

Minutes of the 4th Steering Committee Meeting on

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

MOFED Conference Room, 22nd July 2016

Summary

The 4th **Steering Committee (SC) Meeting** for *the Support to an Integrated National Civil Registration System in Sierra Leone, 2015 – 2017* was held on 22nd July 2016 at 11.30am 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, Mr. Momodu L Kargbo, and co-chaired by the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mr. Al-Hassan Kondeh. The meeting was attended by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), Representative from State House, the National Registration Secretariat (NRS), the National Electoral Commission (NEC), National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT), Office of Births and Deaths, British High Commission, Embassy of Ireland, development partners (EU, , DFID, World Bank), UNICEF and UNDP.

An update from NRS and the timeline for civil registration, were the main items on the agenda.

1. Opening remarks

The **Chair, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr. Momodu Kargbo** stated that civil registration was planned as a seamless operation, and it has been debated whether civil registration should be held before or after the elections. Chair mentioned that civil registration would be held before the elections only that the required resources to successfully conduct the exercise needed to be raised.

Chair tendered apologies for both the Minister and Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs who were unavoidably absent. He admonished that one of the reasons to push for civil registration is that it would unify a number of processes, and more especially make it difficult for the payroll to be duplicated. With the civil registry in place, issues like teachers not being able to open bank accounts and some 800 people identified not to be on the Ministry of Health payroll, would be a thing of the past.

Co-Chair, Permanent Secretary Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Al-Hassan Kondeh, stated a lot had happened since the last meeting held on 28 June 2016. The Civil Registration Bill was

presented and passed in Parliament; NRS had been collaborating with the NEC and timelines for civil registration had been reviewed; plans in place for voter register to be extracted from the civil register; massive sensitization on the Bill undertaken; messaging workshop held; procurement of kits in process; Data Protection Bill being reviewed by the Law Officers' Office; report on the assessment on civil registration and vital statistics from the CRVS team very encouraging. Co-Chair was with the hope that with all these being achieved, donors would be more reassured thereby enticing them to come on board.

2. Update on civil registration

Mr. Elijah Koroma, NRS, gave a power point presentation on the CR process relating to:-

- Registration of residents and analysis of how the registration is to be carried out
- Registration kits, materials, centres, staff and training
- Data centres and exhibition of civil register
- Printing and distribution of ID cards and certificates
- Civil and voter registration activity plan
- Budget of US\$28M for nationwide civil registration exercise
- Funding gap of USD\$3.89M in budget

Note: For detailed presentation, please see Annex A. For procurement forecast see Annex B

3. Comments, questions and answers

Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, UNDP Country Director cautioned Mr. Koroma on NRS' assumption that 1) there would be a steady flow of citizens during registration and 2) that the citizens would bring with them the relevant documents for registration, which might not be the case. Furthermore, time would need to be provided for comfort breaks. Mr. Mukerjee also suggested that a technical committee be formed to do risk assessment.

Ms. Sinead Walsh, Irish Ambassador intimated that conversation on civil registration had been going on since 2012. She added that Ireland supports the civil registration programme because of the huge benefits to be derived, and thus had pledged USD1M over 18 months. She commended the government for the hard work over the last three months and stated that the CR should be done in a proper way, taking risks into concern and ensuring that it does not conflict with the elections. The budget needed urgent attention and partners had been requesting for a meeting with MIA. She expressed concern over the creation of the new National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) as the population had been used to voter registration and the introduction of civil registration now might create some form of confusion in people's minds. Ms. Walsh also underscored the need for a thorough risk assessment before forging ahead.

Mr. Sven Ruesch, EU, expressed concern over 1) the sustainability of the NCRA office and how it would be resourced after the process, and 2) proper transition of the Births and Deaths office

Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, UNDP Country Director reminded members of the development partners' quest to maximize use of assets.

Chair, Minister MoFED commenting on the maximization of use of assets, confirmed that there were internal arrangements on-going for the transfer of vehicles between institutions.

Dr. S G Kamara, State House, commenting on the civil and voter registration plans said August 2017 was to be the latest month to serve as buffer if the overlaps were not met. Items 7 & 8 he said could be moved further for a few more weeks.

Mr. Mohamed N'fa Conteh, NEC Chair, remarked that technical staff of NEC and NRS came together to work on the timelines and that NEC and NCRA would similarly come together to prepare the manuals.

Mr. Sven Ruesch, EU, wanted clarification whether civil registration was meant for nationals only.

Dr. Kamara, State House replied that civil registration was for all whilst voter registration was only for nationals.

Mr. William Davies, Executive Secretary NEC, added that general elections had been slated for February 2018 hence six months backwards would mean August 2017, which has been identified as the buffer period. There were no plans for diaspora registration as it is not a requirement in the Public Elections Act.

Mr. Parminder Brar, World Bank Country Director, mentioned that government should as a priority revisit the budget and consider how much it intended to spend. The budget of \$28M he said could possibly increase depending on how the process would be carried out. He informed that India was able to register 1.5M people per day during civil registration. Mr. Brar mentioned that there were other ways to carry out civil registration cheaper and faster apart from the conventional way, and cited countries like Ghana and Nigeria that made mistakes whilst undertaking the exercise. His office he said would be happy to do a presentation on how it was carried out in India.

Mr. Chris Gabelle affirmed that the key issue was keeping focus on the elections but wondered if it was possible for voter registration to be used as a vehicle for civil registration. He also wanted to know whether the issue of civil register could be trialed or if it had been planned for the voter register to be extracted from the civil register.

Mr. Al-Hassan Kondeh, PS MIA, replied that the issue of civil and voter registers had long been debated upon and being that the Civil Registration Act was now in place, there was no option. The important thing now was mustering of support and funding for the process.

Mr. Chris Gabelle then wanted to know whether the institution was fully charged and capacitated to carry out civil registration.

Chair Minister, MoFED stated that the process was not in any way starting from zero; the issuance of ID cards was not a new phenomenon in Sierra Leone and besides NEC was all poised to render full support to the process.

Ms. Sinead Walsh, Irish Ambassador reminded that at the previous meeting the hybrid option was talked about.

Mr. Al Hassan Kondeh, PS, MIA replied that the hybrid option was subject to the passage of the Bill. He continued to advocate for support whilst assuring that the timelines were not insurmountable.

Dr. Kamara added that the process is being guided by the law and for that reason the voter registration cannot be separated from the civil registration.

Chair, Minister MoFED made a passionate plea for partners to come on board whilst requesting members to reflect on the process and consider what their contributions would be. He implored NRS staff to pay regular visits to the World Bank office to acquire information and learn more about civil registration.

4. Concluding remarks and summary

Chair, Minister MoFED, in his concluding remarks summarized the following action points:-

- Donors to engage with MIA and the emerging NCRA
- Institutions should endeavour to make use of existing resources
- NEC offices up country to be used temporarily for civil registration
- A team to visit Uganda to learn how extraction of data is being done: this would reduce concerns over the extraction of data from the civil register
- Institutions should consider the idea of sharing premises to reduce costs and manage resources in a bid to enhance sustainability after the process
- Diaspora registration – people from the diaspora do not pay tax and therefore not eligible to vote
- A write up on each of the summarized points should be presented at the next SC meeting
- Next SC meeting to be held 2nd week in September.

Co-Chair, PS MIA, further appealed to partners for their support, as the NCRA was soon to be set up and the much needed funding from partners was crucial.

Attendance:

1. Mr. Momodu L Kargbo, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), Chair
2. Mr. Al-Hassan Kondeh, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Co-Chair
3. Mr. Mohamed Nfa Conteh, Chairperson & Chief Electoral Commissioner, NEC
4. Ms. Augusta Bockarie, Commissioner, NEC
5. Ms. Miatta French, Commissioner, NEC
6. Mr. William A Davies, Executive Secretary, NEC
7. Mr. Mbekay Amara, NEC
8. Mr. Elijah S Koroma, NRS
9. Mr. Gibril I Kamara, NRS
10. Mr. Christian C Dawui, NRS
11. Mr. Mambu B Feika, NRS
12. Mr. Milton Jusu, NRS
13. Ms. Mary M Mansaray, Office of Births and Death
14. Mr. Sieh Sesay, Office of Births and Deaths
15. Mr. Abdulai Timbo, NASSIT
16. Ms. Abie Kamara, DACO, MoFED
17. Mr. David A K Abu, DACO, MoFED
18. Dr. S G Kamara, State House
19. Mr. Sven Ruesch, EU Delegation
20. Ms. Sinead Walsh, Embassy of Ireland
21. Mr. John Callaghan, Embassy of Ireland
22. Mr. Chris Gabelle, DFID
23. Mr. Simpson Yajoh, DFID
24. Mr. Annup Vyas, British High Commission
25. Mr. Parmindar Brar, World Bank Country Director
26. Ms. Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF
27. Mr. Sunil Saigal, UN Resident Coordinator
28. Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, UNDP Country Director
29. Ms. Annette Nalwoga, UNDP
30. Ms. Gloria Thomas, UNDP

ANNEXES

- ANNEX A** Presentation on Civil Registration
- ANNEX B** Procurement Plan
- ANNEX C** Explanatory notes