



Office Address: No 48 Siaka Stevens Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone  
Tel: +23278246328 / +23279167457

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE MONITORING OF THE RE-RUN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AT CONSTITUENCY 110, GODERICH**

**BY THE CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING GROUP ON ELECTIONS  
AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SIERRA LEONE**



**DECEMBER 2020**

## **BACKGROUND**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020, a group of Civil Society Activists met and agreed to form a Civil Society Working Group on Elections and Human Rights in Sierra Leone in a bid to compliment the efforts of the National Electoral Commission and other partners in conducting free, fair and credible elections in the country.

A Memorandum of Agreement and Terms of Reference were further developed as legal and regulatory frameworks to guide the operations of the Working Group. Also, a Steering Committee was installed to superintend the affairs of the Working Group. As at the time of this report, the membership of the Working Group is comprised of 30 different Civil Society Organizations.



*A cross section of members of the CSO Working Group on Elections & Human Rights*

## **Objectives and Mandate of the Working Group**

The objectives and mandates of the Working Group are as follows:

1. To monitor and ensure free, fair, transparency and credible elections in Sierra Leone.
2. To raise awareness and sensitization on elections and electoral processes in Sierra Leone.
3. To lobby and advocate for increased support to the National Electoral Commission and Elections Management Bodies.
4. To engage in observation, report writing and documentation of findings on elections and human rights in Sierra Leone.

5. To make strong recommendations to the government, international partners and other stakeholders for legal, institutional and policy reforms regarding the elections management in Sierra Leone.

The Motto of the Civil Society Working Group is: "***Guarding Peace & Democracy through Free, Fair and Credible Elections***".

## **MONITORING OF THE RE-RUN ELECTION AT CONSTITUENCY 110 - GODERICH**

### **Methodology adopted:**

- Observation
- Personal interviews
- Random sampling techniques

### **Scope of the Report**

This report covers monitoring that was done at Constituency 110 during the election (12th December 2020).

### **Limitations**

Limited accreditations were given to the Working Group. Hence, some of its members were unable to participate in the monitoring process.

The Working Group never received funding from either the government, NEC or political parties to facilitate its operations.

Funding of the monitoring exercise came largely from personal contributions of members.

## **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS DURING POLLING**

### **Positive**

That the Working Group noted the following positive issues in the conduct of the re-run election at Constituency 110:

- That most of the National Electoral Commission personnel and election materials were at their various stations in time to facilitate full swing voting process.

- That most of the voting centres were opened on time as stipulated by NEC.
- That NEC provided the logistical support at their disposal for the conduct of the election.
- That all voting stations and centres had at least one (1) party agent to represent their party interests and observe the election.



***Party Agents and Observers paying keen attention to the electioneering process***

- That all the centres monitored were made accessible to Independent / non-partisan observers with valid accreditations from NEC.



***CSO's and independent observers monitoring the election***



- That the security personnel acted with tact and professionalism in securing the electoral process. There was no glaring case of police misconduct or human rights violation (s) reported by our monitors.



***Security forces in action during the elections***

- That there was no major incident of violence to undermine the electoral process. The electorate generally comported themselves in a peaceful and law-abiding fashion.
- That polling ended at 5:00 pm and ballots were counted, computed and ballot boxes sealed at the various centers for transparency purpose.

- That NEC official were to a large extent professional in the exercise of their duties.



***A cross section of observers from the Working Group with the PRO of NEC, Mr Christopher Jones; the new NEC boss on the right.***

- That other observer bodies such as European Union officials were present to observe the elections.



***European Union officials observing the elections***



- That we also noted the presence of NaCOVERC officials distributing facial masks to voters that did not have one. Veronica buckets were also placed at the entrance of all polling stations monitored for the washing of the hands of electorates before accessing the polling booths.



***Provision of hand washing facility by NACOVERC during the elections***

- That NEC relocated the Sarah Modern Preparatory voting centre where the disruption and vandalism occurred in the recent past elections to a more open venue (Kallon Field, Goderich).



***Relocation of Sarah Modern Preparatory polling Centre to KALLON FIELD***

- That the media and civil society organizations did their best in monitoring, providing coverage and reporting on the election



*CSO's at work taking down inventory of the human rights challenges*

## **Challenges**

In their monitoring of the re-run election in constituency 110, the Civil Society Working Group on Elections and Human Rights observed the following challenges:

- That there was an outright case of voter apathy across the Constituency accounting for less than 50% turnout of the electorate in the said constituency. Almost in all of the voting centres observed by the Working Group, the electoral turnout was very low.
- That though the security forces displayed a high sense of professionalism in their manning of polling centres, there was however an outright over securitization of the electoral process which in some ways created fear among the voting population. It is therefore safe to conclude that the election was not free from fear.





***The Police in action***

- That there were allegations of "vote merchandise." The Working Group witnessed chaotic scenes at Sengbeh Pieh Secondary School and Hamilton at **Polling Centre 1588** which had to do with some voters caught taking snapshots of their voting slips for a consideration of fifty thousand Leones (Le 50,000). When apprehended by the police, some of them confessed to have been sent by political stalwarts to do the said act. This was the case in other polling centers though not on a wide scale.



***One of the suspects caught red handed by the police on vote merchandise***

- That a number of unaccredited government officials using vehicles with no number plates bulldozed their way into some voting centers/stations particularly in Kent and Number 2 communities.
- That some of our observers were subjected to verbal attacks by overzealous party stalwarts as a result of our vigilance and robust monitoring of the election.

- That some of the polling centres were not disabled friendly. Thus, accessibility for Persons With Disabilities was a huge challenge.



***Challenges of access to polling stations by disable persons***

- That the voting process at the Kallon Field polling centre stopped at some point in the early hours of voting due to the downpour of rain. This was as a result of the make shift structures that were constructed for the voting process.



***Kallon Field polling station was vulnerable to bad weather***

- That food was not provided for some polling stations workers. As a result, some of them were seen leaving their work schedules in search of foodstuff.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Working Group on Elections and Human Rights, having monitored the just concluded parliamentary rerun election in constituency 110 hereby makes the following general and specific recommendations:

### **General**

- ❖ That the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Julius Maada Bio appoints a fifth commissioner of NEC to fulfill the constitutional requirement as enshrined under section 32 (1),(2) and (3) of the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone. This is to ensure that the Commission is duly constituted to carry out its election mandate throughout the country. At the moment, the North is being deprived of a Commissioner as required under the Public Elections Act of 2012.
- ❖ That the security forces ensure that going forward they do not over securitized the electioneering process so as to avoid unnecessary fear and apprehension by the electorate resulting to voter apathy.
- ❖ That NEC should ensure that going forward its strengthens partnership with other election management bodies, CSO's and other stakeholders to engage in extensive voter sensitization prior to election so as to kept the electorate in full spirit to turn out in their numbers to cast their votes.
- ❖ That NEC allows political parties going forward to have the leverage to campaign in ways that would excite monument to their political base and supporters and not just be confined to a door to door campaign method.

### **Specific**

- ✓ That political parties do all in their powers to ensure that they excite their base and advocate for their full participation in all electoral processes in the country.
- ✓ That government officials respect established electoral processes and resist the urge of interfering into the electoral process especially when they are not accredited by NEC.
- ✓ That going forward NEC should provide foods and drinks for their personnel so as to avoid the risk of them leaving the polling stations in search of food.
- ✓ That NEC should ensure they choose polling stations and or voting locations that are accessible to persons with disability.



- ✓ That make shift structures built by NEC as polling Stations should be weather friendly so as to not affect or delay the electioneering process as was evident at Kallon Field.
- ✓ That more civil society organizations and media institutions should be provided with the necessary resources and accreditations by NEC so as to be able to monitor the conduct of public elections.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Civil Society Working Group on Elections and Human Rights registers its profound thanks and appreciation to the government of Sierra Leone, NEC, election management bodies, the Sierra Leone Police, political parties, civil society organizations, the media and the entire electorate at constituency 110 for the smooth conduct of the parliamentary rerun election.

In sum, while it is apparently clear that the election at constituency 110 could be said to be free and fair, it is however, our candid opinion that the said election was not free from fear. Hence, the low voter turnout.

**Faithfully Submitted**

**Thomas Moore Conteh**



**NATIONAL COORDINATOR**

**Rashid Dumbuya Esq**



**ELECTIONS & HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER**