



# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE



## ELECTIONS MONITORING REPORT

Presidential, Parliamentary & Local Council Elections – 2023



# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE ELECTION MONITORING REPORT

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## ACRONYMS

<b>ACHPR</b>	African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights
<b>ADP</b>	Alliance Democratic Party
<b>APC</b>	All People's Congress
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AYV</b>	African Young Voices
<b>BCC</b>	Bintumani Conference Centre
<b>CCSL</b>	Council of Churches Sierra Leone
<b>CEC</b>	Chief Electoral Commissioner
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CID</b>	Criminal Investigations Department
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DECT</b>	Directorate of Education, Communication and Training
<b>DHRC</b>	District Human Rights Committees
<b>DiSeC</b>	District Security Committees
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>ECPMG</b>	Election Conflict Prevention and Mediation Working Group
<b>ECSL</b>	Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone
<b>EMB</b>	Election Management Bodies
<b>EOC</b>	Election Offences Court
<b>EON</b>	Elections Observer Network
<b>ER</b>	Eastern Region
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GoSL</b>	Government of Sierra Leone
<b>HRCSL</b>	Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
<b>HREPS</b>	Human Rights and Elections Preparedness Strategy
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>ICPNC</b>	Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion
<b>IGP</b>	Inspector General of Police
<b>KAIPKTC</b>	Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Center

<b>LCE</b>	Local Council Elections
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Act 2004
<b>NCRA</b>	National Civil Registration Authority
<b>NDA</b>	National Democratic Alliance
<b>NEW</b>	National Elections Watch
<b>NGC</b>	National Grand Coalition
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institutions
<b>NSC</b>	National Security Council
<b>NSR</b>	National Situation Room
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>ONS</b>	Office of National Security
<b>OSD</b>	Operations Support Division
<b>PCM</b>	Polling Centre Manager
<b>PEA</b>	Public Elections Act
<b>PLV</b>	Provisional List of Voters
<b>PMDC</b>	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change
<b>PO</b>	Presiding Officer
<b>PPRC</b>	Political Parties Regulation Commission
<b>PWD</b>	Persons with Disability
<b>RRF</b>	Results Reconciliation Form
<b>RSLAF</b>	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
<b>SLAJ</b>	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists
<b>SLBC</b>	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
<b>SLCS</b>	Sierra Leone Correctional Service
<b>SLP</b>	Sierra Leone Police
<b>SLPP</b>	Sierra Leone People's Party
<b>SR</b>	Situation Room
<b>SSL</b>	Statistics Sierra Leone
<b>TBG</b>	Tactile Ballot Guides
<b>TRC</b>	Truth and Reconciliation Commission



<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UDM</b>	United Democratic Movement
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nation Development Programme
<b>VIC</b>	Voter Identification Card
<b>WANEP</b>	West African Network for Peace

## Acknowledgement

This special elections report is the outcome of intensive and extensive monitoring and research and consultations with many individuals, groups and organizations to which HRCSL owes a plenitude of appreciation. It would not have been possible without the financial support from the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) alongside technical and financial support from our international development and local partners including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Irish Embassy and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

As always, it is gratifying to express a depth of appreciation to oversight commissioner of the Directorate of Monitoring and Research, Commissioner Simitie Lavaly, Esq. for her critical role in producing this report, as well a big thank you to the collective body of Commissioners including Chairperson Patricia Narsu Ndanema, Vice Chairperson Victor Idrissa Lansana, Esq., and Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah, for their editorial services of this report.

Similarly, my profound gratitude to the entire staff of the Commission, our volunteers, interns and members of District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs) for undertaking the polling day monitoring and sending in their findings leading to the final production of this report. Special thanks to Director Josephine Thompson-Shaw, Frank Kangaju, Joseph Simbo, Arthur Olu-Jones, Aminata Kargbo, Aminata Lamin, John Fuller, Abdulai Yollah Bangura and the Deputy Directors of Regional Services for their various critical inputs into this report and for playing the needed leadership role throughout the process, which culminated in achieving this product.

Finally, I wish to express foremost thanks to the political parties, stakeholders and members of Elections Management Bodies that we interacted with and who provided information for this report.

Joseph Benjamin Manking Kamara  
Executive Secretary

## PART ONE

### 1.1 Background

The right of citizens to participate in democratic governance is fundamental to the national peace and stability of a state, as it enables them to participate in decision-making through freely chosen representatives. Section 31 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 gives Sierra Leoneans who are eighteen years and above the right to participate in public elections. Article 13 of African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 3 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) all impress on the right to participate in governance.

By Sections 46(1) and 85(1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, Sierra Leone has a five-year electoral cycle, which means that general elections for the Presidency and Parliament should be conducted after every five years. Since 1996 all general elections have been held on the same day.

In 2004, Local Councils were brought back into the governance system with the enactment of the Local Government Act 2004 (LGA). Local Council Elections (LCE) are to be held every four year and thus in 2004 the first such elections since the passage of the LGA were held, followed by 2008. In 2012, LCEs were held together with the general elections. Since then, LCEs have been held alongside the general elections, which has led to the use of the term 'multi-tier elections'.

Section 33 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, gives the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) the responsibility to conduct and supervise *“the registration of voters for, and of, all public elections and referenda; and for that purpose shall have power to make regulations by statutory instrument for the registration of voters, the conduct of Presidential, Parliamentary or Local Government elections and referenda, and other matters connected therewith, including regulations for voting by proxy”*.

In view of the above and pursuant to Section 43 of the Public Elections Act (PEA) 2012, the Chief Electoral Commissioner (CEC) who is also the National Returning Officer, after consultations with the President on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 proclaimed that the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2023 was the date set for the conduct of the Presidential elections. On that same day, the President also declared that 24<sup>th</sup> June 2023 was the date slated for parliamentary and LCEs. Other dates were set for the Paramount Chief Member of Parliament elections and the Village Headman elections.

Traditionally the electioneering process is divided into three (3) phases: the pre, during and post elections phases. The pre-election phase is the phase in which voter registration, verification, nomination of candidates and campaigning are conducted; the next phase is



during-elections which is the voting /polling day and the official announcement of all results by the CEC. In the post-election phase, all other activities undertaken after the announcement of results are considered post. The acceptance of announced results is critical to the consolidation of democracy and ensuring stability.

A peaceful environment is also very crucial for the enjoyment of the right to participate in democratic governance and also a prerequisite for the enjoyment of other related rights such as the rights to freedom of assembly, association and movement.

HRCSL has since its inception, played an essential role in electioneering processes such as:

- monitoring to assess the extent to which elections-related rights meet international standards and are enjoyed or respected by all concerned;
- conducting public education particularly on non-violence during the electioneering period;
- capacity building of staff and other partners;
- handling complaints of elections-related violence;
- the setting up and running of a Situation Room since 2018;
- compilation of findings and production of the Special Election Reports.

These activities are part of HRCSL's core functions as stated in Section 7(2)(a), (b) and (f) of the HRCSL Act, in fulfillment of its mandate to protect and promote human rights in Sierra Leone. HRCSL is the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and statutorily obligated to monitor the conduct of national activities to ascertain compliance of such national endeavors with national, regional and international standards.

In monitoring this election, HRCSL considered the following:

## **1.2 Legal Framework**

### **1.2.1 National Legislation**

The Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 is the legal basis on which the electoral processes are anchored. The national, regional, international and Institutional frameworks relating to the conduct of electioneering processes are discussed below.

Sierra Leone has enacted several electoral laws that establish policy frameworks and institutional structures for the effective and efficient conduct of national and local council elections in the country. The relevant legal frameworks on the conduct of public elections in Sierra Leone include:

### **Constitution & Regulations**

- **Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991;**
  - Wards (Boundary Delimitation) Regulations, 2008
  - The Public Elections (Local Councils Proportional Representation System)

Regulations, 2022.

- The Public Elections (District Block Proportional Representation System) Regulations, 2022.

- **Constitution of Sierra Leone Amendment Act 2001;**

## **Acts & Regulations**

- **Public Elections Act 2022;**
  - Public Elections Petition Rules 2022
  - Early Voting Regulations 2023,
- **Political Parties Act 2022;**
- **Local Government Act 2022;**
- **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, 2022**
- **National Civil Registration Act 2016;**
- **Chieftaincy Act 2009;**
- **The Provinces (Amendment) Act 2017;**
- **Persons with Disability Act 2011; and**
- **Statistics Act 2002**

Section 31 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 states that *'every citizen in Sierra Leone being eighteen years and above and of sound mind shall have the right to vote, and accordingly shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for the purpose of public elections and referendum'*. Traditionally Parliamentary elections have been conducted by the First Past the Post System (FPS) with the Member of Parliament nominee polling the highest number of votes being declared the winner of that constituency. With the passage of the Constitution of Sierra Leone Amendment Act 2001, provision was made for a District Block Proportional Representation system to be introduced in Sierra Leone by which constituency seats are allocated by districts and in proportion to the proportion of votes a political party wins in that district. Further, Section 2(1) of the recently passed Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, 2022 provides for one out of every three nominees for Parliamentary seats to be allocated to a female.

In addition to the limitations provided in Section 31 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 above, the right to participation can also be taken from a citizen if an ECSL Registration Officer is not satisfied that the proposed registrant has sufficient proof of claim under Section 24 of the PEA 2022 for that person to be registered to vote.

The Political Parties Act 2022 strengthened the former Political Parties Registration Commission, by renaming it as the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and giving it regulatory powers in addition to its registration duties. The PPRC now registers and

regulates the conduct of political parties and independent candidates in accordance with sections 34 and 35 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991.

The Public Elections Petition Rules 2022, details procedures of the national court regarding the hearing and determination of election petitions.

The Local Government Act 2022, is very instrumental in the conduct of local council elections by the ECSL and provides for the decentralization and devolution of functions, powers and services to local councils and for other matters connected therewith. It extended the term limit for Mayors, Chairpersons and Councillors from four to five years.

Section 29 of the Persons with Disability Act of 2011 requires the ECSL to “*ensure that during elections, polling stations are made accessible to persons with disability and shall provide such persons with the necessary assistive devices and services to facilitate the exercise of their right to vote*”. The ECSL Disability Policy 2015 guides ECSL officials in ensuring that persons with disabilities needs are catered for during the conduct of public elections.

The National Civil Registration Act of 2016 created the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) and provides for the amendment and consolidation of the laws relating to the compulsory registration of citizens and non- citizens resident in Sierra Leone as well as the issuance of identity cards. The NCRA is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the Civil Register, which contains data and statistics of citizens and non -citizens that are resident in Sierra Leone.

In October 2022, the ECSL announced through a press statement that the Parliamentary and Local Council elections would be conducted under the proportional representation system as directed by the President. The lawfulness of this announcement was challenged in the Supreme Court by a Member of Parliament and a Councillor, both individuals being members of the opposition All People's Congress (APC). On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023 the Supreme Court, presided by the Chief Justice held that the directive of the President was not unconstitutional and that all the necessary conditions in the Constitution for such a directive had been met.

### **1.2.2 Regional and International Human Rights Instruments**

Sierra Leone has ratified a number of international and regional human rights instruments that provide for the right to vote and the right to participate in the political affairs of the country. These instruments place obligations on State Parties to ensure that elections are held in an inclusive, secure, transparent and non-discriminatory manner, taking into account the principles of democracy.

At regional level, Article 13 of African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) emphasizes the right of citizens to participate in government either directly or through freely



chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law and equal access to the public services of his country. Similarly, Article 3 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance urges State Parties to implement the Charter in accordance with the following principles: *“holding of regular, transparent, free and fair elections; separation of powers; promotion of gender equality in public and private institutions; and effective participation of citizens in democratic and development processes and in governance of public affairs...”*.

Internationally, Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides that *“Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives”*. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states that *“Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions ... and without reasonable restriction: to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; and to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country”*. Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) calls on States Parties to *“take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women...”*

### **1.3. Institutional Frameworks**

The relevant institutional frameworks set up for the effective administration and regulation of elections in Sierra Leone include the following:

- **Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL)** - The Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 establishes an Electoral Commission under Section 32. Sections 31, 41, 75 and 76 enshrine procedures for the smooth conduct of public elections and the effective participation of citizens in national electoral processes. This is also supported by Section 13 of the Public Election Act 2022 which states that *“There shall be a national register of voters, to be known as the “Register of voters”*.

The President appoints all members of the Commission, after consultation with all registered Political Parties and subject to the approval of Parliament. The tenure of office of the Commissioners is five years, and their terms and conditions of service are prescribed by Parliament. Section 34 of the Constitution confers independence on the ECSL in the exercise of its functions. It states, *‘in the exercise of any function vested in it by this constitution, the Electoral Commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority’*.

- **The Political Parties Regulation Commission** - The institutional mandate and independence of the Political Parties Regulation Commission are enshrined in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. PPRC principally exists for the registration, regulation and supervision of the conduct of political parties and independent candidates in accordance with Sections 34 and 35 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991. In conformity with the Political Parties Act 2022, the PPRC in collaboration with registered political parties and civil society established a Code of Conduct Monitoring Committee to function as a forum for discussion of issues of common concern, including breaches of the Code before, during and after the elections.
- **Judiciary: The Supreme Court** of the Judiciary of Sierra Leone has original jurisdiction to hear and determine petitions brought before it on the outcome and results of the Presidential elections, whilst the **High Court** has jurisdiction to hear and determine petitions brought before it on the outcome and results of the Parliamentary or Local Council Elections. Section 143 of the PEA 2022 establishes the Electoral Offences and Petitions Court, which is the High Court division charged with the responsibility to try all those alleged to have committed electoral offences under the PEA 2022. These offences range from those committed at the stage of voter registration to offences committed at the polls. It is presided over by a High Court Judge or a retired Judge of the Superior Court or a Barrister or Solicitor who is qualified to hold office as a High Court Judge. Trials are by summary procedure, subject to appeal.
- **Office of National Security(ONS)**- this government agency was created by The National Security and Central Intelligence Act 2002 to serve as the secretariat of the National Security Council (NSC) and thereby provide high-level coordination and oversight of the security sector. It hosts and coordinates a National Situation Room (NSR), which provides early warning and response services during national security emergencies. It is activated during a Level II or III emergency state security classification to support the security sector, elections management bodies, Ministries, Departments and Agencies and other state and non-state actors in operational planning, data collection, collation, analysis and presentation. It is usually activated during the electioneering period. The NSR constitutes representatives from the ONS, Central Intelligence and Security Unit, Sierra Leone Police, Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, National Fire Force, Sierra Leone Correctional Services and the Ministry of Information and Communications. Other actors can be brought in depending on the type of emergency being dealt with.
- **The Sierra Leone Police** - The Sierra Leone Police has the responsibility to protect lives and property. During electioneering periods, the SLP is charged with the

responsibility of providing security for staff of the ECSL, their materials and ballot papers as well as providing security for polling stations in a bid to ensuring the safety of the electioneering process. Their activities are coordinated by the ONS.

Other state institutions that provide support to or monitor the electioneering process:

- **The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone** – This Commission has a broad mandate to protect and promote the rights of all in Sierra Leone. During the elections, its main role is to raise awareness on human rights that are likely to be violated before and during elections; build capacity of EMBs, CSOs and DHRCs on human rights and monitor the electoral process to ensure that procedures that guarantee the right to vote and to be voted for are respected. It also documents complaints of human rights concerns related to election and produces a report on the electioneering process.
- **The National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA)** created and keeps up to-date the Civil Register, which contains data and statistics of citizens and non -citizens that are resident in Sierra Leone. Data extracted from the civil register was provided to ECSL for the registration of voters in the 2023 elections.
- **Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL)** was established to be the “*central authority for the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of accurate, clear, relevant, timely and high quality statistical information on social, health, demographic, economic and financial activities to serve the needs of users including government and the general public*” (Section 10(1), Statistics Act 2002). SSL produces the census report that forms the basis of delimitation of boundaries by ECSL into wards and constituencies for Local Council and Member of Parliament elections.

In conclusion, the aforementioned normative frameworks clearly show that Sierra Leone has comprehensive legal frameworks for the efficient and effective conduct of public elections. The extent to which these legal, institutional and policy frameworks have been fully implemented to realize the desired objectives for which they have been established provide the benchmark for election monitors and observers' findings.

## 1.4 Methodology

This report was compiled using data from mainly HRCSL's primary sources which include reports of field monitoring exercises conducted, public education activities undertaken and complaints received during the entire electioneering period. Field monitoring was conducted using checklists developed and approved by HRCSL for the specific types of monitoring exercises.



Public education activities, stakeholder engagements in Freetown and the regions were also sources through which HRCSL was able to gather additional information for the production of this report. Additionally, HRCSL received, documented and processed complaints at its various offices across the country through its Situation Rooms. The Situation Rooms enabled the Commission to generate both qualitative and quantitative data including interviews of individuals and collating the numbers of telephone calls reporting election related human rights concerns.

Information from HRCSL's partners such as the District Human Right Committees and Youth Ambassadors were corroborated and used in producing this report.

Secondary sources included media (traditional and social) reports or accounts and desks reviews. An extensive survey of national, regional and international legal instruments also informed the production of this report.

## PART TWO

### 2. PRE-ELECTION DAY ACTIVITIES

This section details the activities of the HRCSL throughout the pre-election phase. As the national human rights institution in Sierra Leone, HRCSL prepared and positioned itself to be fully involved in the electioneering processes. Throughout the ten months commencing from the Voter Registration process in September 2022 to polling day on 24th June 2023, HRCSL actively monitored and engaged to make sure human right components were integrated into all the processes. Where challenges were observed, relevant stakeholders were contacted and recommendations proffered.

#### 2.1 HRCSL Human Rights and Elections Preparedness Strategy

As a way of positioning the HRCSL to engage in the 2023 multi-tier elections, a Human Rights and Elections Preparedness Strategy was developed and launched (HREPS). The strategy outlined five key pillars of intervention in the electoral process. The content of the strategy was informed by the observations and experiences gained during the 2012 and 2018 electoral processes. In both polls (2012 and 2018), HRCSL observed that its intervention and the involvement of other organisations working in the field of human rights contributed largely to a reduction in election-related violence and the compliance by law enforcement officials with human rights principles and standards.

It was against this backdrop that no sooner the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) announced the date for the 2023 multi-tier elections; the '*HRCSL's Human Rights and Elections Preparedness Strategy*' was finalized and launched.

On 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, the Vice Chairperson of HRCSL, Commissioner Victor I. Lansana Esq. unveiled the Strategy during a Multi-Sectoral dialogue with Elections Management Bodies (EMBs), Political Parties'



*Commissioner V.I. Lansana (extreme right) presenting HRCSL's Election Preparedness Strategy at the multi-sectoral programme organized by ECPMG*

leadership and the Security sector, at the New Brookfields Hotel, Freetown. This programme was organised by the Election Conflict Prevention and Mediation Working Group (ECPMG). Presenting the Strategy, Commissioner Lansana emphasized the importance of human rights in the electioneering processes and the pivotal role the HRCSL, a grade "A" accredited NHRI, will play, throughout the period.

While unveiling the Strategy, the Vice Chairperson highlighted the five Pillars through which the Strategy will be rolled out:

1. Monitoring – pre, during and post elections
2. Public Education and Awareness Raising/Engagements
3. Capacity Building and Training (Commissioner, Staff, DHRC and other field monitors)
4. Complaints Handling and management (setting up of a Situation Room)
5. Compilation and Production of Special Elections Report.

Commissioner Lansana further stated that the general goal of HRCSL's elections intervention is to ensure human rights compliance by both duty bearers and rights holders. The budget for the Strategy amounted to one million, nine hundred and sixty thousand new Leones (NLe. 1,960,000) (\$105,946). Commissioner Lansana in closing, appealed for donor and government support to enable the HRCSL to deliver on the set activities.

The budget was eventually financed by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Irish Embassy and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

## **2.2 Human Rights Capacity Building and Public Education Activities**

### **2.2.1 Training of HRCSL Commissioners, Staff and Members of DHRCs on Monitoring Human Rights Violations During Elections**

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023, HRCSL held a one-day training for its Commissioners, staff, volunteers, interns and members of District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs) on “*Monitoring Human Rights Violations During Elections*”.



**Cross-Section of Participants at the training**

The main objective was to enhance their skills for monitoring the campaigns of political parties and the multi-tier elections on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

One hundred and seventy (170) participants including HRCSL's regional staff, and DHRC representatives from the five regions of the country benefitted from the training. Presentations and discussions focused on:

- International human rights standards in electioneering processes,
- the role of NHRIs in election monitoring,
- Sierra Leone's electoral cycle, and
- an overview of electoral laws in Sierra Leone.

With regards to HRCSL's elections monitoring and complaints handling activities, special presentations on the setting up and operations of the HRCSL Situation Room, the application of the checklists for monitoring political campaigns and polling day as well as the procedures for reporting and processing of complaints were also made. The content of HRCSL Code of Conduct for Election Monitors was also discussed.

The training equipped participants with additional knowledge on international, regional instruments and national laws that guarantee citizens' rights to participate in elections, as well as how to monitor and conduct themselves throughout the monitoring periods.

The training climaxed with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between HRCSL and the thirty-two CSO groups that participated in the training to become HRCSL monitors on election day. This was to ensure that HRCSL had the responsibility to provide oversight over their conduct on election day.

As a follow up on the training conducted, from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June, two staff of the HRCSL undertook a joint monitoring and engagement exercise to the regional headquarter towns together with Thomas Blaise B/Mbock and Beverly Antaro (two staff from OHCHR in Geneva), who were seconded to HRCSL to support the Commission to undertake its planned elections activities. The purpose was to evaluate the impact of the training and the usefulness of the HRCSL's Campaign Monitoring Checklist in their monitoring exercises. HRCSL regional staff and DHRC representatives reported that the training was useful and knowledge gained was used in their monitoring activities.

### **2.2.2 Election Security Training on Human Rights for Law Enforcement officials**

One of HRCSL's core values is “Collaboration” with partners in the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone. Building on this, HRCSL collaborated with the Office of National Security (ONS) in the implementation of the ONS' Election Security strategy.

HRCSL supported ONS' Integrated Election Security Planning Committee, in training over six hundred personnel from the SLP, RSLAF, the Sierra Leone Correctional Service, the National Fire Force and from municipal and chiefdom security units. The training sessions



were held in all sixteen districts and aimed to ensure that all security sector personnel possess the core competencies, skills and necessary knowledge to fulfil their duties with a rights-based approach during the electoral processes and in line with the Standard Response Guidelines for the National Security Architecture.



Participants at the training held in the Western Area Urban



Director Richard M'bayo doing a presentation at the training in the Western Area Rural (Right)

The topics covered Human Rights and Election Security, Gender & Elections and Facilitation Skills

### **2.2.3 Production and Airing of Jingles on Non-Violent Elections**

Jingles were produced as a medium through which HRCSL carried out some of its awareness raising campaigns in schools, communities, radio and television stations countrywide. With support from UNDP/Irish Embassy and GoSL, HRCSL produced and aired jingles in English and six (6) local languages namely; Krio, Themne, Limba, Kono, Fullah and Mende. The jingles carried messages that denounced violence and hate speeches, sensitized Sierra Leoneans on their rights to participate in elections, and advised on how to conduct themselves in a peaceful manner before, during and after the electoral process. The jingles were aired nationwide through radio stations in Freetown, Makeni, Kabala, Port Loko, Bo, Moyamba, Kenema and Kono. The jingles were also distributed to local music centres in Kamakwie, Makeni and Mongor Bendugu and shared widely on social media.

### **2.2.4 Engagements with Youths on Human Rights, Elections, and Non-Violence**

As part of its awareness raising on non-violence throughout the electioneering process, HRCSL engaged over six hundred youths in Freetown. Two separate engagements were held in the east and west ends of Freetown on 17th and 19th May, respectively, to support HRCSL's drive for a peaceful elections. The engagements targeted youth on the edge, mainly from ghettos and hangouts in the Western Area to serve as HRCSL's Ambassadors for Peace in their respective communities before, during and after the 24<sup>th</sup> June elections. The engagements were held at the St. Michaels Hall in Kissy in the east end of Freetown and the Peace Museum in the west end of Freetown with the theme “No Human Rights without Peace and Non-

*Violence During Elections*”. At the end of each engagement, the youths pledged to ensure peace and non-violence during the elections. The event also strengthened HRCSL's public awareness drive to educate the public on its work in protecting and promoting the human rights of all in Sierra Leone.



*Group photograph of a cross section of HRCSL's Youths after the engagement on 19th June*

## 2.2.5 Media Engagements on Elections

HRCSL held several media engagements on radio and television stations to discuss its Election Preparedness Strategy after it was launched in February. As the elections drew closer, HRCSL used the media to update the public on findings of its campaign monitoring and the conduct of members and supporters of political parties.

The media was also engaged to disseminate the content of HRCSL's preliminary report on its findings on the conduct of the June 24<sup>th</sup> general elections.

Below is a matrix of media engagements around monitoring of the general elections:

### Matrix of Media Engagements in 2023

No.	Date	Region	Radio/TV Station	Program	Topic	Responsible person
1.	14th February	Western Urban	SLBC Radio and TV	Morning Coffee and Good Morning Sierra Leone	HRCSL's HREPS	Director of ECT, Richard Tamba M'Bayo
2.	15th February		Afri Radio	News Round Salone	HRCSL's HREPS	PPIO; Madam Millicent Kargbo

3.	16th February	Star Radio	Star Good Morning Show	HRCSL's HREPS	DES, Frederick Ibrahim Kamara
4.	24th February	AYV TV	Wake Up Sierra Leone	HRCSL's HREPS	Vice Chairperson, Victor I. Lansana
5.	27th February	SLBC Radio	Morning Coffee	Human Rights issues, especially current happenings	Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah
6.	28th March	Epic Radio	Epic Morning Show	Human rights issues raised in the recent Amnesty Int'l Report	Commissioner Simitie Lavaly
7.	4th April	SLBC Radio	Morning Coffee	HRCSL's Statement on the current debate on human rights concerns in SL	Director of ECT, Richard Tamba M'bayo
8.	4th April	SLBC TV	The Podium	HRCSL's Statement on the current debate on human rights concerns in SL	Director of ECT, Richard Tamba M'bayo
9.	22nd May	SLBC Radio/TV	Good Morning Coffee and Good Morning Sierra Leone	HRCSL's engagement with Youths on non-violence elections	PPIO; Madam Millicent Kargbo
10.	31st May	SLBC TV	Good Morning Sierra Leone	Training of staff and DHRCs on human rights and elections	Vice Chairperson, Victor I. Lansana

					monitoring	
11.	1st June		AYV TV	Wake Up Sierra Leone	HRCSL's role in the June 24th elections	Vice Chairperson, Victor I. Lansana
12.	24 <sup>th</sup> June		IRN	Live Program	Election monitoring update	Chairperson, Patricia Narsu Ndanema
13.	26th June		EPIC RADIO and SLIK TV	Live Program	Preliminary report on HRCSL's monitoring of Election Day	Chairperson, Madam Patricia Narsu Ndanema
14.	29th June		SLBC TV	The Podium	Mapping the way forward after the general elections	Director of ECT, Richard Tamba M'Bayo

## Regional Engagements

	Date	Region	Radio Station	Topic	Responsible person
15.	18 <sup>th</sup> June	Southern	MODCAR (FM 94.9) - Moyamba	Anti-violence messages	Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah
16.	19 <sup>th</sup> June		Wanjei FM 101.1 - Pujehun	Anti-violence messages	Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah
17.	22 <sup>nd</sup> June	Eastern	SLBC (93.5) - Kailahun	Anti-violence messages	Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah
18.	23 <sup>rd</sup> June		Star Line (98.5) - Kenema	Anti-violence messages	Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah

	Date	Region	Media Houses	Topic	Responsible Person
19.	16 <sup>th</sup> June	Northern Region	Radio Bintumani – Kabala	Sensitization on human rights and peaceful elections.	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay
20.	16th June		Shalom Radio - Kabala	Sensitization on human rights and peaceful elections.	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay
21.	17 <sup>th</sup> June		Shalom Radio – Mongor	Political party tolerance and the need to de-escalate political tension in Falaba District.	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay
22.	18 <sup>th</sup> June		Radio Bintumani – Kabala	Respect for each other's political ideology and the	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay



				promotion of peaceful co-existence.	
23.	20 <sup>th</sup> June		SLBC Radio –	Sensitization on	Commissioner Simitie
			Magburaka	human rights and peaceful elections, and the need for political tolerance.	Lavalay
24.	20 <sup>th</sup> June		Hope Radio	Political tolerance and the need to stay away from violence.	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay
25.	19 <sup>th</sup> June	North – West Region	Radio Sella – Kamakwie	Political Party tolerance and the need to respect people’s political opinions.	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay
26.	21 <sup>st</sup> June		Kolenten – Kambia	Citizens to create enabling environment for ECSL to conduct elections.	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay
27.	21 <sup>st</sup> June		Country Radio - Port Loko	Citizens to create enabling environment for ECSL to conduct elections.	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay
28.	21 <sup>st</sup> June		Culture Radio Reporter	Covered meeting with CSOs in Port Loko	Commissioner Simitie Lavalay

## 2.3 Monitoring Activities

HRCSL monitored the electioneering processes in accordance with the objectives set out in the checklist as well as its mandate, mission and vision. Various stages in the electoral process were monitored ranging from registration to the counting and publishing of votes in polling stations. Where it was appropriate, interventions were made to ensure human rights were protected, promoted and respected.

### 2.3.1 Review of Election Monitoring Checklists

HRCSL reviewed the existing monitoring checklists before embarking on full scale monitoring of each phase of the electoral process. This was done to reflect on current trends in the processes taking into cognizance the Public Elections Act 2022, the PPA 2022 (which were reviewed 2022), the GEWE Act 2022 and PPRC's '*Guidelines on Political Parties Processions to and from Campaign Designated Locations*' as well as international standards and best practices on the conduct of elections.

The Checklists for “*Monitoring the Voter Registration*”, “*Monitoring of Political Party Campaigns*” and “*Monitoring of Polling Day*” were reviewed and served as monitoring guides for HRCSL monitors. The final checklists can be found in Appendix 1.

### 2.3.2 Monitoring of the Voter Registration

HRCSL monitored the Voter Registration process which lasted from 3<sup>rd</sup> September to 8<sup>th</sup>



Monitoring voter registration

October 2022. HRCSL engaged the relevant authorities on its findings and recommended amongst others for an extension of the registration period in order that eligible voters (particularly first-time voters) would not be disenfranchised. ECSL extended the voter registration period by two days.

### 2.3.3 Monitoring of Voter Verification

HRCSL also monitored the exhibition of the Provisional List of Voters (PLV) from 24<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

### 2.3.4 Monitoring of the Legislative processes

HRCSL Commissioners and staff took active part in monitoring the passage of the GEWE Act 2022 and the PEA 2022. Media

monitoring was also done on the passage of the PPA 2022 and the laying of the Proportional Representation Regulations in Parliament.

### 2.3.5 Monitoring of Nomination of Candidates

HRCSL monitored the nomination process for the fourteen political parties certified by PPRC to contest the elections, which lasted from 19<sup>th</sup> April to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023. HRCSL observed that this was done in accordance with the statutory provisions of PEA 2022.

### 2.3.6 Monitoring of Political Campaigns

ECSL announced and published the schedule for the political campaigns on 21<sup>st</sup> May. HRCSL undertook monitoring of campaign activities, which lasted for one month, from 23<sup>rd</sup> May to 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023. HRCSL's monitoring focused on the two main political parties namely the All Peoples' Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) due to the fact that they had a greater number of supporters compared to other political parties as deduced from the results of the 2012 and 2018 elections respectively. HRCSL over the years has also observed that political violence is perpetrated mainly by supporters of these two parties. Lastly, many of the smaller parties formed coalitions with those two parties and campaigned on a joint ticket.



## 2.4 Stakeholder Engagements

### 2.4.1 Engagements with the PPRC, PMDC and ECSL

Following the announcement of the campaign calendar for the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2023 multi-tier elections by ECSL, HRCSL held several engagements with election stakeholders in order to plan and adequately monitor political campaign activities and the voting process on election day.

#### PPRC

On 24<sup>th</sup> May the PPRC was engaged to gather information about contact details as well as the designated campaign locations for each of the fourteen (14) registered political parties eligible to contest the elections. HRCSL was informed that political parties had not shared any information about their campaign locations as that would be determined by their supporters in the respective districts few days to the campaign dates.

However, PPRC informed HRCSL of the “***Guidelines on Political Parties Processions to and from Campaign Designated Locations***” which was developed by PPRC in collaboration with political parties. This was done to create an enabling, secure and fear-free environment throughout the campaign, and ensure free movement of the public on campaign days particularly for those not taking part in the campaigns.

#### PMDC

HRCSL on 25<sup>th</sup> May, visited the presidential candidate for the People's Movement for Democratic Change Party (PMDC) Charles Francis Margai Esq, to get first- hand information on his party's preparedness for the campaigns including designated campaign locations. He informed HRCSL of the launch of the party's campaign in Moyamba on 26<sup>th</sup> May, which was its first campaign date according to the ECSL calendar.

He handed a copy of a letter to HRCSL which the PMDC party had sent to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) notifying him of the launch and expressing concern that the violence perpetrated on 23<sup>rd</sup> May in Bonthe by SLPP supporters against the APC would not be repeated during his campaign tours.

Other issues raised by the PMDC presidential candidate were as follows:

- That ECSL had not given access to presidential candidates to campaign in areas where their parties had not nominated candidates for the parliamentary election. In this regard, he stated that a letter of concern had been sent to ECSL.
- That the SLP had not assigned state security to presidential candidates as was done

during the 2012 and 2018 elections.

- That ECSL flouted the PPA 2022 by failing to gazette notices for the nomination of candidates but resorted to disseminating information via WhatsApp.

He also questioned the eligibility of the Chief Electoral Commissioner of ECSL to occupy the office, a matter which he said he would challenge in the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone.

## **ECSL**

On 25<sup>th</sup> May, HRCSL also engaged the ECSL Commissioner for Western Region to inquire about designated campaign locations for the political parties and measures put in place for conducting voting process on election day.

The Commissioner referred HRCSL to the campaign guidelines developed by PPRC which political parties should adhere to. She also informed the HRCSL team about the ECSL's Situation Room which would be set up at the Bintumani Conference Centre at Aberdeen which would also host Situation Rooms of other EMBs for a duration of 16 days (15<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> June).

### **2.4.2 Commissioners' Regional Engagements**

HRCSL also conducted tours in all the 14 districts outside the Western Area. Supported by two Commissioners, regional staff engaged DHRC members, Political Party Executives, the SLP and other stakeholders in their respective regions on HRCSL's election's preparedness and also to get updates from the stakeholders on human rights issues in their communities during the electioneering process.

#### **Northern region**

The northern region was supported by a team from Headquarters headed by Commissioner Simitie Lavalay. On 17<sup>th</sup> June, the HRCSL team engaged the security sector in Mongor Bendugu, Falaba District, regarding security concerns raised by the local residents that high ranking SLPP members were occupying a guest house in Mongor Bendugu with their security personnel. The team also visited the APC party office which was allegedly attacked on the 28<sup>th</sup> May, by security personnel assigned to the SLPP members who were staying in the said guest house. The SLPP members were also engaged on the issue and denied the allegations.

On 18<sup>th</sup> June, HRCSL engaged the Kabala police authorities on the granting of bail to fifteen (15) APC supporters who were arrested in Fadugu Town and three (3) APC supporters arrested in Bafudia Town for political violence. Bail was granted to the 15 APC supporters from Fadugu whilst investigations commenced on the matter involving suspects from Bafudia Town. The team also engaged APC executives in Kabala on the report of arson to their office,

allegedly by a former APC supporter that had now joined the SLPP.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June in Magburaka town, Commissioner Simitie Lavalý addressed over two hundred (200) youths and stakeholders on political tolerance and non-violence. She called for a commitment on peaceful political interactions and assured participants of HRCSL's commitment to protecting and promoting the human rights of all.



*Commissioner Lavalý addressing youths in Magburaka on non-violence during elections*

On the same date, Commissioner Simitie Lavalý and team also engaged members of the Bombali DHRC on election monitoring and non-violence. Members of the committee highlighted the peaceful political atmosphere in Bombali District as there were no major incidents of political violence.

Commissioner Simitie Lavalý was interviewed by journalists in all the districts visited. Three radio interviews were done in Koinadugu district, while one interview each was done in the other six districts.

The team produced a video documentary, calling on the people of Fadugu and Koinadugu districts to respect the campaign date and distance themselves from hate messages. This video went viral in the district especially Fardugu town, which prevented the disruption of the campaign of NGC on the 17<sup>th</sup> June.

The peace song produced by HRCSL was shared with radio presenters in all the districts visited. The song was also shared with owners of Attaya Bases, and other public gathering places in each of the districts visited.

IEC materials from HRCSL were displayed at police stations and other strategic places in each of the places visited.

### **North-West region**

The North-Western region was also supported by the team from Headquarters led by Commissioner Simitie Lavalý. The team engaged stakeholders between 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> June in Port Loko Town, Kamakwie, Mambolo and Kambia on elections preparedness and to investigate reports of clashes between supporters of the SLPP and the APC. Meetings were held with Civil Society groups in Karene, Port Loko and Kambia districts. Commissioner

Simitie Lavalley and team intervened and struck a compromise between Police officers and members of the main opposition APC while they were protesting at ECSL offices in Kambia and Port Loko Districts respectively.

## Southern region

In the Southern Region, Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah and staff of HRCSL visited Moyamba and Pujehun Districts on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June respectively. In Moyamba District, DHRC members informed HRCSL that although the environment was relatively calm and peaceful there were isolated incidents of humiliation and intolerance.

While engaging the SLP, HRCSL informed the officers of its intention to deploy monitors on election day. The SLP also informed the HRCSL team about its preparedness to provide security on polling day.

Members of the two major political parties (APC and SLPP) were also engaged. Both sides accused each other of intimidation and the destruction of campaign banners by supporters. Similarly in Pujehun, HRCSL engaged members of the Pujehun DHRC and the law enforcement officials. The Pujehun DHRC members reported that the district witnessed several elections related violence mostly between SLPP and APC supporters, some of which resulted in destruction of houses, property, inhuman and degrading treatment that inflicted injuries on three (3) people (2 male 1 female).in Gobaru. The SLP also updated HRCSL on some of the challenges particularly between APC and SLPP supporters.



North-West Team with Commissioner Lavalley investigating reports of disturbance in Mambolo

No.	District	APC			SLPP			PMDC
1	Bo	25/05	08/06	19/06	26/05	09/06	14/06	-
2	Bombali	24/05	02/06	11/06	07/06	-	-	-
3	Bonthe	23/05	02/06	-	16/06	-	-	-
4	Falaba	16/06	17/06	-	16/06	17/06	-	-
5	Kailahun	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Kambia	26/05	01/06	-	24/05	30/05	5/06	-
7	Karene	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Kenema	25/05	07/06	-	01/06	15/06	-	-
9	Koinadugu	18/06	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	Kono	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	Moyamba	-	-	-	18/06	-	-	27/06
12	Port Loko	17/06	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Pujehun	18/06	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	Tonkolili	10/06	-	-	20/06	-	-	-
15	Western Area Rural	09/06	19/06	-	05/06	15/06	-	-
16	Western Area Urban	08/06	18/06	-	10/06	20/06	-	-





*Commissioner Yarjah and Southern region team interviewing victims of political violence in Pujehun district*

## Eastern Region

Commissioner Yarjah joined staff in the Eastern Region to conduct similar engagements in Kailahun and Kenema districts, on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> respectively. The team also engaged members of District Security Committees (DiSeC) in Kenema. At each engagement, Commissioner Yarjah explained the mandate of HRCSL and encouraged all to be peaceful throughout the electioneering period. HRCSL also participated in the Peace Marches held in each district. These marches were organized by the PPRC as part of its sensitization programmes on non-violence during the elections. The HRCSL Commissioner was given the opportunity to address the crowds at both marches. Radio discussion programmes were also held during these visits.

## 2.5 Launching of the HRCSL Situation Room

In accordance with its functions in Section 7(2)(a, b and f) and to ensure that the 24<sup>th</sup> June multi-tier elections resonated with human rights standards, HRCSL established a Situation Room (SR) to among other things, receive and respond promptly to information of human rights related incidents that occurred during the electioneering process.



*Members of the High Table (Left) journalists and staff of HRCSL (right) at the official launching of the HRCSL Situation Room*

The HRCSL's SR was located within the one-stop complex facility at the Bintumani Conference Centre (BCC) at Aberdeen in Freetown. BCC housed SRs of other EMBs such as ECSL, PPRC and the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC). Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) also set up its SR within the complex. The idea was to enhance coordination, communication and networking among these institutions to enable them take prompt actions to address election related matters particularly on polling day.

The SR was officially launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023. Present at the launching were HRCSL staff and Commissioners, the UN Advisor in the OHCHR, Dr. Uchenna Emelonye, the PPRC Chairman, members of the press and other stakeholders. Statements were made by the UN Advisor and Chairman of the PPRC. The Keynote statement was delivered by the Chairperson of HRCSL, Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema.

Journalists were given the opportunity to ask questions relating to the operations of the SR and the work of the Commission generally. The launching was climaxed with the announcement of the telephone numbers through which the SR could be contacted. These were:

- +232 76 635867 and +232 33 918160 Western Area Urban
- +232 73 027712 Western Area Rural
- +232 78 191476 Southern Region
- +232 78 194166 Northern Region
- +232 72 822763 North Western Region
- +232 76 604766 Eastern Region

The SR commenced operations immediately after the launch and was housed for 9 days at BCC. Four (4) staff were assigned to work in the SR. HRCSL Commissioners also joined the staff daily for short periods to follow up on issues.

International observers made on-the-spot visits to the SR. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June, the West African Independent Observers Group visited the SR. This was also followed by a visit from the Head of the Commonwealth Observers Mission to Sierra Leone and former Vice President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo. HRCSL's Chairperson Madam Patricia Narsu Ndanema welcomed them and gave a brief overview of the HRCSL's work and its elections preparedness.

The Chief Electoral Commissioner and National Returning Officer Mohamed K. Konneh also visited on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and had a brief discussion with HRCSL Chairperson.



## PART THREE

### 3. PRE-ELECTION DAY FINDINGS

This section details the findings from the various activities undertaken by HRCSL during the course of the electioneering process.

#### 3.1 Voter Registration

Pursuant to the provisions in the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, and other relevant laws, ECSL issued a timeline for Voter Registration from 3rd September to 8th October 2022.

The exercise was conducted by ECSL in two phases. The first phase was from 3rd to 17th September 2022; the second phase from 20th September to 8th October 2022. A total of 3,630 centres were opened by ECSL: 1,815 in the first phase and 1,815 in the second phase. According to ECSL, 3,374,258 people registered including 22,385 visibly disabled.

HRCSL observed the following:

- **Late start of the registration process:** on the first day of the registration, 10 out of 25 registration centres monitored in Freetown and the regions opened late. Registration did not start at 7:00 a.m. which was the stipulated time, due to late deployment of ECSL staff or late access to registration centres by ECSL staff.
- **Vulnerable groups:** Persons with disability, the Aged, lactating mothers and pregnant women were not allowed to queue for long periods but were given preference to register immediately they entered the centres.
- **Faulty computers:** computers in 15 out of 25 centres monitored on the first day were faulty and HRCSL was informed that they were not properly programmed. Furthermore, ECSL staff had difficulties in logging in as some of the computers could not be turned on due to lack of electricity as their batteries/ power bank were not charged.
- **Accessibility challenges:** due to the limited availability of ramps in some of the centres monitored PwDs and the Aged had problems climbing stairs to access the centres, but were however assisted by ECSL staff or other persons waiting to register.
- **Difficulties encountered by First time Registrants:** during the registration exercise, ECSL partnered with the NCRA to ensure that registrants were eligible to participate in the process. Registrants were firstly verified by NCRA staff before they could be registered by ECSL to vote. If no information was available for an

individual, NCRA would have to register the person afresh with proper documentation. HRCSL observed that this was an issue for first time registrants whose identity did not show up or had never registered with NCRA. Those who tendered the yellow birth certificate were asked to produce a green certificate from the Births and Deaths department. According to ECSL, they were not allowed to register because the yellow certificate was either not stamped or had incorrect serial numbers. Passport and driving license identification were also not accepted.

**Absence of Party Agents:** despite the existence of many political parties, only agents from two political parties (APC and SLPP) were present in all the registration centres monitored.

Following the above concerns raised by HRCSL and others, ECSL extended the voter registration period by two days. HRCSL commends ECSL for ensuring that the problems encountered in the first few days of the registration were swiftly addressed and for the extension of the registration period to ensure that all eligible registrants were given the opportunity to participate in the process.

### **3.2 Voter Verification**

In continuation of the voter registration process, ECSL exhibited the Provisional List of Voters (PLV) from 24th to 28th October 2022. This was to give an opportunity to registrants to confirm their details, request for inclusion if omitted from the PLV and object against persons whose details were on the PLV.

During this exercise, issues such as unpublished, misplaced, and photo less data were reported. These were documented by ECSL staff and affected persons were assured that their particulars or details would be included in the final voter register.

A window period was also opened for all those who had issues during the registration and had been issued the Appeals Form. A Justice of the Peace was deployed in the registration centers for a period of two days to look into these cases.

ECSL put out a notice acknowledging the challenges but assured all that these would be corrected in the final voter register. Those whose names were not found in the provisional register were given forms to take to the ECSL district offices for their names to be included. HRCSL was not in the position to ascertain whether their names were included in the final register.

### **3.3 Nomination of Candidates**

Only fourteen political parties met the PPRC requirements and were certified as eligible to participate in the 2023 elections. These parties had to nominate candidates for the various positions for participation in the elections.

The nomination period lasted from 19th April to 9th May 2023, during which candidates for

the various positions were nominated by their party representatives. With the exception of the presidential nominations which were done in Freetown, all nominations for the district block system (parliamentary and local councils elections) were done in the respective districts.

In a change from the previous proportional representation process that was implemented in 2002 when only political parties nominated candidates, this time independent candidates were allowed to be nominated for Parliamentary and Local Council seats.

### **3.4 Campaigning**

Before the commencement of campaigns, the PPRC, in collaboration with political parties developed “Guidelines on Political Parties Processions to and From Campaign Designated Locations”. This was done to create an “enabling secured and fair-free environment” for the conduct of the multi-tier elections. Prior to this time political campaigns were characterised by violence which sometimes led to loss of lives and destruction of private property. This document, which was released in April, was to guide the process and reduce tensions during the one month long campaign. Political parties were to ensure that their members and supporters complied with the guidelines or face penalties as outlined in Section 39 of the PPA 2022. Political parties were also required to comply with the Code of Conduct in the PPA 2022.

On 21st May, ECSL announced and published the calendar for the political campaigns. Political parties and independent candidates balloted for days in the districts they had nominations. In accordance with Section 154 of the PEA 2022, the campaign activity lasted for one month, from 23rd May to 22nd June, 2023.

Some Presidential candidates expressed concern that ECSL had not given access to them to campaign in areas of the country where their parties had not nominated candidates for the parliamentary election.

The following issues were noted:

1 Adherence to campaign timetable and PPRC Guidelines: Only the two main political parties campaigned on all the days allocated to them through the campaign timetable issued by the ECSL, whilst the smaller parties did not utilize all of their allocated days. On these days members of these parties came out in numbers to convince their supporters and woo other people to vote for them.

In Falaba, Koinadugu and Tonkolili Districts in the North, the SLPP and NGC held joint campaigns on their campaign days. It was also noted that the two big parties also used the days



allocated to members of parties in their coalition to campaign for themselves.

However, there were several incidents wherein campaign activities were disrupted by supporters of opposing parties. These incidents have been outlined under the section on Freedom of Movement and Assembly, below.

The conditions set out in the PPRC guidelines for campaigning were not entirely complied with, particularly towards the end of the campaign period. In Freetown, campaign activities often ended within the timeframe in the first few days, however, this was not complied with on the last days of the campaigns. On 18<sup>th</sup> June, which was the last day of their campaign in Freetown, the APC did not comply with the time set by the PPRC to end campaigns at 5:00pm due to late arrival of its presidential candidate and supporters rallied in the streets. On 20<sup>th</sup> June, although the SLPP presidential candidate delivered his speech before 5 pm, supporters stayed on at the campaign location till night fall and they also rallied in the streets. Similarly in the regions, campaigns went beyond the stipulated time for the same reasons and street rallies were held despite the ban placed by PPRC.

## **2 Destruction of banners:**

Although the PPRC admonished members, supporters and sympathizers to desist from destroying political party banners that were displayed in public areas, yet it was common in all regions and sometimes led to inter-party violence.



*SLPP campaign in Western Area Urban*



*APC campaign in Western Area Urban*

HRCSL noted the following instances:

- On 30<sup>th</sup> May, during the SLPP campaign in Kambia, banners of the APC presidential candidate were comprehensively destroyed in Kambia Town, Rogbere Town, Kasire, Bamoi Luma, Mambolo, Kalainkay and Thombo Wala.
- On 14<sup>th</sup> June the date SLPP campaigned in Fadugu and Bafudia Towns in the Koinadugu District, supporters of the APC destroyed SLPP banners in the townships and pelted stones on the SLPP office building in Fadugu. The police intervened and arrested fifteen APC supporters in Fadugu and three APC supporters in Bafudia.
- On 17<sup>th</sup> June, when the SLPP campaigned in Gbinti Town, Dibia Chiefdom, Karene District APC banners erected at strategic locations in the township were allegedly destroyed by SLPP supporters and HRCSL was informed that no actions were taken by the police.

In many parts of the Eastern and Southern Regions, campaign banners of the APC were either destroyed or were not allowed to be erected by SLPP supporters.

### **3. Freedom of Movement**

Section 18 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, Article 12 of the ACHPR, Article 12 of the ICCPR and Article 13 of the UDHR guarantee the enjoyment of the right to freedom of movement.

The PPRC guidelines for campaigning required rallies to be held at locations specified by the parties and supporters and members were to move to the designated campaign locations to listen to the leadership of the parties. In the Western Area Urban and Rural, North and North-West Regions, supporters of both political parties moved freely along the streets to the designated campaign locations.

However, in the Southern and Eastern Regions, HRCSL noted that movement was restricted for APC supporters on the days the APC campaigned in these regions.

In Bo, HRCSL observed that while the SLPP supporters were allowed to move freely in the township to get to the campaign venues, this was not the case on the days when APC campaigned. HRCSL recorded two incidents in which the APC party had confrontations with personnel of the SLP regarding the routes to be plied by members and supporters to get to the designated campaign locations. On the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023, the APC supporters were prevented by the SLP from escorting their party stalwarts (who had just arrived to conduct the campaign) through the main streets of Bo Town to the campaign locations, on the grounds that such was against the PPRC campaign guidelines. Also, on the 8<sup>th</sup> June, the APC supporters had a standoff with the SLP when

the convoy of the running mate to APC presidential candidate was prevented from using the main routes to exit the township. He was later allowed to proceed.

On 7<sup>th</sup> June, SLPP supporters in Kenema in breach of the campaign timetable prevented APC supporters from using the Hanga Road, which is the shortest route to and from the APC campaign venues because the SLPP office was located on that road. They pelted stones on the APC supporters causing chaos in the surrounding. A monitor of HRCSL who had gone to intervene on the matter was injured when an SLPP supporter hit him on the head with a belt. The SLP intervened and restored calm. In Pujehun, Bonthe and Bo in the southern region, and Kono in the Eastern Region SLPP supporters disrupted the campaigns of the APC.

#### **4. Freedom of Assembly and Association**

Section 26 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, Articles 10 and 11 of the ACHPR, Articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR and Article 20 of the UDHR guarantee the enjoyment of this right.

HRCSL observed that political parties ensured that all campaign locations were accessible to all categories of people including PwDs, pregnant or lactating women and the aged. Huge crowds gathered to listen to the campaign messages of leaders of their respective political parties.

In some cases, supporters of both parties first converged at specific locations before moving to the designated campaign locations. In Freetown, HRCSL observed that on 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June, which were the last dates the APC and SLPP held campaigns respectively, groups of singing crowds from all over Freetown processed the streets to the National Attouga Mini Stadium for the APC and Lumley Beach for the SLPP campaigns.

In the regions, large crowds were also seen particularly on the last days of the campaigns jubilating in support of their Leaders.





*SLPP campaign 55 Waterloo, Western Area Rural*



*APC campaign in Freetown, Western Area Urban*

Notwithstanding, there were instances when political party supporters were prevented from holding their campaigns:

- On 25<sup>th</sup> May in Kenema District, APC party supporters were allegedly attacked by SLPP youths who said that APC supporters and sympathizers should not hold any campaign activities in the town as the APC party was not welcome in the district.
- On the 27<sup>th</sup> May, the PMDC campaign at Moyamba junction was disrupted by SLPP supporters.

Freedom of association was generally enjoyed by members and supporters of various parties. Supporters freely associated themselves with political parties of their choice. This was evidently displayed in the T-shirts they wore to the campaigns. In the Western Area Urban and Rural, there were no instances of violent clashes between the APC and the SLPP supporters and no arrests were made during the monitoring periods.

However, there were several reported incidents of clashes between supporters of the APC and SLPP parties across the North-Western, Southern and Eastern Regions:

- On 23<sup>rd</sup> May, HRCSL noted that several incidents happened in the following areas:  
In Kambia District, in the North West Region, the district Chairman of the SLPP disrupted the campaign of the APC party in Mambolo Chiefdom. Thugs hired from outside the chiefdom physically assaulted some APC supporters using machetes: some of the APC supporters sustained severe machete wounds. This was the day in which the APC was scheduled to campaign in the district.

APC supporters in Moriba Town in the Bonthe District alleged they were beaten by members of the SLPP vigilante group referred to as 'Soja Team Boys'. This action by the vigilante group prevented the APC from holding its campaign on that day. The matter was reported at the Moriba town Police Station and the police took prompt action to quell down the situation and made some arrests.

In Bonthe Municipality an APC supporter was beaten and taken to the police for wearing the APC T-Shirt and moving in front of SLPP supporters while they (SLPP) were campaigning.

- On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, in the Bonthe municipality, SLPP supporters on their campaign day pelted stones at the residence of an APC supporter. Later, on the same day, the SLPP base called “Tally Centre” was burnt down by supporters of the APC.
- On 7<sup>th</sup> June, a girl in Mile 91, Tonkolili district was beaten by her guardian for wearing APC party colours and staying out late. The guardian was the former SLPP Constituency Chairman in Mile 91. The police were investigating the matter and the child was being cared for by the Ministry of Social Welfare.
- On 8<sup>th</sup> June, in Bo city, there was confrontation between SLPP and APC supporters near the home of the SLPP Bo Mayoral candidate. This occurred when the APC supporters returned from escorting their aspirants on their campaign day.
- On 18<sup>th</sup> June, the day the APC party campaigned in the Pujehun District, HRCSL was informed by the SLP and community members that residents of Gobaru town in Pujehun District were allegedly attacked and beaten by the APC marshals and that two houses belonging to SLPP supporters were burnt down allegedly by APC party marshals. Victims informed the team that they lost their property in the course of the incident. The SLP informed HRCSL that four arrests were made in relation to the incident.
- On 19<sup>th</sup> June, the campaign date for the APC, the APC Party office in Bo was burnt down by unknown persons alleged to be SLPP supporters. The matter was reported to the SLP but the complainant could not identify any suspect. Social media monitoring also revealed instances where the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of movement and association were threatened. Through video recordings circulated on WhatsApp and other social media handles HRCSL noted that:
- SLPP supporters in Pujehun barricaded the road to prevent the APC presidential Candidate from entering the town on one of the scheduled dates for APC to campaign in the district.
- The Paramount Chief Member of Parliament of Neya Chiefdom, Falaba District was seen threatening the local authorities in his chiefdom not to vote for the APC.



**Commissioner Yarjah and HRCSL staff at the APC office after it was burnt down**

## **5. Freedom of Expression:**

Section 25 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, gives citizens the rights to express themselves freely in a good and constructive way. Article 19 of the ICCPR and UDHR, Article 9 of ACHPR also guarantee the enjoyment of this right.

Throughout the campaign period, supporters in Freetown and the regional areas expressed themselves freely on the days their parties campaigned. However, some of the songs played and sung and the gestures made at the campaign locations were provocative and were targeted against presidential candidates and supporters of the rival parties.

## **6. Media coverage**

The presence of media was visible in all the campaign locations monitored. The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) which is the state broadcaster covered the campaigns of the two parties.

In Freetown, representatives from private media houses such as the African Young Voices (AYV), Star TV, and other local radio stations covered the campaigns. They took photos and interviewed party supporters and sympathizers on the campaign grounds. Some like the AYV hosted programmes at their studios which gave opportunity to members of these parties to speak to their supporters.

In Bombali and Kenema Districts privately owned radio and community radio stations gave free air time to all the parties although not all of them made use of the opportunity. Both parties also had their own independent media which covered their respective



campaign activities.

## 7. **Hate Speech:**

According to the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (June 18, 2019) defines hate speech as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior that **attacks** or uses **pejorative** or **discriminatory** language with reference to a persons or a group on the basis of **who they are**”.

HRCSL noted that inciting messages were propagated on social media through audios and videos which had the tendency to undermine the peace and security of the state. Below are instances of such messages:

- A video in which an APC supporter alleged to be a former member of Parliament, during a campaign at Lungi in Port Loko district threatened that they will “*massacre all SLPP supporters in Themne Line if SLPP touches any APC person in the Mende Line*”. Owing to the fact that he is an influential person in that region and has the ability to gather a formidable group of people such an utterance had the tendency to incite his supporters to perpetuate violence.
- A video on social media in which the APC Presidential candidate during a campaign at Tombo, Western Area Rural District, openly pronounced in our local dialect that “*are dae announce the result now, APC don win! En nar so we dae announce am everyday now*” which when translated in English means that he has announced the result and that APC has won the elections; and that he will continue to make such announcement throughout.

## 8. **Security Presence:**

The SLP has the responsibility to protect lives and property. Accordingly, the SLP personnel were present at the campaign locations monitored. They were also seen in patrol vehicles along major streets during the campaigns, especially on the days allocated to APC and SLPP. The SLP personnel had protective gears such as shield and were armed with guns and teargas canisters. At some of the campaigns, personnel from the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) were also present. Supported by the RSLAF, the SLP deployed personnel in strategic locations in the municipalities and towns to provide security and respond to any incident that might erupt to undermine the peaceful movement of people and nature of the campaigns. HRCSL noted a few instances where the SLP had disagreements with supporters of the APC as mentioned above in the section under Freedom of Movement over the plying of routes particularly in Bo and Kenema. In addition, APC party supporters in Bo blamed the SLP for allegedly failing to provide adequate security for their party office which was burnt

down on the last day the party campaigned in the district.

HRCSL also noted that unlike 2007, 2012 and 2018 campaign periods, the SLP did not provide personal security for presidential candidates throughout the 2023 campaigns. This issue was raised by the presidential candidate of the PMDC during an engagement



with HRCSL. However, the incumbent presidential candidate had state security assigned to his office as part of his campaign entourage throughout. In the Kambia District, HRCSL observed that while robust police and military escorts were provided for members of the ruling party, none was provided for the

opposition party members on their campaign days. HRCSL was however informed in Freetown and in Port Loko that the APC party officials did not trust the police and therefore were relying on their marshals for protection.

Marshals served as security and body guards for APC party stalwarts throughout the campaign period. Six of them attached to the APC presidential running mate were arrested in Bo (including one who was alleged to have a gun in his possession) while en route to join the APC campaigns in Kenema.

#### **9. Use of state resources:**

Officials of the ruling party used vehicles with government number plates during SLPP campaigns across the country.

- 10. Presence of Children** – children were seen at all the campaign locations of both political parties and some of them dressed in political party t-shirts. In Gbinti, Lokomasama, Mamabolo, Rokupr and Port Loko for example, school children (below the voting age) were given t-shirts to participate in the campaigns. Schools closed early in these towns, so that the children could be present to receive the presidential candidate of the SLPP at the campaign venues. In Kenema also SLPP members were seen distributing party t-shirts to pupils of the Ahmadiyya Secondary School in Blama Town, during the campaign on 1<sup>st</sup> June.





Pupils of Ahmadiyya Secondary School in Blama Town at the SLPP campaign on 1st June

### 3.5 Other Election Violence

- On 29<sup>th</sup> May, at Koidu town, Kono District in the Eastern Region, unknown persons burnt down the house of Diana Konomanyi (a member of the APC party) allegedly for political reasons. This matter was being investigated by the police.

## PART FOUR

### 4. ELECTION (POLLING) DAY MONITORING & FINDINGS

This section details the monitoring activities undertaken by HRCSL on polling day and the findings arising from those activities.

#### 4.1 Field Monitoring

HRCSL is aware that participation in democratic governance is critical to the enjoyment of other human rights. Pursuant to its mandate HRCSL monitored the early voting done on 15<sup>th</sup> June, followed by the 24<sup>th</sup> June polls to assess the extent to which the right to participation in democratic /political governance was enjoyed by eligible voters.

HRCSL monitored the early voting process at Centre 11070 in Bo, Centre 02001 in Kenema, and Centre 15001 in the Western Area Rural, ECSL district office. The voting was also monitored in Makeni and Port Loko.

On polling day, a total of 417 polling centres comprising 2,243 polling stations were monitored across fifteen districts of the country by 170 HRCSL monitors. Among the HRCSL Commissioners, staff, volunteers, interns, youth ambassadors and representatives of the DHRCs were two OHCHR staff (seconded to HRCSL) and Boubacar Njie, the Director of Complaints at the Gambian Human Rights Commission.

REGION	DISTRICT		NO. OF CENTRES MONITORED	NO. OF STATIONS MONITORED	TOTAL NO. OF STATIONS MONITORED BY REGION
WESTERN AREA	Western Urban		131	771	1,548
	Western Rural		117	777	
Southern	Bo		23	107	282
	Moyamba		17	63	
	Pujehun		22	65	
	Bonthe	(Island)	6	16	
		Mainland	10	31	
Northern	Bombali		9	47	84

	Tonkolili	1	6	
	Koinadugu	6	25	
	Falaba	2	6	
North	Port Loko	16	72	111
Western	Kambia	6	39	
Eastern	Kenema	20	85	218
	Kailahun	18	85	
	Kono	13	48	
Total No. of Centres and Stations		417	2,243	2,243

**Table showing total number of HRCSL monitors on Election day by region**

Region	District		No. of monitors	Total No. of monitors by region
Western Area	Urban		74	132
	Rural		58	
Southern	Bo		3	17
	Moyamba		5	
	Pujehun		3	
	Bonthe	Mainland	4	
		Island	2	
Northern	Bombali		7	11
	Tonkolili		1	
	Falaba		1	
	Koinadugu		2	
North	Port Loko		11	
Western	Kambia		2	13
Eastern	Kailahun		6	17
	Kono		7	
	Kenema		4	
Total			170	170

All monitors were given monitoring tools (i.e. checklist) to help guide their work and to document findings of the monitoring exercise.

Monitoring was done individually and in teams. Newly recruited staff, interns, volunteers, youth ambassadors and DHRC representatives monitored at least two polling centres individually. Other staff and Commissioners monitored in teams after each had first observed the opening of polls at a particular centre (to ascertain whether ballot boxes were empty and sealed before the commencement of voting), for a few hours before teaming up (at midday) to rove. Roving was done in teams of between four and five people. Each team was assigned to monitor at least 4 polling centres. About thirty minutes to the prescribed closing time of 5 p.m., each team member returned to the centres where they witnessed the opening of polls, in order for them to ascertain the exact time when voting ended. At the close of polls, each monitor observed the counting and tallying of votes and the publication of results in each polling centre.

In the Western Area Urban, opening and closure of polls was monitored by each monitor before joining their respective teams to rove.

#### **4.2 Early voting for Hajj Pilgrims – 15<sup>th</sup> June**

In a bid to ensure that every eligible citizen participate in political decision making ECSL, pursuant to Section 33 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, the PEA 2022 and the Public Elections Early Voting Regulation 2023, conducted early voting for Hajj pilgrims before their departure on 19<sup>th</sup> June. Voting was done on 15<sup>th</sup> June in all the sixteen districts for presidential elections only. Intending pilgrims had to apply for their names to be included in the Early Voter Register.

It was observed as follows:

- All the centres opened and closed on time.
- Party agents (of the APC and SLPP) and local observers from the National Elections Watch (NEW) and Elections Observer Network (EON) monitored the voting process. There were also monitors from the PPRC and ONS. International observers from the European Union (EU) also monitored the process in Bo and Makeni.
- Tactile ballot guides were available and voting was done in secret.



*A female pilgrim going through the procedures for casting her votes at the ECSL office in the Western Area Rural (Centre NO. 15001)*



- Personnel from the SLP were present in all the centres. In Bo, three armed personnel were deployed outside the centres.
- One female voter in Port Loko and six voters in Kenema were disenfranchised because their names were not found in the voter registers. In Bo, four people were unable to cast their votes because they had not applied to do so before voting day. They informed HRCSL that they were unaware of the procedures and processes for early voting.

### 4.3 Polling Day – 24<sup>th</sup> June

#### Right to participate in the national decision making

In accordance with Section 31(1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, Article 25 of the ICCPR and Article 21(1) and (3) of the UDHR (1948), on 24<sup>th</sup> June, Sierra Leoneans exercised their franchise to determine the fate of the country for the next five years.

On polling day, a total of 417 polling centres comprising 2,243 polling stations were monitored across fifteen districts of the country by 170 HRCSL monitors. Below are findings of the monitoring:

- **High voter turnout:** HRCSL observed that turnout was good by the long queues of electorates at all polling centres in the early hours of the day. People were out as early as 5:00 a.m. and queued up outside the polling centres to cast their votes.



*Voters in long queues waiting to cast their votes at Polling Centre 16003, in Freetown*

- **Priority for Special categories of voters:** Despite the long queues, HRCSL observed that in all the stations monitored priority was given to the aged, pregnant women, lactating mothers, PwDs, sick people and those who accompanied them, to cast their votes without delay. In some polling stations the elderly queued up in separate lines so that they could be easily identified.

- **Disenfranchisement of voters:** while the right to participation was enjoyed by a good number of voters, some electorates who turned up at polling centres were unable to cast their votes, whilst some others whose names were not found on the register were still allowed to vote.



*Elderly people in a separate queue at polling centre 16169, open space Wallace Johnson Street, waiting to cast their votes*

HRCSL observed the following:

- In the Western Area Urban eligible voters were disenfranchised in 17 out of the 91 centres monitored. Some of the reasons were either that their names were not found on the Voters' Registers even though they had their valid Voter Identification Cards (VIC) or that some other people had voted using their names.
- One voter at Kissy Police Primary School, (Centre No. 16080) and two voters at Ahmadiyya Muslim Primary School, Morabi (Centre No. 15025) were denied the right to vote because their names were not found on the voter register.
- At the Great Hall, Milton Margai Technical University (Centre No. 15092), Gideon Secondary School Kuntolor (Centre No. 16058) in Freetown, and SDA Primary School, Bottom Mango Waterloo (Centre No. 15001) in the Western Area Rural, eligible voters with valid voter identification cards did not vote because they were informed by ECSL polling staff that their names had already been ticked in the voter register.
- At Open Space 1&2 Upper Howe Street, Sewa Ground (Centre Nos. 16146 and 16147) voters with surnames starting with the letters "T to Z" were unable to cast their votes due to suspicion of irregularities on the part of ECSL staff. The SLP intervened and transported the ECSL staff and voting materials to the CID. The allegation of ballot stuffing was found to be untrue and the voting materials sent to ECSL regional head office. By the time the materials were brought back for voting to start it was almost 5p.m. The voters became impatient, rowdy and the polling staff was unable to set up the station for voting to commence.
- At Centre No. 12006 in Bonthe Island, military personnel attached to a ruling party member prevented an aspirant of the APC from voting on the grounds that he was campaigning for his party at the polling centre.

- In Koinadugu District, 14 eligible voters from 4 polling stations were unable to vote because their names were omitted in the voter registers. The centres were: Centre No. 6071 Kamasorie (4), Centre No. 6067 DEC School Kafogo (3), Centre No. 3961 DEC School Sagbaba (3), Centre No. 6074 Fadugu (4)

### ● **Opening and Closing of Polling Centres**

Section 71 of the PEA 2022 states that, *“The hours of voting shall be from 7 O'clock in the morning to 5 O'clock in the afternoon or such later time as the Electoral Commission may allow.”*

HRCSL observed that voting started between 7:05 a.m. and 10 a.m. at most of the polling stations monitored nationwide. Centers/stations that started late were related to challenges such as late arrival of election materials, wrong voter register, mismatch of ballot boxes with their covers and in some instances inadequate number of ECSL staff to carry out their duties. In the North-Western Region, voting started between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. in most of the stations monitored and at 10:00 a.m. at Centre No. 10230, in Masimera Chiefdom, Port Loko District.

At the DEC School Taninihun (Centre No. 13114) in the Madina Village, Moyamba District, polling started at 12:30 p.m.

The delayed commencement led to tensions and a lot of rowdiness at those centres, as eligible voters vented out their anger and frustration, (laced with insults) on the ECSL staff. While some voters stayed in the queue, others went home and returned later.

To compensate for the late start, the ECSL released a notice extending the closing time from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. At 7 p.m., there were still long queues in some of the polling centres. Voters in the queues before closing time were allowed to cast their votes. At the Amaria Primary School, Elebank Street, off Mountain Cut (Centre No.16140) voting commenced at 2pm and ended at 9:30p.m. Voting also ended at 9pm at the St. Joseph's Primary School, Howe Street (Centres No.16147 & 16148).



*An aged voter who is also a PWD being assisted by the PCM and relatives to limb the stairs to access his polling station at the Amaria School in Freetown*

### ● **Accessibility:**

HRCSL observed that the centres monitored were easily located within the communities. However, accessibility to some of these centres was a problem, particularly for the physically challenged, visually impaired and the elderly. Some centres did not have ramps for persons using wheel chairs; other centres had stations located at the top floors (particularly school buildings) and voters had to climb stairs to get to their voting stations. For example, polling

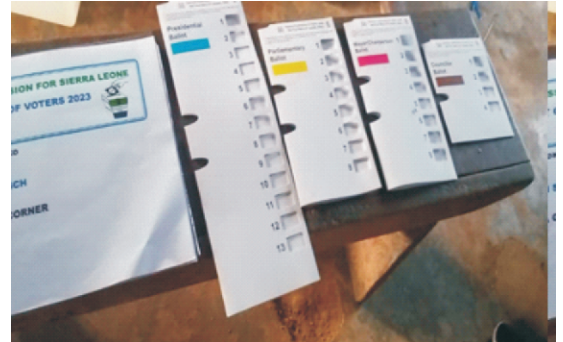


stations 9 and 10 at Joy Primary School (Centre No. 15129) in the Western Area Urban, were situated on the second floor of the school building, and could only be accessed by climbing stairs.

Physically challenged and the elderly persons were assisted either by Polling Centre Managers (PCMs) or their relatives.

### **Availability of Tactile Ballot Guides (TBGs)**

ECSL had earlier informed HRCSL that TBGs will be available for visually-impaired voters at all polling centres. HRCSL observed that the TBGs were available in majority of the centres monitored in the Western Area Rural, Southern, Northwest, Northern and Eastern Regions.



*TBGs on display at polling station 16134, UMC Primary School in Freetown*

However, HRCSL observed that TBGs though available were not utilized due to lack of awareness by the voters.

In the Western Area Urban, TBGs were available in only seventeen (17) of the 109 polling centres monitored. In the remaining 92 polling centres, the ECSL allowed a trusted person (mostly relatives) to accompany visually-impaired voters to cast their votes. This procedure allowed visually-impaired voters to participate in the electoral process, but compromised the secrecy of the votes.

- **Transparency of the voting process:**

HRCSL noted that due regard was given to party agents and observers. Before the voting commenced, ECSL staff ensured that party agents and observers were present to witness the initial stages of the process. These included the verification of the quantity of sensitive voting materials received, the recording of seal numbers for each ballot box and the sealing of the ballot boxes. The ballot boxes were then displayed for voting to begin.



*Presiding Officer preparing to count the votes at the Great Hall Milton Margai College of Education polling Centre 15092*

Eligible voters were required to either append their signature or thumb print in the Voters' Register beside their name before they were issued with ballot papers. However, in some others stations such as in Port Loko and Western Area Urban, ECSL officials only ticked the names of the voters in the Voters' register. After voting, the fore finger of each voter was inked to avoid double voting.



At the close of polls, unused ballot papers were counted. The seal numbers on each of the ballot boxes were read out for confirmation before the ballot boxes were opened and ballot papers counted. All votes cast were counted in the presence of party agents and accredited observers. After counting, the Result Reconciliation Forms (RRFs) were filled by the Presiding officer, signed by party agents and observers present. Signed duplicate copies of each RRF were given to all the party agents and one duplicate copy was published outside the respective polling stations.



*A NEW observer and party agents observing the counting process at Al-Kam School polling Centre No. 16233*

- **Maintenance of Law and Order**

The Office of the National Security (ONS) coordinated the deployment of security personnel from various security sectors including the SLP, the RSLAF, SLCS and Local Council police to provide security at polling centres nationwide.

Security Forces were stationed at each polling centre monitored, with one or two armed OSD/military personnel around the precincts. RSLAF personnel armed with guns and SLP personnel armed with tear gas cannisters were seen around the precincts in some polling centres such as St. Joseph Primary School (Center No. 12007), DEC Police School (Centre No.12006) and ICS Primary school (Centre No. 12004) in the Bonthe Municipality.

Roving security teams were also seen and deployed at centres where reports of violence were received. In centres where violence erupted or was likely to erupt, the roving teams deplored additional personnel to strengthen security and respond promptly.

Security personnel were found to be professional in the execution of their duties and they contributed in maintaining law and order in polling stations that were found to be very chaotic.

The ONS and ECSL were very proactive in responding to calls from the HRCSL Situation Room on security concerns at some polling stations to which their attention was drawn.



*Security personnel at polling Centre No. 16175, Dr. June Holst Roness School (left) and polling centre 16169, Open Space, Wallace Johnson Street, by Central Police (right)*

Voting was conducted in a peaceful atmosphere in almost all of the centres monitored with the exception of the few centres mentioned below:

In the Western Area Urban and Rural, HRCSL recorded incidents of violence in the following locations:

- At the Amaria School (Centre No. 16140), violence erupted as a result of wrong deployment of ballot boxes. Ballot boxes meant for the Annie Walsh Memorial School (Centre No. 16139) were wrongly deployed at Amaria School. When the ECSL sought to retrieve the wrongly deployed boxes, electorates violently attacked police personnel and seized the ballot boxes on suspicion for the possibility of ballot stuffing. The situation was brought under control through the intervention of the RSLAF.
- **At Open Space 1&2 Upper Howe Street, Sewa Ground** (Centre Nos. 16146 and 16147) that were relocated to the St. Joseph's Primary School, the Ward Coordinator was surrounded by angry voters who accused him of ballot stuffing when he tried to set up an additional polling station in the crowded area. (See further details under section on Disenfranchisement).
- **At the Sierra Leone Muslim Union Secondary School, Portee** (Centre No. 16054), there was chaos when the centre ran out of presidential ballot papers towards the close of the polls. The Ward Coordinator who had collected supplementary ballot papers was upon his return to the center misunderstood by voters, who accused him of ballot stuffing. They assaulted him, destroyed the ballot papers in his possession and handed him over to the police.
- **At Christ Standard-Hastings**, (Center No. 15101), tensions mounted and fighting

ensued between impatient voters and polling staff when the centre ran out of ballot papers around 1:30 p.m. The security personnel quelled the situation and voting recommenced at 3:00 p.m. after the PCM received the additional ballot papers.

- **In the Southern Region, HRCSL recorded violence in the following locations:**  
**At St. Joseph's Convent, Moyamba (Centre No.13113)** a party agent of the SLPP had an altercation with an observer from the American Embassy. While the observer was trying to send a report to the Embassy's Situation Room, the agent snatched his phone. They were both taken to the Moyamba Police Station and the matter was later resolved peacefully.

- **At the I.C.S School (Centre No. 13111)** in Moyamba, violence erupted over the replacement of a stationed APC party agent with a roving agent without the knowledge of the PCM. The SLPP party agents opposed this action by APC and fighting ensued. The Centre was closed down for about 30 minutes.

- **In the Northern Region, HRCSL recorded violence in the following locations:**  
**At Manthonkara Community (Centre No. 07099) in Magburaka Town, Tonkolili District** - the Head Master of Baptist Primary School who was also the PCM, was assaulted by youths on suspicion of having extra ballot papers in his office. He was rescued by the police and taken to the police station.

- **At Majau Community (Centre No. 04188) in Makeni, Bombali District** - a polling officer was assaulted by youths after he was accused of soiling his fingers with ink with the intention to invalidate votes cast. The security intervened and he was withdrawn from the Centre by ECSL.

No incidents of violence was recorded by HRCSL in the Eastern and North-Western Regions.

- **Identification of Polling Stations within the centres:** At the start of polls, there were no visible voters list displayed to direct voters to their respective stations. Furthermore, there were no ECSL queue controllers to direct voters to stations where they should find their names to vote. This caused confusion and tensions in some polling stations and observers had to assist.

- **Identification and number of ECSL personnel:**  
In about 70% of the centres monitored in the Western Area Urban, HRCSL observed that the ECSL personnel were without any form of identification such as identity cards



or overcoats, to differentiate them from the voters. Some polling staff expressed fear of wearing the ECSL identification materials, while others stated that they were not given any. However, one senior staff of ECSL in Freetown informed HRCSL that the aprons were available but some Ward Coordinators did not take them (along with the voting materials) to distribute to the polling staff. HRCSL also observed this lack of identification of polling staff in the Northern Region.

To some extent, the lack of identification particularly of the PCMs posed challenges for voters who had issues or concerns to be addressed and was also, a major cause of violence against ECSL staff. As a result, voters were left with no alternative but to seek assistance from local observers and security personnel who were clearly identified with the organizational overcoats /uniforms.

In some centres there were inadequate number of ECSL personnel to man all the stations. For example, at Baptist School Regent Road (Centre No. 16149) there was not enough ECSL personnel to man all 6 polling stations. The PCM had to reduce the number of polling staff in four stations to set up the remaining two stations. This led to staff having to multi-task, leading to the delay in the voting process.

- **Accreditation of Observation of the voting process**

Prior to polling day ECSL issued accreditation cards to political parties, state institutions, international and regional observers and numerous CSOs to monitor the polls.

- **Party agents** - The presence of predominantly the APC and SLPP party agents was glaring in every polling station visited. Political party agents of the NGC were seen in some of the stations whilst those of the NDA, ADP, CDP, UDM, PMDC and representatives of independent candidates were seen in only few centres. The party agents were also seen with the ECSL supplied Final Voters Register (FVR), which they used to verify voters. The list provided was not sorted alphabetically within the surname, adding to delays in identifying voters with common surnames on the list



*Vice Chairperson of HRCSL (centre) with ECSL Accreditation card around his neck engaging the PCM at Buxton Memorial Primary School in Freetown*



- **Presence of Local Observers:** In addition to HRCSL, state institutions and local CSOs observed the voting process. Many were seen roving in and out of polling centres. These included: ONS, PPRC, Native Consortium, National Union of Photographers, Civil Rights Coalition, Citizens Advocacy Network, Women's Forum, Elections Observer Network (EON), SLAJ, National Elections Watch (NEW), and Council of Churches in Sierra Leone.



*Local observers from the Election Observer Network monitoring the voting process at Mafa Field, polling centre 16246 (left)*



*HRCSL monitors and a PFSL observer inside a polling station in Kenema*

- **Presence of International Observers:** International observers from the West African Network for Peace (WANEP), West African Independent Observers Group, Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Center (KAIPKTC), European Union (EU), Commonwealth, UN Women, Carter Centre, British High Commission were seen observing



*US Embassy Observers monitoring voting at Centre No. 16080, Kissy Police Station in the Western Area Urban*



*HRCSL staff Aminata Haja Bawoh (extreme right) with International Observers from AU & ECOWAS*

the process in different parts of the country Party agents, local and international observers not only observed the casting of the votes but were present during the tally and counting of the votes. Political party agents and some observers signed the Results Reconciliation Forms (RRF).

- **Media Coverage** -local journalists moved around polling centres to cover the situation on the ground. They interviewed ECSL personnel and voters on the voting process. Radio stations gave regular updates on the process to the listening public.
- **Secrecy of the vote** - Section 36 of the PEA 2022 states that “*at any public election or referenda voting shall be done by secret ballot*”. HRCSL noted with concern that in the Western Area Urban, the secrecy of the ballot was compromised in polling centres located in open spaces where cloth screens were used. At the National Fire Force, Tower Hill (Centre No. 16271), the 6 polling stations were very close such that voters had to pull the cloth screens over their heads to mark their ballot papers. At the Central Mosque, the proximity of the polling stations to the ECSL staff was such that the ECSL staff could easily identify the candidate that was being voted for.
- For visually impaired voters who did not use the tactile ballot papers, assistance of relatives or polling staff compromised the secrecy of their vote.

#### 4.4 The HRCSL Situation Room

The HRCSL SR commenced operations immediately after the launch on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and was housed for 9 days at the Bintumani Conference Centre. Four (4) staff were assigned to work in the SR. HRCSL Commissioners also joined the staff daily for short periods to follow up on issues. The SR was particularly active on election/polling day during which real time information was received from HRCSL field monitors and the general public mainly through calls made to the SR. The SR team promptly acted on information received by engaging the relevant EMBs to address the situation.

A total of 69 calls and 24 WhatsApp messages were received from 38 polling centres across the country, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Number of calls and WhatsApp messages received from HRCSL monitors and the general public on polling day**

Region	District	No. of calls received				No. of WhatsApp messages received		
		From HRCSL monitor	From the public	Regional Totals		from HRCSL Monitor	from the public	Regional Totals

Western Region	Urban	51	12	<b>67</b>	9	11	<b>20</b>
	Rural	3	1		0	0	
Southern	Bonthe	1	0	<b>2</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
	Moyamba	1	0		0	0	
Northern	Makeni	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	1	<b>1</b>
North West	Port Loko	0	0	<b>0</b>	2	0	<b>3</b>
	Kambia	0	0		0	1	
<b>Total</b>		56	13	<b>69</b>	11	13	<b>24</b>
<b>Grand Totals</b>		<b>69</b>			<b>24</b>		

Over forty seventy percent (47.4%) of the issues reported were from polling centres in the Western Area Urban and the remaining fifty-two percent (52.4%) were all from the Western Area Rural, Southern, Northern and North-Western Regions as shown in the table below.

**Table 2**                      **Number of issues reported by region**

Region	District	Issues reported
Western Area	Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unavailability of voting materials at the station</li> <li>• Late arrival of voting materials</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrong Voter Register</li> <li>• Some ballot boxes without covers</li> <li>• Unavailability of accreditation cards for some ECSL Polling staff</li> <li>• Inadequate number of ECSL staff</li> <li>• Some polling stations did not operate on to the end of polls.</li> <li>• Disenfranchisement as voters were denied the right to vote because their voter identification card did not have pictures</li> <li>• Violence erupted between political party agents, voters and ECSL staff due to late delivery of voting materials</li> </ul>
	Rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortage of Parliamentary ballot papers, tactile ballot papers</li> <li>• Late opening of the voting centre</li> <li>• A voter reported that someone else had voted under her name</li> <li>• One adult male voter manhandled by security personnel</li> </ul>
Southern Region	Bonthe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Party agents were refused access to polling centres</li> </ul>
	Moyamba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unavailability of ballot boxes</li> </ul>
Northern	Bombali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disenfranchisement as name not on register</li> </ul>
North-West	Port Loko	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballot boxes without covers and inadequate supplies of voting materials</li> <li>• Late arrival of voting materials</li> </ul>
	Kambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disenfranchisement of security officers who were not registered in that district</li> </ul>



Depending upon the nature of the issues, these were forwarded either to the ECSL or the ONS situation rooms for action. Calls related to the conduct of the polls were referred to ECSL and those that bordered on violence were referred to the ONS.

**Table 3: Number of issues referred by HRCSL and acted on by relevant institutions**

Region	District	Calls			WhatsApp messages		Institutions
		Total No.	No. for		Total	No. For	
		referred	which action was taken		No. referred	which action was taken	
Western Region	Urban	63	60		20	20	ECSL
			3			0	ONS
	Rural	4	3		0	0	ECSL
			1		0	0	ONS
Southern	Bonthe	2	1		0	0	ECSL
	Moyamba		1		0	0	ECSL
Northern	Makeni	0	0		1	1	ECSL
North West	Port Loko	0	0		2	2	ECSL
	Kambia		0		1	1	ECSL

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, the SR was relocated to the HRCSL Headquarters and continued receiving and documenting calls on elections related issues. A total number of 36 incidents were documented and preliminary enquiries conducted. Follow-up actions are detailed in the post-elections section of this report.

On the whole the objectives for which the SR was set up was fully achieved. It contributed to the peaceful nature in which the election was conducted and enhanced and promoted citizens' right to participation.

#### **4.5 The Gender Dimension - Women's Inclusion and Participation**

According to ECSL, 3,374,258 people registered to vote in the 24<sup>th</sup> June polls of which 1,614,729 (47.9%) were males and 1,759,529 (52.1) were females.





*Women supporters during SLPP campaign*

HRCSL observed that majority of the people that participated in the campaigns were women and that they were seen in their party colours galvanizing massive support for their political parties. Women's participation as voters was commendable. On polling day, women including older women were out very early and waited patiently in long queues to cast their votes even though some of the centres did not open at 7 a.m.

- **GoSL's Affirmative Action for increased female participation in political decision making**

HRCSL noted that in 2022, GoSL demonstrated commitment to promoting gender equality and women's participation in politics a strategy which paved the way for greater inclusion of women in political decision making.

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act of 2022 was passed in Parliament in November and assented to by the President in December 2022. Additionally, Section 58(2) of the PEA 2022 requires political parties to ensure that 1 out of every 3 candidates nominated should be a female and Sections 41 and 42 of the PPA 2022 provide a framework for promoting women's political participation.

HRCSL commends GoSL for opening the space for increased participation of women in political decision making. HRCSL further notes that these actions by GoSL is a milestone in the implementation of a longstanding recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which HRCSL has repeatedly called for in its annual report on the State

of Human Rights in Sierra Leone.



*The Chairperson (in white t-shirt and brown over-coat) engaging another observer while people waited to cast their vote at Christ Church polling centre.*

## PART FIVE

### 5. POST-ELECTION DAY ACTIVITIES

This section sets out all the post-election day activities undertaken by HRCSL and the findings from those activities.

#### 5.1 Production and publication of Preliminary Monitoring Report

In the immediate post-election period HRCSL produced and published a preliminary report of its findings on Polling Day, from across 400 of the polling centres monitored. Information used to produce this report were got from the field and those reported to the HRCSL SR. The Preliminary report can be accessed on [www.hrc-sl.org](http://www.hrc-sl.org).

#### 5.2 Announcement of election results

Pursuant to Section 51 (2) of the PEA 2022, the National Returning Officer who is the ECSL CEC announced the outcome of the presidential election on 27<sup>th</sup> June declaring Julius Maada Bio of the SLPP as the winner with 56.17%. The CEC had on 26<sup>th</sup> June announced the 60% provisional results.

In July 2023, all the results for the Parliamentary and Local Council elections were announced by ECSL.

#### Breakdown of Election Result by Gender

No. of registered voters					
Male	%	Female	%	Total	Disability
1,614,729	48%	1,759,529	52%	3,374,258	22,385

Type of Election		Male		Female		Total	Disability
		No.	%	No.	%		
		N0.	%				
Presidential	Candidates	12	92%	01	8%	13	
	Winner	01					0
Parliamentary	Candidates	590	66%	299	34%	889	



	Winners	94	69%	41	31%	136	0
Mayoral	Candidates	23	66%	12	34%	35	
Chairperson	Candidates	56	78%	16	22%	72	0
Mayoral/Chairpersons	Winners	19	59%	13	41%	32	0
Local Councilors	Candidates	1,691	62%	1034	38%	2,725	
	Winners	329	67%	164	33%	493	0
Kailahun DC	Winners	19	66%	10	34%	29	0
Kenema DC		11	58%	08	42%	19	0
Kenema CC		18	67%	09	33%	27	0
Kono DC		18	72%	07	28%	25	0
Koidu Sembehun CC		11	69%	05	31%	16	0
Bombali DC		16	76%	05	24%	21	0
Makeni CC		09	60%	06	40%	15	0
Falaba DC		14	67%	04	33%	18	0
Tonkolili DC		19	66%	10	34%	29	0
Kambia DC		15	65%	08	35%	23	0
Karene DC		14	67%	07	33%	21	0
Port Loko DC		21	75%	07	25%	28	0
Port Loko CC		08	62%	05	38%	13	0
Bo DC		19	70%	08	30%	27	0
Bo CC		10	56%	08	44%	18	0
Bonthe MC		07	64%	04	36%	11	0
Bonthe DC		13	68%	06	32%	19	0
Moyamba DC		14	64%	08	36%	22	0
Pujehun DC		16	67%	08	33%	24	0
Western Rural DC		19	63%	11	37%	30	0
Western Urban DC		26	65%	14	35%	40	0
Koinadugu DC		12	67%	06	33%	18	0

**Data provided by ECSL Gender Unit**



The implementation of the new laws led to an increase in number of female representation in Parliament. For the very first time, more than thirty percent of the elected members of Parliament are women. There has also been an increase in the number of women in the local governance.

Despite this significant progress, challenges to women's participation at the higher levels of political decision making were noted by HRCSL. Only one political party nominated a female presidential candidate and three nominated a female as presidential running mate. Only one female Paramount chiefs was fortunate to be elected to the Parliament out of the fourteen allocations for chieftaincy representations.

The provisions in the Acts only require political parties to ensure that one out of every three candidate nominated to Parliament must be a woman. Thus, the positioning of the names was very critical in determining the number of women to be elected to Parliament. Several Advocacy by women's groups for political parties to endeavor to put women at the top of nominee list fell on deaf ears. As a result, due to the positioning of names on the lists of candidates for Parliamentary seat allocations under the District Block System, no female candidate was elected to Parliament from Falaba District. The four seats allocated to the district were won by APC and the SLPP, each having two seats and the first two on the lists of both political parties were males.

Persons with disability were not elected to any positions at this election.

## **5.2 Monitoring**

HRCSL continued its monitoring of the elections process after polling day and noted that for some people, the enjoyment of the right to freedom of association was affected by the actions of party supporters of either the APC or SLPP in their respective strongholds.

HRCSL noted through its media monitoring and complaints received from the public that there were limitations to the enjoyment of some election-related rights in the immediate post-elections period particularly leading to and after the announcement of the presidential results. Complaints of post-election violence and intimidation were received by the regional offices and the HRCSL Situation Room. In some cases, the violence resulted in displacement as some people fled their homes out of reprisals or threats of reprisals from supporters in the strongholds of the opposition or ruling political parties.

**Right to life:** On 25<sup>th</sup> June, before the official announcement of the results a member of the APC party was shot and killed allegedly by armed military personnel who fired shots at the APC party office in Freetown to disperse jubilating party supporters, who claimed their candidate had won the presidential polls.

**Freedom of association:**

At Baaka village in Dama Chiefdom, a male supporter of the APC informed HRCSL that on 24<sup>th</sup> June he was assaulted and arrested by Gola Forest Guards who later put him in custody for 7 days. He also informed HRCSL that a member of SLPP instructed that all supporters of APC should be driven out of the village. He further informed HRCSL that he reported the matter to the police and local authorities but no action was taken.

In Kabala, APC supporters alleged they were intimidated and acts of violence perpetrated against them by SLPP supporters and police officers after 60% of the presidential election result was announced by ECSL on 26<sup>th</sup> June. APC supporters were reportedly assaulted around the Kabala Clock Tower which is very close to the SLPP office. Tear gas cannisters were fired into the APC office while supporters were assembled there to listen to the 60% results that were to be announced by the ECSL CEC. The violence allegedly continued after the final election result was announced on 27<sup>th</sup> June.

In Freetown, on 27th June, seven APC supporters allegedly poured hot water mixed with acid on the buttocks of a 34-year old SLPP supporter who had gone to inquire why they had assaulted his daughter who was hawking some foodstuff around the area and calling it 'SLPP cake'. The victim sustained hot water burns from his hips down to his knees. The matter was reported at the Congo Cross Police Station and the suspects were charged to court and refused bail.

In the Kenema District, on 30th June the APC district secretary reported that APC supporters in the Pandebu village in Baoma Town, Baaka village in Dama Chiefdom and Baoma Village, Koya Chiefdom were assaulted by SLPP supporters after the announcement of the presidential results. Some alleged that no action was taken by the police on their matters.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July a supporter of the SLPP in Mattru Jong, was assaulted by four APC supporters who accused him of insulting their tribesmen (Themne people) and also accused them of not voting for the SLPP. The victim sustained injuries on his body as a result of the assault. The matter was reported to the police and the four (3 males, 1 female) people were arrested and later charged to court. The accused persons were granted bail and the trial was ongoing.

**Freedom of movement:**

In Lunsar Town, youths (mainly supporters of the APC) from Madigbo (a section in the Lunsar community) obstructed the free movement of vehicles and pedestrians, barricaded the roads, pelted stones, attacked innocent people and robbed them of their goods, after the announcement of 60% of the results of the Presidential elections. They also attacked and threatened to kill police officers and burn down the Lunsar police station. Some police officers allegedly sustained injuries in the process of dispersing them. Eleven male suspects were later arrested and transferred to the Regional Police Headquarters in Port Loko City for further investigation.

**The right to participate in public affairs through freely chosen representatives:** the results of the presidential polls was rejected by the APC candidate. International observers from Carter Centre and the European Union questioned the credibility of the results claiming that the tallying process was not transparent. NEW, which is a prominent national observer group that had monitored elections since 2002 also questioned the results claiming that according to their statistical analysis no candidate was able to secure the 55% constitutional requirement to avoid a run-off election between the two leading candidates. Neither the APC party nor any other eligible voter challenged the result in the Supreme Court as required by the PEA 2022.

Initially, Parliamentary and Local Council elections results also announced by the CEC of the ECSL were rejected by the APC. Only one APC Parliamentarian took the oath of office during the opening of the sixth Parliament.

The refusal of the elected representatives of the APC party to participate in governance led to some people and some areas of the country being deprived of the right to participate in the national decision making. To overcome this stalemate, the ICPNC facilitated a dialogue process which eventually resulted in the signing of the tripartite peace agreement among APC, SLPP and the international community on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2023. The APC then allowed all it elected MPs and Councilors to participate in governance.

### 5.3 Media Engagement

HRCSL held several media engagements on radio and television stations to discuss its findings on Polling day.

1.	4th July	SLBC Radio in Makeni	Current Affairs Program	HRCSL's preliminary report on the June 24th general elections	Vice Chairperson, Victor I. Lansana
2.	5th July	Radio Democracy 98.1	Good Morning Salone	HRCSL's preliminary report on the June 24th general elections	Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah
3.	10th July	AYV TV	This Day	Position of HRCSL on the general elections	Vice Chairperson, Victor I. Lansana

## **PART SIX - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 CONCLUSION**

HRCSL's participation in the electoral process was primarily to assess the extent to which eligible Sierra Leoneans enjoyed their right to vote and be voted for in accordance with national, regional and international standards.

HRCSL successfully monitored the various phases in the electioneering process and commends ECSL, PPRC, SLP and ONS for ensuring that all phases of the elections were conducted in a peaceful manner, despite several challenges. HRCSL also commends those political parties whose participation in the elections contributed to promoting democratic governance.

HRCSL notes that although efforts were made by EMBs to respect human rights during the entire period, the enjoyment of the right to participation was not fully enjoyed by all as seen in some of the challenges outlined above.

On the whole, compliance with human rights standards throughout the entire process was satisfactory. HRCSL's monitoring and engagements on the process from registration to polling day, to a large extent contributed to the peaceful nature and conduct of the electoral phases.

### **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

HRCSL makes recommendations to the following institutions and affected stakeholders:

#### **ECSL**

ECSL should:

##### ***Voter Registration and Verification***

- Ensure that sufficient registration machines are available with charged batteries and back-up power supply available for each registration centre.
- Provide sufficient training for registration staff.
- Deploy staff earlier to avoid late start of registration
- Ensure that all registration machines are properly programmed.
- Ensure that the registration locations are accessible for PWDs.
- Consider creating mobile registration points for hard to reach areas

##### ***PR System***

ECSL to review the threshold for gaining seats in parliament and local councils in the



district block system to enable more participation of smaller political parties and independent candidates.

### ***Campaign***

ECSL to allow Presidential candidates to campaign in all districts irrespective of not fielding candidates in those districts.

### ***Early Voting/ Polling Day***

- Ensure that procedures for early voting are well disseminated in order not to disenfranchise eligible voters.
- Ensure that voting materials are transported to the respective stations and centres in good time to avoid a recurrence of the late start of polls.
- Ensure that polling staff are easily identified by providing them with the required outfit and identification gear.
- Ensure that all sensitive materials are adequate for the targeted numbers of voter per station.
- Create adequate space for the confidentiality of the vote in polling station centres located in open spaces.
- Continue to provide accreditation to local, international observers and party agents in order to enhance credibility to the process.

## **PPRC**

PPRC should

- Have engagement with political parties on respect for each other.
- Implement penalties in the provisions of its Code of Conduct against defaulting political parties and their supporters.
- Review the guidelines on street rallies.
- Advise political parties to desist from using marshals during the course of campaign.
- Work with the SLP to provide state security for all presidential candidates during the electioneering periods.

## **Political parties**

Political parties should adhere to the PPRC Campaign Guidelines particularly with respect to closing time for campaigning, destruction of banners and hate speech.

NCRA should streamline the process for registration of first time voters and disseminate the information clearly.

**Government**

1. Government to increase the percentage for women's participation in decision making to fifty percent (as recommended by the TRC) over the next five years.
2. Government to amend the Public Elections Act and the PPA to require political parties to give a percentage quota to PwDs in parliamentary and local council elections.

## APPENDIX 1

### CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING 2022 VOTER REGISTRATION

#### HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE

##### Checklist for Monitoring 2022 Voter Registration

Name of Monitor.....

Date .....

Time .....

Registration Center #.....

Ward #.....

Constituency # .....

District .....

Region .....

Is the location of the Registration Centre accessible	YES	NO
---	-----	----

Are Party Agents present in the centre	YES	NO
--	-----	----

Which party representatives are present  
.....  
.....  
.....

Did the process begin on time (7am)	YES	NO
-------------------------------------	-----	----

If No why?.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Has anyone been denied the right to register	YES	NO
--	-----	----

If yes, Why

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
Is the centre easily accessible to the aged, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and lactating mothers

YES NO

Are they given preference in the queue?

YES NO

Is there any media presence?

Is there any sign of intimidation /violence in the centre?

YES NO

If yes who is/ are involved and why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Are there any cases of underage registration?

YES NO

If yes how was it handled?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Is there any visible presence of the SLP?

YES NO

Is there any other security presence?

YES NO

If yes which ones?

.....  
.....  
.....

Did the registration close at 5pm?

YES NO

If no why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



General Comments

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Signature of Monitor**.....

## CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

### HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Name of Monitor.....

Region

.....

Date ..... Time ..... District .....

Community

.....

Name of political party having campaign .....

- **A. ADHERANCE TO CAMPAIGN TIME TABLE**

1. Are political parties adhering to the ECSL campaign time table?

YES..... NO.....

- If no, please explain.....

.....

2. Did the campaign end at 5:00pm?

YES..... NO.....

3. If no, when did it end?

- **B. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE PRESS**

4. Are supporters allowed to express themselves freely?

YES..... NO.....

If no, please give

details.....

.....

.....

5. Is there any media presence?

YES..... NO.....

If yes, how many and from which media houses?

.....

.....

.....

6. Are the media personnel allowed to take photographs and video recordings? YES ..... NO.....

If no, why? .....

.....

.....

- **C. HATE SPEECH**

7. Are provocative songs being played while processing to, or at the designated location?  
**YES ..... NO.....**

·8. Is there any use of hate speech during the course of the campaign? **YES ..... NO.....**  
If yes please explain

.....  
.....  
.....

**D. FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY & ASSOCIATION AND MOVEMENT**

9. Is there a designated location for the campaign? **YES..... NO.....**

Location of campaign .....

10. Are people prevented from accessing the campaign location? **YES..... NO.....**

If yes, please explain.....  
.....  
.....

11. Are they moving freely or are there road blocks along the way? **YES..... NO.....**

If yes, by whom.....

12. Are persons with disability able to access the campaign location? **YES..... NO.....**

If no, why.....

13. Are women able to access the campaign location? **YES..... NO.....**

If no, why.....

14. Are other people prevented from enjoying their freedom of movement? **YES..... NO.....**

If yes, by whom .....

- **E. SECURITY**

15. Is there any visible state security presence? **YES ..... NO.....**

If yes please list the institutions providing the security.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

16. Are they armed? **YES..... NO.....**

.

17. Are political party members moving along with marshals/militia?   **YES..... NO.....**

18. Are they infringing on the rights of others?   **YES..... NO.....**

• If yes, please give details.....

19. Is there any confrontation with supporters of other political parties?   **YES..... NO.....**

.....



If yes, please  
explain.....

11. Are they moving freely or are there road blocks along the way? **YES... NO.....**

If yes, by  
whom.....

12. Are persons with disability able to access the campaign location? **YES... NO...**

If no,  
why.....

13. Are women able to access the campaign location? **YES... NO...**

If no,  
why.....

14. Are other people prevented from enjoying their freedom of movement? **YES..... NO.....**

If yes, by whom  
.....

• **E. SECURITY**

15. Is there any visible state security presence? **YES .... NO.....**

- If yes please list the institutions providing the security.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

16. Are they armed? **YES..... NO.....**

•

17. Are political party members moving along with marshals/militia? **YES..... NO.....**

18. Are they infringing on the rights of others? **YES..... NO.....**

- If yes, please give details.....  
.....

.....

19. Is there any confrontation with supporters of other political parties? **YES.....**  
**NO.....**

• If Yes, please explain

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

20. Is there any confrontation with the security personnel? **YES .....** **NO.....**

• If Yes, please explain

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.....  
.....  
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21. Is there any instance of other forms of violence? **YES.....** **NO.....**

• If Yes, please explain

.....  
.....  
.....  
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.....  
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22. Is any person arrested during the campaign? **YES....** **NO....**

If yes, please explain

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23. Are persons arrested taken to any detention facility? **YES....** **NO....**

• If Yes, please explain

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- **F. OTHER OBSERVATIONS**

24. Is excessive use of alcohol visible during the campaign? **YES..... NO.....**

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25. Are prohibited drugs visible during the campaign? **YES..... NO.....**

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26. Are political parties allowing children to participate in the campaigns? **YES ..... NO**

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- **G. ABUSE OF STATE/PUBLIC RESOURCES**

27. Are Government vehicles used during the process? **YES..... NO.....**

- If yes, please explain

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**H. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS/COMMENTS**

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Signature of monitor.....

## CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING POLLING DAY



### HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE

#### CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING POLLING DAY

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Name of Monitor.....Date ..... Time-----

Polling Station..... Polling Center #..... Ward#.....Location -----

Chiefdom..... Town..... District.....

Region.....

•

1. Is the location of the Polling Centre accessible? YES ☐ NO ☐

Are party agents present? YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, how many parties are represented, and how many agents per party?

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2. Are accredited local/national observers present? YES ☐ NO ☐

• If yes, how many and from which organisations/institutions?

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3. Are accredited international observers present? YES ☐ NO ☐

• If yes, how many and from which organisations/institutions?

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4. Are there any unaccredited officials within the polling centre? YES ☐ NO ☐

• If yes, who are they and why are they at the polling centre?

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.....



5. Did the voting begin on time (7am)? YES ☐ NO ☐

- If No why?

6. Are ballot papers stamped before they are issued? YES ☐ NO ☐

7. Are tactile ballot papers available for the visually impaired? YES ☐ NO ☐

8. Is voting done in secret? YES ☐ NO ☐

9. Is any person denied the right to vote? YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, why

10. Are the following categories given preference in the queues:

- Aged, YES ☐ NO ☐
- persons with disability, YES ☐ NO ☐
- pregnant women YES ☐ NO ☐
- lactating mothers? YES ☐ NO ☐

11. Is there any visible security presence? YES ☐ NO ☐

12. Are they armed? YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, what type of weapons are they carrying?

13. Is there any sign of intimidation /violence in the centre? YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, please explain what happened, who are the persons involved and what action(s) has been taken?

Have any arrests been made by the security officials? YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, who are those arrested?

14. Did the voting close at 5pm? YES ☐ NO ☐

- If no why and at what time did the voting close?  
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.....  
.....

15. Were people waiting in the queue at 5:00 PM allowed to vote? YES ☐ NO ☐

16. Were vote counted immediately at the end of the voting exercise? YES ☐ NO ☐

17. Did party agents sign all reconciliation/result forms before leaving the centre? YES ☐  
NO ☐

- Please explain.....  
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18. Did the presiding officer post the results outside of the polling station? YES ☐ NO ☐

- 
- **GENERAL QUESTIONS**
- 

19. Are people staying around the polling centre after they have voted? YES ☐  
NO ☐

- If yes, please explain.....  
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20. How was the conduct of ECSL officials and Polling Agents?

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21. How can you assess the general conduct of the security officials?

- .....  
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22. Kindly describe the human rights challenges you identified?

- .....  
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23. In your view, how was the general conduct of the polls?

Signature of Monitor.....

### **FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

Name: .....

Signature: .....



- **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR HRCSL ELECTION MONITORS**

- **DOs & DON'Ts**

- **DOs!**

- Arrive early to observe the setting up;
- Introduce yourself to the Election Officer or appropriate authority and present your accreditation;
- Wear HRCSL T-Shirt/Overcoat, and display the Electoral Commission's accreditation badge at all times during the monitoring;
- Register as a monitor;
- Where applicable, vote early on election day;
- Be neutral, impartial, objective and unbiased;
- Respect the authority of Elections Management Bodies (EMBs) and comply with their instructions;
- Maintain accuracy of monitoring and professionalism
- Base all conclusions on factual and verifiable evidence;
- Interview several witnesses should an incident occur;
- Keep a well-documented record of where you monitor, the observations made and other relevant information;
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the monitoring exercise;

- Respectfully bring to the attention of ECSL’s personnel and other relevant EMBs instances of human rights concerns for appropriate action to be taken;
  - Report all significant incidents to the Commission or to the HRCSL’s Situation Room, and record all irregularities and violations when they occur;
  - Be sensitive and cautious when taking pictures or video recordings;
  - Respect the integrity of HRCSL; and
  - Carry this Code of Conduct at all times.
- **DON’Ts!**
    - Indicate, or be seen as indicating partisan support;
    - Obstruct the electoral process;
    - Accept any gift or favours from anybody on voting day;
    - Express an opinion that can affect the outcome of the electoral process;
    - Show observation notes to a non HRCSL staff;
    - Carry any weapons;
    - Consume alcoholic beverages and smoke during monitoring;
    - Take over the role of the security personnel if there is an emergency;
    - Transport electoral materials even if requested by ECSL;
    - Make personal comments about observations or conclusions to the media (including social media) or members of the public;
    - Wear party colours.

Signed by:

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Chairperson









