

The National Election Watch (NEW) Overview

In September of 2001, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) conducted a retreat at Milton Margai College for non-partisan organizations interested in monitoring the 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone. Convened with the help of the Civil Society Movement – Sierra Leone (CSM-SL) and the National Forum for Human Rights (NFHR), 16 organizations came together for the purpose of learning about election observation and to develop a Code of Conduct for non-partisan domestic election observers. The groups involved in the retreat produced a voluntary set of standards and encouraged all other groups interested in election observation in Sierra Leone to follow these guidelines.

In December 2001, many of the organizations from the retreat along with a few new ones expressed interest in working together as an observation partnership to increase their numbers on polling day and to strengthen their reporting. With added assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat, a coalition of 18 non-partisan organizations with differing missions launched the National Election Watch (NEW), a cooperating network of civic, professional, labor and religious organizations. Efforts were made to include representatives from all sectors of civil society.

NEW elected as its Chairman, the Reverend Rogers-Wright from the Sierra Leone Council of Churches (SLCC) and, with assistance from NDI and the Commonwealth Secretariat, began to organize nationally to train and prepare monitors. NEW member organizations, Civil Society Movement, Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities and the Campaign for Good Governance, monitored the registration process and issued reports with the endorsement of NEW. NEW aims to recruit, train and deploy 2,000 domestic poll watchers on May 14th and will issue a joint, comprehensive report on the electoral process.

The NEW effort is supported by the **Commonwealth Secretariat** and **NDI** with funding from USAID/OTI and UNDP. NEW is based in NDI's Freetown office at the NDI/FORDI Resource Center at 7 Lightfoot Boston Street.

The member organizations of NEW are:

1. Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA)
2. Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU)
3. Sierra Leone Labor Congress (SLLC)
4. National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights (NCDHR)
5. Civil Society Movement (CSM-SL)
6. Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL)
7. Women's Forum
8. Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ)
9. National Forum for Human Rights (NFHR)
10. Movement for the Restoration of Democracy Sierra Leone (MRD-SL)
11. Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)
12. Center for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)
13. National Union of Sierra Leone Students (NUSS)
14. Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)
15. Academic Staff Association, University of Sierra Leone (ASA)
16. Forum for Democratic Initiatives (FORDI)
17. Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL)
18. Campaign Against Violent Events (CAVE)

In order to ensure effective implementation of program activities at the regional and district levels, NEW has put in place a structure, as follows:

**National Coordinating Council
National Coordinators**

| | Name | Umbrella Group |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | James A. Lahai | SLTU |
| 2 | Alithur Freeman | CSM |
| 3 | Rev. Rogers-Wright, Chairman | CCSL |
| 4 | Ngolo Katta | CCYA |
| 5 | Frederick Hassan Konteh | ASA |

**Regional Coordinating Council
Regional Coordinators**

| | Region | Coordinator | Umbrella Group |
|---|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Western | James A. Lahai | SLTU |
| 2 | Southern | Josephine Kenneh | CSM |
| 3 | Northern | Usman J. T. Fornah | IRCSL |
| 4 | Eastern | Rev. James Kabangai | CCSL |

**District Regional Coordinators
District Coordinators**

| | Districts | Coordinators | Umbrella Group |
|----|-------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | Koinadugu [N] | Abu Bakarr Kuyateh / Eddy Tuvay | SLTU |
| 2 | Bombali [N] | Alims Kabia / Victoria Kabia | CSM |
| 3 | Kambia [N] | A. Y. Kargbo / A. T. S. Kanu | IRCSL |
| 4 | Tonkolili [N] | Hassan Bangura / Africanus Sesay | CCSL |
| 5 | Port Loko [N] | Taylor S. Kamara / Abu Bakarr Conteh | CCYA |
| 6 | East District [W] | Maxwell Kpakra / Sinnah Bah | CCYA |
| 7 | West District [W] | Edward P.. Bockarie / Ahmed Sannoh | MRD-SL |
| 8 | Bonthe [S] | Marilyn Palmer / Rev. George Sandy | CCSL |
| 9 | Pujehun [S] | Josephine Sowa / C. S. Koroma | SLTU |
| 10 | Bo [S] | Alex Nalo / Sheku James | CSM |
| 11 | Moyamba [S] | Andrew Songu / Tenneh Alpha / [Christiana Dixon] | CCYA |
| 12 | Kono [E] | Rev. Yonga / Lilian Lahai | IRCSL |
| 13 | Kailahun [E] | Rev. Francis S. Nabieu / Patrick Kanu | IRCSL |
| 14 | Kenema [E] | F. E. A. Kallon / Sahr P. Tondoneh | MRD-SL |

The National Coordinating Council has four main responsibilities: 1) to oversee the coalition program activities; 2) to review reports on committee activities; 3) to coordinate communication between NEW and the National Electoral Commission (NEC), political parties, the media, and the general public policy, and 4) to coordinate public information, such press releases, press conferences, radio/TV broadcast and interviews.

A national training of trainers (TOT) took place on **April 4 and 5 in Freetown**, while two regional trainings were conducted on **April 23 and 24 in Makeni** for the Northern and Western Regions, and on **April 25 and 26 in Bo** for the Southern and Eastern Regions.

Selected observers trained during the Regional TOT will in turn conduct District level trainings scheduled between **April 30 and May 10**.

For further information, please contact:

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