



NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH (NEW)

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Sierra Leone November 17th 2012 elections: peaceful and transparent

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Following the preliminary press statements issued by National Elections Watch (NEW) on the 2012 general elections held across Sierra Leone on November 17th, NEW wishes to congratulate once more the people of Sierra Leone for the peaceful nature and high level of participation observed all across the country. Responsible citizenry was on display in all 14 districts, in spite of logistical issues and long delays in some places. The success of non-violence campaigns was evident, and NEW particularly commends the youth of the country for maintaining the peaceful atmosphere. NEW considers that the process was transparent, enabling observers to witness every step of polling day activity.

NEW also commends the National Electoral Commission (NEC) for their response to issues that emerged over the course of election day.

With regards to irregularities in the process, NEW has received reports from its observers in polling stations across the country of incidences of over-voting. NEW urges NEC to investigate and take appropriate actions as soon as possible.

The conduct of NEC officials on election day was generally judged to be good. However, cases of concern were noted: these ranged from capacity-related problems, whereby officials had insufficient knowledge of electoral procedures, to collusion in electoral fraud. NEW strongly urges NEC to investigate these cases and to take the relevant action.

NEW further notes the general absence of agents from political parties outside the two main parties during the reconciliation process at polling stations and tally centers. NEW reminds all political parties that the electoral process does not end with voting; rather, their engagement in *all* phases, including counting and tallying, is important to secure the integrity of a multiparty democratic process.

NEW observers noted a widespread security presence at polling stations and NEW commends the integrated security mechanism, which dealt professionally with issues that emerged on election day.

NEW acknowledges the improvement in voter education since the 2007 elections, thanks to multi-stakeholder efforts. Nevertheless, NEW raises its concern about the level of void votes observed.

The efforts of civil society to develop a national elections strategy have been critical in the success of the 2012 electoral process at all stages.

NEW wishes to express its gratitude to DFID and OSIWA for the support provided to make its activities possible and to Search for Common Ground for the provision of electoral technical advice.

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