



**END OF PROJECT EVALUATION**  
**Standing Together for free, fair and Peaceful Elections in Sierra Leone**

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## **Abbreviations**

APC: All Peoples Congress

CBOs: Community Based Organisations

CGG: Campaign for Good Governance

CSOs: Civil Society Organisations

DAC: Development Assistance Committee

DFID: Department for International Development

EMBs: Elections Management Bodies (EMBs)

EU: European Union

FGDs: Focus Group Discussion

GPS: Global Positioning System

IGR: Institute for Governance Reform

IRN: Independent Radio Network

KAP Survey: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice

KIIs: Key Informants Interviews

NEC: National Electoral Commission

NEW: National Election Watch

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

ONS: Office of National Security

PIC: Project Implementation Committee

PPRC: Political Parties Registration Commission

PVT: Parallel Voter Tabulation

PWDs: Persons with Disability

## 0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Search for Common Ground (Search) in partnership with five Sierra Leonean organisations, National Election Watch (NEW), Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Independent Radio Network (IRN), Institute for Governance Reform (IGR), 50/50 Women's Group (50/50), and an international organisation, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), has recently completed the implementation of a 20-months ambitious project *Standing Together for Free, Fair and Peaceful Elections in Sierra Leone* with funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) Sierra Leone. The project was implemented between December 2016 and July 2018. The undertaking aimed at contributing to creating the conditions for free, fair, and peaceful 2018 elections in Sierra Leone based on the theory of change which suggested that Sierra Leoneans (men, women, young people, and persons with disabilities) can better be represented in public policy decision-making processes, make informed decisions about national governance and the development of their communities, and break the barriers that limit their effective participation in public life when they are adequately informed of their democratic rights, responsibilities, and privileges.

The Consortium designed this project at a time when the Sierra Leonean civil society and a number of international development partners dreaded the high stakes of conducting the 2018 general elections. This was particularly owing to a series of challenges that urgently needed to be addressed to ensure that the elections do not lead to renewed divisions and violence in the country. Although solid institutions were in place laying the foundations for enhanced democratic processes, after the ruling party ended its second term, competition increased between stakeholders within and among political parties.

In implementing this project, Search and its partners capitalised on their elections observation, media programming, public policy formulation and dialogue and community mobilisation expertise to train and empower marginalised categories of society – women, youth and PWDs – to effectively participate in the 2017/18 electoral cycle. The aim was to support free, fair and peaceful elections but also an inclusive public policy dialogue and electoral process.

As the programme was winding down, Search commissioned an external end of programme evaluation. The purpose was to assess the outcomes and impact of the programme to create an informed understanding both among Search and its downstream partners, its donors, participants and other stakeholders in the electoral process in Sierra Leone. Additionally, the evaluation also aimed to identify, and document best practices and lessons learnt and to possibly proffer recommendations for replicability in future programming.

This evaluation therefore, was conducted against five broad evaluation themes of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability alongside the project's key commitments on inclusivity, participation and outcome impact analysis mainstreamed throughout activity implementation. The evaluation adopted a Mixed Methods research technique blending both qualitative and quantitative data collection to measure the programme outcomes and impact. The sections below provide a summary of the key findings analysed based five evaluation criteria from the Development Assistance Committee of the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC):

### **Relevance**

*The evaluation found the programme to be relevant both in the design, context and the implementation strategy used in the overall execution of the project.* On the design, the evaluation found the programme activities well aligned with the needs and priorities of the

Government of Sierra Leone and other stakeholders in the electoral cycle. It also positioned the programme to contribute to both the country level and the aspirations of citizens for a free, fair and peaceful election through the active and meaningful contribution of all sectors of society including women, people with disabilities (PWDs) and young people. In addition, the evaluation found the programme to be also relevant to the 2017/18 electoral cycle in Sierra Leone. A combination of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and the review of documents produced by the Consortium such as the three Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys, the Citizens Manifesto (CM), the Persons with Disability (PWD) Agenda, the Gender Audit, etc, indicates that the electoral context in Sierra Leone was tense, divisive and contentious. ***The cross review of the referenced documents and the evaluation outcome shows that the programme intervention significantly contributed to improving the environment for the 2018 elections.***

### **Effectiveness**

The evaluation found this programme to be very effective in facilitating public policy dialogue, electoral integrity (elections observation and engagement with EMBs) mobilisation of vulnerable groups to participate in electoral process and increased public knowledge on governance and electoral process, and trust in NEC's ability to conduct the election in a free and fair manner. Based on the findings of the three KAP survey conducted in April 2017, December 2017 and April/May 2018 respectively, ***there has been an upward trend in citizen's confidence in NEC's ability to count their votes fairly.*** In the first and second KAP studies (April and December 2017), 68% and 77.3% of respondents expressed confidence that NEC would count their votes fairly. In the third and final KAP conducted after the elections, 81% of respondents indicated that they had confidence that NEC counted their votes fairly.

By the end of the programme, findings of the three KAP Surveys progressively indicated an ***improvement in citizens' satisfaction in the democratic process:*** indeed, the first KAP study conducted in March 2017 shows a 40%, the second KAP in December 2017 points to 45%, whilst the third KAP study in April/May 2018 reports a final value of 55.1%. On the model of community mobilisation and voter education used by the programme, the evaluation survey indicates that over ***90% of the survey respondents noted that they benefited from Consortium related activities.*** This can be confirmed by the final project participants' data which shows that the project exceeded its target of total direct participants by more than 4 percentage points.<sup>1</sup> ***The survey shows that 98% of respondents confirmed seeing NEW observers in the polling place where they voted.*** This was further reinforced in the KIIs, FGDs, NEW and EU Observation Reports that NEW observers were in almost all polling stations across the country.

### **Efficiency**

The evaluation shows that ***the project was efficiently managed as there were structures, systems and processes in place for efficient management of the programme, partnership management and structural decision making*** (Senior Management Team, Project Implementation Committee). The project had dedicated Project and Finance Officers attached to the downstream partners responsible for financial and programmatic management. They received support through a dedicated project management team comprising of a Team Leader, Design, Monitoring and Evaluation and Finance Coordinators. The programme had a well-defined financial management system and payment authorisation across the lead partner and the downstream partners. This was supported by clear procurement guidelines and DFID approved Follow the Money and Risk Mitigation Mechanism. The outcome of the KIIs with

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<sup>1</sup> Total Project Direct Beneficiaries reached was 524,267 as against the target of 500,000.



the lead and downstream partners confirmed that there was a sound financial management and decision-making processes. The project ensured effective programme management systems by setting out clear procedures on reporting, capturing beneficiary data and communicating results through a dedicated Consortium DM&E systems and processes.

***The project demonstrated value for money*** considering the number of activities implemented, scale and the nation-wide coverage within a space of 20 months and a complex implementation context. In similar project contexts of this magnitude, quality and delivery, the project could have costed more in monetary terms than what was provided. Some Consortium partners indicated that they spent more time working on the project than their time budgeted in the project paid. Throughout the assessment, ***there was no indication of report disagreement over issues related to programme and financial management.*** Considering the diversity and complexity of the Consortium partners, this can be considered as a major success.

### **Sustainability**

The study found that the programme ***strengthened the relationship between those civil society organization directly involved with the project implementation and key government agencies involved with the delivery of the electoral cycle.*** For example, the Consortium had a standing MOU with the office of National Security to facilitate national security and political dialogue forums and worked collaboratively with PPRC to both organize the Presidential Debate and training youth peace clusters. Throughout the study, there were indications that the relationship built will continue even after the lifespan of the project and could be leverage upon for future engagement. For example, Search is in consultation with PPRC about the establishment of a National Debates Committee to facilitate future engagement around debates. The Institute for Governance Reform is leading the Governance Pillar of the national development Agenda dubbed “the New Direction” of government.

Apart from the fact that 5 Sierra Leonean CSOs were part of the Consortium and received capacity transfer through the management of the project, several CSOs also received training, mentoring, coaching and skills transfer as part of the activity implementation. Over 700<sup>2</sup> CSOs participated in the consultation, development and roll out of the Citizens Manifesto across the country. Some of the CSOs trained as a result of this project are now leading accountability and public policy dialogue at the local level. For instance, the Justice and Peace Commission in Kenema which received capacity training as part of the Consortium is playing an active role in post-election peace promotion and community integration within the Kenema community. In addition, over 35 radio stations received support from media training and equipment support. The skills, expertise and equipment will continue to enhance the ability of the institutions to deliver on their mandate.

### **Impact**

***The evaluation found the project to be impactful both in its unintended consequences and changes in the context.*** For instance, the interview conducted with National Elections Commission (NEC) found that there was serious funding and other challenges six months to the conduct of the elections. In recognition of this challenge, the Consortium organized a national civil society conference to discuss the potential threat to the elections in which the Executive Secretary of NEC and the Minister of Internal Affairs were panelists. One of the outcomes was that the Minister reconfirmed government’s commitment to funding the

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<sup>2</sup> See the preamble of the Citizens Manifesto

elections. Few weeks later, NEC publicly announced that government has made a weekly Le10 billion commitment to fund the elections.

Importantly, the outcome of the 2018 Presidential Elections both first and second rounds were closest in the democratic history of Sierra Leone. Despite the competitive nature of the elections and the close outcome, both the party that lost and its supportive accepted the results because of the credibility lend to the process by the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium through the deployment of observers in every polling stations across the country and the administration of the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT).<sup>3</sup>

### **Replicability**

*The study finds that the programme has the potential for replicability considering the nature of the electoral calendar in Sierra Leone.* Sierra Leone has a five yearly electoral calendar for the presidency and house of parliament, and a four-year tenure for local councils. To sustain the gains made in this electoral cycle, and to continue the capacity support for local CSOs, it critical that both early action plan is developed to review and replicate this intervention ahead of the 2023 electoral cycle. According to most respondents in the 16 FGDs and 7 key informant interviews conducted as part of the programme evaluation, *the study found out that the DFID-funded Consortium approach in mobilising CSOs to pull together their expertise and experience across the electoral spectrum in Sierra Leone (women, PWDs, youths, media, research etc.) was a novelty that worked effectively.* In previous electoral cycles, donors have funded election observation and other components of civil society engagement in the electoral processes separately – with several CSOs implementing different components. The Consortium approach provided a unified voice, and direction for civil society in an electoral context that was divisive and contentious. Several KIIs respondents and FGDs indicated that this should be a model for civil society engagement in future electoral cycle in Sierra Leone and possibly across the sub-region.

#### **0.1 Key Lessons Learnt**

- The bringing together of local and international organisations in a Consortium approach allowed for the pulling together of expertise to complement each other in activity implementation, it also comes with challenges among partners because internal capacity, structures and systems differ among partners.
- Vulnerable groups, women, PWDs and young people can contribute effectively in community mobilisation and information dissemination that can lead to transparent and peaceful election if they are accorded the opportunity and support to effectively participate in the governance and electoral process. The development of the PWD Agenda for instance, was largely driven by the active involvement of members of the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI), a process which led to ownership and SLUDI-led popularization of the key provision of the Agenda.
- The first ever Presidential Debate (and other lower level debates) provided an opportunity for citizens to dialogue with their political aspirants and to make informed decisions on the basis of policy commitments. This also supported the political aspirants to align their policy priorities with those of the public. Whilst this was successful, in the future there is need for

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<sup>3</sup> National Election Watch Observation Report, 2018 Page

the establishment of a national committee (in the form of a National Presidential Debate Committees) to coordinate and facilitate such engagements.

- Electoral support programmes of this nature are complex due to the fluid nature of the electoral process and politics itself generally. In the future, a longer implementation duration that works alongside the national electoral cycle will support effective activity planning and implementation.
- Putting programme participants at the centre of activity implementation, especially in high risk societies, is a transformative and empowering approach that can lead to peaceful settlement of disputes during elections. The engagement of over 300 young people for instance, as part of the Consortium's community mobilisation and peace promotion before, during and the elections contribution to civic and voter education and the restoration of community calm and quiet after a divisive election.

## **0.2 Recommendations:**

This component of the report focuses on proffering targeted recommendations intended to improve the environment, management, coordination, and collaboration for future engagement around civil society, civic mobilisation and participation in the electoral process. The recommendations target specifically the partners of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium, DFID, and to a lesser extent EMBs and the Government of Sierra Leone.

### **Search for Common Ground and its Consortium Partners**

- There seems to be a feeling across members of the public that Consortium provided the needed civil society leadership to support and influence the electoral cycle. It is important that the Consortium partners find a way to maintain the momentum generated during the election and keep it alive in the post-election context as a way of sustaining citizen's trust and confidence in the Consortium. This can be done through active engagement with political leaders and EMBs on matters of governance by sharing information, releasing statements and jointly conducting studies at small scales and applying for joint projects. For example, the Consortium can support the setting up of a National Debates Committee to promote public policy dialogue.
- The Citizens Manifesto, PWD Agenda and Election Observation Reports, and other public policy documents developed by the Consortium, present strong evidence of public policy imperatives that required strong advocacy for their implementation. It is recommended that Search and its Consortium partners work with the wider Sierra Leonean civil society at all level to lobby for the full implementation of these policy documents. In addition to national advocacy and citizen's mobilisation, there is a need for strong collaboration with local councils in their locality to promote best practices, accountability, inclusiveness, monitoring of local elections throughout the five years of the tenure of the new government. In this way, the Consortium will sustain it gains, empower local CSOs and promote a culture of transparent governance and dialogue.
- Most of projects participants have been educated men. While educated men are an important demographic group, the project participants were not representative of the larger population of Sierra Leone. One of the reasons given by partners and local CBOs who were in charge of mobilizing participants, is that mainly target have been the elites who can easily read and write and this is largely because most of the trainings were intended for the participants who were able to cascade the training within in their

communities. While this is understandable, Search and its partners need to strengthen their efforts to achieve inclusivity of all demographics, especially women and other marginalized groups; as this can also be source of conflict and Search might be wrongly perceived by the community. Search staff should foster its monitoring system and ensure regular spot check of participants' lists provided by implementing partners, regular monitoring will ensure to adjust the targeting accordingly during the project implementation phase, so that Search can identify these issues ahead and act on time.

#### **DFID and the wider donor Community**

- The DFID-funded electoral support project came across more like a traditional development project, rather than a full electoral cycle support programme, such that, the Consortium and its partners are struggling to remain relevant in the post-election governance context. To sustain the gains made in the electoral period, it important the donor considers funding civil society engagement for the entire electoral and governance cycle of five years, rather than a response to the elections.

#### **Government, EMB and other Stakeholders**

- The evaluation has enough evidence to point to the funding and other logistical challenges faced by EMBs, the security sector and other agencies supporting the electoral process. It is recommended that Government and EMBs develop a long term financial and logistical strategy to minimise the impact of late and inconsistent funding to EMBs close to the elections. The Government can open a dedicated account in which funding for the election can be allocated in the national budget. This will avoid the scramble for resources and high dependency on partners during election year.

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

Search for Common Ground (Search), in partnership with the six other Consortium members, completed the implementation of an innovative 20-month electoral support initiative titled *Standing Together for Free, Fair, and Peaceful Elections in Sierra Leone* (Dec. 2016-July 2018). The project leveraged on the Consortium's well-established presence across the country and extensive record of accomplishment in media programming, community-based action, and institutional engagement. It was funded by the UK Aid through the Department for International Development (DFID) - Sierra Leone and was led by Search for Common Ground. The **overall** goal of the project was to contribute *to creating the conditions for free, fair, and peaceful elections in Sierra Leone* by promoting civil society engagement, capacity development for electoral management bodies (EMBs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) and support the gathering and dissemination of quality information on governance and political participation that provides voice and constructive dialogue between citizens and their political leaders on key public policy issues. The project had **three key objectives**:

- To increase the availability of quality and reliable information on democratic rights and responsibilities to citizens, including the marginalised segments of the population,
- To increase the participation of women in the electoral process, and
- To increase the capacities of key stakeholders, including institutions and elections-related agencies, as well as civil society groups, to support the delivery of free, fair, and peaceful elections.

The project had a nation-wide coverage articulated through media (traditional and new platforms) and community mobilisation with a targeted 500,000 direct project participants among them women, young people and PWDs. The approach was anchored on the project's **Theory of Change** which suggested that *Sierra Leoneans (men, women, young people, and persons with disabilities) can better be represented in public policy decision-making processes, make informed decisions about national governance and the development of their communities, and break the barriers that limit their effective participation in public life when they are adequately informed of their democratic rights, responsibilities, and privileges.*

The initiative employed a series of capacity-building, outreach, bridge-building, and violence prevention activities, which contributed to enhancing the knowledge of citizens, collaboration and building mutual trust among and between Sierra Leone's civil society, citizens, institutions, and decision-makers. This, in turn, has minimised the immediate risks of violence as well as consolidated the capabilities of all stakeholders, including women, to engage in constructive policy-based dialogue. The project was built around five (5) thematic areas, including: promotion of public policy dialogue in the electoral process, voter and civic education for participation, building public trust/credibility through elections observation, promoting inclusive electoral management and participation, as well as promoting nonviolent elections engagement.

## 1.2 Project Expected Results and Activities

The project had a total of 9 result areas and 89 activities designed to facilitate the full realization of the project objectives. The result areas and key activities implemented are summarised below:

### **ER1.1: Voters are ready, able and willing to participate in elections, particularly marginalised groups.**

The Consortium carried out a total of seven (7) activities under ER 1.1. These included: (i) three (3) Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) research surveys to assess citizens' policy priorities, comprehension, outlook, and exercise towards elections, and any variation. The analyses were conducted at the start of the project (A1.1.1), three months before the elections (A1.1.2), and two months after the elections (A1.1.3), (ii) a voter education manual, based on the findings of the study, was produced and disseminated alongside the KAP findings in communities. The dissemination was done by engaging civil society organisations (CSOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), local EMBs, political parties' youth wings, and citizens (A1.1.4), and dissemination of the KAP research findings (A1.1.5), (iii) organising a regional CBOs training on citizen's rights and responsibilities around elections (A1.1.6), and institutional outreach campaigns targeting professional institution with policy based election awareness on key thematic issues relating to the elections (A.1.1.7).

**ER1.2: Citizens are aware of their democratic rights and responsibilities, particularly marginalised groups.** As a way to foster a nationwide engagement around democratic rights and responsibilities in the lead up to the general elections, two regional voter engagement forums were organised (A1.2.1). The strengthen the activities of the engagement forums, radio and TV spots were produced and disseminated to further increase citizens' engagement (A1.2.2). Building on the momentum created by the forum, a "Week of Citizens Engagement" was launched. This included solidarity events to increase citizens' awareness of their rights and responsibilities. The Consortium then leveraged on the large outreach of religious leaders to disseminate civic and voter education information in their places of worships, as well as calls for non-violence and tolerance (A1.2.3). In the same way, 50/50 mobilized and trained 28 informal women groups to encourage active women participation (A.1.2.4). This was followed by four regional workshops organised for PWDs to reflect on barriers they faced in participating in elections and identifying strategies to break these barriers (A1.2.5). Working with the Disability Commission, WFD Supported PWD structures to develop a PWD Agenda and its implementation (A.1.2.6). WFD then conducted training for 28 local CBOs to incorporate policy-based advocacy and PWD concerns in their elections programming (A1.2.7). Additionally, 50/50 mobilised women through road-shows to register and vote (A1.2.8).

**ER1.3: Citizens are informed about key policy issues surrounding the elections, and are more likely to vote on the basis of those issues.** The Consortium carried out nine activities under ER 1.3. A training of trainers (ToT) of university youth in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, and Makeni was conducted. The trained youth were deployed to lead restitution training to their peers (A1.3.1). The findings of the KAP research informed the development of a citizens' manifesto which was launched and shared widely (A1.3.2). This was followed by two training for political parties in developing manifestos based on citizens' priorities (A1.3.3). To increase conscious policy-based voting, the Consortium organised the first-ever national presidential debates for the candidates. The debates which were broadcast through IRN's network of 37 radio stations and other TV channels (A 1.3.4). Also, IGR created a public-policy dashboard

to track candidates' policy commitments and create accountability for the elected candidates (A1.3.5). 36 community dialogues targeting marginalised youth and groups working with PWDs in conflict flashpoints were held to bring the aspirations of these hard-to-reach groups to the national discussion (A1.3.6). During the electoral process, the Consortium supported and worked with media and civil society groups to promote public policy engagement, especially on the Consortium's key public-policy documents such as Citizen's manifesto and the PWD Agenda (A1.3.7). The 50/50 Group ran the He-for-She campaign targeting influential men at the local levels including leaders from religious, traditional, business, CSOs, and youth sectors to be sympathetic and supportive towards women's participation (A1.3.8). After the elections, IGR conducted 32 district level "Meet the People's Forums" program where citizens met the elected candidates and held them accountable by asking questions and receiving responses concerning public-policy pledges from the political leaders (A1.3.9).

**ER1.4: Reduced risk of political violence and systems in place to manage election-related conflicts.**

As a way to further avoid the risk of violence and ensure solid systems are in place to tackle violence escalation, IGR engaged EMBs and political parties on the Accra Principles, helping them to develop self-monitoring indicators and scorecards for compliance (A1.4.2). Building on the Consortium members' track record in youth engagement, WFD organised election-related violence mitigation training in each district targeting political parties' youth associations as well as civil society youth groups (A1.4.5). To further minimise the risk of violence and engage women as agents of peace within their communities, 50-50 trained members of the Women Peace and Security Network to address potential threats of violence and de-escalate tensions (A1.4.7). WFD then built on the work of 50/50 and conducted four regional training for District and Chiefdom Youth Councils as Election Peace Ambassadors to promote political tolerance in their district and chiefdom (A1.4.8).

**ER 2.2: Newly-elected female officials understand and are able to execute their roles and responsibilities effectively.** After the 2018 elections, WFD conducted training for newly elected female councillors to support them perform effectively in their new roles (A.2.2.1). This was followed by another set of trainings for newly-elected Members of Parliament (A.2.2.2).

**ER 2.3: All electoral activities are gender-sensitive, including through the contribution of women to administrative, oversight and security arrangements for elections.** To monitor the gender-sensitivity and inclusivity of the overall electoral process, and to provide corrective recommendations to institutions and political parties, 50-50 conducted a Gender Audit of the electoral process. The recommendations of the Audit were shared in a workshop with NEC, EMBs, and political parties (A2.3.1). To further support the mobilisation of women CGG conducted district level mobilization campaign for women to register and vote (A2.3.4).

**ER 3.1: CSO are equipped to observe the electoral cycle including pre and post elections, as well as polling and tallying.** Ahead of election, Search conducted two Consortium retreats to reflect of the context, review the Gantt chart, budget and plan for the activity implementation and monitoring of the electoral cycle (A3.1.1). In preparation for elections observation, NEW organized training of trainers to monitor the national voter registration and exhibition and the polling day. The participants replicated the trainings, reaching approximately 900 more people in each of their districts for the voter registration targeting 12,500 people trained. These people were deployed to monitor the national voter registration exercise and the public display of the provisional voter register, as well as to observe Election Day across all districts (A3.1.2).

**ER 3.2: Increased public awareness and transparency of the electoral cycle.** Search's Talking Drums Studio produced 100 episodes of its popular *Atunda Ayenda* soap opera as well as 100 editions of its *Uman for Uman radio magazine* dedicated to raise women's voices ahead, during and after the election period. Additionally, IRN produced 52 editions of *March 2018 Election Countdown*, a one-hour radio programme discussing electoral challenges and engaging a series of institutional, civil society, and political actors around key issues. IRN also partnered with 3 national newspapers to publish a weekly one-pager on election-related news (A3.2.1). A Social Media application (App) was developed by IRN to keep citizens informed on the electoral process and the election results (A3.2.2). On Election Day, the Consortium supported IRN to establish and operate an Election Media Centre with live election broadcast coverage using IRN's network of over 40 radio station across the country (A3.2.3).

**ER 3.3: Data is available to inform regular conflict analysis and to monitor voters' changing behaviours and attitudes over time.** A total of four (4) activities were implemented under ER 3.3. Search, in partnership with the ONS, organised a two-day residential violence mitigation training for EMBs to prepare them to identify potential risks to elections violence and how to mitigate them within the electoral cycle (A3.3.1). Search also produced three editions of newsletter bulletins covering the activities and progress of the project vis-à-vis information related to elections, security, and general political situation (A3.3.2). Further, Search setup and ran an elections violence database using a mobile-based application to collect data on violence incidents across the country within the electoral cycle (A3.3.3). At the end of the project, Search convened a three-day national civil society and stakeholders' lessons learned workshop to assess, review, and reflect on the Consortium's and CSOs' activities and contribution to the March 2018 elections and document the lessons learnt for future planning and reform in country's electoral process.

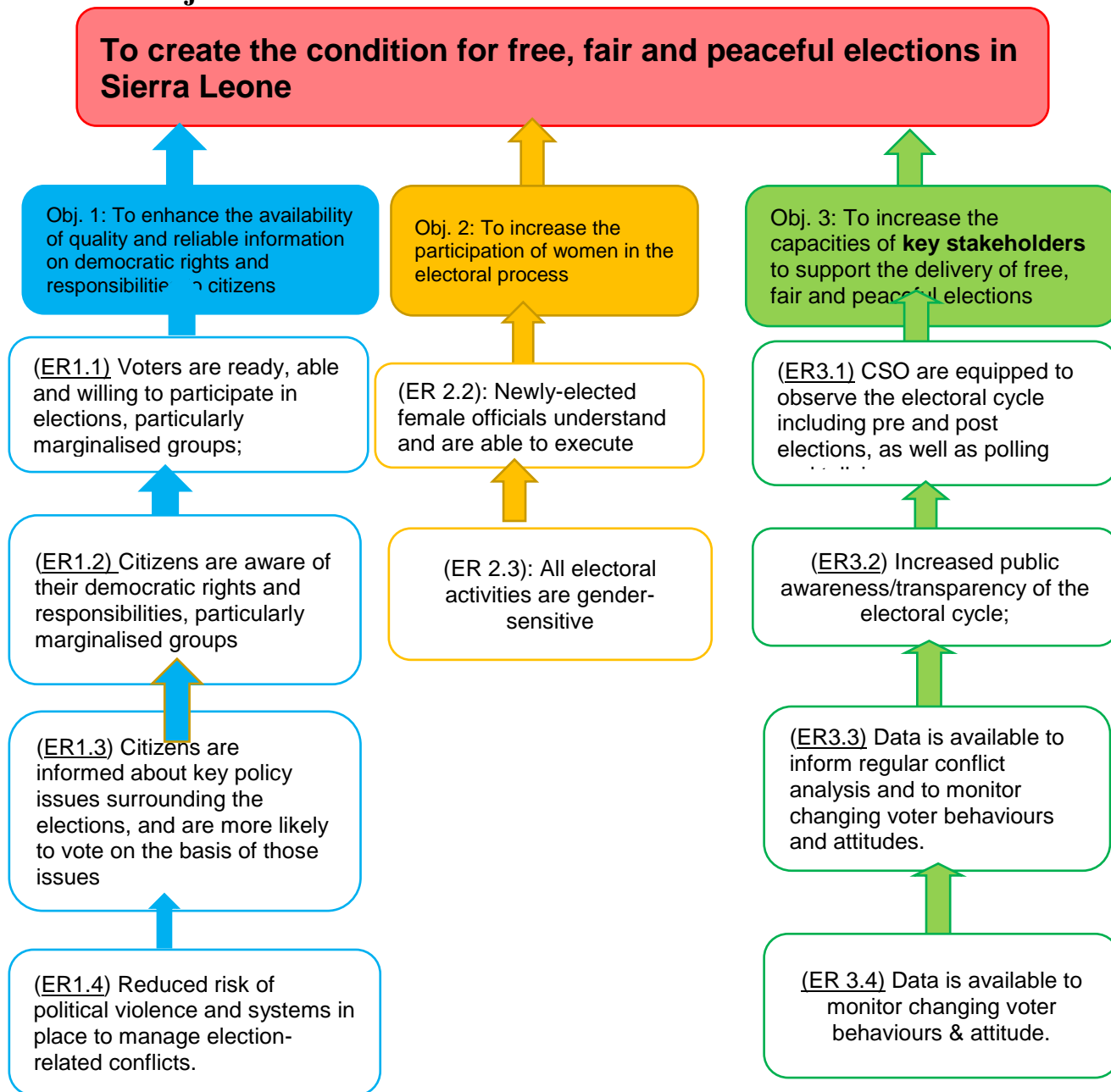
**ER 3.4: Data is available to monitor changing voter behaviours & attitude over time:**

This result area initially had two activities slated for implementation by IGR and IRN. They included: A 3.4.1 Voter preference and Expectation Studies, and A 3.4.2 12 Regional Radio Discussion on the report to increase citizens' awareness. During the first and second review process, the two activities were dropped. The following justification was provided by the Consortium for the removal of the activities:

1. Activity A 3.4.1 Voter Preference and Expectation Studies (to be implemented by IGR): IGR recommended that the objective of this activity has already been met in the KAP surveys and the Citizens' Manifesto and any other voter preference study will duplicate the efforts of the Citizens' Manifesto.
2. Activity A 3.4.2 12 Regional Radio Discussion on the report to increase citizens awareness (to be implemented by IRN): IRN comprehended that the presidential debate and other lower level debates will serve this purpose very well. Hence, it was better not to duplicate.



### 1.3 Project Result Chain



## 1.4 Scope of the Study

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The evaluation covered the entire project duration, from December 2016 to July 2018. Within this period, the evaluation assessed project outcomes at all levels: including all result areas, Consortium partners, participants and project stakeholders. The evaluation also assessed the impact and relevance of the project’s intervention on the participation of young people, women and person with disabilities in the electoral process and the impact of project activities on the outcome of the 2018 general elections. The evaluation further assessed the project management and activity implementation with a view to addressing the results achieved, the partnerships established, as well as issues of capacity and approach developed for Consortium partners and civil society organizations.

## 1.5 Evaluation Objectives and Research Questions

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### 1.5.1 Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation are summarized below:

- a. To evaluate the entire project in terms of its effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, with a priority on assessing the project’s overall goal, objectives and expected results;
- b. To identify key lessons and potentials practices for learning; and
- c. Identify potentials areas for civil society advocacy and donor collaboration in governance process in post-elections Sierra Leone.

### 1.5.2 Evaluation Questions

The evaluation was guided by the following questions:

No	Evaluation Criteria	Mandatory Evaluation Questions
1	<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How appropriate were the management process in supporting delivery of project expected results?</li> <li>● To what extent did the Project’s M&amp;E mechanism contribute in meeting project results?</li> <li>● How effective were the strategies and tools used in the implementation of the project?</li> <li>● To what extent were the intended project goal, outcomes and outputs achieved and how?</li> <li>● To what extent did the project reach the targeted beneficiaries at the project goal and outcome levels? How many beneficiaries have been reached?</li> <li>● To what extent has this project generated positive (or negative) changes in the political participation of young people, women and persons with disability.</li> </ul>

2	<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Was the project relevant to the identified needs of the target beneficiaries and the context?</li> <li>● Were the project inputs and strategy (including its assumptions and theory of change) realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve the results</li> <li>● To what extent do achieved results (project goal, outcomes and outputs) continue to be relevant to the needs of Young people, PWDs and Women in Sierra Leone</li> </ul>
3	<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How far the results achieved did justified the cost incurred - were the resources effectively utilized?</li> <li>● Did project activities overlap and duplicate other similar interventions (funded nationally and</li> <li>● /or by other donors? Are there more efficient ways and means of delivering more and better results (outputs and outcomes) with the available inputs?</li> <li>● Could a different approach have produced better results?</li> <li>● How efficient and timely has this project been implemented and managed in accordance with the Project proposal?</li> </ul>
4	<b>Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are there any plans and or strategies to sustain the gains made in youth, PWD and women’s empowerment in public life after the project?</li> <li>● How effective were the exit strategies, and approaches to phase out assistance provided by the project including support to public policy dialogue?</li> <li>● What are the key factors/areas that will require addition support/attention in order to improve prospects of sustainability of the project outcomes and the potential for replication of this approach?</li> <li>● What are the recommendations for similar support in future</li> </ul>
5	<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the unintended consequences as a result of the project activities?</li> <li>● Are there any significant changes in the context as a result of the project intervention?</li> </ul>
6	<b>Learning and Replicability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are some of the key lesson learned at a result of this project that can be shared and replicated</li> <li>● What are the recommendations for similar for future interventions</li> </ul>

## 2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study Design

This study employed a mixed methodology. The mixed method research design combined multiple data collection techniques including quantitative and qualitative data collection. The data gathered was analysed and triangulated using multiple data sources. The quantitative was collected through survey and the three analysis of the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice surveys conducted over the duration of the project; while the qualitative data sources were collected through Focus Group Discussion, Key Informant Interviews, and desk review of key document produced during the implementation of the project. The benefits of this research design were that it allowed for cross checking and cross referencing of facts using multiple sources, adding rigour and depth in the analysis.

### 2.2 Sample Frame, Size and Technique

The sample frame for this evaluation is the total number of direct project participants of 524,267 of which 352,849 are men and 169,695 are women. In the total number of direct participants, youths and PWDs constituted 186,512 and 9,087 respectively. The 524,267 represents the number of contacts per participant category in the project. Some beneficiaries may have attended multiple activities and therefore may have been counted several times. The figure therefore represents the number of contacts.

From this sample frame, a sample size of 1,120 was drawn using Slovin's Formula described below with a margin of error of 0.05 or 5%.

$$n = N/1+N(e)^2$$

Where: n = the sample size

N = the direct target population per beneficiary category (men, women, youths, PWDs).

**Table 1: District-level breakdown of the evaluation sample size**

Breakdown of Sample by District & Category				
District	Provided as % of Total Sample (Non-Mutually Exclusive)			
	Men	Women	Youth	PWDs
Bo	3%	3%	5%	4%
Bombali	4.7%	7.8%	11.5%	7.5%
Bonthe	1.5%	4.6%	7.1%	6.8%
Falaba	2.3%	3.9%	6.1%	4.5%
Kailahun	2.5%	3.7%	4.7%	6.0%
Kambia	2.7%	3.7%	5.3%	9.0%
Karene	2.2%	4.0%	8.9%	3.0%
Kenema	2.5%	3.8%	3.4%	2.3%

Koinadugu	2.9%	3.7%	8.5%	3.0%
Kono	2.7%	3.6%	7.5%	6.8%
Moyamba	1.8%	4.4%	8.1%	7.5%
Port Loko	2.1%	3.9%	5.5%	3.8%
Pujehun	3.1%	3.1%	6.5%	5.3%
Tonkolili	3.3%	2.9%	4.9%	6.0%
Western Area	4.5%	8.0%	11.9%	28.6%
Kono	2.7%	3.6%	7.5%	6.8%

## 2.3 Data Collection Tools

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### 2.3.1 Survey

As part of data collection using survey tool, a total of 1,120 questionnaires with five questions seeking answers for each of the indicators were administered across the 16-district using an automated data collection platform called Kobo Collected which allowed for the monitoring of enumerators in the field using GPS. The platform minimise errors, improves data quality and analysis as well as real time access to field data.

### 2.3.2 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

A total of seven KIIs were conducted across key actors with specialist knowledge on the electoral process and project stakeholders. The list of informants was pre-agreed with Search. The list of informants and KII guide are attached as annexes.

### 2.3.3 Focus Group Discussion (FDGs)

A total of 16 FDGs were conducted that included 160 participants based on age, sex and disability. Of the total FGD participants, 50 were adult, non-disabled females; 40 were adult, non-disabled males; 30 were non-disabled youth (female or male) and 40 were people with disability (female or male, adult or youth).

**Table 2: FDGs by Type and District**

# Focus Groups	Focus Group Type	Districts
5	Adult Men	Falaba, Kailahun, Karene, Port Loko, Western Area Urban
4	Adult Women	Kambia, Kenema, Moyamba, Tonkolili

2	PWD Men	Bo, Koinadugu
1	PWD Women	Bombali
3	Young Men	Bonthe, Kono, Western Area Rural
1	Young Women	Pujehun

### **2.3.4 Training of Enumerators and Pre-Testing of Tools**

The survey enumerators were 16 (10 male and 6 female) drawn from a pool of existing enumerators with prior experience in using automated data collection platforms. A one-day refresher training was held in Freetown to review the data collection tools, methodology and agree on the deployment of enumerators. To make the data collection easier, enumerators were deployed in localities where they have worked before and conversant with the local language and culture. Search for Common Ground’s “Research Protocol” including its “Do No Harm” principles were part of the refresher training. Following the training, enumerators pre-tested the questionnaire using both the automated system and hard copies. At the end of the pretesting, an hour session was held to gather feedback and debrief with all enumerators who participated in the training. This allowed for collective redress to all technical challenges associated with the data gathering and the use of the automated system.

## **2.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

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Following the completion of enumerators training and pre-testing of the data collection tools, enumerators were deployed across the 16 districts with one supervisor per region, in August and September 2018. The data collection was monitored remotely by the lead consultant and Search through the online system. This allowed, not only for real time monitoring of data collection but also to provide support to enumerators where there are challenges. The data collection took 7 days and this was followed by a post-field work debriefing with Search.

After the debrief and feedback session, the data was exported to the excel and SPSS spreadsheet to generate results and do cross category and cross location analysis of data. The findings of the data analysis are presented in the findings section below. Triangulation was done for each variable. Results from the survey were triangulated with findings from the FGDs, KIIs and desk review reinforced by key public policy documents produced around the electoral process to provide analytical depth and rigor. The Kobo collect online platform used to administer the survey analysed the data. However, the rest of the tools were done manually.

## **2.5 Survey Challenges**

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More specifically, the evaluation faced the following challenges:

- There were serious challenges with internet access in some place within some districts thereby causing challenges in uploading the data in time and tracking some data collectors in the field.
- The timing for gathering the data, coding and analyzing was hampered by repeated change in the timetable of the evaluation as early agree with Search based on donor demand
- The sample side of respondents were drawn from a list of project participants within each district. Some of these targeted beneficiaries were not present in their locality at the time the enumerators were available to contact them for their responses.
- The fact that the sample of survey respondents was drawn from project participants and not from the general population, means that the sample is only representative of the project participants and not the greater population. This is an important distinction and limitation to note, given that program participants were largely male and with higher levels of education than found in the general population. Therefore, the survey data largely underrepresents women and lower educational strata.

## **3. EVALUATION FINDINGS**

The findings of the evaluation are organized in three broad categories with each explaining the approach, structure and analysis. These includes the contextual analysis which explains the electoral profile of Sierra Leone and the environment in which the project was implemented. The profile of survey respondents speaks to the category of respondents who participated in the evaluation and finally, the indicator/outcome and impact analysis shows how the project met its intended objectives using the five OECD/DAC criteria to assess the full extent of the achievement.

### **3.1 Contextual Analysis (Governance & Elections in Sierra Leone)**

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The 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Sierra Leone set out a clear timeframe for the conduct of presidential and parliamentary elections as part of the country's democratic processes. The March 2018 general elections were conducted under the legal framework of the constitution. The entire March 2018 electoral cycle started on a rough footing with lack of clarity on the elections date in the midst of calls from supporters of the ruling party for "more time"<sup>4</sup> while civil society and other stakeholders were demanding for clarity on when the elections will be held.

The 2018 elections were significant since they marked the end of Presidential Era. President Koroma had completed his constitutional term limit and was therefore barred from contesting the elections<sup>5</sup>. Within his own ruling APC party, there were huge challenges of succession. On the other hand, the main opposition SLPP had serious internal infighting and disagreement over its leadership. This and many other challenges made the electoral context tense, unpredictable and prone to violence.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35302119](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35302119), 13 Jan 2016.

<sup>5</sup> See section 46(1) page 28 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone

Additionally, key Electoral Management Bodies faced serious financial, administrative and operational challenges including the over populated electoral calendar, insufficient resources and political will that provide the environment to operate independently.<sup>6</sup> In many instances, the Sierra Leone Police was seen as heavy handed and leaning heavily towards the then ruling APC party.

In a context of political tensions between and among political parties, an over populated electoral calendar as well the limited capacity of EMBs, there was a need for an independent stratum of the society to sit between and among all of these components to mobilise, lobby and advocate for the respect of the rule of law and the tenets of democracy.<sup>7</sup> The Standing Together Consortium implementing the Standing Together for Free, Fair and Peaceful Elections with funding from DFID stepped forward to provide the needed leadership to keep the electoral calendar on track.

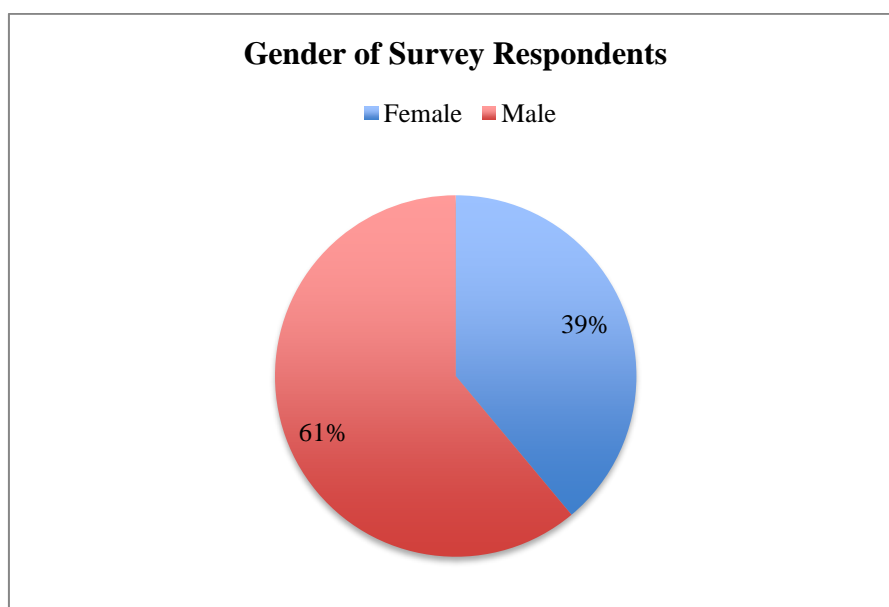
### 3.2 Profile of Survey Respondents

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This section of the report analyses the characteristics of the respondents for the survey and it is not inclusive of other data collection instruments such as the KIIs and the FGDs.

A total of 1,120 respondents were drawn from project participants and surveyed across all the 16 districts of Sierra Leone with a total of 436 females representing 39% and 684 males representing 61% of the sample, respectively. The disparity between the portion of men and women surveyed is representative of project participants.

**Figure 1: Gender Disaggregation of survey respondents**



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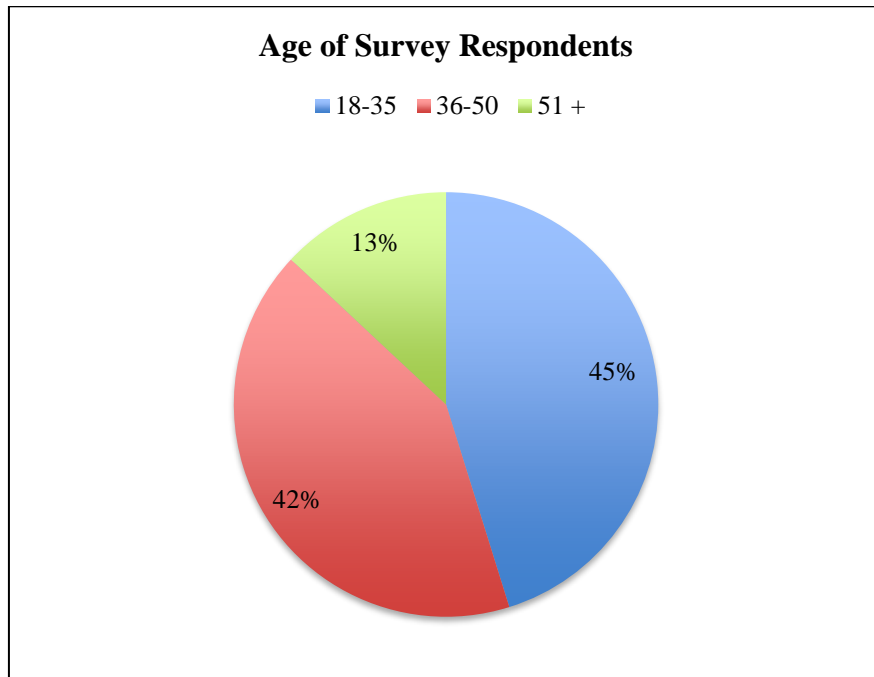
<sup>6</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission Report (2018), p 4

<sup>7</sup> Ibid



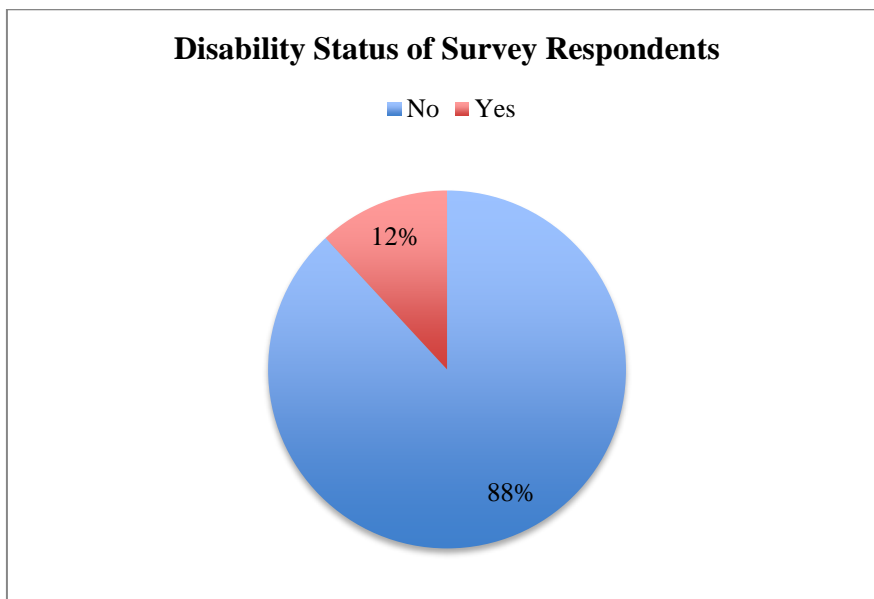
As indicated in the graph below, of the 1,120 respondents surveyed, 506 were within the age bracket 18 – 35 (youth as defined by the Sierra Leone National Youth Policy), whilst 468 were aged between 36 – 50. Respondents above age 50 were 146 of the total respondents.

**Figure 2: Breakdown of survey respondents by age categories**



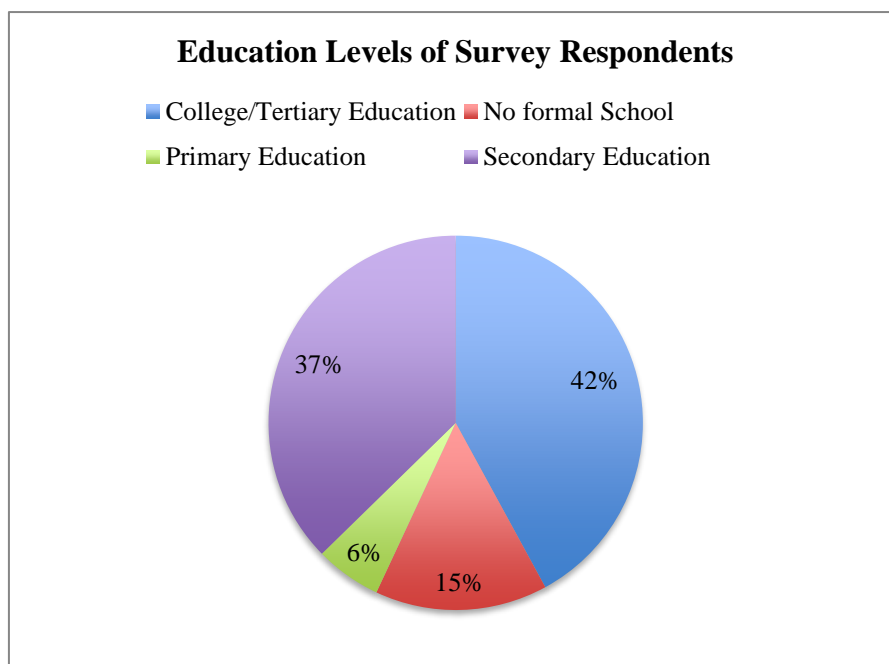
In the figure below, 12% of the total respondents refer to themselves as having disability.

**Figure 3: Distribution of survey respondents by disability status**



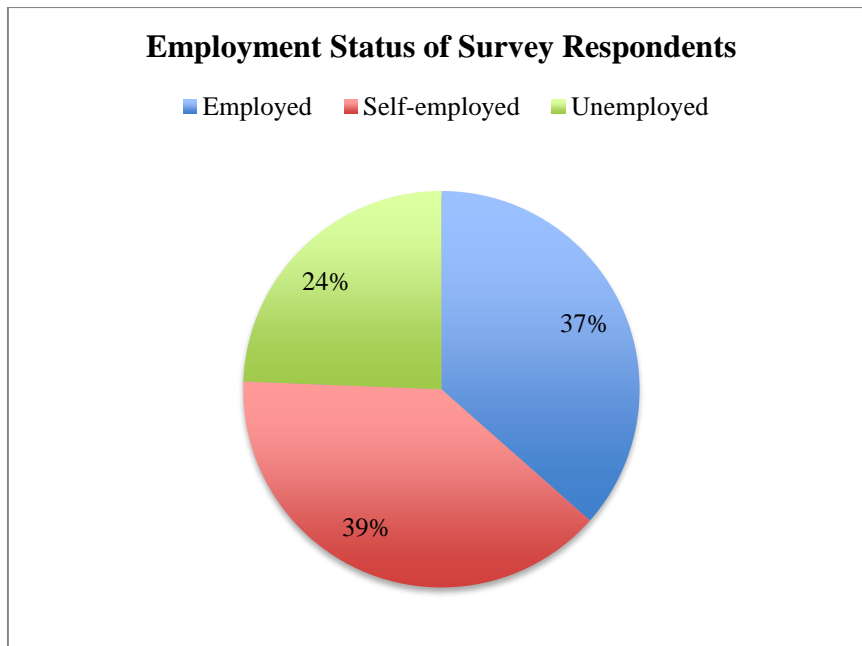
In relation to the educational levels of respondents, a total 471 had college/tertiary education, which represents 42% of all survey respondents. Those with secondary school level education were 418, representing 37.3%, whilst those with primary or no formal schooling were 231, representing 20.6 % of respondents. While most respondents were highly educated, this does not necessarily reflect the demographic realities of Sierra Leone. Instead, the high levels of education among project participants are the reason for these disproportionately high education levels.

**Figure 4: Distribution of survey respondents by education levels**



In terms of the employment status of the respondents, 36.5% (409) of the respondents indicated that they are employed, 39.1% (438) were self-employed, whilst 24.4% (273) were unemployed.

**Figure 5: Employment status of survey respondents**



## 3.3 Programme findings

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### 3.3.1 Relevance

This section of the report analysed the project relevance based on the findings of the survey, KII and FDG. It is structured to respond to all the questions in each of the evaluation criteria.

#### **3.3.1.1 Was the project relevant to the identified needs of the target beneficiaries and the context?**

The project was designed at a time when there was a consensus among civil society and international development partners that the successful conduct of the 2018 election would be critical to sustaining the country's post-Ebola economic recovery and national cohesion. Amidst political division along ethno-regional lines between the two leading political parties, it was crucial that civil society leads civic mobilisation for effective and peaceful participation in the electoral process. Based on the findings of the three KAP survey conducted in April 2017, December 2017 and April/May 2018 respectively, there has been an upward trend in citizen's confidence in NEC's ability to count their votes fairly. In the first and second KAP studies, 68 and 77.3% of respondents expressed confidence that NEC would count their votes fairly. In the third and final KAP conducted after the elections, 81% of respondents indicated that they had confidence that NEC counted their votes fairly. On the basis of citizens trust levels on NEC and the peaceful outcome of the elections, the evaluation found the programme to be relevant both in the design, context, target beneficiaries and the implementation strategy used in the overall execution of the project.

#### **3.3.1.2 Were the project inputs and strategy (including its assumptions and theory of change) realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve the results?**

The project had a nation-wide coverage with over 80 activities implemented across the country and anchored on a theory of change which suggested that Sierra Leoneans (men, women, young people, and persons with disabilities) can better be represented in public policy decision-making processes, make informed decisions about national governance and the development of their communities, and break the barriers that limit their effective participation in public life when they are adequately informed of their democratic rights, responsibilities, and privileges. The use of media and outreach as implementation strategies was appropriate and adequate allowing the Consortium to exceed its participants target by over four percentages points and with over 85% of survey respondent confirming that they have heard about the Consortium.

#### **3.3.1.3 To what extent do achieved results (project goal, outcomes and outputs) continue to be relevant to the needs of Young people, PWDs and Women in Sierra Leone?**

The project mobilised over 160,000 women, 186,000 young people and 9,000 people living with disability to actively participate in the electoral process. Although the project made significant progress in consolidating the democratic gains made so far by contributing to the electoral process and a peaceful change of government, there is need for citizens to remain engaged within the democratic space to contribute to the public policy debates and to hold their representatives to account for their campaign promises. This will further strengthen the local building blocks of accountability and assuring citizens involvement within every sphere of the democratic cycle. Electoral Management Bodies (EMBS) and other democratic institutions must remain fully engaged in preparing for the 2023 electoral processes. On the basis of the

number of young people, women and PWDs that participated in the programme implementation, the evaluation found the programme to be also relevant to the 2017/18 electoral cycle in Sierra Leone and the governance context after the election.

### **3.3.2 Effectiveness**

#### **3.3.2.1. How appropriate were the management process in supporting delivery of project expected results?**

The project had two management support structures. The Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Project Implementation Committee (PIC). The SMT constitute the heads of partner organisations and was the top decision-making body, whilst the PIC constitutes the technical project staff responsible for activity implementation, each structure supports and reinforces each other. At the project management level, there was a Consortium Team Leader who provides strategic leadership and management of the project with the support of the Finance and DM&E Coordinators. In the end of project lesson learnt report produced by the Consortium, all project partners agreed that the project management structure was appropriate and significantly contributed to the success of the project. This positive assessment of the project structures was reinforced in the key informant interviews in which partner organisations confirmed that the PIC, SMT and project support structures were effective in activity delivery.

#### **3.3.2.2. To what extent did the Project's M&E mechanism contribute in meeting project results?**

In addition to role of the Consortium Team Leader that provided overall leadership and technical support in activity implementation, Search had a dedicated DM&E coordinator for this project who made six quarterly M&E visits to track activity implementation and document success stories. In addition, both the DM&E and the programme management teams made spot checks to partners to witness activity implementation. The Consortium Team Leader also provide technical and programme management support for all partners. The project ensured effective programme management systems by setting out clear procedures on reporting, capturing beneficiary data and communicating results through a dedicated Consortium DM&E systems and processes. Through the Key Informants, the downstream partners confirmed that requisite support was provided to them to develop and implement programme activities with robust monitoring and evaluation systems (M&E) that enable them measure success against milestone set out in the project log frame. The project M&E system was flexible such that the necessary changes were made to fit into the electoral context. The project demonstrated values for money as much was achieved within a short time frame for less

#### **3.3.2.3. How effective were the strategies and tools used in the implementation of the project?**

The use of over 40 media outlets and outreach was noted a particularly powerful tool of effective communication and strengthening of citizens voices in the democratic process. The combination of these two, provided the means for the project exceed its direct participants by over 4%. The citizens' manifesto, the PWD Agenda, the Gender Audit and other public policy documents produced by the Consortium, became the centre of mobilisation and reference point for political party and candidate manifestos. For instance, the leader of the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) publicly announced at the press conference that his asset declaration was entirely

in respect of the public demand for asset declaration has demand by citizens in the citizens' manifesto.<sup>8</sup>

#### **3.3.2.4. To what extent were the intended project goal, outcomes and outputs achieved and how?**

This section of the report analyses the findings based on the project indicators using evidence from the mixed data collection sources.

##### ***Impact Indicator 1: % of men and women expressing satisfaction with democracy in the Country.***

This indicator is meant to track or measure citizens' satisfaction with the democratic process in the country. To measure this, the evaluation used the finding of the third KAP study conducted in April/May 2018 after the general elections, which asked the respondents whether they thought that election could make a difference in the way Sierra Leone was governed. 91%<sup>9</sup> of the almost 4,000 survey respondents indicated that yes, they believed elections could make a difference in the way Sierra Leone is governed. This represents a significant shift in voter perception in a period of one year. In the KAP study conducted in March/April 2017, about 78% of citizens held this view.

When a similar question was asked during the 16 FGDs across the country, respondents indicated that though elections bring competition among political parties and afford citizens the opportunity to choose their representatives; there has been little or no changes in the way Sierra Leone is governed as the same political parties continue to dominate the political landscape. However, in about 50% of the KIIs and FGDs, participants indicated that there has been a steady progress in the democratic processes from the general elections held in 2012 to the one held in 2018 owing to the contributions of CSOs and the international community. The respondents further confirmed that the democratic processes have contributed to peace and stability in the country.

##### ***Impact Indicator 2: % of men and women who feel competition between political parties lead to violent conflict***

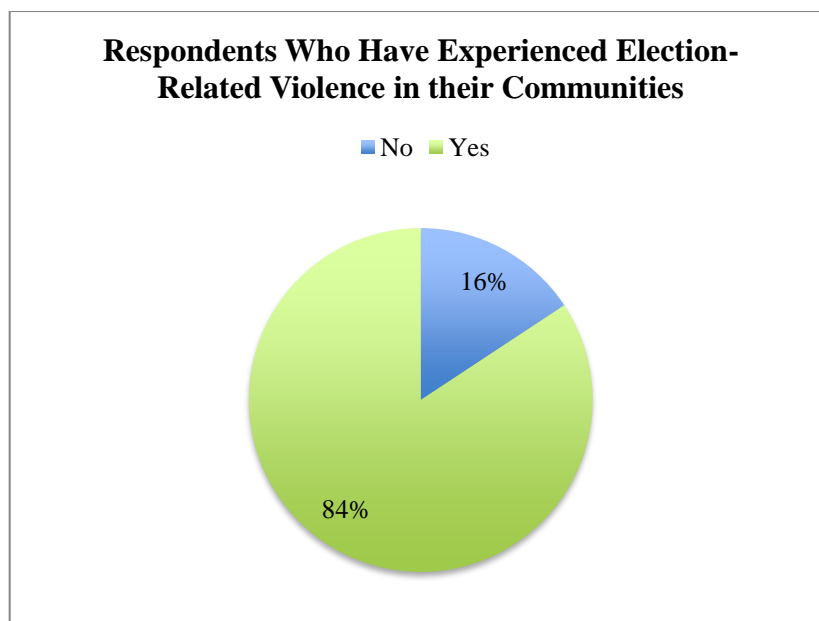
To measure this indicator, a set of questions related to occurrence, location and levels of violence in communities during the electoral cycle were asked. Regarding experiences of election-related violence, 84% of the 1,120 respondents said that they have experienced election related violence in their communities, whilst 16% said they have not experienced elections-related violence in their communities as analysed in the pie chart below:

**Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who have experienced election-related violence in their communities**

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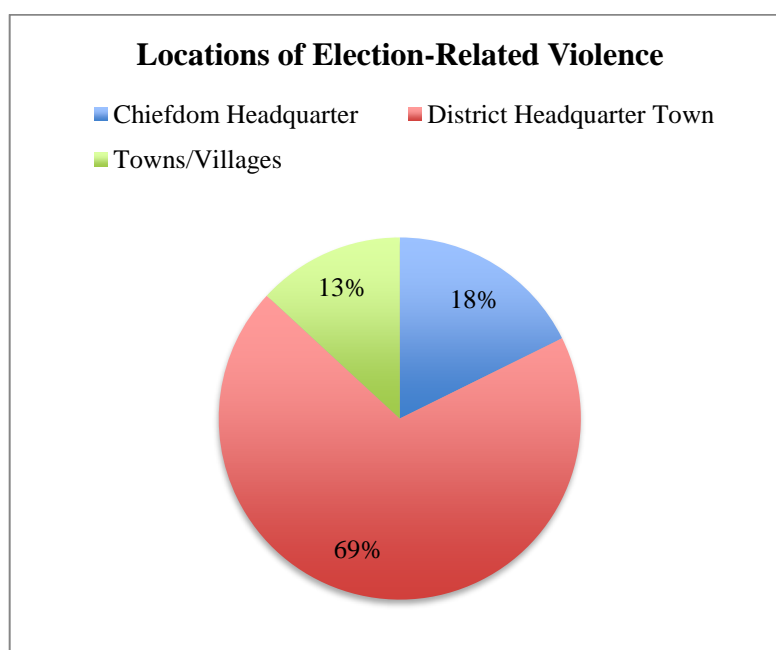
<sup>8</sup> <https://awoko.org/2017/10/26/sierra-leone-news-adp-leader-le15-8-billion-rich/>

<sup>9</sup> See KAP3 Report: Deepening Democracy in Sierra Leone p27



Respondents who experienced electoral violence were asked to respond to the question relating to the location of violent incidents in their localities. Of the 84% (944) respondents above who indicated that they’ve experienced election related violence, 69% (653) indicated that the violence occurred in District Headquarter towns, 18% (167) indicated that the violence occurred in small towns and villages, while 13% (124) indicated that the violence occurred in Chiefdom Headquarter towns. As the bar chart below illustrates, elections related violence in prone in the District Headquarter towns and less in towns and villages.

**Figure 7: Main places where violence took place during the 2018 elections**

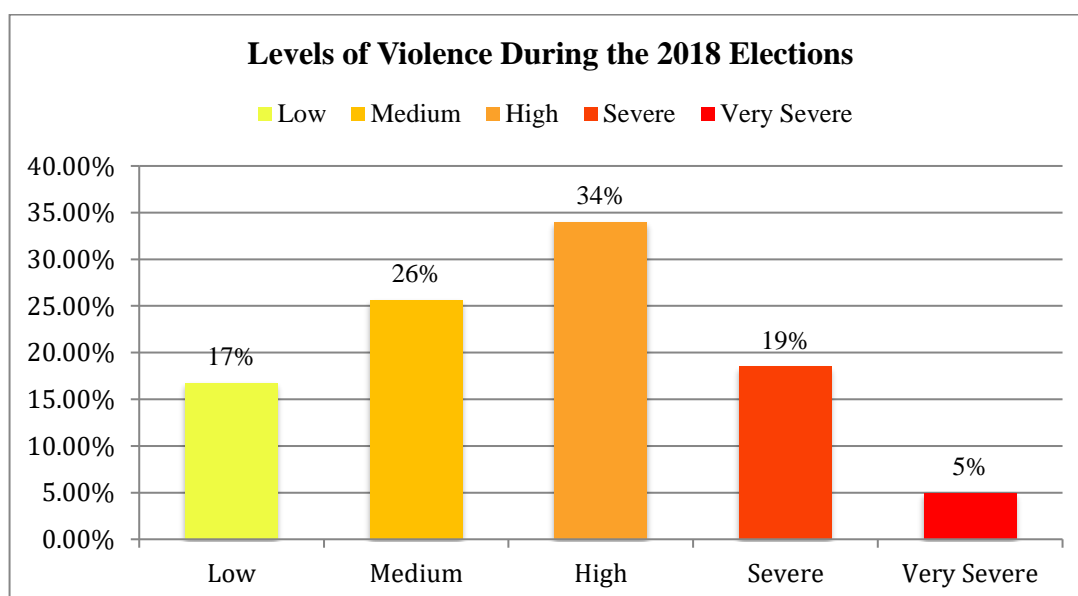


The survey findings confirm the outcome of the violence continuum that the Consortium has been using to monitor levels of violence within the electoral cycle.

Besides Western Rural and Urban, the continuum points to Bo City, Makeni, Magburaka as the district headquarter towns with high incidences of violence.<sup>10</sup>

The survey further sought to understand the level of violence during the elections and therefore asked respondents who indicated that they have experienced election-related violence (944 respondents) to rate the scale of violence in their communities on a scale of 1 – 5 (Low – very severe). The bar chart below indicates that more than half (Medium and High = 563) of the respondents believed that the level of election-related violence was either medium or high. However, it is important to note that 24% (222 respondents) of the 944 respondents rated the level of election-related violence as severe or very severe. This public perception on the levels of violence during the elections is consistent with the Consortium’s own assessment of the elections related violence during key electoral dates. For instance, the Consortium rated elections related violence at level 2 and 3 during the voter registration and campaign periods respectively.

**Figure 8: Levels of violence during the 2018 elections**



During the FGDs, more than half of all participants indicated that violence was high during nominations, campaign and voting periods. In the same way, key informants of security related institutions (SLP and ONS) pointed out that their jobs were extremely demanding during key election dates which included nomination and campaigns and immediately after voting.

***Outcome Indicator 1: Election Observation Assessment of the electoral process - % of men, women, PWDs who believe that NEC will count their votes fairly***

This indicator was assessed based on the findings of KAP 1, 2&3, as well as the EU Elections Observation Reports. Based on the findings of the three KAP survey

<sup>10</sup> Electoral Cycle Violent Incidents Continuum is data generated by the Consortium to measure electoral violence on the scale 1-4.



conducted in April 2017, December 2017 and April/May 2018 respectively, there has been an upward trend in citizen's confidence in NEC's ability to count their votes fairly. In the first and second KAP studies, 68 and 77.3% of respondents expressed confidence that NEC would count their votes fairly. In the third and final KAP conducted after the elections, 81% of respondents indicated that they had confidence that NEC counted their votes fairly. Despite this high level of confidence on NEC, there were significant variations per region between the South-East which is the stronghold of the party that won the election and the North-West which is a stronghold of the party that lost the elections. For instance, whilst 92.2% of respondents in the Eastern Region expressed confidence in NEC, only 68.4% of respondents from the Northern region expressed confidence that NEC counted their votes fairly.<sup>11</sup> The final European Union (EU) elections observation report, stated that "NEC performed its constitutional duties in a competent and impartial manner in preparation for the 2018 elections despite challenges resulting from a late disbursement of funding by the government and an overcrowded electoral calendar".<sup>12</sup>

***Outcome Indicator 2: Level of violence during the electoral period - Number of violent conflicts recorded in the elections***

Throughout the electoral process, the Consortium trained and deployed 14 violent incident reporters to document and report incidences of elections related violence. This evaluation reviewed the Consortium violence database which recorded 39 incidents of elections related violence across the country. The highest such incidents were from the Western Area and Bo District. In addition, KAP3 recorded 120 cases of elections related wounding and 5 deaths.<sup>13</sup> In addition to these sources, the EU Elections Observation Report (2018) also recorded some form of violence especially during the campaign period of the election around January to April, 2018. These recorded incidents of violence were cross referenced during the 16 FGDs in which almost all the 16 groups noted that they witnessed, heard and experienced incidences of violence. For example, in one of the FGDs in Tonkolili, one of the participants noted that: '**rival political party youth supporters such the BAKTALA group was one of the main perpetrator of elections-related violence in Mile 91, Tonkolili district**'. In the KIIs almost all respondents experienced serious concern about the trends of violence during the elections attributed to the country's ethno-regional divide in the politics.

***Output Indicator 1.1: # of citizens who are reached through voter education campaigns disaggregated by population groups***

This indicator is informed by the consolidated beneficiary database. This database shows the number of beneficiaries reached through various activities implemented by partners. The data is disaggregated by beneficiary category - i.e men, women and persons with disability. The number of beneficiaries targeted by the project is 500,000, however, this target was not disaggregated by beneficiary category. The beneficiary database shows a total of 524,267. The project surpassed its target by 24,267.

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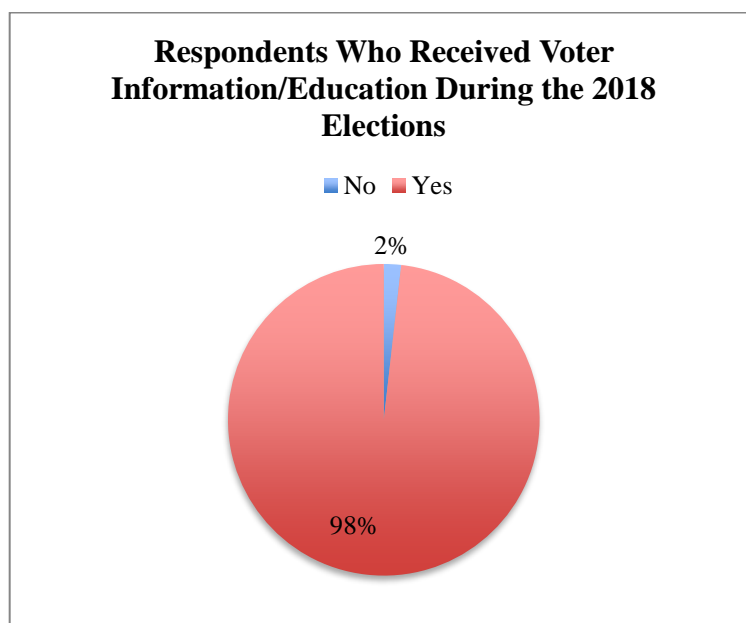
<sup>11</sup> See KAP3 Report: Deepening Democracy in Sierra Leone 2018, p17

<sup>12</sup> European Union Final Elections Observation Report, 2018. Page 4.

<sup>13</sup> Institute of Governance Reform, KAP 3, 2018, Page 52

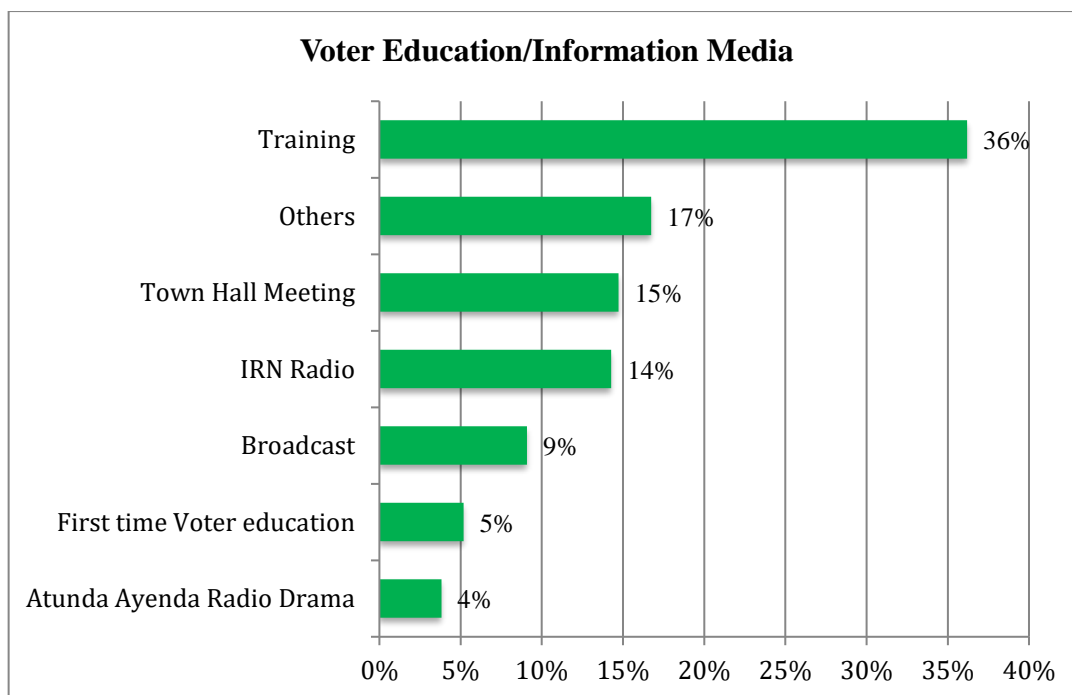
The evaluation process reviewed beneficiary data as part of the final report of the Consortium. On the basis of that report, the programme exceeded its target of 500,000 beneficiaries. The programme reached a total of 524,267 beneficiaries of which 169,695 were women and 354,572 men. Of the total beneficiaries, 9,087 were PWDs while 186,512 were young people. To cross validate this information, the evaluation asked respondents if they received any form of voter information/education during the 2018 election. As the pie chart below indicates, 98% of respondents confirmed that they received information/ education during the 2018 elections.

**Figure 9: Respondents who received voter education during the 2018 elections**



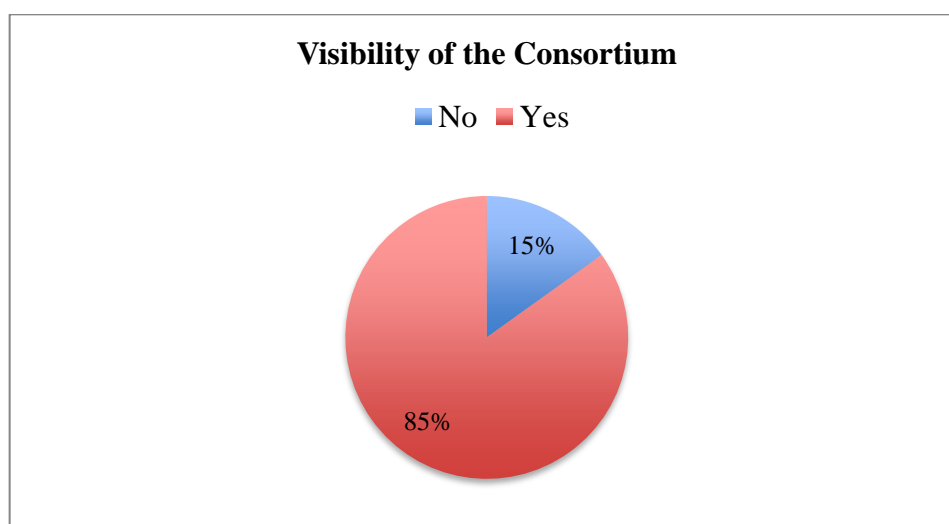
Of the 98% (1,100) respondents that received voter education from the Consortium activities, 36.2 % (398) confirmed that they received it through training, 16.8 % (184) received voter education through 'Other' mediums of communications, 14.3% received through the IRN radio network (157), whilst and 14.8% (162) was received through town hall meetings. The others received theirs through radio broadcast, first time voter education and Atunda Ayenda respectively.

**Figure 10: Breakdown of mediums through voters received voter education in the 2018 elections**



In addition to the number of people reached through voter education and, the survey also sought to assess the visibility of the Consortium, especially citizens who directly benefited from the project’s activities. Respondents were asked whether they have heard about the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium. As indicated by the pie chart below, 85% of the respondents confirmed that they have heard about the Consortium which shows that the Consortium had high levels of visibility across the country.

**Figure 11: Visibility of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium**



*Output Indicator 1.2: # of citizens demonstrating an improved understanding of policy issues; disaggregated by population group and are ready to vote on those issues*

As part of the design methodology, this indicator was to be informed by the 3 KAPs conducted by the Consortium. Based on these 3 KAP studies, there has been a progressive increase in citizens understanding of policy issues on the electoral and democratic process in Sierra Leone. KAP1 conducted in March/April 2017, shows that 40% of the respondents demonstrated understanding of policy issues. KAP2 (conducted in December 2017) had a 5% increase on KAP1 (45%), whilst KAP3 which was after the election in April/May 2018, recorded a 10.1% increase from KAP2. (55.1%).<sup>14</sup> This progressive increase in citizens' understanding of policy issues is a reflection of the projects impact on voters' knowledge and awareness. As a way of triangulating the findings of the 3 KAP studies, the evaluation captured respondents' views on public policy issues and their willingness to vote on these issues. In one of the focus group discussions, a female participant stated that *"in the 2007 and 2012 elections, I voted for the candidate of my political party, but in the 2018 elections, I made my choices for the president after listening to the presidential debate"*.

***Output Indicator 1.3: Voter turnout of the elections (Presidential, Parliamentary) disaggregated by population***

According to the final project narrative report, the target for this indicator is 90% of all registered voters who collected their voter ID cards turn out to vote. Based on the assessment of the Consortium voter turnout, 88.5% of all registered voters who collected their ID cards voted in the 2018 elections. However, this is 4.5% below the Consortium's own target. To validate the Consortium report, the evaluation reviewed data from NEC which reported a total of 3,178,663 registered voters (of which 1,654,228 were female and 1,524,435 were male). Notwithstanding, only 3,013, 941 (95%) registered voters collected their ID cards and about 5% (164,722) did not. After the elections, NEC reported a voter turnout of 2,676,549 (84.2% of all registered voters), representing 88.8% of all registered voter who collected their voter ID Cards.

***Output Indicator 2.3: % coverage of registration to polling centres by NEW – coverage of civic observation on polling day – number of polling centers observed by NEW during polling day***

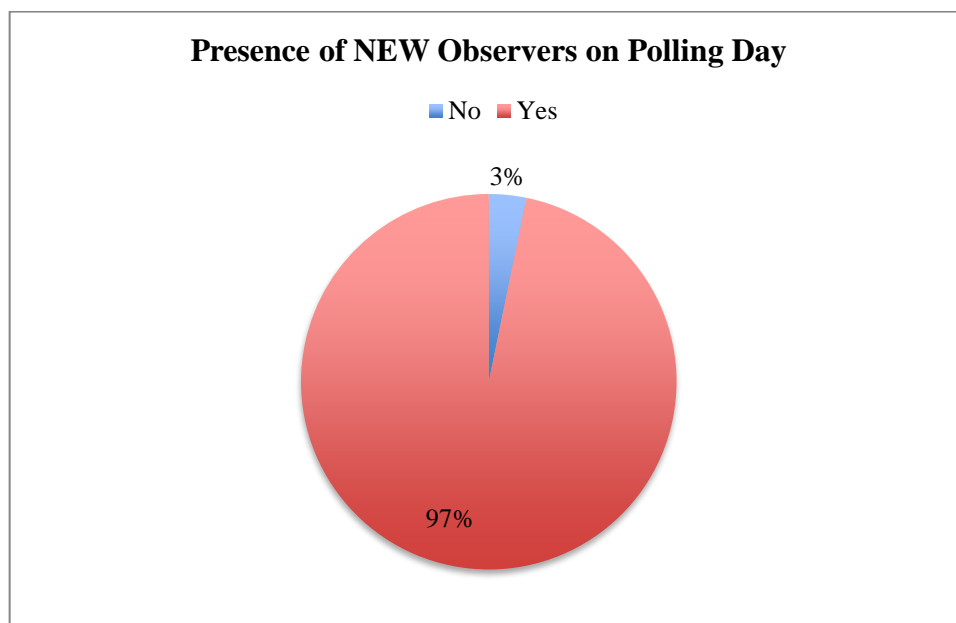
The survey used a combination of data sources to inform this indicator which include the NEW and EU Elections Observation Reports and the end of project evaluation survey data. According to the NEW report the target for domestic observation deployment was 11,122 and the target was met with 100% deployment.<sup>15</sup> To further validate the claim of the NEW report, the study reviewed the EU Observation Report which indicated that during both the 7<sup>th</sup> March election and the Runoff, NEW observers were seen by the EU Election Observation Mission in almost 90% of polling stations the mission visited. Consequently, the final evaluation survey revealed that 98% of respondents surveyed saw NEW observers on polling day in their localities while 97% of respondents confirmed seeing a NEW observer in the polling station in which they voted.

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<sup>14</sup> KAP 1, 2 & 3 are nationwide surveys with 3,300 for KAP and double that number for KAP 2 and 3

<sup>15</sup> NEW Election Observation Report, 2018, Page 2

**Figure 12: Presence of NEW Observers at polling station during the elections**



**3.3.2.5. To what extent did the project reach the targeted beneficiaries at the project goal and outcome levels? How many beneficiaries have been reached?**

The project used a combination of media and community outreach and mobilisation approaches to reach its target beneficiaries. As per the project logframe, the project had a target beneficiary of 524,267 (354,572 Male, 169,695 Female, 186,512 Youth and 9,085 PWDs). The evaluation process reviewed beneficiary data as part of the final report of the Consortium. On the basis of that report, the programme exceeded its target of 500,000 beneficiaries. The programme reached a total of 524,267 beneficiaries of which 169,695 were women and 354,572 men. Of the total beneficiaries, 9,087 were PWDs while 186,512 were young people. To cross validate this information, the evaluation asked respondents if they received any form of voter information/education during the 2018 election. As the pie chart below indicates, 98% of respondents confirmed that they received information/ education during the 2018 elections.

**3.3.2.6. To what extent has this project generated positive (or negative) changes in the political participation of young people, women and persons with disability.**

The evaluation found this programme to be very effective in facilitating public policy dialogue, electoral integrity (elections observation and engagement with EMBs) mobilisation of vulnerable groups to participate in electoral process and increased public knowledge on governance and electoral process, and trust in NEC’s ability to conduct the election in a free and fair manner. Based on the findings of the three KAP survey conducted in April 2017, December 2017 and April/May 2018 respectively, *there has been an upward trend in citizen’s confidence in NEC’s ability to count their votes fairly. In the first and second KAP studies (April and December 2017), 68% and 77.3% of respondents expressed confidence that NEC would count their votes fairly. In the third and final KAP conducted after the elections, 81% of respondents indicated that they had confidence that NEC counted their votes fairly.*

In addition, the NEW election observation report indicates a 100% coverage of local observation across the country. However, the survey shows that 98% of respondents confirmed

seeing NEW observers in the polling place where they voted. This was further reinforced in the KIIs, FGDs, NEW and EU Observation Reports that NEW observers were in almost all polling stations across the country. Therefore, the evaluation found this programme to be very effective in reaching its direct participants and facilitating public policy dialogue, electoral integrity (elections observation and engagement with EMBs) mobilisation of vulnerable groups to participate in electoral process and increased public knowledge on governance and electoral process in Sierra Leone.

### 3.3.3 Efficiency

#### **3.3.3.1 How far the results achieved did justified the cost incurred - were the resources effectively utilized?**

The project demonstrated value for money considering the number of activities implemented, scale and the nation-wide coverage within a space of 20 months and a complex implementation context. In similar project contexts of this magnitude, quality and delivery, the project could have costed more in monetary terms than what was provided. During the Key Informant Interviews and the end of project lesson learnt session, some Consortium partners indicated that they spent more time working on the project than their time budgeted in the project. To strengthen the projects financial management systems, the Consortium and DFID developed and implemented a funds flow chart – called follow the money – design to understand how resources are utilized and what are the associated risks and mitigation actions. Throughout the assessment and review of project documents (Including the FDGs and KIIs), there was no indication of report disagreement over issues related to programme and financial management. Considering the diversity and complexity of the Consortium partners, this can be considered as a major success.

#### **3.3.3.2 Did project activities overlap and duplicate other similar interventions (funded nationally and/or by other donors? Are there more efficient ways and means of delivering more and better results (outputs and outcomes) with the available inputs?**

From the desk-based review of project documents including the three KAP studies and elections observation reports, the evaluation can confirm that this project was the biggest and most resources civil society support project for the election. However, there were other small scale elections support project funded but other donors such as the ‘Strengthening Electoral Accountability and Governance (SEAG) Consortium’<sup>16</sup>, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the USAID Sierra Leone Election Dialogue Series (SLEDS) Project. Whilst these projects implemented similar activities to the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium, their work was complimentary rather than duplicating.

#### **3.3.3.3 Could a different approach have produced better results?**

The Consortium approach to civil society election support is a novelty both to civil society groups and most donor in Sierra Leone. In previous electoral cycles, donors have funded election observation and other components of civil society engagement in the electoral processes separately – with several CSOs implementing different components. The successful implementation of this project using the Consortium approach suggest that the approach was appropriate because it provided a unified voice, and direction for civil society in an electoral context that was divisive and contentious. Several KIIs respondents and FGDs indicated that this should be a model for civil society engagement in future electoral cycle in Sierra Leone and possibly across the sub-region.

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<sup>16</sup> See EU Elections Observation Report 2018 p31

### **3.3.3.4 How efficient and timely has this project been implemented and managed in accordance with the Project proposal?**

The evaluation shows that the project was efficiently managed as there were structures, systems and processes in place for efficient management of the programme, partnership management and structural decision making (Senior Management Team, Project Implementation Committee). The project had dedicated Project and Finance Officers attached to the downstream partners responsible for financial and programmatic management. They received support through a dedicated project management team comprising of a Team Leader, Design, Monitoring and Evaluation and Finance Coordinators. The programme had a well-defined financial management system and payment authorisation across the lead partner and the downstream partners. This was supported by clear procurement guidelines and DFID approved Follow the Money and Risk Mitigation Mechanism. The outcome of the KIIs with the lead and downstream partners confirmed that there was a sound financial management and decision-making processes. The project ensured effective programme management systems by setting out clear procedures on reporting, capturing beneficiary data and communicating results through a dedicated Consortium DM&E systems and processes. Through the Key Informants, the downstream partners confirmed that requisite support was provided to them to develop and implement programme activities with robust monitoring and evaluation systems (M&E) that enable them measure success against milestone set out in the project log frame. The project M&E system was flexible such that the necessary changes were made to fit into the electoral context. The project demonstrated values for money as much was achieved within a short time frame for less. In similar project contexts of this magnitude, quality and delivery, the project could have costed more in monetary terms than what was provided. Some Consortium partners indicated that they spent more time working on the project than their time budgeted in the project paid. Throughout the assessment, there was no indication of report disagreement over issues related to programme and financial management. Considering the diversity and complexity of the Consortium partners, this can be considered as a major success.

### **3.3.4 Sustainability**

This section of the report analyzed the evaluation findings using data from the mixed methods research to respond to the different sub-question on the project's sustainability.

#### **3.3.4.1 Are there any plans and or strategies to sustain the gains made in youth, PWD and women's empowerment in public life after the project?**

The study found that the project to have developed and strengthened the relationships between civil society organisations directly involved with the project implementation and key government agencies involved with the delivery of the electoral cycle. For example, the Consortium had a standing MOU with the office of National Security to facilitate national security and political dialogue forums and worked collaboratively with PPRC to both organize the Presidential Debate and training youth peace clusters. Throughout the study, there were indications that the relationship built will continue even after the lifespan of the project and could be leverage upon for future engagement. For example, Search is in consultation with PPRC about the establishment of a National Debates Committee to facilitate future engagement around debates. The Institute for Governance Reform is leading the Governance Pillar of the national development Agenda dubbed "the New Direction" of government, whilst the Justice and Peace Commission in Kenema which received capacity training as part of the Consortium is playing an active role in post-election peace promotion and community integration within



the Kenema community. In all the FDGs and KIIs there were strong recommendations for the Consortium to remain and to continue to promote post-election public policy engagement at all levels. In recognition of this important public call, Search and some of its Consortium members are at an advance stage to secure funding from Irish Aid to continue the public policy and accountability dialogue stated in the elections period.

#### **3.3.4.2 How effective were the exit strategies, and approaches to phase out assistance provided by the project including support to public policy dialogue?**

The concluding phase of the project was little rough and abrupt. The elections ended in April and the project in July 2018, with only one month (August, 2018) for project closeout protocol including, reporting, audit and evaluation. It is recommended that a project of this nature has a minimum of three months closeout period to allow proper landing and closeout management

#### **3.3.4.3 What are the key factors/areas that will require additional support/attention in order to improve prospects of sustainability of the project outcomes and the potential for replication of this approach?**

Despite these huge successes, the design of the project did not fully take note of the fact that the electoral cycle is different from the governance cycle. To sustain the public policy and empowerment (of PWDs, women and young people) gains made during the elections, and to track the commitments of elected officials, it is important that civil society remain engaged with the government in the post-election environment, something this project did not take into serious consideration

#### **3.3.4.4 What are the recommendations for similar support in future?**

The study found that the programme strengthened the relationship between those civil society organization directly involved with the project implementation and key government agencies involved with the delivery of the electoral cycle. For example, the Consortium had a standing MOU with the office of National Security to facilitate national security and political dialogue forums and worked collaboratively with PPRC to both organize the Presidential Debate and training youth peace clusters. Throughout the study, there were indications that the relationship built will continue even after the lifespan of the project and could be leverage upon for future engagement. For example, Search is in consultation with PPRC about the establishment of a National Debates Committee to facilitate future engagement around debates. The Institute for Governance Reform is leading the Governance Pillar of the national development Agenda dubbed “the New Direction” of the SLPP led government.

### **3.3.5 Impact**

#### **3.3.5.1 What are the unintended consequences as a result of the project activities?**

The evaluation found the project to be impactful both in its unintended consequences and changes in the context. For instance, the interview conducted with NEC found that there was serious funding and other challenges six months to the conduct of the elections. In recognition of this challenge, the Consortium organized a national civil society conference to discuss the

potential threat to the elections in which the Executive Secretary of NEC and the Minister of Internal Affairs were panelists. One of the outcomes was that the Minister reconfirmed government's commitment to funding the elections. Few weeks later, NEC publicly announced that government has made a weekly Le10 billion commitment to fund the elections.

### **3.3.5.2 Are there any significant changes in the context as a result of the project intervention?**

Importantly, the outcome of the 2018 Presidential Elections both first and second rounds were closest in the democratic history of Sierra Leone. Despite the competitive nature of the elections and the close outcome, both the party that lost and its supportive accepted the results because of the credibility lend to the process by the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium through the deployment of observers in every polling stations across the country and the administration of the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT).<sup>17</sup>

## **3.3.6 Replicability**

### **3.3.6.1 What are some of the key lesson learned at a result of this project that can be shared and replicated?**

The study finds that the programme has the potential for replicability considering the nature of the electoral calendar in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone has a five yearly electoral calendar for the presidency and house of parliament, and a four-year tenure for local councils. To sustain the gains made in this electoral cycle, and to continue the capacity support for local CSOs, it critical that both early action plan is developed to review and replicate this intervention ahead of the 2023 electoral cycle. According to most respondents in the 16 FGDs and 7 key informant interviews conducted as part of the programme evaluation, the study found out that the DFID-funded Consortium approach in mobilising CSOs to pull together their expertise and experience across the electoral spectrum in Sierra Leone (women, PWDs, youths, media, research etc.) was a novelty that worked effectively. In previous electoral cycles, donors have funded election observation and other components of civil society engagement in the electoral processes separately – with several CSOs implementing different components. The Consortium approach provided a unified voice, and direction for civil society in an electoral context that was divisive and contentious. Several KIIs respondents and FGDs indicated that this should be a model for civil society engagement in future electoral cycle in Sierra Leone and possibly across the sub-region.

## **3.3.7 Lessons Learnt and Best Practices**

- The bringing together of local and international organisations in a Consortium approach allowed for the pulling together of expertise to complement each other in activity implementation, it also comes with capacity challenges among partners because internal capacity, structures and systems differ among partners.
- If vulnerable groups, women, PWDs and young people are accorded the opportunity and support to effectively participate in the governance and electoral process, they can contribute effectively in community mobilisation and information dissemination that can lead to transparent and peaceful election.

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<sup>17</sup> National Election Watch Observation Report, 2018 Page

- Public policy dialogue especially in this case, the first ever Presidential Debate (and other lower level debates) provided an opportunity for citizens to dialogue with their political aspirants and to make informed decisions on the basis of policy commitments. This also supported the political aspirants to align their policy priorities with those of the public. Whilst this was successful, in the future there is need for the establishment of a national committee (in the form of National Debate Committee) to coordinate and facilitate such engagements.
- Electoral support programmes of this nature are complex due to the fluid nature of the electoral process and politics itself generally. In the future, a longer implementation duration that works alongside the national electoral cycle will support effective activity planning and implementation.
- Putting programme beneficiaries at the centre of activity implementation especially in high risk societies is a transformative and empowering approach that can lead to peaceful settlement of disputes during elections.
- Throughout the implementation of the project, support structures and systems from DFID that deviated from the traditional donor-recipient relationship to a partnership based on mutual support, information sharing, and collaboration was strategic. This reinforcing relationship contributed immensely to the success of the project. Speaking to the prime and other downstream partners, the relationship described above was noted to have contributed to the success of the project.

**Table 3: Project Result Table**

Outcome/Outputs Indicators	Baseline	Target	Evaluation	Comments on achievement
<b>Goal: To create the condition for free fair and peaceful elections in Sierra Leone</b>				
Impact Indicator 1: % of men and women expressing satisfaction with democracy in the Country.	61% were fairly or very satisfied (Afrobarometre 2015)	% increase	91% Data Source: KAP3 source of assessment	The target for this indicator is the third and final KAP study conducted after the elections. Almost 4,000 Sierra Leoneans were surveyed across the 16 districts. Over 90% of respondents believed that elections can make a difference in the way Sierra Leone is governed.
Impact Indicator 2: Levels of violence during the electoral period: : % of men and women who feel competition between political parties lead to violent conflict	(2012) 76% said often or always (Afrobarometre)	Decrease from baseline	8% Data source:	This indicator was assessed against respondents who experienced election-related violence in the 2018 election
Outcome: Free and fair in elections in Sierra Leone by March 2018				
<u>Outcome Indicator 1:</u> Elections observation assessment of electoral process: % of men, women and PWDs who believed that NEC will count their votes fairly	N/A	Elections deemed free and fair by Sierra Leonean and international observers	81% Data Source: KAP3 and EU Observation report	In the third and final KAP study conducted after the elections, 81% of respondents indicated that they had confidence that NEC counted their votes fairly. In addition, the EU election observation report stated that NEC performed its constitutional duties in a competent and impartial manner in preparation for the 2018 elections

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<i>Outcome Indicator 2:</i> Levels of violence during the electoral period: Number of violent conflicts recorded in the elections	0	Level 3 (based on agreed scale with DFID)	Level 3 Data source: Consortium/DFID violence continuum	Throughout the electoral process, the Consortium trained and deployed 14 violent incident reporters to document and report incidences of elections related violence. This evaluation reviewed the Consortium violence database which recorded 39 incidents of elections related violence across the country. The highest such incidents were from the Western Area and Bo District
Output: Citizens, especially marginalised groups, are more informed of democratic rights and responsibilities				
<i>Output Indicator 1.1:</i> # of citizens reached through voter education campaigns, disaggregated by population group and by delivery partner i.e. GoSL and CSOs	0	500,000 citizens reached through voter education campaign	524,267 (354,572 Male, 169,512 Female 186, 512 Youth and 9,085 PWDs) Data source:	During the reporting period, all 89 project activities were implemented reaching a total of <b>524,267</b> (354,572 Male, 169,512 Female, 186, 512 Youth and 9,085 PWDs) direct project beneficiaries.
<i>Output Indicator 1. 2:</i> % of citizens demonstrating an improved understanding of policy issues, disaggregated by population group	40% Data Source: KAP1	+10 increase on baseline	55.1% Data source:	KAP3 was conducted in April/May 2018. The report indicated a 55.1% of citizens demonstrating an improved understanding of policy issues disaggregated in population groups (women, men, youth disabled etc.). In total, the data showed a 10.1% increase in public policy knowledge from the last KAP study.
<i>Output Indicator 1. 3:</i> Voter turnout for elections, disaggregated by population group	87.3% Data Source: 2012 elections	90% of registered voter who collected their voter IDs.	88.8% Data source:	NEC reported a total 3,178,663 registered voters (of which 1,654,228 were female). However, only 3,013, 941 (95%) registered voters collected their ID cards and about 5% (164,722) did not. After the elections, NEC reported a voter turnout of 2,676,549 (84.2% of all registered voters), representing <b>88.8%</b> of all registered voter who collected their voter ID Cards.

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<p><u>Output Indicator 2.3:</u> % coverage of registration to polling centres by NEW – coverage of civic observation on polling day – number of polling centers observed by NEW during polling day</p>	<p>At least one domestic monitor per polling station</p>	<p>100% deployment</p>	<p>98% coverage of domestic observers</p>	<p>According to the NEW report the target for domestic observation deployment was 11,122 and the target was met with 100% deployment.</p>
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## **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section summarises the report, highlighting the key findings and proffer recommendations for the consideration of stakeholders.

### **4.1 Conclusion**

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The project's overall success can be attributed to the pull of civil society organizations that made up the Consortium and their expertise in areas related to the project's key themes. This strategy of multiple actors working together on common themes has shown that there is enormous benefit in bringing different expertise and skills together for the implementation of complex projects, in this case civic mobilization and participation, information and education campaigns, media synergy, violence mitigation campaigns, elections monitoring, empowering marginalized groups with a focus on Persons with Disabilities, women, girls, and youths and increasing citizens understanding of their civic rights, duties and obligations. These efforts were the catalyst that paved the way for the government and other stakeholders to appreciate the important role of civil society in the March 2018 elections.

The assumption underlined in the project's Theory of Change laid the premise upon which the actors continuously refocused their actions to ensure that the project remained on track and the results achieved. To better position Consortium members in achieving the desired outcomes, series of capacity-building, outreach, bridge-building, media synergy, retreats and violence prevention activities were performed which further contributed to enhancing the knowledge of citizens, collaboration and building mutual trust among and between Sierra Leonean civil society, citizens, institutions, and decision-makers.

The Consortium members were highly regarded by most political parties as a credible source of information and mobilization which enhanced public perception of the Consortium's activities. This further increased trust and citizen' participation at every stage of the Consortium activities. In addition, the relationship between DFID and the Consortium on effective coordination, information sharing, and meeting also create an improved capacity of the Consortium in achieving the project's outcome.

The evaluation found that the activities were aligned with the needs and priorities of the government in line with the 1991 constitution and the desire of citizens to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities thereby electing a new leadership of their country. On assessing the efficiency of the programme, it was established that there were structures, systems and processes in place for the efficient and coherent management of the programme, partnership and decision-making principles. The lead agency had adequate financial management systems and authorisations that enhanced performance and outcome. The evaluation also found evidences that the programme was effective in facilitating dialogue, electoral integrity, mobilisation of vulnerable groups, increased public knowledge about governance and electoral process, synergy between and amongst electoral stakeholders and the execution of the first successful presidential debate. The visibility of the Consortium and the capacity demonstrated throughout the project implementation has now seen Institute for Governance Reforms leading the "Governance Pillar" of the Government of Sierra Leone's national development agenda dubbed "The New Direction"; while there is discussion with the Political Party Registration Commission about the establishment of a national debate committee to manage national and lower level debates ahead of general elections. These endeavours suggest that this initiative is sustainable in the long run. Finally, the potential for

the replicability of the project considering the nature of the electoral calendar in high. There was indication from Consortium members and other election stakeholders that this model of election engagement through Consortium approach should be upheld because it further strengthens and boosts the electoral climate in Sierra Leone.

## **4.2. Recommendations**

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This component of the report focuses on proffering targeted recommendations intended to improve the environment, management, coordination, and collaboration for future engagement around civil society, civic mobilisation and participation in the electoral process. The recommendations target specifically the partners of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium, DFID, and to a lesser extent EMBs and the Government of Sierra Leone.

### **4.2.1 Search for Common Ground and its Consortium Partners**

- Across the Consortium, there was a feeling that Search's financial management system was too bureaucratic and not responsive to the context. It is recommended that during similar project of this nature, Search adapt its financial management system to respond to the complex and changing electoral context while still remaining compliant.
- There seems to be a feeling across members of the public that Consortium provided the needed civil society leadership to support and influence the electoral cycle. It is important that the Consortium partners find a way to maintain the momentum generated during the election and keep it alive in the post-election context as a way of sustaining citizen's trust and confidence in the Consortium. This can be done through active engagement with political leaders and EMBs on matters of governance by sharing information, releasing statements and jointly conducting studies at small scales and applying for joint projects. For example, the Consortium can support the setting up of a National Debates Committee to promote public policy dialogue.
- The Citizens Manifesto, PWD Agenda and Election Observation Reports and other public policy documents developed by the Consortium present strong evidence of public policy imperatives that required strong advocacy for their implementation. It is recommended that Search and its Consortium partners work with the wider Sierra Leonean civil society at all levels to lobby for the full implementation of these policy documents. In addition to national advocacy and citizen's mobilisation, there is a need for strong collaboration with local councils in their locality to promote best practices, accountability, inclusiveness, monitoring of local elections throughout the five years of the tenure of the new government. In this way, the Consortium will sustain its gains, empower local CSOs and promote a culture of transparent governance and dialogue.
- Most of the project participants have been educated men. While educated men are an important demographic group, the project participants were not representative of the larger population of Sierra Leone. One of the reasons given by partners and local CBOs who were in charge of mobilizing participants, is that mainly targets have been the elites who can easily read and write and this is largely because most of the trainings were intended for the participants who were able to cascade the training within their communities. While this is understandable, Search and its partners need to strengthen their efforts to achieve inclusivity of all demographics, especially women and other



marginalized groups; as this can also be source of conflict and Search might be wrongly perceived by the community. Search staff should foster its monitor system and ensure regular spot check of participants lists provided by implementing partners, regular monitoring will ensure to adjust the targeting accordingly during the project implementation phase, so that Search can identify these issues ahead and take action on time.

#### **4.2.2 DFID and the wider donor Community**

- The DFID-funded electoral support project came across more like a traditional development project, rather than a full electoral cycle support programme, such that, the Consortium and its partners are struggling to remain relevant in the post-election governance context. To sustain the gains made in the electoral period, it important the donor considers funding civil society engagement for the entire electoral and governance cycle of five years, rather than a response to the elections.
- The concluding phase of the project was little rough and abrupt. The elections ended in April and the project in July 2018, with only one month (August, 2018) for project closeout protocol including, reporting, audit and evaluation. It is recommended that a project of this nature has a minimum of three months closeout period to allow proper landing and closeout management

#### **4.2.3 Government, EMB and other Stakeholders**

- The evaluation has enough evidence to point to the funding and other logistical challenges faced by EMBs, the security sector and other agencies supporting the electoral process. It is recommended that Government and EMBs develop a long term financial and logistical strategy to minimise the impact of late and inconsistent funding to EMBs close to the elections. The Government can open a dedicated account in which funding for the election can be allocated in the national budget. This will avoid the scramble for resources and high dependency on partners during election year.
- It is recommended that EMBs and CSO's collaboration should be based on mutual trust and reinforcing partnerships. The motivation should be a situation where both agreed to work together on common interests around elections and governance with long term plan based on information sharing, collaborative support and mutual trust.