

Minutes of the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting on

The Support to an Integrated National Civil Registration System in Sierra Leone 2015 – 2017 Programme

MOFED Conference Room, 19th October 2015

Summary

The 2nd **Steering Committee (SC) Meeting** for *the Support to an Integrated National Civil Registration System in Sierra Leone, 2015 – 2017* was held on 19 October 2015 at 3.30 pm in the Conference Hall of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) in Freetown. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Dr. Kaifala Marah, and co-chaired by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Hon. Joseph B Dauda. The meeting was attended by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC), the National Registration Secretariat (NRS), the National Electoral Commission (NEC), National Elections Watch (NEW), UNICEF, PLAN International, EBF development partners (DFID, Irish Aid) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The main items on the agenda were the budget and timeline for civil registration and the legal frameworks.

I. Opening remarks

The **Chair, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Dr Kaifala Marah** welcomed all to the meeting. He thanked UNDP for the key role it has been playing in managing the project, and noted that significant progress had been made so far. The Chair made mention of the sustainable development Goals (SDGs) that had just been adopted which he said was a requirement to enable us plan effectively and take forward our protection programmes, elections etc.

Co-Chair, Minister of Internal Affairs, Hon. Joseph B Dauda, said the meeting was timely and appropriate as the political season was drawing near, and looking at the role civil registration should play. He stressed that it was incumbent on government to see that the project is implemented, and informed that the first consultative forum with the political parties and civil society organizations was held the previous week.

II. Adoption of minutes of Steering Committee (SC) meeting of 9 June 2015

The minutes of the SC meeting of 9 June 2015 had earlier been circulated electronically. A motion was moved, seconded, and agreed by all that matters arising be dealt with electronically.

III. NRS update

Mr. Foday Kamara, Chief Registrar NRS, briefed and informed the meeting that

- 12 district offices had been identified to be used as district registration offices; government buildings identified to avoid payment of rent.
- Civil Registration Act to be completed in the next month or two.
- Pilot registration of the Social Safety Net successful.
- Survey conducted for the purpose of connecting the data centre at NRS to the disaster recover site at NEC, and to the production site at the warehouse. Mass printing of ID cards to start soon.
- Development of civil registration software almost complete; awaiting instructions on what the PIN no. should look like, as wanted to adopt NASSIT's pattern but NASSIT's PIN too long.
- The communications strategy has been drafted by a technical committee.
- Timeline for nationwide registration prepared in accordance with NEC's timelines for elections.
- The budget was presented at the government's budget hearing session the previous week.
- UNDP contributed \$1M (one million dollars) towards the project in 2015; GoSL's contribution of LE2B (two billion leones) will be used to rehabilitate the district registration offices.

Note: For detailed NRS update see Annex

Co-Chair, Minister J B Dauda in addition to the Chief Registrar's update, stated that the Civil Registration Bill was drafted by the Law Officer's Department and validated at a stakeholders' meeting in August; suggestions made at the meeting have been incorporated in the draft. Minister Dauda then briefly reported on the consultative meeting with the political parties and civil society. He observed that most of the participants at the

consultative meeting had not read the Bill fully, and concentrated mainly on the provision which required NEC to extract the voter register: in consequence therefore, the participants reacted negatively to the Bill. Minister said he drew the participants' attention to other areas of the Bill like the establishment of the National Civil Registration Authority. As a compromise, they finally agreed that participants would go back and read the Bill fully and meet again under the guidance of the Political Parties Registration Commission to deliberate further. Minister added that some more sensitization on the draft Bill will be done before it is taken to Parliament.

Minister Dauda informed that the Data Protection Bill has also been drafted.

Questions, comments and answers

Mr. Bakarr Tarawally, Director of Communications, Ministry of Communications commended NRS on the progress made so far, but asked that a more detailed budget and update be prepared in the future. He pointed out that it was not ideal for the Disaster Recovery Site to be housed at the NEC, and that a possible suitable location could be the earth station at Wilberforce.

Mr. Tarawally also informed that the draft submission of the Data Protection Act was plagiarized from European parliament and that we needed to follow the ECOWAS format which the Heads of States of the respective countries have subscribed to.

Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, UNDP Country Director, reported on the resource mobilization drive undertaken by UNDP in a bid to bridge the funding gap in the project. He said a number of development partners were approached for contributions; the World Bank has expressed interest as ICT for development is a global corporate priority, the African Development Bank also exploring the possibility of contributing, whilst USAID on the other hand are interested but might find it difficult to route the funding through UNDP. Mr. Mukerjee pointed out that donors do not feel comfortable to put in resources when they do not know how much the government was contributing, and intimated that the donors needed assurances that resources would be available for 2016. He made mention of the two Bills that were yet to be presented to Parliament for approval, and recounted that the project is a complex one with several partners and players who needed to be continuously reassured that the government was actively driving the project. Mr. Mukerjee also stated that a repeat of the political parties' meeting in public must be avoided, and all key stakeholders must be seen to pursue a common objective.

Mr. Augustine Sheku, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the meeting that a chip (a sample of what should be contained in the ID card) was donated to the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs at the Ministers' conference on Civil Registration.

Ms. Grace Harman, UNICEF remarked that Ministry of Health (MoH) has been conspicuously absent from steering committee meetings: she pointed out that as UNICEF was supporting the MoH, it was but in place for MoH to form part of the meeting. Ms. Harman mentioned also that UNICEF agreed with MoH for BeMONCs to be used as civil registration centres, therefore if changes occur, such changes must be communicated to all.

Mr. James Lahai, NEW, in his contribution said civil society was happy with the initiative of the updating of the voter register to be carried out by NEC periodically. The element of trust he said was the people's concern.

Mr. Edmond Alpha, NEC, replying, reiterated NEC's commitment to the process. He said stakeholders were still nervous about the civil registration process, and reminded that NEC had to perform its duties in line with its prescribed mandate.

Ms. Christiana Baum, NEW, observed that data collection was fragmented as the various MDAs and institutions each had their respective Acts which stipulates their mandate.

Mr. Donald King, NRS, recounted that for about two years, NRS had been holding task force meetings. He said it would appear that members of the task force failed to report back to their principals after the meetings. The meetings he said were chaired by NEC which constituted the greater number of participants.

Ms. Sinead Walsh, Irish Aid, commented that she was rather confused hearing all the talk about transparency, trust etc. etc. She intimated that it was critical for NEC and the political parties be part of the process and therefore implored all concerned to work together to resolve the issues.

Chair, Minister Marah, in his intervention stated there was still room for collaboration and partnership. He said there was need now for effective communication as a means to provide assurance and trust to political parties and the wider public, and therefore the scope of communication must be expanded. He applauded the fact that there was now a draft communications strategy, a copy of which he would like to have. He said the fears of the public needed to be allayed and as such suggested engagement at several levels. The Minister promised to put in more resources if need be so that more public consultations are undertaken be it by civil society groups or others, so that people become more knowledgeable about the civil registration process. He asked that the budget be redone, after which a timeline for the refurbishment of the buildings (to be used as registration offices) would be fixed. The issue of the PIN numbers he said will be looked into again.

Minister Marah reiterated that civil registration is key and that there was no better time to do it than now. He thanked the partners for the resource mobilization.

Chief Registrar, Foday Kamara, clarifying the issue of the BeMONCS stated that the BeMONCs would still be used as registration centres whilst buildings in the district HQ towns would be used by both NEC and NRS.

Mr. Augustine Sheku, PS, MIA, reassured NEC that the project was not intended to usurp NEC's job, but rather to complement it.

Co-Chair, Minister Dauda encouraged all that this was an exercise all stakeholders should undertake together and succeed, rather than divide and lose. The Civil Registration Bill he said was still in its formative stage and comments were still being invited from stakeholders

Chair, Minister Marah, replying to the question of government's financial commitments to civil registration, promised that government would come in big. He asked that the budget be revised and shared with him the next day, and that he would inform partners of government's contribution the following week.

IV. Timeline for civil registration and legal frameworks

There was discussion on the timelines for the Civil Registration and Data Protection Acts and the establishment of the National Civil Registration Authority.

It was reported that National Telecoms office (NATCOM), and Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and others had been working on the draft Data Protection Bill, and that the national ICT policy also contained some relevant data. It was agreed that the NRS in collaboration with the Ministry of Information's technical team and UNDP's legal expert, produce a draft Bill by end November. Draft copies are to be made available by 30 November 2015.

Discussion as to how the outreach and communications were to be handled ensued. The National Commission for Democracy's mandate for civic education was then mentioned. There was a suggestion that the MIA takes the lead for the consultations, and another for all to be involved with civil society, PPRC and the political parties. It was decided that the Chief Registrar meets the Minister, MIA the following day to further discuss and agree on a timeline.

V. AOB

Some other issues were discussed and the following agreed upon:-

a) NRS, NEC, MIC and UNDP to meet to discuss the relocation of the Disaster Recovery Server. Notes of the meeting must be circulated to members of the Steering Committee by 15 November 2015

b) The Ministry of Health to become a member of the Steering Committee.

c) The country assessment (a prerequisite for the incorporation of the NCRA), be carried out by Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, UNICEF in collaboration with other partners.

VI. Concluding remarks by Co-Chairs

Co-Chair, Minister J B Dauda, thanked all for the various contributions at the meeting, and appealed for active participation and collaboration in the civil registration process; he implored that the process should be looked at from a national point of view.

Chair, Minister Kaifala Marah also thanked members for their participation and looked forward to members keeping the various deadlines that have been agreed upon.

Attendance List

1. Hon. Dr. Kaifala Marah, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, (MoFED),
Chair
2. Hon. Joseph B Dauda, Minister of Internal Affairs, MIA
3. Mr. Foday Kamara, Chief Registrar, NRS
4. Mr. Elijah S Koroma, NRS
5. Mr. Donald King, NRS
6. Mr. Abdul Malik Bangura, NRS
7. Mr. Aiah F Koroma, NRS
8. Mr. Abdul L Sheriff, NRS
9. Mr. Matthew A Jabati, NRS
10. Mr. Abdul M Mansaray, NRS
11. Mr. Mambu B Feika, NRS
12. Mr. Milton Jusu, NRS
13. Mr. Gibril I Kamara, NRS
14. Mr. Vandy Kormoh, NRS
15. Mr. Edmond Alpha, NEC
16. Mr. Sheku Ahmed Kamara, NEC
17. Mr. Solomon Villa, NEC
18. Mr. Augustine S Sheku, Permanent Secretary, MIA
19. Mr. Bakarr Tarawally, MIC
20. Dr Hamza Bangura, MIC
21. Ms. Abie Kamara, Deputy Director DACO, MoFED
22. Ms. Avril Cummings, PDFS, MoFED
23. Mr. David A K Abu, DACO, MoFED
24. Mr. James Lahai, NEW
25. Ms. Christiana Baum, NEW
26. Ms. Vanina Trojan, PLAN International
27. Ms. Cecilia S Hanciles, PLAN International
28. Ms. Grace Harman, UNICEF
29. Ms. Samina Bhatia, DFID
30. Ms. Sinead Walsh, Irish Aid
31. Mr. John Callaghan, Irish Aid
32. Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, Country Director, UNDP
33. Ms. Illuminate Maerere, UNDP
34. Mr. Rudolf Elbling, UNDP
35. Mr. Mike Zulu, UNDP
36. Mr. Humayun Khan, UNDP
37. Ms. Gloria Thomas, UNDP

ANNEX – NRS update