20.12. Tactile Ballots	**Select One:** A B C D	[TactileBallot]
20.19. Other	**Select One:** A B C D	[OtherMat]

21. If materials are missing, insufficient, or incorrect, please describe, including any "other" materials noted: [MissingMatDesc]

22. Does the quality of photos in the Voter Register provide for sufficient identification? **Select One:** Yes No Not observed [VRPhotos]

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #22 is equal to "No" [PhotosVRDesc]
23. If photo quality is not sufficient, please explain.

24. Does the station appear to be accessible to physically challenged persons, including the elderly?

Select One: Yes No [Accessibility]

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #24 is equal to "No" [AccessibilityDesc]
25. If "no", please describe the impediments as well as any efforts to overcome the impediments or assist the challenged persons:

26. Did the polling station open during your observation? **Select One:** Yes No [OpeningObs]

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #26 is equal to "No" [OpeningObsDesc]
27. If "no", please describe:

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #26 is equal to "Yes" [OpeningTime]
28. At what time did the polling station open?

29. If the polling station opened MORE THAN 30 MINUTES late, what are the reasons for delay? **Select Multiple:** Missing materials Absent polling staff Unrest Other Not applicable [OpeningLateReasons]

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #29 excludes "Not applicable" [OpeningLateReasDesc]
30. If the polling station opened more than 30 minutes late, please describe the reasons, including any "other" reasons noted:

SKIP TO Question #34 [How many agents representing each party/candidate were present?] if Question #26 [OpeningObs] is equal to "No"

31. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding assessment of PROCEDURES. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed.

Select One: I have read and understand the definitions. [BeforeProcedures]

32. How closely did each of the following procedures adhere to regulations?

32.1. Ballot inventory	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotInventory]
32.2. Empty ballot box demonstration	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotBoxDemo]
32.3. Ballot box sealing	**Select One:** A B C D E	[OpeningBallotBoxSeal]
32.4. Reading of seal numbers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[SealNumReading]
32.5. Room configuration	**Select One:** A B C D E	[RoomConfig]
32.6. Ink preparation	**Select One:** A B C D E	[InkPrep]
32.7. Recording of seal numbers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[SealNumCheck]

33. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Fully" or "Adequately", if you did so: [OpenProcedDesc]

34. How many agents representing each party/candidate were present?

34.1. APC Males	[MaleAgentsPtyA]
34.2. APC Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyA]
34.3. SLPP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyE]
34.4. SLPP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyE]
34.5. NDA Males	[MaleAgentsPtyB]
34.6. NDA Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyB]
34.7. NGC Males	[MaleAgentsPtyC]
34.8. NGC Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyC]
34.9. ReNIP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyD]
34.10. ReNIP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyD]
34.11. NURP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyF]
34.12. NURP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyF]
34.13. RUFP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyG]
34.14. RUFP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyG]
34.15. CDP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyH]
34.16. CDP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyH]
34.17. PLP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyI]
34.18. PLP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyI]
34.19. PMDC Males	[MaleAgentsPtyJ]
34.20. PMDC Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyJ]
34.21. UNPP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyK]
34.22. UNPP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyK]
34.23. PDP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyL]
34.24. PDP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyL]
34.25. UDM Males	[MaleAgentsPtyM]
34.26. UDM Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyM]
34.27. ADP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyN]
34.28. ADP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyN]
34.29. Independent Males	[MaleAgentsOther]
34.30. Independent Females	[FemaleAgentsOther]

35. How many observers from each election observation group were present?

35.1. EU Males	[MaleObsIntA]
35.2. EU Females	[FemaleObsIntA]

35.3. NEW Males	[MaleObsCitB]
35.4. NEW Females	[FemaleObsCitB]
35.5. EON Males	[MaleObsCitC]
35.6. EON Females	[FemaleObsCitC]
35.7. ECOWAS Males	[MaleObsIntD]
35.8. ECOWAS Females	[FemaleObsIntD]
35.9. AU Males	[MaleObsIntE]
35.10. AU Females	[FemaleObsIntE]
35.11. Commonwealth Males	[MaleObsIntF]
35.12. Commonwealth Females	[FemaleObsIntF]
35.13. WADEMOS Males	[MaleObsIntG]
35.14. WADEMOS Females	[FemaleObsIntG]
35.15. Other Observer Males	[MaleObsOther]
35.16. Other Observer Females	[FemaleObsOther]

36. What level of access did each of the following groups have?

36.1. Candidate/party agents	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessAgents]
36.2. International observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessIntObs]
36.3. Citizen observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessCitObs]
36.4. Polling staff	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessPollStaff]
36.5. Media	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessMedia]
36.6. Other	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessOther]

37. If any groups were not allowed sufficient access, please describe: [AccessDesc]

38. Did you observe any interference in the election process? **Select Multiple:** [Interference]
Candidate/party agents, International observers, Citizen observers, Polling staff, Media, Voters, Security, Local officials, Religious/traditional leaders, Other, No interference observed

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #38 excludes "No interference observed"
39. If any interference, please describe: [InterfernceDesc]

41. Were there any officially lodged complaints? **Select One:** Yes No [OfficialComp]

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #41 is equal to "Yes"
42. If "yes", please describe: [OfficialCompDesc]

43. Were there any problems reported to you by those present rather than those observed directly by you? **Select One:** Yes No [ProbReport]

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #43 is equal to "Yes"
44. If "yes", please describe: [ProbReportDesc]

45. End of Observation (Station): [EndTime]

46. How would you evaluate party/candidate agents' performance? [AgentsEval]

Select One:
Adequate | Inadequate | Not Observed/Observable

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #46 is not equal to "Adequate" [AgentsEvalDesc]

47. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Adequate":

48. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURES BY STAFF. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed.

Select One: [BeforeProcedImp]
I have read and understand the definitions.

49. What is your team's evaluation of the implementation of procedures by staff at this station?

Select One: [ProcedImpEval]
Very Good | Reasonable | Poor | Not Credible

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #49 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #49 is not equal to "Reasonable" [ProcedImpEvalDesc]

50. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?

51. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of the OPENING ENVIRONMENT AND PROCESS. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed.

Select One: [BeforeOpenEnv]
I have read and understand the definitions.

52. What is your team's overall assessment of the election environment and process at this station? **Select One:** [ElecEnv]
Very Good | Reasonable | Poor | Not Credible

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #52 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #52 is not equal to "Reasonable" [ElecEnvDesc]

53. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?

54. Any other comments? [AddComments]

Polling v4

Sierra Leone IEOM 2023

User/Team

Observation Time

1. Location Details

1.1. Geographic Area: [GeoArea]
Area of Responsibility
Select One: North Northwest West South East

1.2. Electoral District: [ElecDist]
Select One: Bo Bombali Bonthe Falaba Kailahun Kambia Kenema Kerene Koinadugu Kono Moyamba Port Loko Pujehun Tonkolili Western Rural Western Urban

1.3. Center ID: [CenterID]

1.5. Is the center in an urban or rural area? [UrbanRural]
Urban: Rural: defined subjectively per mission. Could include distance to cities....
Select One: Urban Rural

3. Number of stations at the center: [StationCount]
If the center and the station are the same, please answer "1".

4. Were there obstacles or barriers on the way to the center that could have inhibited general access? [Barriers]
Examples of barriers might include distance from villages or a dysfunctional bridge.
Select One: Yes No

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #4 is equal to "Yes" [BarriersDesc]
5. If "yes", please describe:
Describe the barriers to public access and to what extent it affected voter franchise.

6. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe OUTSIDE the CENTER? [DisruptOutCent]
If there is only one station per "center," then please answer this question as "OUTSIDE the STATION." Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Bussing activities Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #6 excludes "None" [DisruptOutCentDesc]
7. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 [DisruptInCent]
8. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the CENTER (but outside the stations)?
Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #8 excludes "None" AND Question #3 is greater than 1 [DisruptInCentDesc]
9. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 [StationID]
10. Polling Station ID:

12. Start of Observation (station) (please use 24 hour clock): [StartTime]
For example: 3:00 pm should be 15:00 hrs.

14. If present, please indicate the polling center manager's gender: [POGender]
If the polling center manager is not present now but appears before departure, please adjust this answer.
Select One: Female Male Not observed

15. Number of staff working at the polling station (excluding polling center manager): [StaffCount]

16. Number of FEMALE staff present (excluding polling center manager): [FemaleStaff]

17. Number of registered voters: [RegVoterCount]

18. Number of voters who have voted by time of arrival: [VotedCount]
If the number of voters is not directly recorded by the polling staff, it may be necessary to ask the presiding officer or other staff to estimate the number of voters or calculate by other means.

19. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the STATION? [DisruptInStat]
Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #19 excludes "None" [DisruptInStatDesc]
20. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

21. Were any of the following materials missing, insufficient, or incorrect?
*A = Present and correct;
B = Missing (entirely absent);
C = Insufficient (fewer than required, but some present);
D = Incorrect (wrong)*

21.1. Indelible ink [Ink]
Select One: A B C D

21.2. Booths/screens [Booths]
Select One: A B C D

21.4. Ballot papers [BallotPapers]
Select One: A B C D

21.6. Ballot box(es)	**Select One:** A B C D	[BallotBox]
21.7. Voter list(s)/FVR	**Select One:** A B C D	[VoterList]
21.8. Stamps	**Select One:** A B C D	[Stamps]
21.9. Seals	**Select One:** A B C D	[Seals]
21.11. Forms	**Select One:** A B C D	[Forms]
21.17. Tamper Evident Envelopes	**Select One:** A B C D	[TamperEnvelope]
21.18. Tactile Ballots	**Select One:** A B C D	[TactileBallot]
21.19. Other	**Select One:** A B C D	[OtherMat]
22. If materials are missing, insufficient, or incorrect, please describe, including any "other" materials noted:		[MissingMatDesc]
23. Does the quality of photos in the Voter Register provide for sufficient identification?	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[VRPhotos]
24. If photo quality is not sufficient, please explain.		[PhotosVRDesc]
25. Does the station appear to be accessible to physically challenged persons, including the elderly? *The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities establishes an obligation for states to take measures to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility. This requires that people with disabilities will have an opportunity to participate on an equal basis in both rural and urban areas.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[Accessibility]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #25 is equal to "No" 26. If "no", please describe the impediments as well as any efforts to overcome the impediments or assist the challenged persons:		[AccessibilityDesc]
27. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding assessment of PROCEDURES. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *FULLY — The procedure was always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor. ADEQUATELY — The procedure was mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. INADEQUATELY — The procedure was often not applied correctly; OR the procedural error may have compromised the integrity of the process (even if few instances were observed). NOT AT ALL — The procedure was omitted or was not followed meaningfully. NOT OBSERVED — Due to circumstances other than those described by the above, the observer was not able to assess the procedure.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeProcedures]
28. How closely did each of the following procedures adhere to regulations? *A = Fully; B = Adequately; C = Inadequately; D = Not at all; E = Not observed*		
28.1. Checking for ink	**Select One:** A B C D E	[InkCheck]
28.2. Voter identification	**Select One:** A B C D E	[VoterID]
28.3. Reading out of voter name	**Select One:** A B C D E	[ReadVoterName]
28.4. Crossing names out/signing voters list	**Select One:** A B C D E	[SigningList]
28.5. Ballot issuing	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotIssue]
28.6. Voter instruction	**Select One:** A B C D E	[VoterInstruc]
28.7. Ballot stamping	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotStamp]
28.8. Inking fingers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[Inking]
28.9. Ballot casting	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotCasting]
28.11. Assisted voting	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AssistVote]
29. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Fully" or "Adequately", if you did so:		[ProceduresDesc]
30. During your observations was any voter turned unlawfully away?	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[TurnedAway]
31. If unlawfully, please describe how.		[UnlawfullyDesc]
32. If you observed use of the tactile ballots, was it used correctly according to procedures? *If you did not observe use of the tactile ballots, please mark 'Not Observed.'*	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[TactilleBallotUse]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #32 is equal to "No" 33. If the tactile ballots were not used correctly, please describe how it was used.		[TactileBallotNoDesc]

34. Which, if any, of the following ineligible voters were allowed to vote?	**Select Multiple:** Persons not on list — unauthorized Persons with unauthorized ID Persons without ID Voters with spoiled ballots Voters already crossed off list Voters already inked Underage persons Security personnel — unauthorized Voters by proxy (e.g. relatives) Voters improperly assisted Other No ineligible voters allowed	[IneligibleVoters]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #34 excludes "No ineligible voters allowed" 35. Please describe, including any "others" noted:		[IneligibleDesc]
36. Which, if any, of the following eligible voters were NOT allowed to vote?	**Select Multiple:** Persons on list with ID Polling staff EMB members Citizen observers Party/candidate agents Security personnel — authorized Journalists — national Other No eligible voters prevented	[EligibleVoters]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #36 excludes "No eligible voters prevented" 37. Please describe, including any "others" noted:		[EligibleDesc]
38. Are ballot boxes correctly sealed? *All seals should be correctly applied and ballot boxes should be secure from tampering.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[BallotBoxSeal]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #38 is equal to "No" 39. If "no", please describe:		[BallotBoxSealDesc]
40. Are additional polling materials secured from potential theft or misuse? *Additional materials should be stored compactly and out of the way of traffic in the polling station. Disorganized or poorly stored materials are vulnerable to tampering.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[MatSecure]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #40 is equal to "No" 41. If "no", please describe		[MatSecureDesc]
42. Is the polling station layout in accordance with regulations? *A HINT SHOULD INCLUDE THE REGULATIONS WHICH DETERMINE LAYOUT PROCEDURES.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[LayoutReg]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #42 is equal to "No" 43. If "no", please describe:		[LayoutRegDesc]
44. Does the polling station layout effectively facilitate the flow of voters? *The layout should allow voters to move through the process without skipping steps or crossing paths with other parts of the queue.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[LayoutFlow]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #44 is equal to "No" 45. If "no", please describe:		[LayoutFlowDesc]
46. Are voters able to cast their ballots in secret? *Secrecy of the ballot should not be undermined or violated because of crowding or exposed booths.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[BallotSecret]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #46 is equal to "No" 47. If "no", please describe:		[BallotSecretDesc]
48. Was the number of staff working in the polling station sufficient for an efficient and orderly process? *(OPTIONAL) A hint may include indicators of disorder or delay when caused by an insufficient number of polling staff.*	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[StaffSufficient]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #48 is not equal to "Yes" 49. If "no" or "not observed", please describe:		[StaffSufficientDesc]
50. How long did a typical voter have to wait in the queue before entering the polling station? *If there is no queue, enter 0, otherwise, ask the second or third voter in line how long they have waited so far to inform your estimate. Provide your answer in minutes. For example, if a voter waited 1.5 hours, enter 90 (minutes).*		[LineWait]
51. How long did it take a typical voter to complete the voting process once they entered the polling station? *The voting process begins when the voter enters the polling station and ends when the voter has cast his or her ballot and is able to leave the polling station. Watch two or three voters carry out the voting process, and provide an estimate in minutes of how long the process took.*		[VoteTime]
52. Which, if any, of the following irregular processes did you observe?	**Select Multiple:** Multiple voting Ballot stuffing Interruption of voting Voter intimidation Illicit assistance Family voting Possible vote buying/selling Violation of secrecy of the ballot Other No irregularities observed	[IrregProcess]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #52 excludes "No irregularities observed" 53. If any irregularities, please describe: *Please comment on the frequency and severity of the irregularities, noting the extent of their impact on the voting process.*		[IrregProcessDesc]
54. How many agents representing each party/candidate were present?		
54.1. APC Males		[MaleAgentsPtyA]
54.2. APC Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyA]
54.3. SLPP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyE]
54.4. SLPP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyE]
54.5. NDA Males		[MaleAgentsPtyB]

54.6. NDA Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyB]
54.7. NGC Males	[MaleAgentsPtyC]
54.8. NGC Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyC]
54.9. ReNIP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyD]
54.10. ReNIP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyD]
54.11. NURP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyF]
54.12. NURP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyF]
54.13. RUFP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyG]
54.14. RUFP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyG]
54.15. CDP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyH]
54.16. CDP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyH]
54.17. PLP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyI]
54.18. PLP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyI]
54.19. PMDC Males	[MaleAgentsPtyJ]
54.20. PMDC Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyJ]
54.21. UNPP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyK]
54.22. UNPP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyK]
54.23. PDP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyL]
54.24. PDP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyL]
54.25. UDM Males	[MaleAgentsPtyM]
54.26. UDM Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyM]
54.27. ADP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyN]
54.28. ADP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyN]
54.29. Independent Males	[MaleAgentsOther]
54.30. Independent Females	[FemaleAgentsOther]

55. How many observers from each election observation group were present?

55.1. EU Males	[MaleObsIntA]
55.2. EU Females	[FemaleObsIntA]
55.3. NEW Males	[MaleObsCitB]
55.4. NEW Females	[FemaleObsCitB]
55.5. EON Males	[MaleObsCitC]
55.6. EON Females	[FemaleObsCitC]
55.7. ECOWAS Males	[MaleObsIntD]

55.8. ECOWAS Females		[FemaleObsIntD]
55.9. AU Males		[MaleObsIntE]
55.10. AU Females		[FemaleObsIntE]
55.11. Commonwealth Males		[MaleObsIntF]
55.12. Commonwealth Females		[FemaleObsIntF]
55.13. WADEMOS Males		[MaleObsIntG]
55.14. WADEMOS Females		[FemaleObsIntG]
55.15. Other Observer Males *Please write organization and number.*		[MaleObsOther]
55.16. Other Observer Females *Please write organization and number.*		[FemaleObsOther]

56. What level of access did each of the following groups have?
*A = Sufficient access;
B = Deficient access (within regulations) — applied to one, some, or all;
C = Deficient access (violation of regulations) — not able to participate as stipulated in regulations (not permitted entry; time limited in violation; applied to one, some, or all);
D = Not present;
E = Not observed*

56.1. Candidate/party agents	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessAgents]
56.2. International observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessIntObs]
56.3. Citizen observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessCitObs]
56.4. Polling staff	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessPollStaff]
56.5. Media	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessMedia]
56.6. Other	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessOther]
57. If any groups were not allowed sufficient access, please describe: *How were groups denied access and what was the impact?*		[AccessDesc]
58. Did you observe any interference in the election process? *Please indicate which group(s) interfered. Select "No interference observed" if no interference was observed.*	**Select Multiple:** Candidate/party agents, International observers, Citizen observers, Polling staff, Media, Voters, Security, Local officials, Religious/traditional leaders, Other, No interference observed	[Interference]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #58 excludes "No interference observed" 59. If any interference, please describe: *How were groups causing interference and what was the impact?*		[InterfernceDesc]
61. Were there any officially lodged complaints? *If applicable, near the end of your observation, ask the polling center manager if present or ask observers from other organizations or party/candidate agents.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[OfficialComp]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #61 is equal to "Yes" 62. If "yes", please describe: *Who filed complaints? What were the reasons? How were they addressed?*		[OfficialCompDesc]
63. Were there any problems reported to you by those present rather than those observed directly by you? *(Reported by e.g., agents, observers, voters)*	**Select One:** Yes No	[ProbReport]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #63 is equal to "Yes" 64. If "yes", please describe: *Please note the actors involved, how it was resolved, the apparent impact, and any supporting evidentiary corroboration.*		[ProbReportDesc]
65. End of Observation (Station):		[EndTime]
66. How would you evaluate voters' understanding of voting procedures?	**Select One:** Adequate Inadequate Not Observed/Observable	[VotUnderstd]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #66 is not equal to "Adequate" 67. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Adequate":		[VotUnderstdDesc]
68. How would you evaluate party/candidate agents' performance?	**Select One:** Adequate Inadequate Not Observed/Observable	[AgentsEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #68 is not equal to "Adequate" 69. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Adequate":		[AgentsEvalDesc]
70. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURES BY STAFF. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed.		

VERY GOOD — Procedures were always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor and did not affect the integrity or transparency of the process. REASONABLE — Procedures were mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. POOR — Procedures were not applied correctly; OR procedural errors significantly affected the transparency of the process and/or may have compromised the integrity of the process. NOT CREDIBLE — Important procedures were not followed correctly and these problems likely compromised the integrity of the process.	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeProcedImp]
71. What is your team's evaluation of the implementation of procedures by staff at this station? *This evaluation should be based upon the procedures evaluated earlier in the checklist as well as any procedural factors that may have been omitted from the checklist. Please refer back to the answers provided to questions about procedures as needed to inform the overall evaluation.*	**Select One:** Very Good Reasonable Poor Not Credible	[ProcedImpEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #71 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #71 is not equal to "Reasonable" 72. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?		[ProcedImpEvalDesc]
73. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of the ELECTION ENVIRONMENT AND PROCESS. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *VERY GOOD — The environment and process fully allowed voters to freely exercise their right to vote. The process was fully transparent. REASONABLE — The environment and process were acceptable in ensuring that voters could freely exercise their right to vote. Any observed problems did not significantly affect the integrity or transparency of the process. POOR — For some voters, the environment or process was not conducive to the free exercise of the right to vote, equality, or transparency. Observed problems may have compromised the integrity of the process. NOT CREDIBLE — The environment or the process prevented voters from freely exercising their right to vote or affected the fairness of polling. Observed problems likely compromised the integrity of the polling process.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeElecEnv]
74. What is your team's overall assessment of the election environment and process at this station?	**Select One:** Very Good Reasonable Poor Not Credible	[ElecEnv]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #74 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #74 is not equal to "Reasonable" 75. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?		[ElecEnvDesc]
76. Any other comments?		[AddComments]

Closing v4

Sierra Leone IEOM 2023

User/Team

Observation Time

1. Location Details

1.1. Geographic Area: [GeoArea]
Area of Responsibility
Select One: North Northwest West South East

1.2. Electoral District: [ElecDist]
Select One: Bo Bombali Bonthe Falaba Kailahun Kambia Kenema Kerene Koinadugu Kono Moyamba Port Loko Pujehun Tonkolili Western Rural Western Urban

1.3. Center ID: [CenterID]

1.5. Is the center in an urban or rural area? [UrbanRural]
Urban: Rural: defined subjectively per mission. Could include distance to cities....
Select One: Urban Rural

3. Number of stations at the center: [StationCount]
If the center and the station are the same, please answer "1".

4. Were there obstacles or barriers on the way to the center that could have inhibited general access? [Barriers]
Examples of barriers might include distance from villages or a dysfunctional bridge.
Select One: Yes No

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #4 is equal to "Yes" [BarriersDesc]
5. If "yes", please describe:
Describe the barriers to public access and to what extent it affected voter franchise.

6. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe OUTSIDE the CENTER? [DisruptOutCent]
If there is only one station per "center," then please answer this question as "OUTSIDE the STATION." Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Bussing activities Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #6 excludes "None" [DisruptOutCentDesc]
7. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 [DisruptInCent]
8. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the CENTER (but outside the stations)?
Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #8 excludes "None" AND Question #3 is greater than 1 [DisruptInCentDesc]
9. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 [StationID]
10. Polling Station ID:

12. Start of Observation (station) (please use 24 hour clock): [StartTime]
For example: 3:00 pm should be 15:00 hrs.

14. If present, please indicate the polling center manager's gender: [POGender]
If the polling center manager is not present now but appears before departure, please adjust this answer.
Select One: Female Male Not observed

15. Number of staff working at the polling station (excluding polling center manager): [StaffCount]

16. Number of FEMALE staff present (excluding polling center manager): [FemaleStaff]

17. Number of registered voters: [RegVoterCount]

18. Number of voters who have voted by time of arrival: [VotedCount]
If the number of voters is not directly recorded by the polling staff, it may be necessary to ask the presiding officer or other staff to estimate the number of voters or calculate by other means.

19. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the STATION? [DisruptInStat]
Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Prohibited campaigning Prohibited campaign material Ineffective queue management Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #19 excludes "None" [DisruptInStatDesc]
20. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

21. Were any of the following materials missing, insufficient, or incorrect?
*A = Present and correct;
B = Missing (entirely absent);
C = Insufficient (fewer than required, but some present);
D = Incorrect (wrong)*

21.1. Indelible ink [Ink]
Select One: A B C D

21.2. Booths/screens [Booths]
Select One: A B C D

21.4. Ballot papers [BallotPapers]
Select One: A B C D

21.6. Ballot box(es)	**Select One:** A B C D	[BallotBox]
21.7. Voter list(s)/FVR	**Select One:** A B C D	[VoterList]
21.8. Stamps	**Select One:** A B C D	[Stamps]
21.9. Seals	**Select One:** A B C D	[Seals]
21.10. Forms	**Select One:** A B C D	[Forms]
21.12. Tamper Evident Envelopes	**Select One:** A B C D	[TamperEnvelope]
21.13. Tactile Ballots	**Select One:** A B C D	[TactileBallot]
21.19. Other	**Select One:** A B C D	[OtherMat]
22. If materials are missing, insufficient, or incorrect, please describe, including any "other" materials noted:		[MissingMatDesc]
23. Does the quality of photos in the Voter Register provide for sufficient identification?	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[VRPhotos]
24. If photo quality is not sufficient, please explain.		[PhotosVRDesc]
25. Does the station appear to be accessible to physically challenged persons, including the elderly? *The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities establishes an obligation for states to take measures to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility. This requires that people with disabilities will have an opportunity to participate on an equal basis in both rural and urban areas.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[Accessibility]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #25 is equal to "No" 26. If "no", please describe the impediments as well as any efforts to overcome the impediments or assist the challenged persons:		[AccessibilityDesc]
27. Did you observe the official closing of the polling station? *Generally, a polling station is closed when announced by the judge. Depending on regulations and implementation, it may be distinct from the time of the last vote.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[ClosingObs]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #27 is equal to "No" 28. If "no", please describe:		[ClosingObsDesc]
29. At what time was the closing of the polling station announced? *The closing time should match the time in regulations unless an emergency change was made by the EMB.*		[ClosingAnnounced]
30. Approximately how many voters were waiting in the queue at the time of closing?	**Select One:** 0 1-10 11-25 26-50 51-100 More than 100	[ClosingQueue]
31. Did you observe the last vote at the polling station?	**Select One:** Yes No	[LastVoteObs]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #31 is equal to "Yes" 32. If "yes", at what time did the last voter vote?		[LastVoteTime]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #30 is not equal to "0" 33. Were all eligible persons in the queue at the time of closing allowed to vote?	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[ClosingQueueEligible]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #30 is not equal to "0" 34. Were any and all voters prevented from joining the queue after closing?	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[ClosingQueuePrevent]
35. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding assessment of PROCEDURES. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *FULLY — The procedure was always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor. ADEQUATELY — The procedure was mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. INADEQUATELY — The procedure was often not applied correctly; OR the procedural error may have compromised the integrity of the process (even if few instances were observed). NOT AT ALL — The procedure was omitted or was not followed meaningfully. NOT OBSERVED — Due to circumstances other than those described by the above, the observer was not able to assess the procedure.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeProcedures]
36. How closely did each of the following procedures adhere to regulations? *A = Fully; B = Adequately; C = Inadequately; D = Not at all; E = Not observed*		
36.1. Closing announcement	**Select One:** A B C D E	[ClosingAnnouncement]
36.2. Queue management	**Select One:** A B C D E	[QueueManagement]
36.3. Sealing of ballot boxes (incl. slot)	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotBoxSealing]
36.4. Recording of seal numbers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[SealNumRecording]
36.5. Securing of sensitive polling materials	**Select One:** A B C D E	[MaterialSecuring]
36.6. Storage of materials	**Select One:** A B C D E	[MaterialStorage]
36.7. Transfer of materials	**Select One:**	[MaterialTransfer]

	A	B	C	D	E	
37. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Fully" or "Adequately", if you did so:						[ClosingProcedDesc]
38. How many agents representing each party/candidate were present?						
38.1. APC Males						[MaleAgentsPtyA]
38.2. APC Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyA]
38.3. SLPP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyE]
38.4. SLPP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyE]
38.5. NDA Males						[MaleAgentsPtyB]
38.6. NDA Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyB]
38.7. NGC Males						[MaleAgentsPtyC]
38.8. NGC Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyC]
38.9. ReNIP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyD]
38.10. ReNIP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyD]
38.11. NURP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyF]
38.12. NURP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyF]
38.13. RUFP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyG]
38.14. RUFP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyG]
38.15. CDP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyH]
38.16. CDP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyH]
38.17. PLP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyI]
38.18. PLP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyI]
38.19. PMDC Males						[MaleAgentsPtyJ]
38.20. PMDC Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyJ]
38.21. UNPP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyK]
38.22. UNPP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyK]
38.23. PDP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyL]
38.24. PDP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyL]
38.25. UDM Males						[MaleAgentsPtyM]
38.26. UDM Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyM]
38.27. ADP Males						[MaleAgentsPtyN]
38.28. ADP Females						[FemaleAgentsPtyN]
38.29. Independent Males						[MaleAgentsOther]
38.30. Independent Females						[FemaleAgentsOther]

39. How many observers from each election observation group were present?

39.1. EU Males	[MaleObsIntA]
39.2. EU Females	[FemaleObsIntA]
39.3. NEW Males	[MaleObsCitB]
39.4. NEW Females	[FemaleObsCitB]
39.5. EON Males	[MaleObsCitC]
39.6. EON Females	[FemaleObsCitC]
39.7. ECOWAS Males	[MaleObsIntD]
39.8. ECOWAS Females	[FemaleObsIntD]
39.9. AU Males	[MaleObsIntE]
39.10. AU Females	[FemaleObsIntE]
39.11. Commonwealth Males	[MaleObsIntF]
39.12. Commonwealth Females	[FemaleObsIntF]
39.13. WADEMOS Males	[MaleObsIntG]
39.14. WADEMOS Females	[FemaleObsIntG]
39.15. Other Observer Males *Please write organization and number.*	[MaleObsOther]
39.16. Other Observer Females *Please write organization and number.*	[FemaleObsOther]

40. What level of access did each of the following groups have?
*A = Sufficient access;
B = Deficient access (within regulations) — applied to one, some, or all;
C = Deficient access (violation of regulations) — not able to participate as stipulated in regulations (not permitted entry; time limited in violation; applied to one, some, or all);
D = Not present;
E = Not observed*

40.1. Candidate/party agents	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessAgents]
40.2. International observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessIntObs]
40.3. Citizen observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessCitObs]
40.4. Polling staff	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessPollStaff]
40.5. Media	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessMedia]
40.6. Other	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessOther]

41. If any groups were not allowed sufficient access, please describe: *How were groups denied access and what was the impact?*		[AccessDesc]
42. Did you observe any interference in the election process? *Please indicate which group(s) interfered. Select "No interference observed" if no interference was observed.*	**Select Multiple:** Candidate/party agents International observers Citizen observers Polling staff Media Voters Security Local officials Religious/traditional leaders Other No interference observed	[Interference]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #42 excludes "No interference observed" 43. If any interference, please describe: *How were groups causing interference and what was the impact?*		[InterfernceDesc]
45. Were there any officially lodged complaints? *If applicable, near the end of your observation, ask the polling center manager if present or ask observers from other organizations or party/candidate agents.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[OfficialComp]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #45 is equal to "Yes" 46. If "yes", please describe: *Who filed complaints? What were the reasons? How were they addressed?*		[OfficialCompDesc]
47. Were there any problems reported to you by those present rather than those observed directly by you? *(Reported by e.g., agents, observers, voters)*	**Select One:** Yes No	[ProbReport]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #47 is equal to "Yes" 48. If "yes", please describe:		[ProbReportDesc]

Please note the actors involved, how it was resolved, the apparent impact, and any supporting evidentiary corroboration.		
49. End of Observation (Station):		[EndTime]
50. How would you evaluate party/candidate agents' performance?	**Select One:** Adequate Inadequate Not Observed/Observable	[AgentsEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #50 is not equal to "Adequate" 51. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Adequate":		[AgentsEvalDesc]
52. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURES BY STAFF. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *VERY GOOD — Procedures were always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor and did not affect the integrity or transparency of the process. REASONABLE — Procedures were mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. POOR — Procedures were not applied correctly; OR procedural errors significantly affected the transparency of the process and/or may have compromised the integrity of the process. NOT CREDIBLE — Important procedures were not followed correctly and these problems likely compromised the integrity of the process.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeProcedImp]
53. What is your team's evaluation of the implementation of procedures by staff at this station? *This evaluation should be based upon the procedures evaluated earlier in the checklist as well as any procedural factors that may have been omitted from the checklist. Please refer back to the answers provided to questions about procedures as needed to inform the overall evaluation.*	**Select One:** Very Good Reasonable Poor Not Credible	[ProcedImpEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #53 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #53 is not equal to "Reasonable" 54. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?		[ProcedImpEvalDesc]
55. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of the CLOSING ENVIRONMENT AND PROCESS. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *VERY GOOD — No significant problems were observed with the implementation of procedures or environment. The process was fully transparent. REASONABLE — Observed problems did not significantly affect the integrity or transparency of the closing process, but there is room for improvement. POOR — Significant problems with any of the following may have compromised the integrity of the results: errors in implementing closing procedures; polling staff subject to intimidation or interference; observers restricted. NOT CREDIBLE — Observed problems with the closing likely compromised the integrity of the results.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeCloseEnv]
56. What is your team's overall assessment of the election environment and process at this station?	**Select One:** Very Good Reasonable Poor Not Credible	[ElecEnv]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #56 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #56 is not equal to "Reasonable" 57. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?		[ElecEnvDesc]
58. Any other comments?		[AddComments]

Counting v4

Sierra Leone IEOM 2023

User/Team

Observation Time

1. Location Details

1.1. Geographic Area: [GeoArea]
Area of Responsibility
Select One: North Northwest West South East

1.2. Electoral District: [ElecDist]
Select One: Bo Bombali Bonthe Falaba Kailahun Kambia Kenema Kerene Koinadugu Kono Moyamba Port Loko Pujehun Tonkolili Western Rural Western Urban

1.3. Center ID: [CenterID]

1.5. Is the center in an urban or rural area? [UrbanRural]
Urban: Rural: defined subjectively per mission. Could include distance to cities....
Select One: Urban Rural

3. Number of stations at the center: [StationCount]
If the center and the station are the same, please answer "1".

4. Were there obstacles or barriers on the way to the center that could have inhibited general access? [Barriers]
Examples of barriers might include distance from villages or a dysfunctional bridge.
Select One: Yes No

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #4 is equal to "Yes" [BarriersDesc]
5. If "yes", please describe:
Describe the barriers to public access and to what extent it affected voter franchise.

6. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe OUTSIDE the CENTER? [DisruptOutCountCent]
If there is only one station per "center," then please answer this question as "OUTSIDE the STATION." Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #6 excludes "None" [DisruptOutCtCentDesc]
7. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 [DiscruptInCountCent]
8. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the CENTER (but outside the stations)?
Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #8 excludes "None" AND Question #3 is greater than 1 [DisruptInCtCentDesc]
9. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #3 is greater than 1 [StationID]
10. Polling Station ID:

12. Start of Observation (station) (please use 24 hour clock): [StartTime]
For example: 3:00 pm should be 15:00 hrs.

14. If present, please indicate the polling center manager's gender: [POGender]
If the polling center manager is not present now but appears before departure, please adjust this answer.
Select One: Female Male Not observed

15. Number of staff working at the polling station (excluding polling center manager): [StaffCount]

16. Number of FEMALE staff present (excluding polling center manager): [FemaleStaff]

17. Number of voters who have voted by time of arrival: [VotedCount]
If the number of voters is not directly recorded by the polling staff, it may be necessary to ask the presiding officer or other staff to estimate the number of voters or calculate by other means.

18. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the STATION? [DisruptInCountStat]
Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.
Select Multiple: Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None

ANSWER ONLY IF Question #18 excludes "None" [DisruptInCtStatDesc]
19. If any issues, please describe:
What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?

20. Were any of the following materials missing, insufficient, or incorrect?
*A = Present and correct;
B = Missing (entirely absent);
C = Insufficient (fewer than required, but some present);
D = Incorrect (wrong)*

20.2. Voter list(s)/FVR [VoterList]
Select One: A B C D

20.3. Stamps [Stamps]
Select One: A B C D

20.5. Forms [Forms]
Select One: A B C D

20.6. Tamper Evident Envelopes [TamperEnvelope]
Select One: A B C D

20.7. Tactile Ballots [TactileBallot]
Select One: A B C D

20.11. Other	**Select One:** A B C D	[OtherMat]
21. If materials are missing, insufficient, or incorrect, please describe, including any "other" materials noted:		[MissingMatDesc]
22. Does the quality of photos in the Voter Register provide for sufficient identification?	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[VRPhotos]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #22 is equal to "No" 23. If photo quality is not sufficient, please explain.		[PhotosVRDesc]
24. Does the station appear to be accessible to physically challenged persons, including the elderly? *The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities establishes an obligation for states to take measures to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility. This requires that people with disabilities will have an opportunity to participate on an equal basis in both rural and urban areas.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[Accessibility]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #24 is equal to "No" 25. If "no", please describe the impediments as well as any efforts to overcome the impediments or assist the challenged persons:		[AccessibilityDesc]
26. Number of registered voters:		[RegVoterCount]
27. Please record the number of ballots in each of the following categories:		
27.1. Parliamentary ballots received		[BallotsReceived]
27.2. Additional parliamentary ballots received during the day (if any)		[AddParBallotsRec]
27.3. Parliamentary ballots issued to another polling station (if any)		[ParBallotsIssuedPS]
27.4. Total parliamentary ballots received *This number is based on parliamentary ballots received plus additional parliamentary ballots received during the day minus number of parliamentary ballots issued to another polling station.*		[TotalParBallotsRecd]
27.5. Unused parliamentary ballots		[BallotsUnused]
27.6. Used parliamentary ballots *Used parliamentary ballots equals total number of parliamentary ballots received minus the number of parliamentary ballots unused.*		[ParUsedBallots]
27.7. Spoiled parliamentary ballots		[BallotsSpoiled]
27.8. Invalid parliamentary ballots		[BallotsInvalid]
27.9. Parliamentary ballots in box		[BallotsInBox]
27.10. Discrepancy in parliamentary ballots *Discrepancy in ballots equals the number of total parliamentary ballots found in the box plus the number of invalid parliamentary ballots cast minus the number of parliamentary ballots used.*		[ParBallotDiscrepancy]
27.11. Presidential ballots received		[PresBallotRec]
27.12. Additional presidential ballots received during the day (if any)		[AddPresBallotsRec]
27.13. Presidential ballots issued to another polling station (if any)		[PresBallotsIssuedPS]
27.14. Total presidential ballots received *This number is based on president ballots received plus additional presidential ballots received during the day minus number of presidential ballots issued to another polling station.*		[TotalPresBallotRecd]
27.15. Unused presidential ballots		[UnusedPresBallots]
27.16. Used presidential ballots *Used presidential ballots equals total number of presidential ballots received minus the number of presidential ballots unused.*		[UsedPresBallots]
27.17. Spoiled presidential ballots		[PresBallotsSpoiled]
27.18. Invalid presidential ballots		[PresBallotInvalid]
27.19. Presidential ballots in box		[PresBallotBox]
27.20. Discrepancy in presidential ballots *Discrepancy in ballots equals the number of total presidential ballots found in the box plus the number of invalid presidential ballots cast minus the number of presidential ballots used.*		[PresBallotDiscrep]
28. Please record the number of votes for the following parties for the parliamentary election:		
28.1. APC		[VotesPartyCandA]
28.2. SLPP		[VotesPartyCandE]

28.3. NDA	[VotesPartyCandB]
28.4. NGC	[VotesPartyCandC]
28.5. ReNIP	[VotesPartyCandD]
28.6. NURP	[VotesPartyCandF]
28.7. RUFP	[VotesPartyCandG]
28.8. CDP	[VotesPartyCandH]
28.9. PLP	[VotesPartyCandI]
28.10. UDM	[VotesPartyCandJ]
28.11. PDP	[VotesPartyCandK]
28.12. PMDC	[VotesPartyCandL]
28.13. UNPP	[VotesPartyCandM]
28.14. ADP	[VotesPartyCandN]

29. Please record the number of votes for the following candidates for the presidential election:

30. Julius Maada Bio (SLPP)	[VotesCandA]
31. Samura Matthew W. Kamara (APC)	[VotesCandB]
32. Charles Francis Margai (PMDC)	[VotesCandC]
33. Abdulai Dougakoro Saccoh (RUFP)	[VotesCandD]
34. Mohamed Chernoh Bah (NDA)	[VotesCandE]
35. Prince Coker (PDP)	[VotesCandF]
36. Mohamed Jonjo (CDP)	[VotesCandG]
37. Saa Henry Kabuta (UNPP)	[VotesCandH]
38. Iye Kakay (ADP)	[VotesCandI]
39. Nabieu Musa Kamara (PLP)	[VotesCandJ]
40. Jonathan Patrick Sandy (NURP)	[VotesCandK]
41. Mohamed Sowa-Turay (UDM)	[VotesCandL]
42. Beresford Victor Williams (ReNIP)	[VotesCandM]

43. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding assessment of PROCEDURES. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *FULLY — The procedure was always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor. ADEQUATELY — The procedure was mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. INADEQUATELY — The procedure was often not applied correctly; OR the procedural error may have compromised the integrity of the process (even if few instances were observed). NOT AT ALL — The procedure was omitted or was not followed meaningfully. NOT OBSERVED — Due to circumstances other than those described by the above, the observer was not able to assess the procedure.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeProcedures]

44. How closely did each of the following procedures adhere to regulations?
*A = Fully;
B = Adequately;
C = Inadequately;
D = Not at all;
E = Not observed*

44.1. Ballot verification and sorting	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotVerifySort]
44.2. Ballot counting	**Select One:**	[BallotCounting]

	A B C D E	
44.3. Reconciliation	**Select One:** A B C D E	[Reconciliation]
44.4. Recounting of ballots	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotRecount]
44.5. Determination of validity of ballots	**Select One:** A B C D E	[BallotContest]
44.7. Completion of parliamentary RRFs	**Select One:** A B C D E	[ProtocolForm]
44.8. Completion of presidential RFFs	**Select One:** A B C D E	[PresProtocolForm]
44.9. Announcement of results (verbal)	**Select One:** A B C D E	[ResultAnnounceVerbal]
44.10. Distribution of results (copies of results sheets)	**Select One:** A B C D E	[ResultDistribution]
44.11. Posting of results (at station/center)	**Select One:** A B C D E	[ResultPosting]
45. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Fully" or "Adequately", if you did so:		[CountProcedDesc]
46. Did party agents have an opportunity to sign the results?	**Select One:** Yes No Not observed	[ResultSigning]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #46 is not equal to "Yes" 47. If "no" or "not observed", please describe:		[ResultSigningNoDesc]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #46 is equal to "Yes" 48. If "yes", did any observers elect not to sign the results?	**Select One:** Yes No	[ResultSigningObsDec]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #48 is equal to "Yes" AND Question #46 is equal to "Yes" 49. If "yes", please describe:		[ResultSignObsDecDesc]
50. How many agents representing each party/candidate were present?		
50.1. APC Males		[MaleAgentsPtyA]
50.2. APC Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyA]
50.3. SLPP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyE]
50.4. SLPP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyE]
50.5. NDA Males		[MaleAgentsPtyB]
50.6. NDA Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyB]
50.7. NGC Males		[MaleAgentsPtyC]
50.8. NGC Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyC]
50.9. ReNIP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyD]
50.10. ReNIP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyD]
50.11. NURP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyF]
50.12. NURP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyF]
50.13. RUFP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyG]
50.14. RUFP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyG]
50.15. CDP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyH]
50.16. CDP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyH]
50.17. PLP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyI]
50.18. PLP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyI]
50.19. PMDC Males		[MaleAgentsPtyJ]
50.20. PMDC Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyJ]

50.21. UNPP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyK]
50.22. UNPP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyK]
50.23. PDP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyL]
50.24. PDP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyL]
50.25. UDM Males	[MaleAgentsPtyM]
50.26. UDM Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyM]
50.27. ADP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyN]
50.28. ADP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyN]
50.29. Independent Males	[MaleAgentsOther]
50.30. Independent Females	[FemaleAgentsOther]

51. How many observers from each election observation group were present?

51.1. EU Males	[MaleObsIntA]
51.2. EU Females	[FemaleObsIntA]
51.3. NEW Males	[MaleObsCitB]
51.4. NEW Females	[FemaleObsCitB]
51.5. EON Males	[MaleObsCitC]
51.6. EON Females	[FemaleObsCitC]
51.7. ECOWAS Males	[MaleObsIntD]
51.8. ECOWAS Females	[FemaleObsIntD]
51.9. AU Males	[MaleObsIntE]
51.10. AU Females	[FemaleObsIntE]
51.11. Commonwealth Males	[MaleObsIntF]
51.12. Commonwealth Females	[FemaleObsIntF]
51.13. WADEMOS Males	[MaleObsIntG]
51.14. WADEMOS Females	[FemaleObsIntG]
51.15. Other Observer Males *Please write organization and number.*	[MaleObsOther]
51.16. Other Observer Females *Please write organization and number.*	[FemaleObsOther]

52. What level of access did each of the following groups have?

*A = Sufficient access;
B = Deficient access (within regulations) — applied to one, some, or all;
C = Deficient access (violation of regulations) — not able to participate as stipulated in regulations (not permitted entry; time limited in violation; applied to one, some, or all);
D = Not present;
E = Not observed*

52.1. Candidate/party agents	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessAgents]
52.2. International observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessIntObs]
52.3. Citizen observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessCitObs]
52.5. Media	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessMedia]
52.6. Other	**Select One:**	[AccessOther]

	A	B	C	D	E	
53. If any groups were not allowed sufficient access, please describe: *How were groups denied access and what was the impact?*						[AccessDesc]
54. Did you observe any interference in the election process? *Please indicate which group(s) interfered. Select "No interference observed" if no interference was observed.*	**Select Multiple:** Candidate/party agents Polling staff Religious/traditional leaders	Media	International observers Voters Other	Security	Citizen observers Local officials No interference observed	[Interference]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #54 excludes "No interference observed" 55. If any interference, please describe: *How were groups causing interference and what was the impact?*						[InterfernceDesc]
57. Were there any officially lodged complaints? *If applicable, near the end of your observation, ask the polling center manager if present or ask observers from other organizations or party/candidate agents.*	**Select One:** Yes	No				[OfficialComp]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #57 is equal to "Yes" 58. If "yes", please describe: *Who filed complaints? What were the reasons? How were they addressed?*						[OfficialCompDesc]
59. Were there any problems reported to you by those present rather than those observed directly by you? *(Reported by e.g., agents, observers, voters)*	**Select One:** Yes	No				[ProbReport]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #59 is equal to "Yes" 60. If "yes", please describe: *Please note the actors involved, how it was resolved, the apparent impact, and any supporting evidentiary corroboration.*						[ProbReportDesc]
61. End of Observation (Station):						[EndTime]
62. How would you evaluate party/candidate agents' performance?	**Select One:** Adequate	Inadequate	Not Observed/Observable			[AgentsEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #62 is not equal to "Adequate" 63. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Adequate":						[AgentsEvalDesc]
64. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURES BY STAFF. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *VERY GOOD — Procedures were always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor and did not affect the integrity or transparency of the process. REASONABLE — Procedures were mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. POOR — Procedures were not applied correctly; OR procedural errors significantly affected the transparency of the process and/or may have compromised the integrity of the process. NOT CREDIBLE — Important procedures were not followed correctly and these problems likely compromised the integrity of the process.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.					[BeforeProcedImp]
65. What is your team's evaluation of the implementation of procedures by staff at this station? *This evaluation should be based upon the procedures evaluated earlier in the checklist as well as any procedural factors that may have been omitted from the checklist. Please refer back to the answers provided to questions about procedures as needed to inform the overall evaluation.*	**Select One:** Very Good	Reasonable	Poor	Not Credible		[ProcedImpEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #65 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #65 is not equal to "Reasonable" 66. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?						[ProcedImpEvalDesc]
67. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of the COUNTING ENVIRONMENT AND PROCESS. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *VERY GOOD — No significant problems were observed with the implementation of procedures or environment. The counting process was fully transparent. REASONABLE — Observed problems did not significantly affect the integrity or transparency of the counting process, but there is room for improvement. POOR — Significant problems with any of the following may have compromised the integrity of the results: errors in implementing counting procedures; counting staff subject to intimidation or interference; observers restricted. NOT CREDIBLE — Observed problems with the counting likely compromised the integrity of the results.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.					[BeforeCountEnv]
68. What is your team's overall assessment of the election environment and process at this station?	**Select One:** Very Good	Reasonable	Poor	Not Credible		[ElecEnv]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #68 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #68 is not equal to "Reasonable" 69. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?						[ElecEnvDesc]
70. Any other comments?						[AddComments]

Tabulation v4

Sierra Leone IEOM 2023

User/Team		
Observation Time		
1. Start of Observation (station) (please use 24 hour clock): *For example: 3:00 pm should be 15:00 hrs.*		[StartTime]
2. Location Details		
2.1. Geographic Area: *Area of Responsibility*	**Select One:** North Northwest West South East	[GeoArea]
4. Were there obstacles or barriers on the way to the center that could have inhibited general access? *Examples of barriers might include distance from villages or a dysfunctional bridge.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[Barriers]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #4 is equal to "Yes" 5. If "yes", please describe: *Describe the barriers to public access and to what extent it affected voter franchise.*		[BarriersDesc]
6. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe OUTSIDE the center? *Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.*	**Select Multiple:** Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None	[DisruptOutAggCent]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #6 excludes "None" 7. If any issues, please describe: *What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?*		[DisruptOutAggCenDesc]
8. Which, if any, of the following prohibited or disruptive circumstances did you observe INSIDE the center? *Select "None" if you did not observe any prohibited or disruptive circumstances.*	**Select Multiple:** Intimidation Violence Significant disorder Security (beyond regulations) Other None	[DisruptInAggCent]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #8 excludes "None" 9. If any issues, please describe: *What were the prohibited/disruptive circumstances and how did they affect the process?*		[DisruptInAggCentDesc]
11. Were any of the following materials missing, insufficient, or incorrect? *A = Present and correct; B = Missing (entirely absent); C = Insufficient (fewer than required, but some present); D = Incorrect (wrong)*		
11.1. Space	**Select One:** A B C D	[Space]
11.2. Lighting/Electricity	**Select One:** A B C D	[LightingElec]
11.3. Information and Communication Technology	**Select One:** A B C D	[ICT]
11.4. Staff	**Select One:** A B C D	[Staff]
11.13. Other	**Select One:** A B C D	[OtherMat]
12. If materials are missing, insufficient, or incorrect, please describe, including any "other" materials noted:		[MissingMatDesc]
13. Does the station appear to be accessible to physically challenged persons, including the elderly? *The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities establishes an obligation for states to take measures to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility. This requires that people with disabilities will have an opportunity to participate on an equal basis in both rural and urban areas.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[Accessibility]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #13 is equal to "No" 14. If "no", please describe the impediments as well as any efforts to overcome the impediments or assist the challenged persons:		[AccessibilityDesc]
15. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding assessment of PROCEDURES. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *FULLY — The procedure was always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor. ADEQUATELY — The procedure was mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. INADEQUATELY — The procedure was often not applied correctly; OR the procedural error may have compromised the integrity of the process (even if few instances were observed). NOT AT ALL — The procedure was omitted or was not followed meaningfully. NOT OBSERVED — Due to circumstances other than those described by the above, the observer was not able to assess the procedure.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeProcedures]
16. How closely did each of the following procedures adhere to regulations? *A = Fully; B = Adequately; C = Inadequately; D = Not at all; E = Not observed*		
16.1. Receipt of materials	**Select One:** A B C D E	[MaterialsReceipt]
16.2. Manual data recording or IT entry	**Select One:** A B C D E	[DataRecord]
16.3. Tabulation	**Select One:** A B C D E	[Tabulation]
16.4. Proclamation/display of results	**Select One:** A B C D E	[ResultsAnnounce]
16.5. Quarantined materials/results	**Select One:** A B C D E	[QuarantinedMat]

16.6. Recount	**Select One:** A B C D E	[Recount]
17. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Fully" or "Adequately", if you did so:		[AggProcedDesc]
18. Total number of polling station results this tabulation center is responsible for: *Leave blank if unknown/not observable.*		[PollStatResultsResp]
19. Number of polling station results received to date: *Leave blank if unknown/not observable. Include TOTAL number of results quarantined.*		[PollStatResultsRec]
20. Number of polling station results quarantined to date: *Leave blank if unknown/not observable.*		[PollStatResultsQuar]
21. Please describe quarantine: *E.g., reasons for quarantine, PC/PS IDs of those quarantined.*		[QuarantinedDesc]
22. How many quarantined results have been processed to date? *Leave blank if unknown/not observable.*		[QuarantinedProcessed]
23. How many polling station results required correction?		[PollingResultCorrect]
28. Were there any results that should have received scrutiny but did not?	**Select One:** Yes No	[ResultScrutinyNeeded]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #28 is equal to "Yes" 29. If "yes," please describe:		[ResultScrutinyDesc]
30. How many agents representing each party/candidate were present?		
30.1. APC Males		[MaleAgentsPtyA]
30.2. APC Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyA]
30.3. SLPP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyE]
30.4. SLPP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyE]
30.5. NDA Males		[MaleAgentsPtyB]
30.6. NDA Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyB]
30.7. NGC Males		[MaleAgentsPtyC]
30.8. NGC Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyC]
30.9. ReNIP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyD]
30.10. ReNIP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyD]
30.11. NURP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyF]
30.12. NURP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyF]
30.13. RUFP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyG]
30.14. RUFP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyG]
30.15. CDP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyH]
30.16. CDP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyH]
30.17. PLP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyI]
30.18. PLP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyI]
30.19. PMDC Males		[MaleAgentsPtyJ]
30.20. PMDC Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyJ]
30.21. UNPP Males		[MaleAgentsPtyK]
30.22. UNPP Females		[FemaleAgentsPtyK]

30.23. PDP Males	[MaleAgentsPtyL]
30.24. PDP Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyL]
30.25. UDM Males	[MaleAgentsPtyM]
30.26. UDM Females	[FemaleAgentsPtyM]
30.27. Independent Males	[MaleAgentsOther]
30.28. Independent Females	[FemaleAgentsOther]

31. How many observers from each election observation group were present?

31.1. EU Males	[MaleObsIntA]
31.2. EU Females	[FemaleObsIntA]
31.3. NEW Males	[MaleObsCitB]
31.4. NEW Females	[FemaleObsCitB]
31.5. EON Males	[MaleObsCitC]
31.6. EON Females	[FemaleObsCitC]
31.7. ECOWAS Males	[MaleObsIntD]
31.8. ECOWAS Females	[FemaleObsIntD]
31.9. AU Males	[MaleObsIntE]
31.10. AU Females	[FemaleObsIntE]
31.11. Commonwealth Males	[MaleObsIntF]
31.12. Commonwealth Females	[FemaleObsIntF]
31.13. WADEMOS Males	[MaleObsIntG]
31.14. WADEMOS Females	[FemaleObsIntG]
31.15. Other Observer Males *Please write organization and number.*	[MaleObsOther]
31.16. Other Observer Females *Please write organization and number.*	[FemaleObsOther]

32. What level of access did each of the following groups have?
*A = Sufficient access;
B = Deficient access (within regulations) — applied to one, some, or all;
C = Deficient access (violation of regulations) — not able to participate as stipulated in regulations (not permitted entry; time limited in violation; applied to one, some, or all);
D = Not present;
E = Not observed*

32.1. Center staff	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessCenterStaff]
32.2. Candidate/party agents	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessAgents]
32.3. International observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessIntObs]
32.4. Citizen observers	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessCitObs]
32.5. Media	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessMedia]
32.6. Security	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessSecurity]
32.7. Other	**Select One:** A B C D E	[AccessOther]
33. If any groups were not allowed sufficient access, please describe: *How were groups denied access and what was the impact?*		[AccessDesc]
34. Did you observe any interference in the tabulation process? *Please indicate which group(s) interfered. Select "No interference observed" if no interference was observed.*	**Select Multiple:** Center staff, Candidate/party agents, International observers, Citizen observers, Media, Security, Local officials	[InterferenceAgg]

	Religious/traditional leaders Other No interference observed	
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #34 excludes "No interference observed" 35. If any interference, please describe: *How were groups causing interference and what was the impact?*		[InterfernceDesc]
37. Were there any officially lodged complaints? *If applicable, near the end of your observation, ask the polling center manager if present or ask observers from other organizations or party/candidate agents.*	**Select One:** Yes No	[OfficialComp]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #37 is equal to "Yes" 38. If "yes", please describe: *Who filed complaints? What were the reasons? How were they addressed?*		[OfficialCompDesc]
39. Were there any problems reported to you by those present rather than those observed directly by you? *(Reported by e.g., agents, observers, voters)*	**Select One:** Yes No	[ProbReport]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #39 is equal to "Yes" 40. If "yes", please describe: *Please note the actors involved, how it was resolved, the apparent impact, and any supporting evidentiary corroboration.*		[ProbReportDesc]
41. End of Observation (Station):		[EndTime]
42. How would you evaluate party/candidate agents' performance?	**Select One:** Adequate Inadequate Not Observed/Observable	[AgentsEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #42 is not equal to "Adequate" 43. Please describe the reasons for not choosing "Adequate":		[AgentsEvalDesc]
44. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURES BY STAFF. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *VERY GOOD — Procedures were always or almost always applied correctly. Any procedural errors observed were very minor and did not affect the integrity or transparency of the process. REASONABLE — Procedures were mostly applied correctly. Procedural errors observed did not appear to affect the integrity or transparency of the process. POOR — Procedures were not applied correctly; OR procedural errors significantly affected the transparency of the process and/or may have compromised the integrity of the process. NOT CREDIBLE — Important procedures were not followed correctly and these problems likely compromised the integrity of the process.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeProcedImp]
45. What is your team's evaluation of the implementation of procedures by staff at this station? *This evaluation should be based upon the procedures evaluated earlier in the checklist as well as any procedural factors that may have been omitted from the checklist. Please refer back to the answers provided to questions about procedures as needed to inform the overall evaluation.*	**Select One:** Very Good Reasonable Poor Not Credible	[ProcedImpEval]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #45 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #45 is not equal to "Reasonable" 46. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?		[ProcedImpEvalDesc]
47. Before moving ahead, please review the following definitions regarding the overall assessment of the AGGREGATION ENVIRONMENT AND PROCESS. Mark the selection below to indicate that you understand the definitions and refer back to this page if needed. *VERY GOOD — No significant problems were observed with the implementation of procedures or environment. The aggregation process was fully transparent. REASONABLE — Observed problems did not significantly affect the integrity or transparency of the aggregation process, but there is room for improvement. POOR — Significant problems with any of the following may have compromised the integrity of the results: errors in implementing aggregation procedures; election staff subject to intimidation or interference; observers restricted; sensitive materials not secured. NOT CREDIBLE — Observed problems with the aggregation likely compromised the integrity of the results; OR there are significant, unexplained differences between counting results and aggregation results.*	**Select One:** I have read and understand the definitions.	[BeforeAggEnv]
48. What is your team's overall assessment of the aggregation environment and process at this center?	**Select One:** Very Good Reasonable Poor Not Credible	[AggEnv]
ANSWER ONLY IF Question #48 is not equal to "Very Good" AND Question #48 is not equal to "Reasonable" 49. What were the main reasons for not choosing "Very Good" or "Reasonable"?		[AggEnvDesc]
50. Any other comments?		[AddComments]

The Carter Center at a Glance

The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, the Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 80 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; and improving mental health care. Please visit www.cartercenter.org to learn more about The Carter Center.

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