



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE SIERRA LEONE



The President of the All Political Party Women Association gives a speech during a town hall in Kenema on the National Inclusion Action plan.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, Sierra Leoneans will return to the polls for the country’s fifth presidential and parliamentary elections since the end of the civil war in 2002. Despite the strong democratic gains the country has made since the turn of the century, the upcoming elections will take place during a time of economic crisis, increasing concerns about women’s limited participation in politics, episodes of political violence, and ongoing political party tensions in Sierra Leone. To help address these challenges and support free, fair, and credible elections and governance in Sierra Leone before, during, and after the 2023 elections, NDI implements programs that aim to increase the capacities of elected officials to carry out their roles and responsibilities, facilitate effective communication between political parties and citizens on issues important to Sierra Leoneans, and enhance the meaningful participation of women in political parties. By addressing political party tensions, prioritizing the needs and policy priorities of citizens, and increasing the inclusion of women throughout Sierra Leone’s politics, NDI and our local partners support Sierra Leone to strengthen its democratic processes, institutions, and delivery of good governance.

Increasing Effective Dialogue between Political Parties on Issues Important to Sierra Leoneans

Since the 2018 general elections, NDI has worked to facilitate effective dialogue between political parties and citizens and ensure the priorities of Sierra Leone citizens are prioritized by political parties and elected officials. To do this, NDI has partnered with the National Political Debates Committee (NPDC) to hold a series of issue-based debates. The most recent round of debates were held in January 2022 and were broadcast on live television, the radio, and on social media. The first debate saw women politicians discuss the Gender Empowerment Bill and the role of political parties in ensuring its passage and implementation. During the second debate, young politicians spoke on the use and misuse of social media, especially around election time. NDI plans to work with the NPDC to carry out another series of issue-based debates and radio programs ahead of the 2023 elections to highlight women, youth, and disabled voices.

In addition to the debates, NDI is working with local partners like the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), to increase dialogue between political parties and civilians through all-party issue forums, town halls, training sessions, and workshops. Between February and July 2022, NDI and PPRC organized all-party issue forums across Sierra Leone to convene representatives from political parties, civil society, the media, and the public in consensus building and constructive engagement on issues that are priorities for citizens. To improve the outcomes of the all-party forums, NDI and the PPRC also organized training sessions on message development and communications, so that political parties could participate in the forums in a more meaningful way.

Enhancing the Meaningful Participation of Women in Sierra Leone’s Political Processes

Carrying out programming aimed at enhancing the meaningful participation of women in Sierra Leone’s political parties and processes has been a priority of NDI’s throughout its history in Sierra Leone. Building on past efforts, NDI is working in collaboration with the Men’s Association for Gender Equality Sierra Leone (MAGE) to execute Men, Power, and Politics (MPP) workshops, as well as small group dialogue sessions between male and female party members. The MPP workshop series targets male political party leaders from the four major political parties in Sierra Leone, the All People’s Congress (APC), the Coalition for Change (C4C), the National Grand Coalition (NGC), and the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), and aims to increase their awareness and understanding of the impacts of patriarchal gender norms on their lives, families, communities, and society at large. During these workshops, participants personalize, politicize, and strategize on the role of gender in Sierra Leone to better understand how they can promote gender equality in their personal and professional lives. Dialogue sessions held between male and female party members provide a safe platform for women to share their perspectives and recommendations with their male counterparts on how to address the many challenges they face when it comes to their full inclusion in politics within their parties.

NDI is also working with Sierra Leone’s political parties and the All Political Parties Women’s Association (APPWA) to develop and implement party-specific and national inclusion action plans that aim to identify policies and actions parties can take to increase women’s inclusion. This includes enforcing laws related to sexual harassment and violence, reforming party constitutions to include quotas for women for leadership positions, and developing training manuals to provide women aspirants and party members with critical skills so that they can effectively perform their roles and take on leadership positions.

Increasing Responsiveness of Local Governments

To improve the capacities of elected officials to effectively execute their roles and responsibilities and deliver good governance to the citizens of Sierra Leone, NDI recently conducted capacity building trainings with local councilors and core council administrative staff across Sierra Leone. The training curriculum aimed to address some of the most critical challenges local officials face while performing their duties, which were identified through a survey distributed to local councils throughout Sierra Leone as well as phone interviews with various local media representatives, civil society organizations, and local councilors. During the training sessions, local councilors and staff talked through the challenges they faced, such as limited revenue generation and lack of citizen input, and created action plans for tackling these obstacles. This resulted in efforts by local councilors to bring council meetings and town halls to the citizens to better account for their priorities and needs.

Promoting Electoral Integrity

NDI is a pioneer in helping domestic civic organizations in Sierra Leone and around the world to build capacities to monitor electoral and political processes. In 1997, NDI supported the establishment of the National Election Watch (NEW), a coalition of Sierra-Leone-based nongovernmental organizations working to enhance the credibility and transparency of electoral processes within and outside of Sierra Leone. NDI has provided assistance to help organizations like NEW to understand the electoral process and domestic observation; formulate monitoring strategies; prepare training materials and observation checklists; recruit, train, deploy and evaluate observers; establish systems for internal communications; develop data management systems; draft election statements; design external communication strategies; and advocate for electoral reforms. Through financial and technical assistance, NDI contributed to the successful implementation of NEW's citizen election monitoring efforts during the 2002 and 2007 national elections and 2004 and 2008 local elections in Sierra Leone. Since their establishment, NEW has positioned itself as a trusted and leading domestic monitoring group in Sierra Leone.

Funding

NDI's current work in Sierra Leone is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy and Global Affairs Canada. Previously programming has been funded by the United States Agency for International Development, United Nations Development Programme, and the UK Department for International Development (now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office).



Young party members from 6 of Sierra Leone's political parties engage in a youth debate

Contact Information

For more information about these programs, contact:


Courtney Creek, Program Director, Central and West Africa
ccreek@ndi.org

Mohamed Konneh, Program Director, Sierra Leone
mkonneh@ndi.org

455 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2621
p: 202.728.5500 | f: 888.875.2887

www.ndi.org

 @ndi

 /National.Democratic.Institute

 @ndiafrica