



## NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH (NEW)

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### Press Statement for Immediate Release

#### ***Freetown, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021: NEC Conducts Bye-election in Ward 350, Pujehun District with High Voter Turnout and visible Police Presence***

National Electoral Commission (NEC) conducted bye-election in Ward 350, Constituency 099, in Pujehun District on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2021. The vacancy occurred following the death of the substantive councillor, Brima Njuma Kamara of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). NEW observed the presence of Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in polling centres and they were professional in their conduct. NEW also observed the presence of senior officials of the contesting political parties in the ward on polling day.

NEW observed the entire process including opening, polling, closing and counting, tallying and the announcement of provisional results. NEW recruited, trained and deployed observers in all the 6 polling centres. NEW also deployed 2 supervisors who served as roving team to monitor the process.

#### **Findings**

- Polling stations observed were opened on time across the Ward.
- NEC staff were mainly youth with a gender balance and inclusion of PWDs.
- Hand washing facilities were available in all polling centres.
- Voters complied with COVID-19 rules of hand washing.
- NEC enforced the wearing of facemasks in all polling stations.
- Thermometers were available in polling centres.
- The 2 political parties -All Peoples Congress (APC) and SLPP that contested the election deployed party agents in all polling stations.
- Police presence was highly visible in all polling centres.
- Voter turn-out was high at 64.5%.
- Other observers/stakeholders present were: the Election Conflict Prevention and Mediation Group (ECPMG) and Office of National Security (ONS).
- Senior NEC officials were also on the ground to support the process.

## **Key Observation**

- NEW observed political intolerance was heightened by the presence of senior officials of political parties contesting the election resulting in unnecessary tensions among their party supporters and disturbing the peaceful nature of the process. At Polling Centre Code 14011, Court Barray, Foutah Peje at about 3:17 pm there was high presence of party representatives of both APC and SLPP outside the centre. They included, Amb. Eddie Mansallay, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to Liberia, Hon Kadie Davies, MP of Constituency 110 in the Western Area Rural District and other party stalwarts from both parties. The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and Office of National Security (ONS) immediately asked them to leave the centre as tensions mounted between supporters of both political parties. They all adhered to the advice and left the centre.
- Other political heavyweights that were moving around the ward on polling day with groups of people included Independent MP, Hon Musa Shiaka Sama of Constituency 104 in Pujehun district, Resident Minister, South, Hon Mohamed K. Alie and APC flagbearer aspirant, Dr Richard Konteh.

## **Recommendations**

NEW recommends that;

- Political Party heavyweights refrain from moving around polling centres on polling day, as this has been a major source of conflict and violence in bye-elections.
- Political party heavyweights that are accredited by NEC refrain from moving around polling localities on polling day with groups of youth and other party members.
- SLP maintain the level of professionalism displayed at the just concluded bye-election in subsequent elections.

*National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of local and international organizations in Sierra Leone with a common objective of supporting free, fair and peaceful elections.*

*This Electoral Observation was realized with the financial support of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of National Election Watch – Sierra Leone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*

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***Banker: Sierra Leone Commercial Bank (SLCB)***