

FINAL PROJECT REVIEW REPORT

2019

United Nations Development Programme

Sierra Leone


Support to the National Electoral Commission project 2016-2018

Award ID	99474		
Project Duration	2016 to March 2019		
Extension(s)	to March 2019		
Implementing Partner	None		
Total Budget		USD	12,886,274.61
Donors	Canada	USD	401,517.42
	Ireland	USD	1,783,765.57
	United Kingdom	USD	6,114,099.88
	European Union	USD	3,609,609.63
UNDP TRAC Fund		USD	977,282.11
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Date	TBC (this draft 27 November)		

The Support to the National Electoral Commission Project was established late in the electoral cycle to provide advisory and material support to the National Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone in the conduct of the 2018 Presidential, Parliamentary and local council elections, and during related activities.

The United Nations has supported Sierra Leone's elections since the Lomé Peace Accord (7th July 1999). By 2014, all Security Council mandates relating to Sierra Leone's democratic transition, and their related mission architectures, had ended. 2018 was anticipated to be an electoral process that featured less visible international support and strong national ownership of the process.

The project originally focused on a small number of areas identified as requiring the most support and was flexible enough to expand to meet emerging needs.



5 GENDER
EQUALITY



10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS

Table of Content

ACRONYMS.....	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1. CONTEXT.....	7
2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES	7
3. PROJECT RESULTS SUMMARY.....	9
4. VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION PLANS.....	
5. PERFORMANCE REVIEW	9
PROGRESS REVIEW	10
(i) Overall progress towards the CPAP outcome and output(s)	10
(ii) Capacity Development.....	10
(iii) Gender Mainstreaming.....	10
(iv) Human Rights Mainstreaming	10
(v) Impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries.....	10
(vi) Communication and publicity.....	10
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY REVIEW	11
(i) Sustainability	11
(ii) Participatory/consultative processes	11
(iii) Partnerships.....	11
(iv) National Ownership.....	11
MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW	11
(i) Monitoring and Evaluation.....	11
(ii) Timely delivery of outputs	11
(iii) Resource Allocation	12
(iv) Cost-effective use of inputs.....	12
5. INDICATOR BASED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT	12
6.FINANCIAL DELIVERY.....	13
(i) Financial Overview.....	13
(ii) Financial Utilization.....	13
7. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES AND CHALLENGES.....	13
8. LESSONS LEARNED.....	14
9. RECOMMENDATION.....	14
10.CONCLUSION.....	15
ANNEXES.....	17
Annual Work Plan.....	17
Project Document	17
Charts, tables and visual aids, with accompanying analytical descriptions (1-2 paragraphs per table/chart).	17

Table 1: Financial overview for the whole duration of the project13

Table 2: Financial utilization by donor and activity for [ex. 2018] 13

Table 3: Lessons Learned 14

ACRONYMS

AVETO	Assistant Voter Education and Training Officers
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPM	Conflict Prevention and Mitigation during the Electoral Cycle
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAA	Disability Access Advisor
DEOs	District Election Officers
DFID	Department for International Development UK Aid
DPO	Disabled Persons Organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMB	Electoral Management Board
EOA	Electoral Operations Advisor
ES	Executive Secretary
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
G&D	Gender and Disability Unit
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HRC	Human Rights Commission
IGA	Inclusion and Gender Advisor
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NEW	National Election Watch
NCPD	National Commission for Persons with Disability
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
PEA	Public Elections Act 2012
POM	Project Operations Manager
PPRC	Political Parties Registration Commission
PSO	Procurement Support Office
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RMA	Results Management IT Advisor
RMWG	Results Management Working Group
RRF	Results and Reconciliation Form
RRO	Results and Reporting Officer
SNEC	Support to the National Electoral Commission
SLUDI	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues
TBG	Tactile Ballot Guides
TPA	Training and Procedures Advisor
UNAMSIL	UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main achievements of the Support to the National Electoral Commission (SNEC) project are that the 2018 presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections were credibly and successfully conducted on-time; that the National Electoral Commission (NEC) was resourced and supported to this end, and ultimately a peaceful transition from one legitimately elected government to another was achieved. While under threat during some parts of the electoral process, trust was broadly maintained in the NEC, and the 2018 elections were more inclusive of women and people with disabilities than previous elections. The project was able to achieve results due to a combination of a well-staffed advisory team; a NEC that collaborated for improvement in policy and process; and an engaged and supportive international donor community. The project document envisaged a small amount of direct technical assistance here, SNEC ended up with a large portfolio under this output, accounting for almost half of the project budget. In addition to the two areas identified in the project documents, SNEC, based on the decision of the SC/TC, provided support to the areas of logistics and procurement; external communications; voter information design and production; and direct arrangement of voter outreach activities.

Some evident achievements made by the project are as follows:

- Increased professional electoral administration, standardized systems and procedures that reduced room for human error and increased the dependability of NEC's processes.
- As a consequence of the NEC's professionalism and awareness raised, citizens confidence in the NEC increased, particularly in the credibility of the processes and the reliability of the results.
- Enabled the development and operationalisation of the Results Management System with eventual stakeholder buy-in; NEC's capacity was strengthened to make better informed and more timely decisions on the RMS system to adopt; increased the integrity and transparency aspects of the system and helped to build consensus among stakeholders on the system's dependability;
- Strengthened NEC's planning and management capacity resulting in better efficiency of the institution;
- Enhanced upholding of standards and the ability of NEC to maintain its independence and impartiality in the face of significant pressure and intimidation;
- Increased public awareness and engagement of PWD as advisors and educators and the empowerment of some through increased engagement and access.
- More accurate and timely information on voter registration and the elections and more substantive consultations with stakeholders contributing to increased transparency, understanding and reduced suspicions.
- Delivery and legitimacy of the key processes of voter registration and the elections which were not assured in the context.

Key recommendations include:

- UNDP's continued engagement with the NEC both advisory and institutional capacity support as well as maintaining the Steering Committee to provide strategic level follow-up on electoral reforms ahead of the next elections.
- Further, UNDP should adopt a more programmatic and electoral cycle approach for the next project, based on a well-structured institutional capacity assessment, the lessons learned from NEC's 2018 experience and the recommendations from electoral observer reports.

- Include an efficiency assessment of NEC's organizational structure and management procedures. Continue the embedding of TA within the NEC and start the effort well before the elections.
- UNDP to maintain the DIM mechanism but ensure its PMU has enough long term administrative and procurement support and an appropriate delegation of authority.
- Strengthen UNDP's Governance Office and its monitoring and support role for projects and assess UNDP CO's internal processes to see how to strengthen its project design and consultation process for the next project, and to increase the efficiency of its procurement processes for time-bound efforts such as election support.

1. CONTEXT

Sierra Leone has made notable progress in consolidation of peace and democracy since the end of its civil war in 2002. Following the Lomé Peace Agreement, the United Nations (UN) heavily supported the successful elections of 2002 through the provision of technical, organisational and logistical support. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) was completely restructured and the staffing entirely changed in 2004 with UN support. The NEC successfully managed the administration of peaceful elections in 2007 and 2012, with declining levels of international involvement in the management of each election.

However, the growth of electoral administration capacity is not complete and the NEC as an institution needs additional support to fully manage electoral processes while on the other hand government comes to the position of fully funding elections. A number of challenges constrained the NEC and its partners from holding elections that fully meet internationally acceptable standards without international assistance. These include resource and capacity constraints coupled with the compressed time frame and complex electoral processes expected in 2017-2018. Case in point are the implementation of a boundary delimitation exercise; implementation of chiefdom de-amalgamation and creation of new administrative districts; fresh registration of all eligible voters; and the holding of presidential, parliamentary, local council, village head, and paramount chieftaincy elections. The short time frame for all of these processes required strong resourcing and capacity coupled with strong and timely management by the NEC and well-organised collaboration with partners and other stakeholders for successful elections to be delivered.

While the electoral cycle started in 2012, the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Sierra Leone in 2014 led to delay and disruption in electoral administration, in common with many other public bodies. EVD led to the postponement of the national population and housing census twice which consequentially required delaying the required boundary delimitation process until 2016. Other delays were caused to the planned process of civil (population) registration as well as the constitutional review process. These delays compressed much action that could have occurred in 2014 and 2015 into 2016, and in many cases further delays pushed them into 2017.

In 2012 it is estimated that international donors met 94% of the NEC's costs for the election. While there is a clear wish for the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) to increase their commitment, the amount of government funds available for the electoral processes of 2017 and 2018 remained unclear at the beginning of the project.

Sierra Leone has benefitted from substantial support for the elections and electoral processes held after the end of the civil war in 2002. The Lomé Peace Agreement of 7 July 1999 explicitly recognised that the lack of a legitimate, elected government was one of the key causes of the civil war and made it clear that credible, competitive elections were central to the post-conflict stabilisation of Sierra Leone. The United Nations provided significant support to the national elections in 2002: the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and UNDP supported the complete restructuring of the National Electoral Commission and provided institutional and capacity development for electoral processes in the country leading up to the 2002 electoral cycle. Further electoral assistance was provided by UNDP to the two electoral cycles of 2007-2010 and 2011-2014, in partnership with the relevant missions established by the UN Security Council (UNIOSIL and UNIPSIL). The 2018 elections were the first national elections since the civil war to take place without a United Nations Security Mandate.

UNDP's Support to Electoral Reform and the National Electoral Commission project focused on providing technical and financial assistance from 2005-2007 for the seven outputs of the NEC's reform process: restructuring of the NEC, staff capacity development at NEC; infrastructure

development; setting up IT Systems; reviewing electoral laws and regulations; supporting boundary delimitation; and assisting voter registration. The directly executed project was developed based on the experience of the period 2001-2004, which demonstrated that capacity building of NEC had not been achievable while the NEC and UN were simultaneously preparing for and running the national elections.

UNDP's Support to the Electoral Cycle in Sierra Leone 2011-2014 Project was developed in 2010; the Steering Committee broadened the project to focus beyond the NEC, with UNDP and the United Nations Integrated Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) managing different components within the project. The project supported key processes that led to the successful administration of the 2012 elections and supported capacity-development per the electoral cycle approach after the elections.

While the 2011-2014 project successfully delivered a large amount of material and advisory support to the Electoral Management Boards (EMBs), the project was less successful in supporting NEC capacity building in the run up to and after the elections. The Final Evaluation of the Project in June 2014 by an external consultant found that "this assistance was not sufficient for sustainability of these achievements or to enable the NEC to successfully manage future national elections without the support of the international community." Although the project made important efforts, the project did not manage to develop and implement a comprehensive capacity development plan that emphasized sustainability for EMB partners as part of the eventual exit strategy for these institutions from international assistance. Efforts late in the program towards improving NEC work processes and planning were then slowed by the EVD epidemic and a consequent lack of momentum at the project and at NEC.

Origins of the SNEC project

On 18 August 2015, through a letter to the UN Resident Coordinator, the NEC requested UNDP's financial and technical assistance for voter registration, the conduct of the expected constitutional referendum and the conduct of the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections, including if necessary, a second round of voting in the presidential election.

In December 2015, the United Nations Focal Point for Electoral Assistance in the Department of Political Affairs approved the provision of electoral assistance to Sierra Leone, to consist of a UNDP technical assistance project and complementary efforts under the UN Resident Coordinator to promote peaceful and tranquil elections. The decision followed internal UN consultations with UNDP, the United Nations Office for West Africa, DPA Africa II Division, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and UN Women.

Since the approval was received, the UNDP Country Office in Sierra Leone developed a standalone proposal to support boundary delimitation in 2016 and partnered with Irish Aid on this work. The SNEC project did not include work on boundary delimitation as this was catered for in the separate project.

Similarly, the lack of certainty around the timing and scope of the proposed constitutional referendum at the time of agreeing the SNEC project meant that direct support for the referendum processes was not included in this project.

A separate project – Conflict Prevention and Mitigation (CPM) during the Electoral Cycle was developed by the UN Resident Coordinator's office to undertake various conflict prevention and mitigation activities. This project included some elements of election-related programming that have previously been within wider UNDP electoral projects, specifically support to planning and training

for electoral security actors, improving the mediation abilities for political dialogue of national independent commissions, including Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), and efforts to establishing early warning systems to prevent electoral violence (including electoral violence against women).

Development partners had standalone projects with civil society partners in support of the electoral process. Areas covered in these projects include civic education (including such education for marginalised groups); civic dialogue efforts; domestic electoral observation; media development; media monitoring and supporting women's participation as voters and candidates. Accordingly, the SNEC project did not seek to work in these areas with civil society.

UNDP consultations with development partners indicated that the level of donor funding in support of the administration of the 2018 elections would be significantly smaller than in previous cycles. The SNEC project design, therefore, prioritised areas (Supporting the institutional and management capacity of NEC to deliver key results: voter registration, results management and voter information; inclusive participation: expanding levels of electoral and democratic awareness and participation through increasing awareness of NEC's work with a particular emphasis on expanding participation of women and PWDs) where donor funding is most likely to prove both catalytic and sustainable. The SNEC Project addressed these concerns and further strengthened NEC's work in voter education, printing of voter ID cards, support to regional and district tally centres (which were initially outside the scope of the project). The project interfaced with the Conflict Prevention and Mitigation during Electoral cycle Project that ensured peaceful, secure and transparent elections.

2.PROJECT OBJECTIVES

In the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the SNEC project fits under the Outcome: Capacity of democratic institutions strengthened to enable good governance and in Pillar 7 (Governance and Public Sector Reform) of the national development framework (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper IV) and the Country Programme Document (CPD) outcome: Capacity of democratic institutions strengthened to enable good governance.

The UNDAF outcome indicators relating to the electoral processes are

Indicator 7.10: Voter turnout in electoral processes including draft national constitution referendum.
Baseline:87 %; Target:90%

Indicator 7.11: Number of public institutions and electoral bodies using the integrated national civil register
Baseline: 0 Target: 3

The UNDP Country Programme Document 2015-2018 has the following relevant outcome indicators:

UNDAF OUTCOME INDICATOR(S), BASELINES, TARGET(S)	DATA SOURCE AND FREQUENCY OF DATA COLLECTION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES	INDICATIVE COUNTRY PROGRAMME OUTPUTS (including indicators, baselines targets)
<p>3b. Voter turnout in electoral processes including referendum on draft constitution. B: 87% (elections) T: 90% B: 0 (referendum) T:70%</p>	<p>S: Election Commission Voter Turnout report F: CSO led Observation Commission report R: Commonwealth Observation Mission Report</p>	<p>3.2 State institutions, CSOs including women’s organizations and media are enabled to undertake joint outreach initiatives for a participatory constitutional review process 3.2.1: Level of adherence of the constitutional review process to international norms and standards 1 – Not adequately 2 – very partially 3: Partially 4: Largely. B: 1 – Not adequately; T: 4: Largely; S: Survey; F: Once at the end of programme</p>
<p>3c. Number of reservations of local and international monitors and observer groups with regards to transparency and conduct of electoral processes. B: 2012 election was well regarded by local and international observer groups, T:To be established</p>	<p>S: International and national electoral reports F: Every four to five years R: National Electoral Commission</p>	<p>3.3 Electoral Management Bodies (EMBS) are able to administer a free and fair referendum and elections 3.3.1: Number of electoral management supports provided for free and fair elections. B: 5 by end 2014; T:20 by end 2018: F:5 Annually</p>

The project’s overall outcome (objective) was expressed as:

Improved NEC capacity to administer technically sound, inclusive and sustainable electoral processes that are capable of garnering public trust and confidence.

The SNEC project was designed as part of the transition across the Sierra Leonean public sector from very large, 'hands on' technical support to a smaller, focused 'advisory' role.

The project's key partner is the NEC. The main stakeholders are political parties, electoral candidates and the people of Sierra Leone; the last are also the obvious beneficiary of the project's overall effort.

3.PROJECT RESULTS SUMMARY

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Achieved Target (current Status)	Reasons for Variance	Source of Verification
Project Results:					
Output 1 : Establishment of the Register of Voters supported					
Utility of the voter registration data centre (is it established, was it used to develop, print and correct voter lists, is it repurposed for election tasks)	None (Dec, 2016)	Repurposed for election period tasks and deployed successfully	Used successfully in management of voter registration process	None	Document review and collation of admin data Semi structured interviews
No. of people reached during voter registration campaigns through the Ward Electoral Education Committee (WEEC) Sessions using SNEC Project-supplied materials (disaggregated by location, gender and PWD status)	0 (Dec, 2016)	15,000	15,000	None	Document review and collation of admin data Semi structured interviews
Utility of appropriate equipment and materials for in-country printing of voter lists	None (Dec, 2016)	Used successfully to generate polling station lists	Used successfully to generate PVR and FVR	None	Document review and collation of admin data Semi structured interviews
Output 2 : Results Management Processes agreed and system developed					
Key national-level stakeholders consulted on the workings of the results management process	0 (Dec 2016)	All relevant national level stakeholders consulted	All relevant national level stakeholders consulted and NEC decision on RMS approved and validated by stakeholders	None	Document review and collation of admin data Sample survey/ Annual Reviews
Results Management (IT) System developed, tested and ready for deployment before the polling day	2 IT systems developed in 2012	Results IT enhanced, deployed and used effectively in 2018 elections	NEC decision on RM IT system (to expand RMS 2012 to RMS 2018) approved and	None	Reports from stakeholder meetings Field visits

			validated by stakeholders		
% of tally centres that apply the agreed results management process consistently	0	100% of the tally centres applied RMS process (April 2018)	achieved		
Output 3 : NEC capacity to conduct inclusive elections increased					
% of pre-election recommendations in the gender inclusion action plan that are addressed	0	80% addressed by March 2018	Not on track as assessment delayed to after election.	Assessment was conducted after the elections due to the tight deadlines for delivering the elections, court action against NEC that further shortened the preparation timeframes.	document review Sample survey/ reviews Semi structured interviews
% of stakeholder organisations that report improved inclusion of women in NEC processes	0	60% by March 2018	Achieved	Observation missions reported improved inclusion of women. However, data on female voter turnout could not be recorded due to fear of administrative burden of filling out multiple forms	
Domestic observers' appraisal of women's inclusion in the 2018 NEC processes	Limited inclusion	Improved Inclusion	NEW noted women's participation in registration and outcome on VR itself	Achieved	
% of pre-election recommendations in the PWD action plan that are addressed	0	80% addressed by March 2018	80% achieved within the reporting period.	Achieved	document review Sample survey/ reviews
% of stakeholder DPOs that report improved inclusion of PWD in NEC processes (sample survey)	0	60% by March 2018	40% achieved by Dec 2017. Observer missions recognised the elections as very inclusive of PWDs	Achieved	Semi structured interviews Assessment reports End of project reports
Domestic observers' appraisal of PWD inclusion in the	Limited inclusion	Improved Inclusion	Improved	achieved	

2018 NEC processes

Output 4: Conduct of the 2018 elections supported:					
% of NEC electoral guidance and procedural materials that incorporate all relevant new legislative requirements	0	100%	No new legislation passed but all SNEC supported materials are fully compliant		Periodic Project/ Activity Progress Monitoring Reports
No. of people reached during election voter information campaigns through WEEC Sessions using Project supplied materials (disaggregated by location, gender and PWD status)	0	75,000	1330 town criers recruited 16 jingles in the 16 indigenous languages played over 43 community radios, 100.000 posters printed, 70 banners printed, 5 songs composed and musical clips that reached out to the wider population covering more than 75,000	achieved	
Timeliness of delivery of appropriate sensitive voting materials to facilitate NEC to run elections (disaggregated by type e.g. ballot papers, ink, tamper evident envelopes, etc)	None (Dec 2016)	Fully delivered to NEC to specification	achieved	All sensitive voting materials were procured and delivered in timely fashion	
Process established for post-election evaluation that involves key NEC stakeholders and delivers specific recommendations	None (Dec, 2016)	Process is Used (June 2018)	Achieved	Completed	
Output 5: NEC planning and management capacity strengthened					
NEC capacity to deliver voter registration and electoral process strengthened in identified areas	None (Dec, 2016)	Electoral period capacities met (June 2018)	VR capacities met Result management capacities met (Dec 2017)	Achieved. Trainings for key areas – gender inclusion, among others were conducted for NEC staff after the elections	Periodic <i>Project/Activity Progress Monitoring Reports</i> /Electoral readiness report
Output 6: Project Management					
Extent of use of the M&EF as a guide to Project M&E and Reporting (i.e. financial performance reports and programmatic narrative reports)	None (Dec, 2016)	100% use of M&EF (Jan 2018)	100% use of M&EF (June 2018)	M&EF in place used for result tracking. Good mastery of the tool by the staff and used for service delivery.	Periodic <i>Project/Activity Progress Monitoring Reports</i>

Established and functional missions to support election readiness assessments	None (Dec, 2016)	Additional mission, if any requested (Feb 2018)	One mission undertaken (Dec 2017); attendance at the Electoral Conference by SNEC & NEC leadership in Brussels (Dec 2018)	Achieved.	Periodic <i>Project/Activity Progress Monitoring Reports</i>
Quality of project management modalities in use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliant Financial and Narrative Reporting • Acceptable Project Design, Implementation and Management 	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory. Financial and narrative reporting on track with acceptable and recommended format.		Periodic Project/Activity, Progress and Risk Monitoring Reports

Output 1 Establishment of the Register of Voters supported

Result: *SNEC's technical assistance, funding and procurements enabled the NEC to undertake voter registration and complete it within the required time despite tight timelines, the lack of clarity on the new civil registry process from which the voter registry was to be extracted, and the political and technical uncertainties.*

Activity 1.1: Support compilation of credible voter registry

The SNEC project support ensured the development of a credible voter register accepted by all stakeholders including political parties, printing and display of the provisional voter registry and printed the voter identity cards. Without the credible and accepted voter register, the elections results would have been rejected or contested in court by political parties.

In order to compile a new voters' register, the NEC needed both software to manage the process and hardware to undertake the processing. To this end, SNEC agreed to develop the relevant software, in partnership with NEC's own IT staff, and also procure the necessary infrastructure. The NEC identified that it would establish the data centre at its existing Wellington (Freetown) site, and that this data centre was also used during the results process of the 2018 elections.

As a first step, the project engaged an experienced ICT advisor to work with NEC on all IT-related elements and support the UNDP Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and NEC management on ICT-related decisions. A series of discussions around the necessary software approach led to an agreement with NEC that the database developed in 2012 would be used as the basis for the 2017 database. SNEC then engaged two national developers to undertake both the development of the software and the coaching and training of NEC staff in the use of the software.

SNEC also procured a suite of ICT equipment - servers and various related elements as well as consumables with the support of UNDP's Procurement Support Office. Before installation of the equipment, SNEC undertook work to check and update the electrical wiring of the data centre premises, serviced and repaired backup generators and UPS systems, upgraded the CCTV and digital lock and serviced and upgraded the air conditioners. SNEC also provided one month of internet access via a high-speed fibre optic link to facilitate installation and database testing, with NEC to take this over after SNEC.

NEC had a suitable data centre ready for use in compiling a voters' register which was also used to support the national electoral results management process. The equipment purchased was compatible with existing NEC equipment, allowing for both staff familiarity and availability of spare parts. SNEC entered into an arrangement for the equipment supplier to provide on-site support during voter registration work.

NEC had bespoke software that allowed it to process the data from the civil register into a voters' register. The software, further developed from the 2012 system, allowed NEC to:

- Manage registration centres (add, amend, delete) and split registration centres into polling stations;
- Allocate voters to polling stations within their registered centre;
- Print the provisional voters' register for use at Exhibition;
- Manage, edit and update the voter file with information collected at Exhibition; and
- Create and print the final voters' register for use in polling stations.

Project funds were also used to develop further functionality:

- Create and print reports relating to the voter file and other voter registration functions;
- Disaggregate all relevant reports and outputs by gender; and
- Generate voter ID cards.

NEC IT staff were fully involved in the development of the software which strengthened their capacities in addition to the initial training and briefing provided to them. UNDP allocated funds to allow the developers to stay with NEC during the initial data processing phase from the NCRA to further respond when the system is down.

NEC had compiled a large list of ICT items influenced by models of previous international support when extensive ICT procurements were done but this was revised, with the project agreeing to only procure equipment that was demonstrably necessary (as opposed to quite nice to have) and that could be re-used at the 2018 elections.

With regards staffing, NEC had a competent IT staff, who have benefited from their own education and previous international support. However, the team was quite small – no more than ten people – to support nationwide events. As such IT staff were often asked to support tasks outside of their technical expertise, resulting in delays in project implementation in areas i of their specific expertise. With the advice of the CTA, this arrangement was reversed to ensure the IT staff for example were focused on the development and testing of the Results Management System.

NEC's existing IT environment was based on Windows and SQL; previous support to IT development has stayed in this environment, and staff had been trained and supported to run electoral operations in this fashion. When NCRA procured the biometric kits and database for the civil register, they purchased a solution that runs in Oracle but Linux based. NEC on the other hand, had no expertise in Oracle (not widely used in Sierra Leone); the two systems had no direct compatibility with their existing systems. As part of the database development, SNEC developed a 'transformation engine' that translated the Oracle database's voter fields into Microsoft SQL compatible data which ensured the smooth transfer of data from NCRA to NEC.

Significant delays were experienced in receiving the registration data from the NCRA. The process of using software to search for duplicates based on biometric data – considered to be a key benefit of a biometric register – was slow and not well managed. These tasks were under the control of the NCRA and so outside of the remit of SNEC assistance.

The delays in receipt of the data were dwarfed, however, by the complications caused to NEC’s work by the protracted boundary delimitation process. NEC had undertaken this work in 2016 and it was largely finished by the end of 2016. However, political development and inaction by relevant state institutions meant that the new NEC boundaries (for both parliamentary constituencies and local government wards) were not legislated by the time voter registration commenced. NEC had no choice but to proceed with the field exercise to have any chance of meeting the election timetable.

The government made a late decision to alter Sierra Leone’s administrative boundaries to create two new districts and one new Province, in addition to the de-amalgamation of chiefdoms in the East, North and South. Once taken and brought into law, these changes required NEC to revisit and in many areas re-delimit electoral boundaries. This process diverted a significant amount of NEC’s time and attention, but NEC managed to accommodate the work. However, the finalisation of the boundaries was not recorded in a systematic function, and there was no authoritative document setting them out, which made them impossible to reflect in the software correctly.

An interesting lesson that is only tangential to this output is that the relatively sophisticated IT environment used for voter registration is not replicated in other NEC operations. From the outside, an electoral management body running a second biometric exercise would be expected also to be *au fait* with other uses of ICT in its work. In fact, outside of the IT section much of NEC remains working on computers that are not connected to the internet or do not feature up to date software. No institution-wide email system is in place and not all staff have access to a printer. These are important elements to factor into wider work planning.

One lesson that applies across all activities is the need to manage the difference between an electoral assistance project that is here to do the work for NEC, and one that is here to support NEC to do the work. Again, patterns from previous rounds of support have led to an assumption within NEC of the former, whereas SNEC was designed for the later.

1.2. Support voter information activities on voter registration

There is not enough data on the voter information efforts beyond the number of products produced to know the effectiveness of the SNEC effort. There was no baseline undertaken by the project and no data was collected that could help determine the reach of the material and messages and effect of the effort. However, 85.7% of the estimated voting aged population registered to vote. This was below the project’s 90% target. The estimated registration rate in 2012 was 88 – 90%. About 10% of the expenditures for Output 1 were for the registration-related voter information efforts. These were intended to complement NEC’s own efforts to inform and encourage citizens as to voter registration. SNEC worked with NEC on developing key messages for voter information work. This process resulted in a set of messages that were endorsed by NEC Commissioners and then refined in a meeting with civil society organisations also engaged in their own voter information and outreach. These organisations agreed to use the same key messages in their own work.

SNEC then worked with NEC and a local designer to expand upon the key messages in visual form. The artwork was very informal and welcoming and fit local expectations. There were general ‘call to action’ images, details of the registration centres, and specific artwork for people with disabilities and women. SNEC produced the artwork in the following formats and quantities:

Poster 1_Gloria	25,000	Poster 4_17 and over	25,000
Poster 2_Register Now	25,000	Poster 5_Women1	25,000
Poster 3_Disability	25,000	Poster 6_Women2	25,000
A5 flyer	100,000	FAQ document	100,000
Vinyl flex banners_Gloria	100		100

These flyers, posters and banners were distributed to NEC's 14 districts offices who further distributed them through ward electoral education committees and displayed them as appropriate in the local environment. NEC used their own funds to mount some billboards using the same 'Gloria' image in selected locations.

SNEC also developed a core script on voter registration, based on the key messages, and had this script translated and recorded into Krio, Temne, Loko, Kono, Koranko, Fula, Bullom, Mende, Limba, Kissi, Yalunka, Susu, and Sherbro. These were distributed to community radio stations, through WhatsApp groups and to the NEC offices and electoral education committees. SNEC also supplied four hundred megaphones that could play back pre-recorded voter education messages and these were used by electoral education committees (and town criers where resources allowed).

Work on disability access started late – just a few days before registration was to begin. To address an initial need SNEC and NEC presented four workshops (in Freetown, Bo, Kenema and Makeni) to discuss the registration process with representatives from the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI). SLUDI was the vehicle for conveying voter registration messages and engagement with the disability community. SLUDI informed their members on the registration process and how people with physical disabilities would be accommodated at the registration centres. These workshops were replicated by Standing Together consortium members, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and NEC in other areas of the country.

In addition to the physical products listed above, this activity helped SNEC to build relationships with key NEC counterparts in addition to key civil society partners and interlocutors. Valuable project intelligence about NEC capacities was gathered as well as the acceptability of certain support modalities. Without a baseline, was difficult to estimate how many persons' behaviour were changed by NEC voter information that was supported by the project.

The design of output one did not include additional technical assistance to assist with this activity (in comparison with say, the ICT advisor in activity one). It became clear that this was not tenable and so UNDP resource was used to bring in a short-term advisor to work with all three sections. In addition to managing the production of items under this activity, the advisor worked with NEC on ongoing messaging, statements and preparations for the voter registry exhibition phase.

In working with the NEC G&D section, the NEC's good will and commitment to inclusion was underlined. As envisaged in the project design, this commitment needs to be widened beyond public information into the design of electoral processes. Good connections were made with relevant CSOs to inform such work.

Despite a well-established universe of DPOs in Sierra Leone, relatively little data had been collected on information consumption used by people with disabilities. A common response of 'produce it in Braille' was considered inclusive enough during voter registration. In future, NEC should do a more systematic analysis of the information needs of people with disabilities.

1.3 Support printing and exhibition process for provisional voters' registry

As detailed above, the NEC needed to print a provisional voters' register, conduct an Exhibition process and then make corrections before publishing a Final Voters' Register. With the support, SNEC established a printing centre adjacent to the data centre at Wellington for the purposes of printing the voters' register for exhibition and then for the election. In addition to the printers and their installation, SNEC provided spare parts and consumables to support the printing of the provisional and final registers (additional resource is included in the SNEC project to print the list for polling stations).

SNEC also supported the effective functioning of the centres by procuring stationery for use by NEC staff during the registration phase and for the exhibition centres, as well as forms for use in the voter registration processes only.

As a result of the SNEC project, NEC now has a permanent printing centre to produce voter lists at the relevant stages of the electoral process. This will see a considerable saving, as in 2012 the lists were printed abroad at great cost, and required also the deployment of NEC, political parties and observers to the print location. The print centre – like the data centre – will be open to observation and monitoring throughout the process.

Further, given NEC's financial circumstances at the time and the late start to NEC's logistical preparations, materials procured for use in registration were essential for opening of centres on 20 March. Some of the materials – directional signs, lamps, fingerprint ink – were reused during exhibition.

NEC experienced significant difficulties in having data ready for exhibition, due to:

- poor quality data received from the field exercise, and a lack of checking field electronic data against hard copy information on CVR1 forms and in the registration journal;
- problems in the correct application of new electoral boundaries following the second, poorly documented boundary delimitation process;
- NEC's lack of a systematic and detailed approach to checking data and materials at both District and HQ level.

As anticipated the biometric data received from the NCRA was of variable quality. The exhibition process revealed problems across the country relating to no data available for persons who held registration receipts; only partial data available for people who held registration receipts (most commonly no biometrics) and unexpected allocations to new electoral areas. Exhibition ensured that these issues were identified and clarified in time for voter card printing.

The work done in the preparation and ordering of forms and stationery provided sufficient evidence that NEC could benefit from long-term electoral operational expertise. For registration, UNDP resources were used to bring a short-term logistics advisor to Sierra Leone to support NEC.

Activity 1.4: NEC supported to produce voter registration cards for use at 2018 elections

Under the National Civil Registration Act of 2016, the NCRA was assigned the function of issuing multi-purpose national identity cards. During all discussions and planning for the collection of the new civil registry data, NCRA had had an intention to issue such cards before the March 2018 elections with the view that these ID cards would double as voter cards. Once NCRA confirmed to NEC in June that no national ID cards could be issued in time for March 2018 elections, NEC requested the SNEC project to support the production of voter registration cards.

The SNEC supported voter registration application, SERVE, did not originally include a module to produce voter registration cards (based on the assumption of NCRA cards). The application was therefore expanded to include a card production module by the SNEC IT developers, and this functionality was used in 2017.

NEC had developed an initial proposal for an 'in-house' production of voter registration cards earlier in the year, as a contingency. This proposal was discussed between NEC and SNEC and advice sought from the UNDP procurement and printing experts in the UNDP headquarters Procurement Support Office (PSO). After a consideration of various options, it was agreed that SNEC, with the support of UNDP's PSO, would procure voter cards internationally.

A UNDP expert worked with NEC to develop the specification for voter cards and finalise it together with UNDP PSO. A contract was awarded to a Dubai-based company. Once the voters' register was complete, the data was supplied to the contractor. Production was supervised on-site by the UNDP expert and NEC delegates. The data was delivered significantly later than anticipated yet the contractor still had the cards in-country for the planned distribution timeline, albeit after switching to an all-air freight option.

Cards were received in Sierra Leone well in time for distribution to NEC District Offices and then registration centres for the planned public distribution in early December.

The need to make amendments and do updates to the registration data after Exhibition caused a delay of over one month to the planned commencement of voter card printing. The delaying amendments and updates were not the expected result of Exhibition – amendments and minor errors being fixed – but rather related to gaps in the data provided by NCRA (especially in regard to mission biometric data) and problems caused by the late, undocumented boundary delimitation data. Delays in production led to an increase in cost due to the need to switch to air freight.

Unfortunately, during distribution of voter cards a further and extensive set of errors were identified. In some areas, the codes on the voter card for the parliamentary constituency and the local government ward were incorrect (this information was not on the Exhibition list so was previously seen by electors or stakeholder). When the cards were distributed this led to over 300,000 voter cards needing to be re-printed to ensure voters had the correct information. While the erroneous information was not legally required, NEC wished to reprint to avoid voter confusion and any suggestion of misallocation. The project assisted by ordering a new print run and arranging for the freighting as well as helping NEC raise funds for the additional distribution process.

Once again, the assistance provided by UNDP's PSO was invaluable, keeping work going over the festive period and provided 24hours monitoring of progress, as well as developed innovative solutions to emerging issues.

Output 2: Results management processes agreed and system developed

Result: SNEC technical, IT, logistical and operational support on RMS facilitated the NEC to make better informed and more timely decisions on the RM system to adopt, increased the integrity and transparency aspects of the system and help to build consensus among stakeholders on the system's dependability. This was essential in the highly suspicious political context. The adoption of the RMS working group model increased NEC's operational effectiveness and resulted in a reasonably well done RMS according to election observers. Nevertheless, the political aspects of the election results overwhelmed the technical considerations and required political mediation at the end.

Activity Result 2.1: support consultation on and definition of a new result management process

Due to delays to mobilise funds and deploy the long-term Electoral Operations Advisor (EOA), the SNEC Technical Committee (TC) decided to bring a short-term expert to help with this activity. The expert deployed undertook the following tasks:

- mapping the 2012 processes, their robustness, acceptability to stakeholders and assessment by subsequent electoral assistance providers;

- Develop a shared understanding in NEC about results management issues and with key stakeholders;
- Make recommendations for the future regarding a choice between a new results management IT system or enhancement of existing systems;
- Make additional recommendations for the planning and delivery of a results management process in 2018.

The consultant's final report (the McDermott report) was accepted by NEC and the SNEC TC. It assumed use of 16 district-level input – or tally – centres, rather than the regionally based approach of 2012. This was NEC's stated plan for 2018. The vast majority of the consultant's recommendations, however, were not dependent on either a district or regional approach - they were location agnostic.

After the McDermott assessment, the project saw first-hand how significant capacity issues in NEC District Offices delayed the process of finalising the voter register. Especially once expert staff were in place – the EOA in early September and the Results Management IT Advisor (RMA) in early October, concerns mounted in the SNEC team about NEC's capacity to undertake a district level tally. These concerns were exacerbated by the NEC's difficult financial position due to GoSL's slow disbursement. In mid-October, NEC Commissioners took the decision to retain the 2012 model of using regional tally centre for results data entry, with the addition of a fifth tally centre for the new North West region.

The EOA worked to implement the outcomes of McDermott report. A notable success was the formation and use of a Results Management Working Group (RMWG) to ensure all relevant directorates within NEC were aligned and working towards the common goal. The RMWG met weekly following a series of initial workshops to develop a shared conceptual framework and roadmap for the practical development of the results process. The RMWG focused on ensuring a holistic approach to results management planning that did not only centre on the IT system but that also looked at relevant counting procedures and documentation in polling stations and district offices, the physical process of result aggregation, logistics and venue preparation, training, external relations and legal issues. Some key outputs from the RMWG were:

- A documented process flow of legal and procedural steps in the results process;
- Issues around the number of voters allocated per polling station: different options were developed and discussed about the number of voters allocated per polling stations, impact of the numbers to the entire process and technical aspect of voter allocations to polling stations;
- The number and type of results forms: SNEC advised to focus on the legally official polling station level and reduce the number of confusing results forms by cancelling any attempts at aggregation on the polling centre level;
- Determination of tally centre locations: fieldtrips undertaken to make an assessment of result centre locations, required logistics, IT equipment, facility management, security needs;
- Tally centres staffing structure: structure, staffing table and job description drafted for the tally centres, and options shared with NEC; and
- Development of a results management manual used to train all the staff involved in the process.

SNEC advisors also undertook a lot of on-the-job mentoring, information sharing and comparing examples of different models, question and answers sessions to complement the more formal working group sessions. The project developed and delivered bespoke results management training and so did not use the Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) module as envisaged in the project document. While SNEC staff were key to ensuring the process did not lose momentum and meet key milestones, NEC permanent staff were supported to develop a more realistic expectation of external support for results management and to take more internal ownership.

The project did lag in commencement of activities under this output. The decision to not wait for the long-term EOA but to bring a short-term advisor to undertake the initial assessment was useful and

provided NEC and SNEC with recommendations to work through for practical and resource implications. The tendency of the NEC to wait to finish one process before commencing planning for another was evident in the unwillingness of NEC to actively engage on results management issues until the voter registration work was completed. Given this, the deployment of the EOA in September meant her arrival coincided with the closure of most voter registration activities, ensuring she and key counterparts could focus on results management work (with some disruption caused by the problems found in finalising registration as discussed under output one above).

The introduction of the working group model ensured all relevant NEC Departments were involved and active in shared processes.

2.2 Development of IT solution for result management system

The SNEC RMA supported NEC IT staff to implement the technology recommendations from the McDermott report; all recommendations were implemented by end 2017.

The combined SNEC-NEC IT team completed an RMS System Review document which highlighted the high-level changes which needed to be made to the 2012 results management IT application. Once agreed, this formed the roadmap to achieving a revamped RMS 2018, with key steps as:

- ICT JAD session conducted to elucidate the various ICT deliverables: database enhancements, system enhancements, reporting requirements, network enhancements, & security enhancements;
- Documenting a Concept of Operations for the transformation of RMS 2012 into RMS 2018;
- The complete re-working of the original 2012 database to ensure cleaning up of all unnecessary tables, mappings and structures;
- All business rules were clarified and new database delimitations completed;
- Application mappings added to the database;
- All application codes cleaned and updated with further system enhancements;
- Implementation of reporting module as per the McDermott report and separation of internal management reports from external results reports;
- Defining the network topology for the deployment of the 2018 RMS;
- Sourcing of Server equipment from NCRA; and
- Procurement of additional ICT equipment.

The RMS 2018 at the end did not rely on transmission by VSAT for which no 2018 budget existed but rather transmission occurred by agnostic means. SNEC assisted NEC to design a transmission requirements document to support the NEC's own procurement of internet connectivity to the tally centres.

Once the approach had been defined and agreed upon by all stakeholders an ICT project schedule was developed. SNEC advisors supported NEC to review the IT team workload and capacity and concluded it was necessary to increase the number of software developers to three and therefore requested the return of a NEC Developer on a loan assignment to the NCRA. This additional capacity allowed the development team to make following changes:

- Redesign of the database tables and delimitations through removal of all AFIS related tables; removal of all 'civil' related non-results-based tables and fields; realignment of tables in the database; updating of fields in some instances to cater for the new database/system design and enhancing security features in the database.
- Update of User Interface including addition of a serial number field within the Material Transfers screen; inclusion of additional reconciliation fields on the data entry screens (Data Entry 1&2); additional Audit User screen with the ability to make corrections; additional reset of forms functionality by the Regional Chief and inclusion of interim reports (25, 50 and 75%) and wording updates to the final reports.

While all these changes were made on time and worked well, the early stages of the re-development defining roles and responsibilities inside the IT team continued to be a challenge, as the team experienced difficulty regarding poor cohesion and low managements skills. In late January 2018, a separate consultant was engaged to undertake a system and logic check on the system and to provide assurance to NEC and SNEC that it was fit for purpose.

2.3 Support for implementation of result management process and IT system

The NEC RMWG continued work in 2018 with the permanent participation of the relevant directors and periodically other NEC staff. This group coordinated the planning and preparatory work for establishing the regional tally centres and coordinated procurement, logistics, human resource management and the staff training aspect of the result management process. SNEC advisors supported the work with preparing agenda, follow up, facilitation, and technical advice, including the development and use of planning tools.

While the SNEC project document contained no plan to place SNEC advisors in what were assumed to be district-based tally centres, the reversion to regional tally centres led to re-consideration. NEC asked SNEC to consider placing an advisor in each location to provide support to the NEC regional returning officer, district returning officers and staff. The advisors, it was also hoped would provide additional assurance that procedures and technology supported by the project were being correctly deployed. Given the challenges experienced in the RMWG, where staff appeared overwhelmed by the need to set up five tally centres parallel to other electoral activities, SNEC saw merit in this plan and received TC approval to use funds for this.

SNEC provided support to NEC in the content development of Tally Centre Procedure, which were completed ahead of polling and distributed to registered political parties, electoral observers and other interested stakeholders. SNEC advisors ensured that the Tally Centre Procedures' content and the IT software architecture and use were coherent.

The project developed and financed tally centre training packages: the procedures documents, training session agenda and slides that were distributed to NEC staff as well as political party agents in the tally centres. SNEC also led the design of the training for the regional tally centre staff and, through the Tally Centre Advisors, its delivery. This entailed the planning of a cascade structure aimed squarely at standardising the approach taken in each of the five tally centres. The cascade was supported at headquarters level by internal workshops to enhance cross-departmental understanding of the tally centre procedures. The first level of the cascade was delivered by the EOA and TPA together with relevant NEC staff.



For the second-round, additional briefing materials were developed for candidate and party agents and observers, as well as the media, reflecting the heightened interest in the results process. NEC took proactive steps, supported by the tally centre advisors, to ensure a common understanding of process and procedures.

One significant benefit of the SNEC project is that all development and updates made to the RM systems not only met the needs of the 2018 elections, it caters for the long-term requirements of a results system i.e. there is no need to redesign the IT system for the 2023 presidential elections. While there was national expertise used, the key NEC IT staff member had moved permanently to NCRA, leaving a key gap in NEC's knowledge base, which could be filled ahead of the 2023 elections.

A lesson learned workshop on results management was conducted in October 2018. The key outcome was a recommendation to NEC to establish a result management technical committee as early as

possible that will be responsible for coordinating the timeline, budget, procedures and other related issues for election operations. The NEC has committed to follow up on the 26 recommendations made at the workshop.

As a complementary activity to the work on results management, SNEC engaged an international expert on Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) to support the work of National Election Watch (NEW) in this area. This

Box 3: Accuracy of NEW's PVT Results		
First Round Presidential		
	NEW	NEC
Bio	43.05%	43.30%
Kamara	42.9%	42.70%
Second Round Presidential		
Bio	52.54%	51.81%
Kamara	47.46%	48.19%

was a DFID request; DFID was funding the civil society observation effort through another mechanism. The addition of a non-NEC activity was agreed at the TC in order to have NEW's PVT serve as an external quality assurance check on the NEC's RMS. The PVT advisor work covered preparation for the village head elections, test the NEW's PVT capacity before the 7 March elections, helped set up the PVT systems, and after the first round, helped adjust the systems for the run-off.

Further, the consultancy conducted a stocktaking exercise on NEW's previous PVT, and report on the suitability of the methodology as well as the experience of conducting and reporting on the PVT; advise on the methodology and IT for PVT in 2018; support NEW in the production of explanatory materials; train NEW on the methodology; and provide in-country support during the counting. The consultant supported NEW in the conduct of the PVT during the polling and counting period for the 7th March elections and the run-off on 31st March.

The support enabled NEW select a more representative sample decreasing its margin of error and make projections of the presidential results within 24 hours after the polls closed, pre-empting the NEC in announcing that a second round would be needed.¹ As can be seen from Box 3, NEW's projections were within 1% of the official results and it felt that the PVT was one of its biggest achievements in the 2018 elections, "bringing added credibility, trust and respect from Sierra Leoneans and the international community."²

The project was pleased to support NEW with this expertise, but accepts it was not integrated into the wider SNEC project.

Output 3: NEC capacity to conduct inclusive elections increased

Results Achieved: *SNEC increased the level of information and data available to the NEC on persons with disabilities (PWD) and on women's access to the electoral process, raising the profile of PWD in the process. This was done through the hiring of PWD to work in the NEC as advisors and voter educators, by completing access assessments and supporting the NEC to update its PWD policy and develop a gender policy. SNEC also increased PWD access to voting by building ramps at some polling sites and by producing and publicizing the tactile ballot guide. This strengthened the confidence among some PWD to participate and helped to provide more confidentiality for their votes*

For this output the SNEC Inclusion and Gender Advisor (IGA) worked with the NEC Gender and Disability Unit (G&D). Through this support, the IGA and G&D team developed several activities for mainstreaming gender and disability in NEC & the elections as a whole. These were the development of a gender assessment and gender policy, disability assessment and disability policy, a template for rolling out training. Prior to and during elections the G&D, assisted by the Advisor, mainstreamed gender and disability issues across NEC's work, especially as pertains to procedures, arrangements for polling and voter information. A gender and disability mainstreaming workshop was held in November 2018 for selected HQ and district staff that further strengthened the capacities acquired before the elections. As a result of the projects intervention the NEC has deepened its commitment to gender and inclusion issues. The goal of the project was achieved in time and within budget under this output. Future

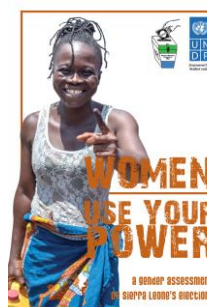
¹ NEW, Op Cit. p 31

² Ibid

interventions could use materials established by the SNEC project to improve on the practice of gender and disability issues in a more structured manner in the NEC.

3.1 Improved gender inclusiveness of the Sierra Leonean electoral processes

Through the project, NEC produced knowledge products based on an assessment of the gender-openness of the electoral process, using the methodology suggested in the joint UNDP-UNWomen publication *Inclusive Electoral Processes: a guide for electoral management bodies on promoting gender equality and women's participation*. The framework for the assessment was adapted to the Sierra Leone context from that in the guidebook. Due to the relatively late on-boarding of the IGA, it was decided that there was insufficient time to undertake both the gender and disability access assessments before the 2018 elections. Given that data on disability was less readily available than for women, it was decided to prioritise the disability access assessment.



In view of tight election timetable, political tensions and high expectations from NEC, it was decided that the assessment be postponed as a priority post-election task. The UNDP advisor worked with G&D to review relevant documents. A workshop was held with NEC staff from headquarters and districts to give input to the questions relating to the NEC and statistics were gathered from NEC to inform the document. Focus group discussions were held with political parties involved in the election and with NGOs engaged in improving women's electoral and political participation. A main constraint was in getting statistics both from NEC and other relevant actors to inform the report; this proved very time consuming. Conducting the assessment after the elections enabled the inclusion of electoral results and statistics on the women employed, as well as allowing the team to engage more meaningfully with political parties who were less inclined to promote their party line as they would probably have done had the assessment been conducted before the elections. It was completed within the budget and within the timeline. Success factors in this activity was due to genuine cooperation of NEC and other partners. The assessment informed the new NEC Gender Policy and will allow NEC to advocate for the implementation of findings that require action from other actors.

A gender policy was developed and published in November 2018 to ensure gender is effectively mainstreamed in the 2018 elections and subsequent democratic processes. As foreseen in the project document, it took into consideration recommendations of the assessment and was validated by the departments of NEC before being finalised. It contains a skeletal workplan which can be used by G&D to elaborate a plan for each department. It was completed later than expected due to the Gender Assessment being completed later than originally foreseen for reasons described above but within budget.

NEC was supported by the project to produce sex disaggregated data on voter registration for internal planning and publication. During voter registration the NEC collected the sex of all registered voters; this information was eventually disaggregated at the national and district level. NEC staff who were present at the 2017 Liberian elections prompted an active discussion within NEC on the idea of collecting sex disaggregated data on voter turnout at the March elections in the polling stations. While this is the preferred method for collecting this vital data, it was concluded, however, that with the complexity of the elections in 2018 and the number of forms that had to be filled out (with four simultaneous elections), staff would not be able to cope with also compiling sex-disaggregated figures on turnout.

However, as the NEC uses sophisticated IT systems, this information can be reported in sex-disaggregated format by region, district, constituency, ward and down to the polling centre. It is hoped that NEC build this in to reporting processes in future, as it will have access to this information even if there is a shift to using only civil registry data to generate the voters' register.

In the by-elections (for local councillors) conducted after the March 2018 elections, voter turnout disaggregated by sex was gathered during polling using a new form designed to capture the information. The figures are available in the Resource Centre and in the NEC Gender Unit. In the June 2018 bye-elections, the form showed that women's turnout in those elections were as follows: Makeni Ward 121: 51%; Makeni Ward 123: 50%; Bonthe Ward 308: 51%; and Port Loko Ward 235: 50%.

The G&D Unit is now keenly aware of the importance of sex disaggregated data and are mindful of the recommendation made in the ECOWAS final report ³of "the need for the Gender Unit within NEC to be reinforced and to work towards making available data on gender."

Indicating how the G&D Unit is becoming proactive in this regard, at the time of reporting, working with the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Department on developing a Human Resources Department 'temporary staff form' to collect details, (e.g. name, address, sex, ID number, function, location), on temporary staff directly at the District level. Until now such data was sent to Human Resource Department via Regional Coordinators; there was no agreed format and providing the information to HR was not prioritised. This resulted in incomplete, with no sex disaggregated and outdated data.

Two BRIDGE workshops on Gender and Elections were conducted by the project, one for staff of NEC and one for counterparts, each lasting 4 days, with a facilitation team of the TPA, IGA and the Research and Reporting Officer (RRO). Expert input came from the Chief of G&D and the CTA. The materials from these courses can be used for future trainings on gender. These were completed on time and within budget with no constraints.

3.2 Improved inclusion of people with disabilities in Sierra Leonean electoral processes

The project assisted NEC and the National Commission for Persons with Disability (NCPD) conduct the first ever nationwide assessment of the access of persons with disabilities to the electoral process. 16 workshops were held in all districts across Sierra Leone engaging persons with disabilities (PWD) to identify their greatest challenges in the electoral process and to propose solutions to them. A total of 310 PWDs were in attendance, of which 107 were women. The report was launched in early December 2017 to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The access assessment was not specifically foreseen in the project document, however the IGA proposed it as a very useful exercise in order to really assess the situation on the ground with regards to political participation of PWDs. No organisation or body has done a nationwide survey on PWD's electoral rights.

³ <http://necsl.org/eor.aspx> ECOWAS Observer Mission to the General Elections in Sierra Leone Final Report, page 27

The assessment report included key short- and long-term recommendations from the PWD community - out of 14 short-term (pre-election) recommendations 10 were implemented and one partly implemented).

A key recommendation of the assessment was that PWD should be hired by NEC and actively involved in the process as productive employees and not mere beneficiaries of assistance. The project set the tone in this regard by the hiring of a full-time, visually impaired, Disability Access Adviser (DAA). The advisor worked in the NEC premises to assist the NEC in screening electoral procedures and developing its PWD policy. In addition, 19 persons with disabilities were hired to work in all NEC district offices as assistant voter education and training officers (AVETOs). NEC also instructed its district offices to make efforts to hire PWD as polling staff and there were more PWD visible as observers than in previous elections.

There was no major constraint to implementing the assessment's recommendations or in employing the PWD national advisor or the 19 AVETOs. The project catered for an assistant for both the DAA and any AVETO who needed one, as well as securing an exemption to allow the payment of transport allowances to PWD attending SNEC and NEC events.

A large factor leading to the success of this activity was the active collaboration with the NCPD. A success factor in hiring PWD was the willingness of NEC to incorporate PWD and to make some reasonable accommodation to allow them to work more effectively. The NEC may hire these persons in future as staff in polling stations, hopefully in responsible positions, such as presiding officer. Their knowledge on elections was increased by having them participate in a BRIDGE module on 'introduction to electoral administration', and they also benefited from two training courses on electoral procedures.

A new Disability Policy was developed by NEC G&D with support of project advisors and was endorsed by the Commission in November 2018. This policy revised NEC's ground-breaking 2015 policy, making three clear commitments to the disabled community: improved employment opportunities in NEC; screening of NEC policies and procedures for inclusion and maintaining links with the disabled community organisations. Policy actions in each area are outlined. It has been published and will be disseminated to NCPD, MDAs and the PWD community by the G&D. The SNEC project supported the embossing of the policy into Braille as well as printed hard copies. The project also produced a reference compendium for NEC staff on disability issues, to increase access to inclusion information for NEC staff.

In implementing the recommendations of the access assessment, SNEC assisted NEC to improve the accessibility of polling stations through the provision of a table-top voting screens in all polling stations to help voters who cannot stand to complete a ballot paper. Dedicated information in the polling procedures and training provided to temporary staff ensured voting services were provided in an accessible and respectful manner. The Commonwealth final observer report noted that they had "observed in most Polling Centres [that] people with disability were ably assisted to vote."⁴

Over 177 ramps to polling stations and 30 benches for use by those queueing were constructed by a Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO) contracted by SNEC to make and install them across the country. This was not foreseen but was a recommendation from the assessment. The NEC was unable to identify which polling stations needed ramps. SLUDI had completed a survey on which polling stations needed ramps and the project was able to use indications in their survey to procure ramps. The ramps could not have been identified in the limited time frame without the SLUDI document, yet ironically a major constraint in fully implementing the building of ramps for all necessary locations, was that the SLUDI survey was incomplete. It omitted two districts (Kambia and Karene) and did not accurately reflect the needs at polling station locations. This was partially rectified by the ramp building company who informed the project of the situation when they arrived on-site. This was the first election where ramps had been provided, and it has set a precedent which the NEC will repeat depending on funding. The

⁴ Ibid, page 15

ramps were inexpensive, in total cost around USD7,000, so the activity was well within the amount allocated for Inclusion.

Tactile Ballot Guides (TBG), that allow visually impaired voters to vote independently, were provided in all polling stations. Despite reaching only a small number of PWD, this is one of the best-known adaptive strategies in elections. A targeted voter information campaign ensured the visually impaired were aware of the TBG. In many areas the AVETOs carried out door to door sensitisation and worked with local DPOs to share information on the TBG and other access measures. This had been a failing in previous elections where the TBG was partially provided but not used. Through face to face meetings, town hall meeting and extensive voter education the TBG was not something unfamiliar in this election.

Frequent radio interviews/media events with PWD NEC staff on their activities and use of radio spots and jingles to share voter information messages were used to share the inclusion message. The Access Advisor appeared several times on the BBC Media Action show *Dis Na Wi Voice* that showcased overcoming traditional barriers to PWD political participation. These were re-broadcast on radio stations across the country and through the internet.

Voter information provided in Braille and sign language was used to ensure TV messages were accessible to the deaf community. NEC officials consistently reiterated that PWD were an important part of the electoral process and encouraged their participation.

Continued efforts on inclusiveness after the elections the executive summaries of the Carter Centre, Commonwealth, ECOWAS, EU and NEW electoral observation reports were embossed into Braille and distributed with the help of SNEC national disability advisor to institutions and organisations teaching braille as well as the NCPD.

Overall, a factor making implementation successful was the energy of DPO organisations and NEC willingness to engage the issue. Clearly NEC, if they had funds, would have done more in this area. In conclusion this output was satisfactorily implemented.

Output 4: Conduct of 2018 elections supported

Results Achieved: *The various components i.e. RMT, VR and inclusion, of the projects fed into the achievement of this output. Results were visible in many areas including strengthened integrity mechanisms, training methods, procedures, and communications. SNEC was consistently credited in evaluation interviews as having helped ensure that the NEC was able to produce a “meaningful electoral exercise conducted in compliance with international standards*

The project document envisaged a small amount of direct technical assistance here, and instead SNEC ended up with a large portfolio under this output, accounting for significant portion of the project budget.

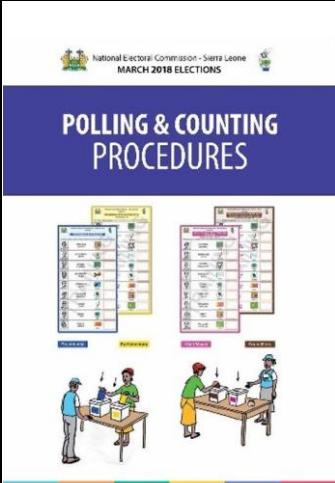
In addition to the two areas identified in the project documents, SNEC, based on the decision of the SC/TC, provided assistance to the area of logistics and procurement; external communications; voter information design and production; and direct arrangement of voter outreach activities.

4.1 NEC supported to manage enabling actions for conduct of elections

In regard to training, the project engaged an experienced Training and Procedures Advisor (TPA). Despite the many years of UN assistance and their enthusiasm for cascade training programmes, NEC had limited skills in development of procedures and training content, relying instead on the procedures done under the last technical assistance programme. SNEC supported a thorough review of the polling station level tasks (polling and counting), to remedy defect in the previous procedures and improve the general polling experience, especially for people with disabilities and women. In 2012, polling station guidance and training materials were delivered too late for use in training or comprehension by staff. For 2018, SNEC ensured that this was not the case with all necessary materials for training available in advance of the training cascade. Additional copies were also produced for party agents and electoral observers to foster a shared understanding.

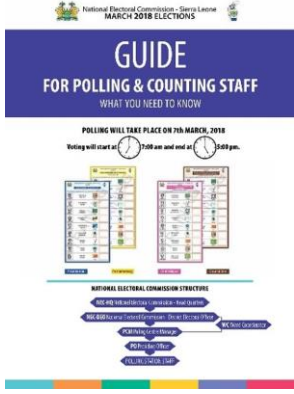
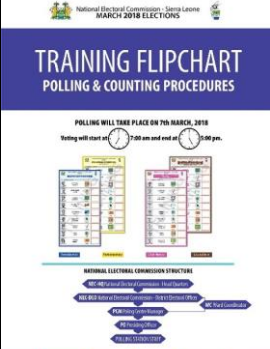
SNEC supported the development of a consistent and interrelated suite of materials. The core document being the Polling and Counting Procedures, which was fully revised and largely re-written that enhanced utility (user-friendly version developed) with visual aids and colours that were followed on in the other products produced.

Summary of training package

	<p>Central reference text</p> <p>100 pages of guidance: a binding instruction to the temporary staff by NEC</p> <p>61,000 copies printed for Ward Coordinators, Polling Centre Managers, Presiding Officers and Voter Information Officers</p> <p>On NEC website and shared with parties and observers</p>
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Shorter guide containing key elements from the main manual

For junior polling staff: reflects the amount of training they receive and the tasks they must perform without confusing them by additional information

Recognising logistical issues we have pre-printed flipchart for use in training sessions


Reinforces key messages and describes key processes

Accompanied by practice materials to ensure correct form filling etc

Highlighting essential changes made to procedures following 7 March polling.

Designed to be read in conjunction with main guidance.

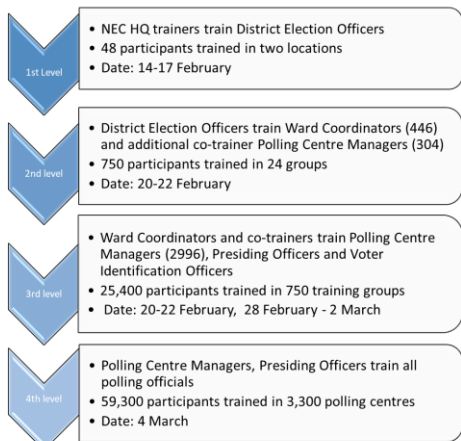
Used at face to face training sessions




Designed to ensure consistency in packing of electoral materials by the polling staff so that all materials come to tally centres in the same manner.

The was the first use in Sierra Leone of a pictorial guide rather than inaccessible text; so represents a new style of presenting important procedures to the temporary staff.

As the guidance and training materials were both designed and printed by SNEC, the project was able to ensure consistency with the forms and other documents also provided by SNEC, such as through colour coding, reflecting changes in the manual when needed and also arguing against unnecessary late changes once the procedures were finished.



SNEC provided extensive support in the design of the structure of the training cascade for the temporary polling station staff who would conduct the poll and count the votes. In this work SNEC redesigned training cascade structure to include a standard implementation methodology such as

number of participants, materials to be used and training methodology. The advisory team implemented workshops at NEC headquarters to enhance cross-departmental understanding of the polling and counting process. The two key SNEC advisors also supported the NEC training team at the 'zero level' of training so they could provide precise, consistent content for the cascade training first level to District Election Officers (DEOs). These advisors, joined by others from SNEC, supported the first level of delivery and provided coaching to the NEC trainers in two regional locations.

These activities were implemented in time and allowed the election to take place on schedule. There was no delay of implementation of these activities.

While SNEC was not planning to work with NEC on the candidate nomination process, the SNEC RMA provided support to the NEC IT team during the candidate nomination process upon their request. The internal management of the nomination process proved particularly challenging for NEC, which became apparent during ballot paper printing when a plethora of errors and inaccuracies were discovered in the ballot paper data, generated by the candidate nomination process.

The procedures developed for the district staff (who receive all but presidential nominations) were not harmonised with the NEC-built IT system and so there was a divergence between the paper forms and the electronic input. There was no control over candidates selecting to use a name other than their registered name, which was not acceptable to the IT system. The entire nomination process was weakly reported and administered, and there were no active quality control mechanisms in place by NEC headquarters. To remedy these problems, all nomination materials were brought to headquarters, meaning there had been no need to do candidacy data entry in the districts, which took up valuable time during the busiest electoral period. In the end, the SNEC project team undertook a simple physical double checking of names and symbols to ensure accuracy and return to adherence with the ballot paper printing schedule.

The candidate nomination process also showed that the coordination and cooperation amongst NEC department needed further enhancing. The procedures manual was developed - without SNEC support - in the HQ training department, but without working closely with the IT department and without testing the procedures against the IT programme. IT department delivered separate training to the field staff on the application, not together with training department train on theory.

This point also highlights the structural problem that there is not appointed person or section in the NEC to write the procedures, so it fell under the training section, where there was not enough capacity to cover all the procedures and training as well as the voter information tasks required of the existing team of six people.

Following the success of the logistics advisor during voter registration, SNEC contracted the same advisor to assist during the elections. Key work areas included:

- Planned and managed the cleaning and set up the warehouse area in Wellington. Several buildings needed to be cleared of previous electoral materials, and space made available for different tasks. The main building floor was rehabilitated including toilets facilities fixed.
- Managed the receipt of the polling station and centre materials, storage and distribution to Districts. This included the project renting a sufficient number of trucks to convey the materials to the districts.
- Receiving ballot papers and forms at the airport. This process was closely followed by political party agents that turned out to be a sensitive situation.

It is vital to acknowledge that despite the difficult road conditions NEC managed to deliver the materials to each polling centres, and they were ready for opening in time on election day.

While the distribution of materials experienced no problems, the material retrieval was slow and lacked a reporting system. That left the headquarters and management without regular information updates on the night of the election. This is an area where tighter procedures and reporting lines need to be developed for the next elections.

Based on the post-electoral activities as well as the experience of the elections there is now a better understanding in the NEC of the necessity of better coordinating activities between headquarters and field offices; especially for materials intake in district offices and tally centres. Further written procedures and trainings are required in this area.

The *main* implementation constraints that directly influenced this specific output was that NEC did not receive the government financial contribution in a consistent and timely manner. That made the NEC both unwilling to plan processes without guarantee of funds and unable to do so economically due to short timeframes when funds were available.

International observers all rated the polling and counting process in the polling station as being very good - polling was assessed by the EU observers as 'good' or 'very good' in 95% of stations visited on 7 March and 98% visited on 31 March⁵.

The procedural and training support was welcomed by the training participants and NEC core staff alike.

4.2 NEC supported to deliver inclusive voter information campaign

The SNEC IGA, and the DAA worked closely with the Voter Education and Training Department and in coordination with the Chief of G&D, ensured all messaging were inclusive. In January 2018 a 'Messaging Workshop' was convened by the NEC for all organisations intending to produce any voter information materials. At this workshop messages were agreed with particular attention on slogans addressed to women; certain slogans suggested by participants were rejected as being gender insensitive, such as 'one man one vote'. NEC selected messages with advice from SNEC and developed into jingles (eight jingles were produced in Krio and 13 local languages), and posters. These jingles were played on national and independent radio providing for nationwide coverage. An election song was developed in Krio "Think fine O, vote fine O" with a brief to be gender inclusive, the song had a verse addressed to women. Flyers were developed to inform on the actual process, and these were also vetted for gender and disability sensitivity, for example it ensured that women were shown in positions of authority in the polling station and not just as voters. The work in this area was informed by the results of the disability assessment from output three.

The IGA helped vet materials produced for NEC by other organisation, for example an election process video was produced which did not show the TBG, or the agreed procedure of giving PWD, expectant mothers and the aged priority in the polling station queue. The video was reshot correcting these issues and a sign language interpreter was added. The video was aired on led screens in Freetown. The DAA participated in numerous radio shows throughout the country, speaking on inclusion for PWDs.

One constraint was a change in the original project plan, originally NEC was to meet the costs of placing, distributing and producing the voter information material but by January 2018 it was clear the NEC did not have the funds. SNEC procured posters, jingles, an election song, and paid for town criers and almost all voter information efforts. Due to delays with procuring services for developing the jingles, the second set of jingles were not produced in a timely fashion, and the election song was not ready until three days before the run-off election. Miscommunication between the NEC HQ and district offices left unclarity on which voter information should be disseminated and by whom. A lessons learnt in this instance would

⁵ EUEOM Final report, pg. 36-37

look at building the capacity of the NEC to encourage more open communication between offices nationwide.

Also relating to inclusive voter information, the SNEC advisor assisted national counterparts on the development and production of a drama show (six skits) entitled “Women Know Your Power” which was performed in almost all districts (three performances per district), focusing on the electoral procedures and voter information specifically aimed at women. Half the cast were women. Main production was in Krio and actors were able to vary the language (Mende, Temne and Koranko) depending on the district. Voter information material was distributed before and after the shows. The shows were effective and well liked.⁶ They were performed in the lead up to the first and second round of polling. The length of time needed to develop the contract and pay an initial amount prior to going on the road was a constraint as had it been quicker the shows could have started at least a week earlier. Another constraint was that NEC did not inform its district offices of the drama shows schedule and so the Voter Education Officers in some district did not see the show and did not use the opportunity it afforded to educate the public. The quality of the actors was a major success factor. One lesson learnt is that, in future, the drama groups should try to gather statistics relating to size of crowd on a simple form that could be completed at each event. This would make for more effective reporting.

A series of Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) documents were produced on various topics (for example how to mark the ballot, the TBG) and were translated into Braille and distributed in printed form.

First time voters were targeted with a ‘First Time’ voter education initiative implemented on the project’s behalf by the NGO ‘HEAL Sierra Leone’. These efforts were supported by the IGA who helped the director of HEAL develop his training plan based on a peer educator model. Peer educators had been identified in 2014 from amongst young men and women in schools across the country who demonstrated leadership and training skills. These peer educators worked with HEAL’s organisational structure with team leaders and coordinators. Drawing on this network a core group were trained on voting procedures by HEAL and NEC staff and they subsequently cascaded the ‘training’ through the various schools that participate in the peer educators’ network. The initiative focused on explaining voting procedures to young people who were 13 between 17 years in the 2012 elections. There were 3,825 direct beneficiaries from 75 learning institutions, mostly young women.

In spite of challenges, voter information efforts were without doubt inclusive. The Commonwealth Observer Group noted in its final report “the participation of the elderly and disabled voters and were encouraged by the presence of women and youth both as voters, polling officials and citizen observers”.⁷

4.3 Design and procurement of sensitive electoral materials

In addition to support for guidance and training, SNEC was called upon to equip polling stations with essential equipment, procured internationally, for the conduct of the polls and the counting. These included:

- Pre-packaged polling station kits and pre-packaged polling centre kits;
- Bottles of indelible ink for marking voters’ fingers;
- Security printed ballot papers, bound into pads and with legislatively required serial numbers
- Security printed Result and Reconciliation Forms and Materials Transfer Forms;

6

<http://www.sl.undp.org/content/sierraleone/en/home/presscenter/articles/2018/03/29/street-theatre-supports-women-s-voting-rights.html>

⁷ <http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/observer-group%E2%80%99s-report-sierra-leone%E2%80%99s-elections-released>, page 37

- Table-top voting screens for use by disabled electors; and
- Tactile ballot guides custom designed for the ballot papers.

Quantities ordered are detailed in the Annex.

SNEC supported two successful printing productions of sensitive materials. The printing productions performed by Renform in South Africa went well, all materials were delivered to Freetown on time with the required quality. Statistical information is included in the annex. During the preparation and production of ballot papers, several challenges emerged, with the most challenging being delay in sending final data to printing.

The late decision by NEC to add a serial number on the Results and Reconciliation Forms (RRFs) for the second round was a change that required quick responses and technical solutions. For the serial numbers to be useful, they must be related in the database to the polling station of allocation (else there is no point in the numbering as an integrity check). NEC was supported to correct the situation and for the second round, NEC delivered the database with sequential numbers linked to the RRFs. For future considerations, the NEC needs to take full ownership of the need to produce accurate nomination and ballot paper data and to have in place methods of data transfer

NEC supported to revise the 2012 policy on creating polling stations and what number of voters should be allocated to them⁸. To allow for the complications of the four elections being run with a comparatively complex polling procedures, NEC decided to make 300 the maximum number of voters to be allocated to an average Station. However, for the last Station in each Centre, the number was allowed to vary from 350 to 400. Using this number of voters increased the number of polling stations compared to 2012, but not as much as it would have been by keeping to a strict numerical number, but instead analysing the actual impact, which is that a very small number of stations had more than 300 voters. This decision had no impact on the quality of the service to the people on election day but saved both financial and managerial efforts. This had an impact on a number of polling staff to hire and manage, forms and contingency ballot printing cost, and more administration for result tallying process.

The contingency ballot distribution was also changed. The 2012 model allocated 300 contingency ballots per every Polling Centre as a standard package regardless of the number of stations in the Centre. The project shared NEC's concern for 2018 that using that high a number of contingency ballot papers would be a risk factor for allegations of manipulation and so resolved to reduce the numbers. The formula implemented was to have 50 contingency ballot papers per polling station within a polling centre. Considering that most centres had only 1-5 polling station this decision significantly reduced the number of the contingency ballot compared to previous cycles.

However, NEC retained on the RRF the possibility of transferring ballot papers from one polling station to another within the same centre; this was not used at any single occasion in 2018 which caused significant concern to political parties. The NEC's own reviews, and the project team share the view that for the next election cycle, a re-design of the RRF can withdraw the possibility of station to station transfers and the process can rely on the contingency ballot paper allocation per centre, as this happened this time.

While the 2023 elections should be only for presidential and parliamentary elections, not local councils, at this stage there is no local printing capacity to produce secure ballot papers with the legislatively required serial numbers that are packed to the polling station level. Accordingly, NEC should decide early on key ballot paper issues:

⁸ The registration centres became a Polling Centre which is then broken up into the required number of Polling Stations.

- is the serial number really useful or can legislation be passed to remove it?
- does NEC need pre-packed ballot papers or can they organise the pack and labelling themselves?
- What are the security needs for Sierra Leonean ballot papers?

This should be considered with a view to move for either legislative change or securing international assistance for their production.

While the use of SNEC international procurement to equip the polling stations and centres ensured a high degree of consistency and good value for money, it did reinforce the reliance on international support for core electoral materials.

Details of procurements over USD10,000 are included in the annex.

4.X: SNEC II – Additional support to the agreed initial support to NEC

NEC identified the need for further funding to ensure adequate staffing for polling stations and full delivery of March 2018 electoral tasks. Project Output 4 ‘Conduct of 2018 elections supported’ was extended to meet these additional needs. It was agreed that National Execution (NEX) advances modality be used to implement the activities and that a stand-alone project to cater for the NEX advances be created. This modality required a workplan for the activities to be drawn up and NEC’s financial management capacity assessed (HACT Assessment) to determine adequacy of NEC’s systems to manage the funds. The assessment came out with satisfactory results. Risks involved in implementing the activity were identified and mitigation measures undertaken.

Risks identified and mitigated were:

- a) Risk of fraud
Mitigation: Outflows to be supported by supporting documents verified by UNDP reviewed and certified by UNDP and
- b) Risk of misappropriation of funds.
Mitigation: weekly review of financial records. List of staff to be agreed upon before disbursement and traced to source documents.

The project management unit provided orientation to NEC staff on financial management and financial reporting.

A sub-project was set up with a total budget of USD944,381 - USD767,514 earmarked for polling staff and USD106,913 for other electoral activities. Two letters of Agreements (LOA) were signed with NEC during implementation of the activities. One for the polling staff salaries and the 2nd one for other electoral activities. Funds for the 1st LOA for polling staff were disbursed to NEC in two tranches, first tranche for the main elections and the 2nd tranche for run-off. One disbursement was made for other electoral activities on reimbursement basis terms. Of the total budget of USD106,913 earmarked for other electoral activities, only US\$64,026.12 was utilized.

4.4 Post-event reflection and evaluation

In the post-election period, the project team held a Post-Election Review retreat for all NEC staff from across the country. This retreat was an opportunity to reflect on the implementation of the project with regards its efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability as well as considering future needs and priorities. After the retreat, project advisors supported NEC management to develop an Action Plan for responding to issues raised during the retreat.

The project also supported NEC to hold a well-received workshop in Freetown in October 2018 to consider the recommendations of those electoral observation missions that had issued reports. The workshop brought together political parties, CSOs, the judiciary, PPRC, other state institutions and the international community to consider in detailed working groups 111 recommendations from the Carter Center, Commonwealth, ECOWAS, EU and NEW. The NEC plans to form a task force to continue work in this area.

Output 5: NEC planning and management capacity strengthened

This output was designed to come on-stream after the electoral period. In practice, many issues related to NEC planning and management capacity obviously arose in 2017 and early 2018 and were as possible addressed by the project team.

A multi-stakeholder Steering Committee⁹ was established to help guide all elements of the electoral process in Sierra Leone.

The Steering Committee used a suite of tools to assist in their work, and the project team supported NEC in their contributions to:

- the consolidated electoral budget;
- the electoral readiness tracker, a product of the Electoral Readiness Assessment discussed in Output Six;
- the strategic risk log; and
- milestone planning.

NEC did not have a consolidated operational plan for these elections (or for the proceeding voter registration exercise). The project arrived too late to develop the culture necessary to make an operational plan a useful and consistent tool. This was addressed after the elections through the development and delivery of a series of workshops for headquarter and district staff, with the aim of all levels of staff understanding each other's planning and coordination needs. It is hoped that this new awareness of planning and timelines translates to a proper operational timeline for future electoral events.

The lack of such a key tool had a marked impact on the planning and coordination of electoral tasks, as can be seen throughout this report.

5.1 Support NEC external communications efforts during the electoral period

In October 2017, following a request from the NEC, SNEC added an activity to deploy an external communications expert to support the NEC during the electoral period. The Electoral Relations Advisor developed an external relations strategy together with the Director of External Relations and supported/led on in its implementation.

Understanding the limitations of traditional and social media and recognising the role of external relations as distinct from public information/outreach, the strategy addressed national and international media; national and international observers; and civil society organisations.

The broader public was also served by this strategy – both because critical information was transparently and publicly availed, and because target audiences were seen as multipliers (extending the reach of information) and influencers (potential advocates of the institution and of the democratic process within their respective communities and social circles).

5.2 Post-electoral capacity building

⁹ See UNDP Sierra Leone, 2018, *Sierra Leone Electoral Steering Committee Lessons Learned* for a full discussion

It was recognised, and based on the electoral context, that structural cohesion and planning within NEC needed to be further strengthened. The following inter-related workshops on key planning and implementation topics were provided and these could be built upon in future cycle support.

Date	Workshop title	Attendees	Attendees		
			T	F	M
14-17 Aug 2018	Training Skills I	NEC staff	20	7	13
22-24 Aug 2018	Training Skills II	NEC staff	16	5	11
28-29 Aug 2018	Managing the Training Cascade I	NEC staff	22	4	18
11-12 Sep 2018	Managing the Training Cascade II	NEC staff	21	6	15
10-11 July 2018	Operational Planning I	NEC staff	26	25	1
19-20 July 2018	Operational Planning II	NEC staff	26	7	19
20 Sep 2018	Special Voting	NEC staff	15	4	11
1-2 Oct 2018	Planning for High Level Timeline	NEC staff & 1 EU	19	5	14
24-25 Oct 2018	Result Management	NEC staff	27	2	25
7 Nov 2018	IT team meeting	NEC staff	11	1	10

Output 6: Project Management

6.1 Project reporting and evaluation systems to provide accurate and timely financial and narrative reports

The arrival of the Project Operations Manager (POM) in October 2017 saw commencement of monthly financial reports distributed in a timely fashion. The POM worked with all project donors to ensure reports met their needs while complying with UNDP corporate guidelines. The 2017 provisional¹⁰ financial update was able to be discussed at the Technical Committee of 17 January, despite the pressures of electoral period procurement at this time.

The project was subject to an external audit, for which only one medium recommendation was proffered relating to CTA’s emolument and internal approval of the provisions of her contract.

An external evaluation of the project started in November 2018 completed by end 2018.

6.2 Electoral Readiness Assessment

The project document included the novel concept of an electoral readiness assessment to take stock of electoral preparations and if necessary divert or re-direct project resource. One of the tools used to

Electoral Readiness Status Check 2018 general elections in Sierra Leone	23 Jan 2018	Week ending 30 Jan 2018	
NEC's operational plans			
1. NEC milestone plans in place and being monitored			NEC will present here
2. NEC financial resources in place			New arrangements for 'top up' funding
Distribution of voter cards			
3. Distribution of voter cards			Plans in hand but res
Nomination of candidates			
4. Nomination of candidates			
Procurement storage, distribution and retrieval of electoral materials			
5. Ballot papers, boxes, indelible ink and stationery kits procurement & distribution			Goods continue to ar
6. Warehousing, Storage and Distribution & retrieval plan adopted			

track election preparedness was the readiness tracker – that clearly and quickly indicated the progress of both NEC and other electoral contributing institutions against key milestones and tasks, using a red-orange-green traffic light system. This tool was initiated by the Steering Committee for effective oversight and guidance of the electoral process.

6.3 Project management arrangements ensure on-time delivery of project activities and timely financial and narrative reporting

Project management was the joint responsibility of the CTA, in her role as Project Manager, and the POM, an experienced UN operations management staff. The POM sat at the UNDP Country Office with the small administrative cell.

A list of staff and consultants recruited can be found in the annex.

4. VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

Direct Engagement

¹⁰ All UNDP financial updates are provisional until the financial year is closed, often some months into the following year

The NEC had been meeting regularly with political parties since 2012. In 2017 and 2018, these meetings occurred on a fortnightly then weekly basis and focused on specific stages of the electoral cycle. The NEC also hosted weekly meetings for CSOs, to which observers and media were also welcomed.

This regular and direct engagement was invaluable and arguably one of the most important components of the external relations strategy. Meetings provided a platform for discussion and an opportunity for attendees to pose questions directly to the Chair, Commissioners and the Director of Media and Public Information. In addition to keeping stakeholders informed, they allowed participants to resolve misunderstandings and to discuss sensitive issues amongst themselves and in the witness of others. Effectively, having taken place in a semi-public forum, some critical discussions were “on record” and participants contributed to an informal contract of mutual accountability. As a result, many potentially difficult issues were addressed very quickly and frankly.

Print Media

Although there are an estimated 40 registered newspapers in Sierra Leone, approximately 15 newspapers are printed and circulated daily while the majority is privately owned. These papers tend to be only a few pages long, focus almost exclusively on national news. They are overtly biased and very often sensational.

Several particular challenges experienced with print media engagement warrant mention. Firstly, professional culture is under-developed owing largely to the lack of recognition or other non-monetary incentive available to print journalists. Inadequately remunerated, journalists are regularly provided with transportation and meals or money in exchange for attending/reporting events. Similarly, articles are often published, verbatim, at the expense of commissioning parties – the same way one would pay to publish an advertisement. The effect is somewhat oligarchical as those with disposable resources are best positioned to control what is printed and, more specifically, to control the narrative. Moreover, the situation is self-perpetuating as both national and international institutions continue to feed this advertorial¹¹ culture.

In spite of these weaknesses, the significance of print media cannot be overlooked. Although political bias is a widely acknowledged aspect of print news – and in spite of low literacy rates and the disproportionate concentration of print news in Freetown– newspapers are a cherished tradition; and many Sierra Leoneans collect news clippings as a way to remember important events. NEC’s own Director of Media and External Relations, offers as an example: “I collect all the articles in which I am featured.”

Television and Radio

There are four television and an approximate 50 radio stations in Sierra Leone. The most popular traditional news medium in the country, radio, draws the most listeners in the morning and late evening. Of radio audiences, 62 percent live in rural areas and 38 percent in urban areas.¹² The rural/urban ratio is almost inverse for television, with 56 percent of viewers located in urban and 44 percent located in rural areas¹³.

Like print media, radio and television are subject to the biases of their owners. In fact, many owners form media empires – including print, radio and television. The advantage of giving radio and television interviews, however, is that the NEC was able to communicate directly to audiences, reducing opportunities for editing and manipulation.

¹¹ Advertorial content is paid advertisement, that appears to be editorial (news) in nature.

¹² Wittels, Annabelle and Nick Maybanks, Communication in Sierra Leone: An Analysis of Media and Mobile Audiences, BBC Media Action (May 2016)

¹³ Ibid.

The Director of Media and External Relations featured twice per week on live morning talk shows and on pre-recorded interviews that aired repeatedly in the days before the election.

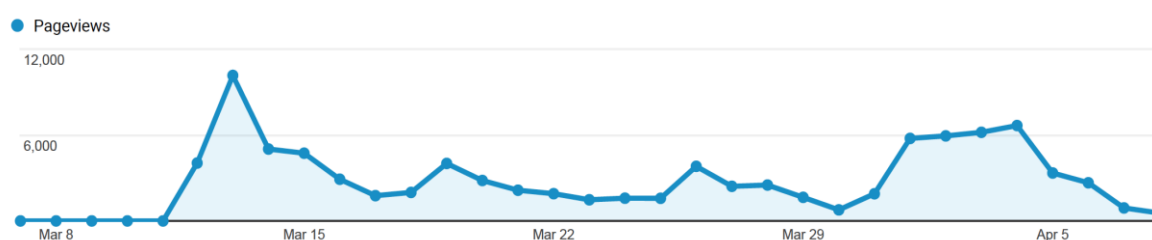
In the weeks prior to elections, the Chair appeared on live morning television and radio shows. The Commission was deliberate in patronizing all major stations as well as providing pre-recorded material for prime time airing. According to the Director of Media and External Relations, morning features had the potential to “shift the discourse” among listeners, for the rest of the day. Moreover, many of these stations have a social media presence and are followed by the diaspora.

In 2018,¹⁴ Presidential candidates engaged in public debate with higher attendance than that of 2012. Debates were broadcast on television and radio and were extremely popular. The exact number of listeners/viewers is unknown. It is hoped that the degree of public interest in serious political discourse through formal debates could shift campaigns from being based on tribal divisions toward those based on political issues and practical solutions.

Website

At the outset of the external communications assignment (early February), the NEC website had been neglected. Content had last been updated in 2012, layout was text-heavy and files were not well-organized. It was eventually revealed that the responsible staff person had been assigned to other tasks and could not update or maintain the site for the duration of elections. Inefficient site maintenance (and the resultant unavailability of information) could have been perceived as a lack of transparency and was therefore addressed as a matter of urgency. An externally based website designer and administration team was temporarily hired, to manage the site until end April 2018.

The newly designed site was not without flaw. Because the team was remotely located, difficulties in communication style and layout instructions were sometimes experienced. In addition, the spontaneous, time-sensitive and sometimes volume-heavy nature of election information meant that uploading content to the website was much slower than sharing it via social media – so that the NEC may have appeared to be “the last to share” information.



Nonetheless, the website was accessed by 15,116 users between 7 March and 8 April, among whom 75 percent returned to the site more than once and 58.26 percent were located in Sierra Leone. The most popular content, by far, was election results and this is also reflected in site use, which increased dramatically when Presidential results were announced.¹⁵ Election results pages¹⁶ accounted for 37,77 percent and press releases,¹⁷ accounted for 13,33 percent of page views.

¹⁴ 15 February

¹⁵ 13 March and 4 April

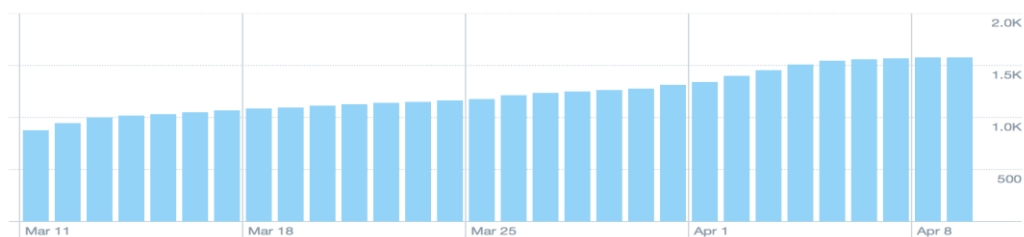
¹⁶ Including progressive results

¹⁷ Including official statements and public notices

At one point in the run-off electoral process, a webpage outlining constituencies was found to be erroneous. This quickly became a major point of discussion between competing parties and pointed to the significance of the website as a demonstration of both transparency and professional efficiency.

Twitter

Within a two-month period (10 February launch to 10 April report), the NEC drew a following of 1,574 Twitter users. This audience grew very quickly, surpassing 1,000 within the first month of the account launch, but modestly thereafter.



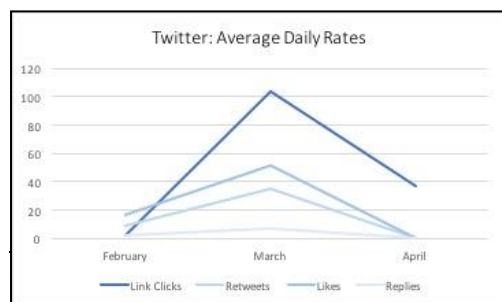
According to Twitter’s own analytics, followers are predominantly English-speaking¹⁸ and male.¹⁹ The largest proportion (42 percent) is based in Sierra Leone. The next largest proportion is located in the United States (15 percent), followed by the United Kingdom (12 percent) and the remainder reside elsewhere.

Based on informal observation, active users included professional and semi-professional journalists in and outside of Sierra Leone, political or quasi-political players, national civil society groups, and international diplomatic and humanitarian/development missions.

It was clear that for NEC followers, quick sharing was a top priority. Users rushed to share the same information within minutes of its release. According to Twitter demographics, NEC’s top followers include Umara Fofana, a Freetown-based freelance journalist, widely known for his work with BBC Africa, with over 63,200 followers; and Musa Inuwa, a Ghana-based journalist with over 27,300 followers.

Tweets with the highest engagement²⁰ rates were election results –particularly disaggregated and infographic charts. Aside from these results, the greatest engagement was drawn with actual copies of the Bintumani Agreement, the press release in which President Julius Maada Bio was officially declared president, and the official statement, announcing the date of the run-off election, after having been deferred as the result of a court injunction.

Users were often critical. Some requested very specific information, on the basis of transparency (and in some cases, presumably, as a way to stimulate politically motivated dialogue). Other comments were less constructive and frequently reflected a lack of understanding of the electoral process.



In other cases, users became advocates of the NEC and the electoral process. One notable example occurred when a Swiss Blockchain company claimed to have managed election results. Rather than responding directly to the company, NEC shared a “fast fact” – a graphic panel,

¹⁹ 78 percent

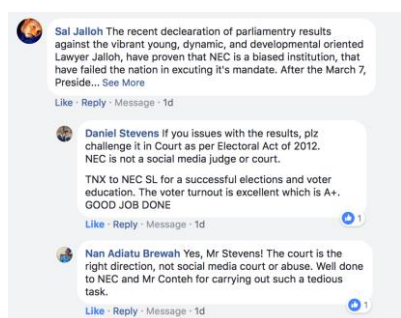
²⁰ Engagement reflects the total number of clicks, retweets, replies, follows and likes, divided by the number of times a post has been seen.

explaining that NEC had not used Blockchain and elaborating which particular software had in fact been used. As a positive outcome, followers retweeted the panel quickly and repeatedly and engaged in dialogue with the company, themselves, insisting that the company rectify the spread of the false information it had inspired. Several news sources rescinded their original reports and the company in question also issued an amended account of its presence in the country. On the other hand, precarious and ill-informed Blockchain stories have persisted well beyond election day,²¹ suggesting that even when erroneous information is corrected, the impact may not be entirely reversed.

Among international missions, messages regarding voter participation and inclusion of women and persons with disabilities were well-received. Overall, however, the most popular content was objective information related directly to key election events and results. This is likely the explanation for the sharp rise in followers prior to and throughout the month of elections – as well as its swift decline.

Facebook

Although new follows tend to be concentrated around specific events and developments, Facebook followers (4,228²²) significantly outnumbered Twitter followers and continue to grow. Facebook followers are predominantly male,²³ aged between 18 and 34²⁴ and located in Sierra Leone. In fact, over 88 percent²⁵ of users are based in Sierra Leone – notably, about double the proportion of Twitter users. Unlike Twitter, growth (and decline) of followers is both more consistent and moderate.



Facebook followers were extremely interested in news and developments related to the electoral process. As with Twitter, a post related to an agreement reached between two competing political parties, achieved the widest reach by far.²⁶ Content with a human element was also well-received. The second most popular post was a photograph of NEC Chair, Mohamed Conteh casting his ballot in the first electoral round.²⁷ Other favourites included photographs of children waving election signs, persons with disabilities being trained to use the tactile ballot guide and elderly

²¹ <https://futurism.com/sierra-leone-election-blockchain-agera/> ; <https://techcrunch.com/2018/03/19/sierra-leone-government-denies-the-role-of-blockchain-in-its-recent-election/> ; <https://techcrunch.com/2018/03/14/sierra-leone-just-ran-the-first-blockchain-based-election/?platform=hootsuite>

²² As of 12 April

²³ 80 percent male and 20 percent female

²⁴ Largest user groups were male aged 18 – 24 (31 percent); male 25 – 34 (31 percent); female 25 – 34 (11 percent); male 35 – 44 (9 percent); female 18 – 24 (4 percent); and female 35 – 44 (2 percent).

²⁵ 88,27 percent

²⁶ The post reached an audience of 20,000.

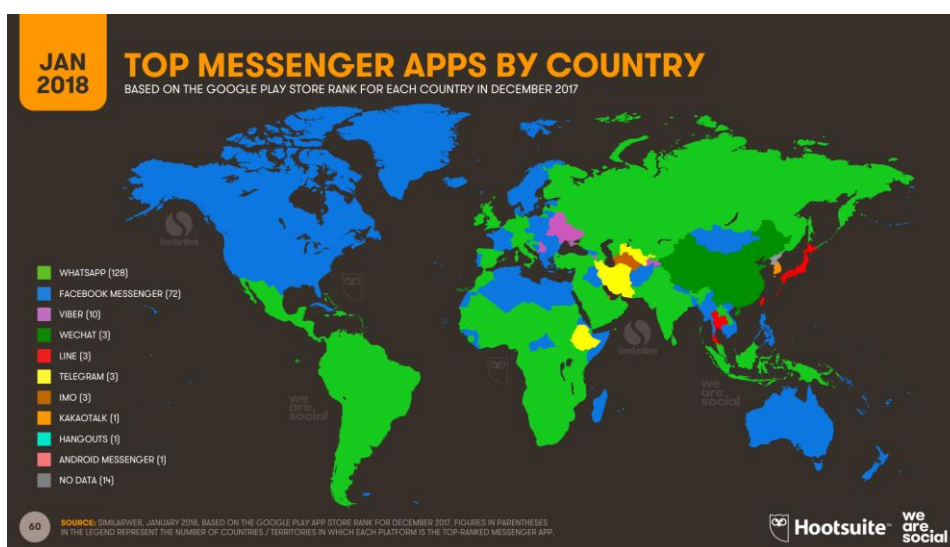
²⁷ The post reached an audience of 14,200.

ladies leaving a polling station.

Comments were generally brief and positive. Comments that were critical or politically motivated were not rare but were largely ignored and sometimes even refuted by other users.

WhatsApp

Given the prevalence of mobile phones and the popularity of WhatsApp in the region, the application was an extremely effective means of information-sharing. The Director of Media and External Relations reports membership in 89 WhatsApp groups, including those established by NEC for its communication with political parties, civil society groups, observers and the media. With each group including 1 – 200 members, on average, a single message could conceivably reach over 17,000 – and be further disseminated, exponentially.



Like other social media, WhatsApp enabled NEC to share the latest information, quickly and efficiently and – to some degree – to retain control of the narrative.

Conversely, as a member of these groups, NEC was able to spot trends information and discussion trends and, when necessary, to address misconceptions. In fact, this prompted important dialogue within the Commission. Specifically: in what cases and in what manner should the Commission respond to gossip and misinformation? On one hand, any response could be interpreted as validation of the initial assertion – and could draw further attention to a statement that would otherwise fall naturally out of the conversation. On the other hand, lack of response could be perceived as irresponsible, cowardly, or simply apathetic.

At one point, when several accusations seemed to be drawing widespread attention and criticism, the Commission responded with an official statement, addressing each of the false allegations, frankly and firmly. The statement was well received and followed with positive feedback on social media platforms.²⁸ In other cases, however, issues fell out of public attention as a result of other, newer election-related gossip.

The project also supported NEC in its work with international and domestic electoral observers. The project provided additional sets of all electoral materials for observers, helped NEC respond to requests for information and analysis, printed accreditation badges and folders and underwrote a national observers' briefing in Freetown on 2 March.

²⁸ 19 March 2018, available at: <http://necsl2018.org/press-releases/>

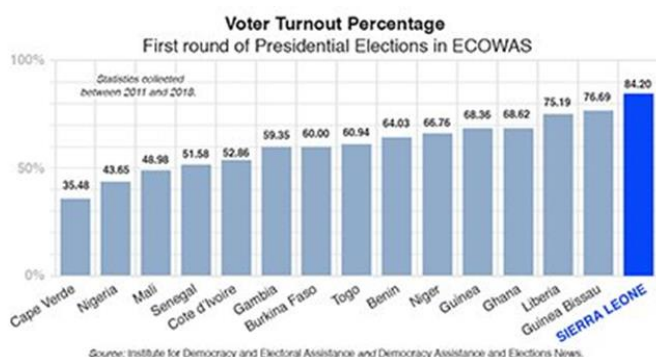
A number of communication challenges arose as a result of the lack of coordination between NEC institutional decision-makers and the communication team. As one well-known example, on the eve when the first 25 percent of Presidential election results were to have been announced, media were called to the NEC for a press conference. At the last minute, a discrepancy was discovered, leading the NEC to delay the conference. The discrepancy took more time to resolve than had been anticipated and the conference was continuously delayed until – after having left press waiting for well over four hours – the Commission decided to cancel the conference. Journalists²⁹ later identified this as an instance in which the NEC inadvertently raised suspicions. The decision to defer the announcement was logistically and ethically sound but had unnecessarily affected public perception and threatened to reverse progress in gaining public trust.

There were also some discrepancies with regard to what information was shared and in what format. As just one example, the Commission shared a polling station level breakdown of results of the Presidential first-round on its website, but then did not do so with run-off election results. The reason for this is not malicious but nonetheless, could be misinterpreted and undermine the integrity with which results were actually delivered. These instances point to the importance of conducting electoral activities with the “message in mind.”

More broadly, an election is only successful to the extent that its outcome is accepted by the electorate. To this end, communication of plans is just as important as the execution of them. Moving forward, the Commission would be well advised to situate the Director of Media and External Relations in closer proximity to the Chair. The Director should be actively involved in strategic planning at every stage of the electoral process, as well as in addressing unanticipated developments as they arise.

5. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

PROGRESS REVIEW



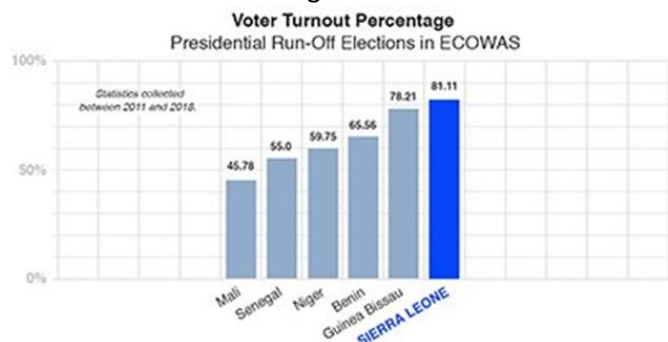
Overall progress towards the CPD outcome and output(s)

In the UNDAF, the SNEC project fits under capacity of democratic institutions

AID, Internews and CEPPS, at Hill Valley

strengthened to enable good governance and in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper IV (PRSP) Pillar 7: Governance and Public Sector Reform,.

The outcome indicators relating to the electoral process are poorly expressed, consisting of a raw measurement of voter turnout³⁰. Voter turnout is not a measurement of competent electoral management, nor of electoral technical assistance. It is subject to endogenous factors that often have little or nothing to do with the work of the electoral management body. While Sierra Leone did not meet



the arbitrary target in the UNDAF, it does have the highest voter turnout in the ECOWAS region.

While the indicator makes no reference to this, it is worth noting that voter turnout has not been disaggregated by sex as a matter of course. Following project advise and as part of its wider commitment to providing better electoral data, NEC will produce this data in the future and hopes to conduct research to provide 2018 data as a benchmark for the future.

The UNDAF also refers to the use of the (then) proposed integrated national civil register³¹. NEC collaborated with the NCRA to conduct mass registration in 2018 that formed the basis of the integrated national civil register as such NEC counts as one institution that utilised this data system.

The UNDP CPD includes an indicator on voter turnout for the conduct of a referendum; this was not met as the constitutional referendum was not held during the project duration.

The CPD suggests looking at the findings of electoral observation mission as per follows:

Group	Summary comments
African Union	The AUEOM concludes that the 31 March presidential run-off election was conducted in line with national legal frameworks as well as regional, continental and international standards for democratic elections.
Carter Center ³²	Sierra Leone's March 7, 2018, elections were conducted under a legal framework generally consistent with international standards and were assessed by international and domestic citizen observers as professionally administered. During the two years preceding the elections, the National Electoral Commission prepared a voter registry and revised constituency boundaries in a credible fashion. The campaign period was generally calm, allowing parties to mobilize supporters and communicate with the general public, although several violent incidents during the campaign period raised concerns.
Commonwealth Observer Group	The Groups overall assessment of the voting and counting process at the polling stations on election day is that it was conducted in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Sierra Leone, in a

³⁰ Indicator 7.10: Voter turnout in electoral processes including draft national constitution referendum. Baseline: 87.3% Target:90%

³¹ Indicator 7.11: Number of public institutions and electoral bodies using the integrated national civil register Baseline: 0 Target: 3

³² Was not present for second round of election

	<p>credible, peaceful, inclusive and orderly manner.</p> <p>We commend the people of Sierra Leone for the peaceful and orderly manner in which they exercised their democratic franchise.</p> <p>We also commend the NEC, civil society and other stakeholders for their professionalism, dedication and general contributions to ensuring the peaceful and credible conduct of these elections. Many of the key benchmarks for democratic elections were met.</p>
EU Electoral Observation Mission	The second peaceful transition from one elected leader to another was an important milestone in the consolidation of democracy in Sierra Leone. The NEC proved its genuine commitment to a transparent and inclusive election
National Election Watch	Overall, NEW concludes that the 2018 elections were free, fair and transparent; reflecting the will of the people though NEC was constrained due to the seeming lack of political will for the elections to be conducted within schedule as prescribed by the 1991 Constitution and the Public Elections Act (PEA) 2012.

Capacity Development

SNEC advisors closely worked with NEC staff at headquarters on a daily basis, with additional working relationships developed with District Offices through the election operations and training activities (unlike the 2012 project, SNEC was not designed to operate in the Districts). An on the job mentoring approach was used and that was highly appreciated by the counterparts. Through this process NEC had established regular meeting routines, where agenda and notes were taken, follow up mechanism and responsibilities instituted and tracked.

It is the case that project team feels that at many stages of the electoral process, their wish to build capacity was subsumed by the need for the election to take place. While common in electoral assistance projects, it does mean that the reliance on advisors and international support has not been obviated.

Gender Mainstreaming

The project fully mainstreamed gender in all elements of work. This was achieved in two ways: through the design of output three, where NEC were assisted to mainstream gender in all their work areas. Secondly, by the provision of a full-time gender and elections expert, backed up by other gender expertise in the team, SNEC demonstrated to NEC everyday how practical mainstreaming works. It should be noted that the core project team was entirely staffed by women.

The project and NEC published a gender assessment of Sierra Leone's elections, which includes 21 recommendations for NEC, PPRC, political parties, Office of National Security and the police as well as international partners to improve the gender inclusivity of Sierra Leonean elections. NEC also published their first ever Gender Policy, informed by the assessment, which forms an action plan for further work in this area.

Human Rights Mainstreaming

Any project that is dedicated to the delivery of elections that allows for full, secret and equal suffrage is mainstreaming human rights. The SNEC project chose to focus additional efforts on the electoral rights of PWD and women.

The project fully mainstreamed disability access in all elements of work. This was achieved in two ways: through the design of output three, where NEC were assisted to mainstream disability access in all their work areas, which of course also included the work areas supported in other SNEC

outputs. Secondly, by the provision of a full-time accessibility and elections expert, backed up by other access expertise in the team, SNEC demonstrated to NEC everyday how practical mainstreaming can work.

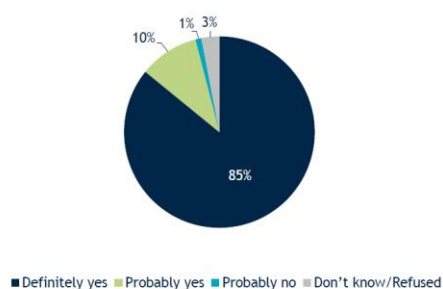
The project and NEC have published an access assessment of Sierra Leone’s elections, which included recommendations for short- and long-term action to improve the accessibility of Sierra Leonean elections. NEC published a revised Disability Policy, informed by the assessment, which formed an action plan for further work in this area.

Impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries

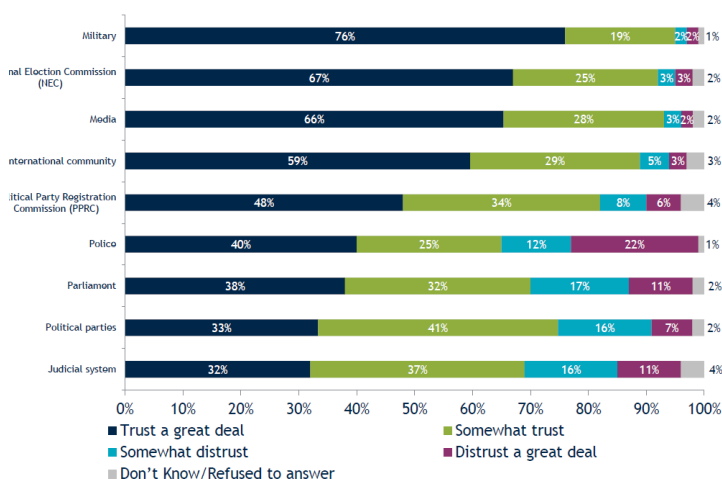
The development language of direct and indirect beneficiaries does not fit with electoral technical assistance, given the wide net covered by its actions and the impossibility of gauging their views.

As a proxy, there are several research reports that complement the finding of electoral observation missions.

Do you expect the March 7, 2018 elections to be free and fair?



Please indicate your level of trust in the following institutions:



Communication and publicity

The support nature of the project and the heavily politicised environment in which it operated meant that for large periods of time the project itself did not want to gain visibility. This strategy was followed with the agreement of project donors. Closer to the elections, and especially once the topic of whether there were sufficient resources for the election to proceed, more outward communication efforts were made.

The UNDP Sierra Leone channels were used to share factual information about the project as well as more [human focused pieces](#) on issues such as [electoral access](#).

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY REVIEW

Sustainability

Whilst the project was designed with sustainability in mind, as implementation progressed and the capacity and resource gaps became clearer, the sustainability of interventions notably decreased.

In the post-election period, the project team held a Post-Election Review retreat for all NEC staff from across the country. This retreat was an opportunity to reflect on future needs and priorities. After the retreat, project advisors supported NEC management to develop an Action Plan for responding to issues raised during the retreat.

Specific reflection and self-assessment activities were held on key outputs, resulting in reports and strategies to work through issues and problems using electoral cycle approach. In addition to the Action Plan, key amongst these are:

- the report from a Results Management lessons learned workshop and its recommendations;
- the Gender Assessment, its recommendations and the NEC Gender Policy;
- the Access Assessment, its recommendations and the NEC Disability Policy; and
- the review report from the External Relations Advisor and its recommendations.

A new technical assistance programme, funded by the EU and implemented by Human Dynamics, commenced at the NEC. It was hoped that this programme could pick up many of these workstreams as priorities for their support.

All materials were passed to NEC for their future use in electronic format and a copy provided to the UNDP CO for archiving purposes.

Participatory/consultative processes and national ownership

The project was designed in collaboration with the NEC and the NEC Executive Secretary (ES) acted as the key interlocutor for the further definition of project activities. He also chaired the Project Board (Technical Committee) which enhanced NEC's ownership of the project. The ES was consulted on all project ToR, whether for staff or consultants as well as scope of work, event agendas and procurement specifications.

NEW was the civil society representative on the Technical Committee and provided valuable guidance on priorities and implementation strategies during project implementation.

Partnerships

The project partnered with the NCPD and the SLUDI on the implementation of the PWD work under Output Three. This was invaluable particularly during the conduct of the access assessment and the development of NEC's actions for the elections. The NEC will continue to collaborate closely with these organisations.

The project collaborated with UNWomen on the gender dimension, and with the CPM project. For the latter, the project CTA worked with the judiciary for the development of tools and provision of training to the various players in the electoral justice chain. Through this work and the Steering Committee, a strong relationship was built between the NEC Chairman and the judiciary's focal point on elections.

MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

Monitoring and Evaluation

The project engaged an M&E expert to develop the results framework.

As the project implementation progressed some monitoring information was gathered through the Electoral Steering Committee process and its tools such as the readiness tracker and strategic risk log³³ and corrective action taken through expansion of project activities, allocation of additional resource, etc. A final evaluation of the project was conducted in late 2018 followed by an audit in May 2019.

Timely delivery of outputs

The majority of project outputs were delivered in line with AWP timelines. Some delays in project recruitment saw time slippages but with an immovable electoral timetable the wider timeframes were met.

The project was extended by the Technical Committee to end March 2018 to allow for full project closure and the production of financial reports by the POM.

³³ See UNDP Sierra Leone, 2018, *Sierra Leone Electoral Steering Committee: Lessons Learned*

6. INDICATORS BASED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved or Not Achieved
Utility of the voter registration data centre (is it established, was it used to develop, print and correct voter lists, is it re-purposed for election tasks)	None (Dec 2016)	Used successfully in management of voter registration process	Repurposed for election period tasks and deployed successfully
No. of people reached during voter registration campaigns through the Ward Electoral Education Committee (WEEC) Sessions using SNEC Project-supplied materials (disaggregated by location, gender and PWD status)	Zero (Dec 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All eligible voter population of 3,100,000 (Three million, one hundred thousand) people were reached as the WEECs were in operation in all 446 wards and were assisted by Town Criers. The campaign in its entirety was able to reach 5,673,690 people of the 7,092,113 of the Sierra Leone population representing 80% of the total population of Sierra Leone. 	Achieved
Utility of appropriate equipment and materials for in-country printing of voter lists	None (Dec 2016)	Used successfully to generate PVR and FVR	Used successfully to generate polling station lists
Key national-level stakeholders consulted on the workings of the results management process	Zero (Dec 2016)	All relevant national level stakeholders consulted	All relevant national level stakeholders consulted
Results Management (IT) System developed, tested and ready for deployment before the polling day	2 IT systems developed in 2012	NEC decision which IT system to use (July 2017)	Results IT enhanced, deployed and used effectively in 2018 elections
% of tally centres that apply the agreed results management process <u>consistently</u>	Zero	NEC decides on the RM process (Dec 2017)	85% of the tally centres are applying the RMS process (April 2018)

<u>% of pre-election recommendations in the gender inclusion action plan that are addressed</u>	Zero	100% addressed by Dec 2018	Gender assessment conducted after elections
<u>% of stakeholder organisations that report improved inclusion of women in NEC processes</u>	Zero	50% by Dec 2017	Assessment not performed
<u>Domestic observers' appraisal of women's inclusion in the 2018 NEC processes</u>	Limited inclusion	Improving Inclusion	NEW reported reduced level of intimidation of women voters and high level of women as polling staff
<u>% of pre-election recommendations in the PWD action plan that are addressed</u>	Zero	50% addressed by Dec 2017	80% addressed by Dec 2017
<u>% of stakeholder DPOs that report improved inclusion of PWD in NEC processes (sample survey)</u>	Zero	100% by Dec 2018	Assessment not performed
<u>Domestic observers' appraisal of PWD inclusion in the 2018 NEC processes</u>	Limited inclusion	Improving Inclusion	NEW commended NEC's PWD inclusion efforts
<u>% of NEC electoral guidance and procedural materials that incorporate all relevant new legislative requirements</u>	Zero	50%	No legislative change. All NEC guidance was legally compliant.
<u>No. of people reached during election voter information campaigns through WEEC Sessions using Project supplied materials (disaggregated by location, gender and PWD status)</u>	Zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All eligible voters of 3,100,000 were targeted and more than 95% of them were reached. Overall, about 80% of the total population of Sierra Leone was reached through "know your candidate" posters, "How to mark the ballot", posters on voting steps, car stickers, billboards, posters targeting women and PWD, etc. 	Fully achieved
<u>Timeliness of delivery of</u>	None	None (Dec 2017)	Fully delivered to NEC

<u>appropriate</u> sensitive voting materials to facilitate NEC to run elections (disaggregated by type e.g. ballot papers, ink, tamper evident envelopes, etc)	(Dec 2016)		to specification
<u>Process established</u> for post-election evaluation that involves key <u>NEC stakeholders</u> and delivers <u>specific recommendations</u>	None (Dec 2016)	Established (Dec 2017)	Process was Used (June and October 2018)
NEC capacity to deliver voter registration and electoral process strengthened in identified areas	None (Dec, 2016)	VR capacities met (Dec 2017)	Project evaluation noted capacity improvement was evident
<u>Extent of use</u> of the M&EF as a guide to Project M&E and Reporting (i.e. financial performance reports and programmatic narrative reports)	None (Dec 2016)	100% use of M&EF (June 2017)	MEF supported tracking results at the latter end of the project
<u>Established</u> and <u>functional</u> missions to support election readiness assessments	None (Dec 2016)	One mission undertaken (Dec 2017)	Mission undertaken and model adopted for SC use
<u>Quality</u> of project management modalities in use: <u>Compliant</u> Financial and Narrative Reporting <u>Acceptable</u> Project Design, Implementation and Management	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No major problems identified. Project will be audited in 2019.

7.FINANCIAL DELIVERY

7.1 Financial Overview

Donor	Committed (USD) as per the cost sharing	Received (USD)	Expenditures				Total	Remaining funds
			Till 2017	2018	2019	Commitments		
Canada	401,517.42	401,517.42	0.00	401,517.42	0.00	0.00	401,517.42	0.00
Ireland	1,783,765.57	1,783,765.57	48,592.37	1,733,034.02	0.00	0.00	1,781,626.39	2,139.18
United Kingdom	6,114,099.88	6,114,099.88	2,721,451.46	3,293,717.53	0.00	0.00	6,015,168.99	98,930.89
European Union	3,609,609.63	3,609,609.63	0.00	3,273,680.64	29,175.78	60,993.98	3,363,850.40	245,759.23
UNDP	977,282.11	977,282.11	490,576.05	486,217.68	488.38	0.00	977,282.11	0.00
TOTAL	12,886,274.61	12,886,274.61	3,260,619.88	9,188,167.29	29,664.16	60,993.98	12,539,445.31	346,829.30

7.2 Financial Utilisation report

Outputs/Activities	Budget (USD)	Expenditure (USD)	Balance (USD)
Output 1: Establishment of the Register of Voters Supported			
Activity 1.1			
Support to voter registration data centre	1,051,627.00	1,033,635.56	17,991.44
Activity 1.2			0.00
Support voter information activities on voter registration	223,900.00	222,286.95	1,613.05
Activity 1.3			
Support printing & exhibition process for voters` registry	626,000.00	625,007.20	992.80
Activity 1.4			0.00
Voter identity cards	356,000.00	345,250.23	10,749.77
Activity 1 Total	2,257,527.00	2,226,179.94	31,347.06
Output 2: Results management processes agreed and system developed:			
Activity 2.1			
Support consultation on and definition of a new results management process	324,988.00	321,930.47	3,057.53
Activity 2.2			
Development of IT solution for results management system	323,735.00	316,861.87	6,873.13
Activity 2.3			
Support for implementation of results management process and IT system	62,705.00	61,366.16	1,338.84
Activity 2 Total	711,428.00	700,158.50	11,269.50
Output 3: NEC capacity to conduct inclusive elections increased			
Activity 3.1			
Improved gender inclusiveness of Sierra Leonean electoral process	247,361.41	215,782.47	31,578.94
Activity 3.2			
Improved inclusion of people with disabilities in Sierra Leonean electoral processes	300,295.00	254,917.16	45,377.84
Activity 3.3			
Improved facilities for NEC inclusion and outreach work	2,000.00	1,051.03	948.97
Activity 3 Total	549,656.41	471,750.66	77,905.75
Output 4: Conduct of 2018 elections supported			
Activity 4.1			
NEC supported to manage enabling actions for conduct of the 2018 elections	849,942.00	846,862.94	3,079.06
Activity 4.2			

NEC supported to deliver inclusive voter information campaign	1,528,025.02	1,526,753.22	1,271.80
Activity 4.3			
Design and procurement of sensitive electoral materials	3,367,464.00	3,364,003.95	3,460.05
Activity 4.4			
Post-event reflection and evaluation	55,400.00	55,342.80	57.20
Activity 4.5			
Polling staff salaries	944,381.46	830,892.50	113,488.96
Activity 4 Total	6,745,212.48	6,623,855.41	121,357.07
Output 5: NEC planning and management capacity strengthened	174,415.00	151,712.34	22,702.66
Activity 5 Total	174,415.00	151,712.34	22,702.66
Output 6: Project Management and Support			
Activity 6.1			
Establishment of project reporting and evaluation systems to provide accurate and timely financial and narrative reports	100,000.00	39,721.00	60,279.00
Activity 6.2			
Electoral readiness assessment	12,032.00	12,031.20	0.80
Activity 6.3			
Project management arrangements ensure on-time delivery of project activities and timely financial and narrative reporting	1,494,930.93	1,489,636.41	5,294.52
Activity 6 Total	1,606,962.93	1,541,388.61	65,574.32
Programmable Amount	12,045,201.82	11,715,045.46	330,156.36
GMS	841,072.79	824,399.85	16,672.94
Grand Total	12,886,274.61	12,539,445.31	346,829.30

Financial Summary

Total project budget for whole duration of the project is US\$12,886,274.61. Expenditure as of 18 March 2019 is US\$12,539,445.41 (97% delivery rate). Additional funding was raised and injected into the project to cater for important unfunded elements of the 2018 elections budget.

8. LESSONS LEARNED

Project-Related CPD Outcome	7c: Capacity of democratic institutions strengthened to enable good governance.
Brief description of context	See section 1
Brief description of project	<p>The SNEC Project was established late in the electoral cycle to provide advisory and material support to the NEC of Sierra Leone in the conduct of the 2018 Presidential, Parliamentary and local council elections, and during related activities.</p> <p>The United Nations has supported Sierra Leone’s elections since the Lomé Peace Accord. By 2018, all Security Council mandates relating to Sierra Leone’s democratic transition, and their related mission architectures, had ended. 2018 was anticipated to be an electoral process that featured less visible international support and entrenched national ownership of the process.</p> <p>The project originally focused on a small number of areas identified as requiring the most support and was flexible enough to expand to meet emerging needs.</p>
Key project successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NEC enabled to undertake voter registration and complete it within the required time amidst various challenges - NEC supported to develop and operate a RMS that had the buy-in of stakeholders; increased integrity and transparency aspects of the system helped to build consensus among stakeholders on the system’s dependability - Increased NEC’s capacity to conduct inclusive elections that commended by observer missions of the election. - strengthened NEC’s capacity planning and management capacity through hands-on work and formal transfer of skills
Project shortcomings and solutions	<p>Capacities within NEC needed much more strengthening than was envisaged by the project to deliver electoral tasks. Direct capacity and hands-on backstopping was provided to mitigate this gap.</p> <p>UNDP and partners under-estimated Government’s willingness to undermine the electoral process. Operationalising the SC provided</p>
Lessons learned	<p>A: Delays in commencing project affected timelines for all activities including late arrival of the CTA in the electoral cycle. The risks of this approach were detailed in the evaluation of the last electoral project.</p> <p>B: The actual extent of NEC’s capacity to undertake electoral tasks was not clear at the onset, this became clear during voter registration. While an earlier start of the project may have ameliorated this situation, there is clear benefit to Sierra Leone and many other countries of the development of an up-to-date tool for measuring and monitoring EMB capacity at headquarters and lower levels.</p> <p>C: The access and gender assessments are very useful, with utility improved by their conduct prior to electoral events.</p> <p>D: For future cycles, interventions should clearly indicate roles and responsibilities by each parties under the specific outputs. This could be mitigated with continued capacity strengthening during the low seasons of the electoral cycle.</p>

	<p>E: An engaged and flexible TC is hugely beneficial for ensuring project activities are carried out properly and in a timely manner.</p> <p>F: The project could have done more on internal knowledge sharing, documentation of work and better reporting processes but this could not be given the tight election schedule, limited time project staff had to work with NEC and political sensitive nature in which the elections itself was held.</p>
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9.RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the life of the Support to the Electoral Cycle 2011-2014 Project a capacity assessment and organisation review of the NEC was undertaken by an external consultant and a report presented in June 2014. This report highlights that NEC's own internal management capacity and styles are not as sophisticated as the electoral processes NEC is expected to deliver. It made a raft of sensible recommendations for organisational development and review. Unfortunately, due to the Ebola epidemic and related restrictions, none of these recommendations were followed up. By their very nature they need to take place during the quiet phase of the electoral cycle – in Sierra Leone this would have been in 2014, 2015 and the early part of 2016. By the time the SNEC CTA arrived and the SNEC project started work, it was too late to address these sensitive and delicate issues that are part of the deep-seated folkways of the NEC.

Accordingly, the SNEC project team found many of the same issues as documented in the capacity assessment. NEC did not display appropriate levels of responsibility for their tasks or process. There remained a clear expectation that no matter the external environment the international community would step in to fill gaps and remedies deficiencies. The many years of international advisors at the NEC has led to an advisor dependence and a lack of understanding of the concepts that underlie many electoral tasks.

The UNDP worked closely with partners within the short time frame to commence the electoral support in a timely manner to ensure requisite resources including staff/consultants are in place well ahead of election dates. The Development Partners should continue to support the NEC and allow for such support within their budget during the quiet period of the electoral cycle. Continued engagement with the NEC will strengthen gains achieved in the last electoral cycle and revisit recommendations made in the June 2014 report.

10. CONCLUSION

The project reached the following conclusions:

1. Electoral assistance was needed and highly relevant for the 2018 electoral process. These were the first national elections delivered solely by the NEC and under difficult circumstances. Supporting this process technically, financially and politically was essential to its successful conclusion. SNEC played a valuable role in this by providing the needed technical, financial and moral support to the NEC for voter registration and the elections. The SC's role to support the NEC and its independence at the policy levels was also indispensable given the challenges faced by the NEC.
2. SNEC assistance was highly effective and it met most of its activity outputs, although its late start was a significant handicap. Its achievements were a result of the commitment of all involved and to the constructive partnership that developed between the NEC, SNEC and UNDP and DPs. It was also due to the flexibility of UNDP, the project and its donors to adapt the activities to the rapidly changing circumstances and their ability to meet unforeseen needs.
3. The main accomplishment of the project was the holding of on-time, credible elections for president, parliament and local government and the peaceful transition from one legitimately elected government to another. Determining the actual extent of its results besides this is difficult because of the dearth of project performance data. However, it appears likely that SNEC contributed to:
 - More professional electoral administration, standardized systems and procedures that reduced room for human error and increased the dependability of its processes.
 - Upholding of standards and the ability of NEC to maintain its independence and impartiality in the face of significant pressure and intimidation.
 - Increased citizen confidence in the NEC, in the credibility of the processes and the reliability of the results.
 - Increased public stature for PWD as advisors and educators and the empowerment of some through increased engagement and access.
 - More accurate and timely information on voter registration and the elections and more substantive consultations with stakeholders contributing to increased transparency, understanding and reduced suspicions.
 - Delivery and legitimacy of the key processes of voter registration and the elections which were not assured in the context.
4. UNDP's role in supporting the electoral process through SNEC, and its leadership at the policy level through the SC/TC, was highly valued by the DPs, NEC, CSOs and others.

ANNEXES

- A Pictures from Elections Day
- B Knowledge products supported by the Project
- C Project Assets transferred to NEC

Annexes A: Pictures from Elections Day

Picture 1: First time voter casting her ballot



Picture 2: Visually impaired voter casting their ballot

Picture 3: cross-section of voters at a polling station

Picture 4: a mother casting her ballot on elections day

Annex B: Knowledge Products supported by the Project

1. Sierra Leone Electoral Steering Committee Lessons Learned Report
2. Women Use your Power: an assessment of Sierra Leone's Elections
3. Disability Policy of the National Electoral Commission

Steering committee lesson learned report

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fnmwO1jcg3uPusZiAUCE1ct_AJsyAMlk/view?usp=sharing

Gender assessment report:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bdXIVqw0IEEHZ8DLj9WsRALOJCAictTw/view?usp=sharing>

Annex C: list of Project assets transferred to NEC

Asset transfers link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V41-_QqHOohC8irrn6pT8TUaTTG8z8rN/view