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**EVALUATION OF
SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND-TALKING
DRUM STUDIO
SIERRA LEONE ELECTION STRATEGY 2007**

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ABBREVIATIONS & ACCRONYMS

APC	All People's Congress
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DfID	UK Department for International Development
DM&E	Design, Monitoring & Evaluation
IRN	Independent Radio Network
KABP	Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviour and Practice
NEC	National Election Commission
NEW	National Election Watch
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
PMDC	People's Movement for Democratic Change
PIVOT	Promoting Information and Voice for Transparency on Election
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TDS	Talking Drum Studio

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Ratiba Taouti-Cherif
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) – known as SFCG-Talking Drum Studio – has been working in Sierra Leone since 2000 to strengthen the capacity of communities to participate in building a tolerant, inclusive society for sustainable peace. As an organisation working to transform the way the world deals with conflict, SFCG developed an election strategy within its goal of strengthening democratic governance into a peacebuilding framework. The strategy targets conflict prone communities and groups, and combines the enhancement of informational and communication processes with organisational development around institutions or coalitions that are engaged in the electoral process.

In the 2002 and 2004 elections in Sierra Leone, SFCG and its partners mobilised widespread media and outreach initiatives that contributed to a largely violence-free electoral process. From this experience, SFCG was strategically positioned to make a significant impact on the conduct of peaceful elections and developing a culture of democracy and participation in Sierra Leone. Building on its well-established relationships with key partners and its lessons learned from its work during the 2002 and 2004 elections, SFCG proposed a 25-month strategy to reduce fear and mistrust and minimise the potential for violence in the 2007 presidential and parliamentary election process and subsequent local elections in 2008.

This report presents the findings of the election strategy evaluation conducted in December 2007, with a view of learning from the first phase of the election strategy (that covered the presidential and parliamentary elections) and informing the second phase (that will cover the local elections which are planned to be held in the 3rd quarter of 2008).

SFCG is also a member of the DfID PIVOT strategy, which aims at supporting free and fair elections by improving citizens' ability to engage effectively in the electoral process through enhanced capacity of media and civil society. To that end, the findings of this evaluation (albeit focusing on the effectiveness of SFCG's strategy tools) will need to be read within the larger framework of PIVOT and the findings of its recent evaluation.

The Evaluation

As a learning evaluation, it focused on three main objectives:

1. Assess the extent of the implementation of the election strategy.
 - *Why?* To learn about the effectiveness of implementation and to inform future election strategies
2. Identify and analyse any outcomes achieved by the tools¹ of the strategy
 - *Why?* to learn about what the results of the strategy were from the targeted population perspective and how they were achieved
3. Assess the outcomes of the TV soap opera from the target audience perspective
 - *Why?* to provide recommendations for future TV productions

¹ Independent Radio Network, National Election Watch and TV episodic drama

The analytical framework used for this evaluation was based on five key criteria (the 5 Cs) deemed critical to this strategy and chosen after reading project documents. They include:

- **Coverage** of the strategy both geographically & demographically
- **Coordination** between SFCG & its partners to reach the intended outcomes
- **Complementarity** of SFCG & its partners for the effective implementation of the strategy
- **Coherence** of SFCG's & its partners' approaches to the elections and coherence of tools
- **Credibility** of SFCG's strategic partners among the general population

The evaluation tasks included the following:

- Strategy document review
- Stakeholder analysis and evaluation framework development
- Meeting with SFCG staff to brainstorm on methodology (decision on locations)
- Development and review of data collection tools
- Focus group discussions
- Mini attitude survey
- Interviews with election stakeholders (NEC, NEW, IRN, political parties representatives)
- Discussion with election strategy leadership, including SWOT analysis

Constraints to the Evaluation

The evaluation fieldwork was carried out in two weeks (2nd- 16th December 2007). Although the evaluation methodology did not aim for statistical significance (see methodology), more time would have allowed the team to conduct fieldwork in eastern Sierra Leone, a sensitive area of the country along the Liberian border where the fighting started in 1991. Another constraint is the limitation of using surveys as tools for assessing attitudes and behaviour². SFCG's Design, Monitoring and Evaluation unit is conducting research to design more appropriate research tools for showing attitude and behaviour change.

Overview of Findings

1. Coverage and Reach of the Strategy Tools

- The overwhelming majority of respondents listened to IRN across the study areas. Some participants sang the jingle of IRN to study team members and one interviewee said that it became a sort of household song. Another participant also mentioned the poems aired on IRN and said that some verses are used, even after the elections, as metaphors for cooperation.
- NEW observers were seen in the polling stations. Their roles were clearly understood by respondents.
- The TV episodic drama *Insai di Saloon* did not have the intended reach and reached only a section of the target population. But as the next point shows, those who did watch it understood it and appreciated it.

² One of the limitations of social research is what is commonly known as the "Hawthorne effect," which refers to a phenomenon thought to occur when people observed during a research study or following any new or increased attention temporarily change their behaviour.

2. Effectiveness and Impact of the Strategy Tools

- IRN had an impact in that it effectively provided the appropriate information on the electoral process before the election. But its real impact came through when participants showed how important it was for them to be kept abreast of the election results on the days of the election. Hearing election results from all areas of the country was seen as a deterrent for any violent flare-ups and a contribution to election transparency.
- NEW observers were seen as being unbiased, not “wearing party colours” as one participant said. They were also trusted, in all but one study location, as they came from the communities, were known and were trained.
- Although the TV drama did not have a large reach, those in the study locations who did watch *Insai di saloon* showed a clear understanding of the messages and the character behaviour models. Participants of the focus group discussions provided in-depth readings of the TV show and gave examples of how some of the scenes of the show actually happened in their communities and how the acts of some characters helped them make their own decisions and protect their “vote” during the election.

3. Coordination of Strategic Partners

The coordination of such a multi-faceted strategy was a very challenging task, and hiccups along the way could not be avoided. The findings based on discussions with strategy actors at national, regional and local levels showed that, all in all, the coordination was very good and was key in helping the strategy partners reach their goal of contributing to making the elections free from violence. Areas for improvement of the strategy were clearly identified by strategy partners during discussions, and steps have already been taken to address those in preparation for the up coming local elections.

4. Complementarity of and Coherence between Strategic Partners

Discussions with various partners of the strategy clearly showed that all shared the same vision of a peaceful and transparent election, and the approach of each component of the strategy was not only complementary to the others, but also necessary for the success of the other. The metaphor for the election strategy used by a participant was that of tree protecting Sierra Leone and its citizens, where each branch would be a component that could not be divorced from the others.

5. Credibility of Strategic Partners

A lack of credibility of any of the actors would have jeopardized the whole strategy. Participants showed that they trusted the NEW observers and thought the information provided on IRN radios was true. SFCG-TDS is constantly assessing its credibility among the population. The responses to questions about preferred radio programs is a proof of respect and acceptance of TDS productions.

Conclusions & Recommendations

On the implementation of the election strategy

This election strategy aimed at “broadening the space,” to ensure that Sierra Leonean citizens were included in the election process and that the country remained peaceful. SFCG and its partners contributed, along with other actors, in creating that space. This work not only helped Sierra Leoneans to make informed choices on voting day, but also

made them a witness of transparent elections by providing them with continuous information as the election unfolded.

SFCG complemented its partners by bringing in the strategic vision, the technical expertise and the logistical support during the elections. As one TDS staff member said, “you should have seen this place during the elections, it was full of people; we actually lived here for a few days.” Apart from achieving its intended goal, the strategy also achieved unintended goals such as strengthening the capacity of radio station to produce quality programs and conduct live reporting, and of CSOs to manage funds and organise their staff.

As SFCG and its partners prepare for the upcoming local elections, more efforts should be made to ensure that the money necessary for field observers and reporters be received in time, and training for NEW observers be conducted earlier than in the previous phase. In short, a tighter logistical plan and longer timeframe.

On the outcomes achieved by the tools of the strategy

In spite of technical obstacles, IRN achieved its goal. More local radios should be invited to join the network to reach more remote areas, to reinforce the sustainability of IRN, and to increase the capacity of reporters and producers of community radio. The decision and to choose NEW observers from the communities proved to be a very good one. Here too, the strategy would gain from increasing the membership, as this would also allow for more coverage and sustainability of CSOs as a “power” in Sierra Leone’s governance make up.

The TV show did not reach a wide audience and few episodes were shown, but those who saw it showed increased knowledge and attitude changes. The show remains relevant for the next elections, and SFCG and its partners should identify ways of bringing it to a wide audience. Also, discussions after viewing proved to be useful in receiving feedback from viewers and strengthening the messages.

Overall, this election strategy has presented Sierra Leonean society with a new model for the media, civil society and the public to participate in the governance of their nation. It proved positive and had many more repercussions than initially anticipated.

INTRODUCTION

A. Country background

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has been working in Sierra Leone since 2000 to strengthen the capacity of communities to participate in building a tolerant, inclusive society for sustainable peace. The ten-year war in Sierra Leone claimed 50,000 lives, left thousands mutilated, displaced over a million people, and turned more than 7,000 children into child soldiers. Since the end of the war in 2002, the country has struggled to rebuild and to heal.

Sierra Leone, ranked at the bottom of the UN Human Development Index, is coming to the end of a transition period from recovery into long-term development. This transition period includes the complete withdrawal of UNAMSIL and the handover of responsibility for security to the Sierra Leone Government.

SFCG in Sierra Leone operates two projects that complement, integrate, and multiply the efforts of the other: Talking Drum Studio (TDS) and the Community Peace-building Unit. SFCG has identified four priorities around which to design its activities: corruption; quality education; governance; and those marginalized in the decision-making process, specifically youth, women and children. As recommended by the June 2004 external evaluation, SFCG is concentrating its efforts on supporting the policy of decentralisation.

B. Sierra Leone Elections

As an organization working to transform the way the world deals with conflict, SFCG developed an election strategy (see appendix 1 for more details) within its goal of strengthening democratic governance into a peacebuilding framework. The strategy targets conflict-prone communities and groups and combines the enhancement of informational and communication processes with organizational development around institutions or coalitions that are engaged in the electoral process.

In the 2002 and 2004 elections in Sierra Leone, SFCG and its partners mobilised widespread media and outreach initiatives that contributed to a largely violence-free electoral process. From this experience, SFCG was strategically positioned to make a significant impact on the conduct of peaceful elections and developing a culture of democracy and participation in Sierra Leone. Building on its well-established relationships with key partners and its lessons learned from its work during the 2002 and 2004 elections, SFCG proposed a 25-month strategy to reduce the fear and mistrust and minimize the potential for violence in the 2007 presidential and parliamentary election process.

These last elections were crucial to Sierra Leone's recovery process as well the country's security and stability, particularly as the UN peacekeepers phased out. It was important that the process leading to the elections was transparent and inclusive so as to minimize violence and tensions that were already mounting. To this end SFCG saw it as an urgent imperative to work closely with the National Election Commission (NEC) and other partners.

SFCG and its partners designed their election strategy around DfID's "Promoting Information and Voice for Transparency on Election" (PIVOT) strategy. The goal of PIVOT was that 'citizens (be) able to hold local and national

"There is no longer a place for fraud and malpractice in the Sierra Leone electoral system. The people of Sierra Leone deserve to exercise their rights in an atmosphere of freedom, fairness and transparency."

National Election Commission

government to account' by supporting free and fair elections through the improvement of citizens' ability to engage effectively in the electoral process through enhanced capacity of media and civil society. While the focus of this evaluation was on the effectiveness of the strategy tools used by SFCG and its partners, the findings in this report can also support and complete the findings of the PIVOT evaluation commissioned by DfID.

C. Constraints to the Evaluation

The evaluation fieldwork was carried out in two weeks (2nd- 16th December 2007). Although the evaluation methodology did not aim for statistical significance (see methodology below), more time would have allowed the team to conduct fieldwork in eastern Sierra Leone, a sensitive area of the country along the Liberian border where the fighting started in 1991. Another constraint is the limitation of using surveys as tools for assessing attitudes and behaviour³. SFCG Design, Monitoring and Evaluation unit is conducting research to design more appropriate research tools for showing attitude and behaviour change.

D. Structure of the Report

The report starts with an Executive Summary and an introduction to the country and election strategy context. The Methodology Section presents the evaluation objectives and research questions, sample and tools. The main body of evaluation results and analyses are presented in the Findings Section, which is divided into 2 key parts:

- A. Findings on Coverage of the Strategy Tools
- B. Findings on the Election Strategy Partnership

The section on conclusions and lessons learned is the final section. It is structured by evaluation objective and shows what has been achieved and what was learned from the exercise.

Appendices to the report are presented in a separate document.

³ One of the limitations of social research is what is commonly known as the "*Hawthorne effect*," which refers to a phenomenon thought to occur when people observed during a research study or following any new or increased attention temporarily change their behaviour.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A. Evaluation Objectives

The purpose of the evaluation is three-fold:

1. To assess the extent of the implementation of the election strategy.
 - **Why?** To learn about the effectiveness of implementation and to inform future election strategies
2. To identify and analyse any outcomes achieved by the tools of the strategy
 - **Why?** to learn about what the results of the strategy were from the targeted population perspective and how they were achieved
3. To assess the outcomes of the TV soap opera from the target audience perspective
 - **Why?** to provide recommendations for future TV productions

B. Intended Audience

With a learning focus, this evaluation has been undertaken primarily to meet the needs of the SFCG programme team in Sierra Leone and its partners (IRN & NEW): to provide information for reflecting on the process and tools of the strategy, and preparing the final phase of the strategy to cover the local elections.

This report also provides information and analysis to SFCG in general, with a particular focus on improving on our approach to election work. Three of the countries where SFCG operates will have elections in 2008.

Another audience for this report includes international donors (DfID and Irish Aid, who fund SFCG work on elections in Sierra Leone), the National Election Commission (NEC) and other stakeholders, including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Finally, the findings of this evaluation will have to be packaged for radio, and IRN radio stations, in the study locations should be asked to inform the population about the outcomes of the evaluation and thank them for their contribution.

C. Approach and Evaluation Questions

The project under evaluation is a strategy, and therefore the scope of this evaluation will not be statistically significant or representative. Instead, the evaluation focuses on perceptions and attitudes towards the tools that SFCG and its partners have implemented to accompany the election process and contribute to the efforts of ensuring the elections are violence free, inclusive and transparent.

Because there is no right or wrong strategy, the research questions will focus on five key criteria (the 5 Cs) that are deemed critical to this strategy, chosen by the evaluator after reading project documents:

- **Coverage** of the strategy both geographically & demographically
- **Coordination** between SFCG & its partners to reach the intended outcomes

- **Complementarity** of SFCG & its partners for the effective implementation of the strategy
- **Coherence** of SFCG's & its partners' approaches to the elections and coherence of tools
- **Credibility** of SFCG's strategic partners among the general population

Due to the multi-purpose approach of the evaluation, subsets of the following questions will be used with different stakeholder groups.

1. Questions relating to **Coverage** –

- How effective was the strategy in reaching rural women and youth?
- Which groups have been reached by the activities of the strategy?
- What was the impact of the strategy components on those groups' attitudes and behaviours during the elections?
- How strategic was the alliance building approach to ensure that information on elections reached the target groups?

2. Questions relating to **Coordination** –

- How effective was the coordination between partners during the strategy?
- How has it contributed to reaching the intended outcomes of the strategy?
- What were the main challenges?
- What were the success stories?
- What are the lessons learned by SFCG's partners with regards to coordination?

3. Questions relating to **Complementarity** –

- To what extent were SFCG and its partners complementary for the effective implementation of the strategy (perhaps a mini-stakeholder analysis)?
- What were the strengths & weaknesses of each partner in the strategy?

4. Questions relating to **Coherence** –

- To what extent were the approaches to the elections of the different partners coherent with each other?
- To what extent were the strategy tools used coherent with each other?

5. Questions relating to **Credibility**–

- To what extent was the credibility of SFCG's partners important in reaching the strategy goals?
- What are the lessons learned in terms of choice of partners to ensure credibility of the process?

D. Evaluation Tasks & Tools

The evaluation tasks included the following:

- Strategy document review
- Stakeholder analysis and evaluation framework development
- Meeting with SFCG staff to brainstorm on methodology (decision on locations)
- Development and review of data collection tools
- Focus group discussions
- Mini attitude survey

- Interviews with election stakeholders (NEC, NEW, IRN, political parties representatives)
- Discussion with election strategy leadership, including SWOT analysis

Four main tools were used to collect data (see appendices 3, 4 & 5):

- Focus group discussions with women & youth to better understand their perceptions of the election strategy tools
- Mini attitude surveys with women and youth. The mini surveys included 21 questions, mostly statements anchored with likert scales to assess respondent's attitudes towards strategy tools.
- One on one interviews and group discussions with various stakeholders
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) exercise with Election Strategy leadership

E. Sample Size & Research Sites

As mentioned above, this evaluation did not aim for statistical significance or breadth, but depth of information to assess effectiveness and extract lessons learned from the strategy.

The target populations of the strategy are poor women and youth. Therefore, this evaluation included focus groups & mini-surveys with youth and women in both rural and urban settings in 6 study locations. To ensure a fair degree of representation, the study locations were chosen based on a number of pragmatic criteria, keeping the time and resources available in mind. They included a cross-section of conflict-prone communities (focus of election strategy) and socio-political denominations, gender differences and where SFCG's TV soap opera *Insai Di Saloon* was shown.

A total of 6 sites were visited in the North, South and Freetown regions. At each site the team conducted rapid attitude surveys with individuals and focus group discussions. While focus groups were being held, individual interviews were held with partners and other stakeholders such as political party representatives.

The sampling plan was based on the time allotted to this study and SFCG-SL's knowledge of focal points in those areas. Based on the results of surveys and focus groups, as well as feedback from a cross section of stakeholders, there seems to be no bias in the choice of participants. In some areas it was only when the team arrived in the locations that people were trickling in, especially women; at the time of visit most were busy on the farms or preparing evening meal. That said, the final sample is very gender balanced. Appendix 2 presents a breakdown of sample and mix of stakeholders.

FINDINGS

A. Findings on Coverage of the Strategy Tools

The outcome of the election has been hailed as being free and fair by a wide range of the Sierra Leonean population. However, in some areas in the South, both survey respondents and focus group participants mentioned some discontent towards the outcome of the election as there were feelings of disenfranchisement particularly with the cancellation of results. During the evaluation, the phrase “free and fair” was on everyone’s lips. According to a NEW supervisor, some played with words, saying not only did they feel they were “free and fair” but also “free from fear”⁴.

The findings of this section present the perspective of the women and youth who responded to the evaluation questions. In the first part of this section, the findings show whether the strategy reached the audience it intended to reach with its different tools. In the second part, the effectiveness and impact of the tools will be discussed.

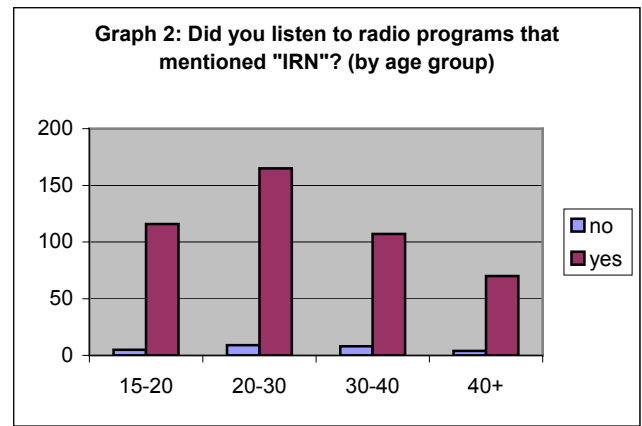
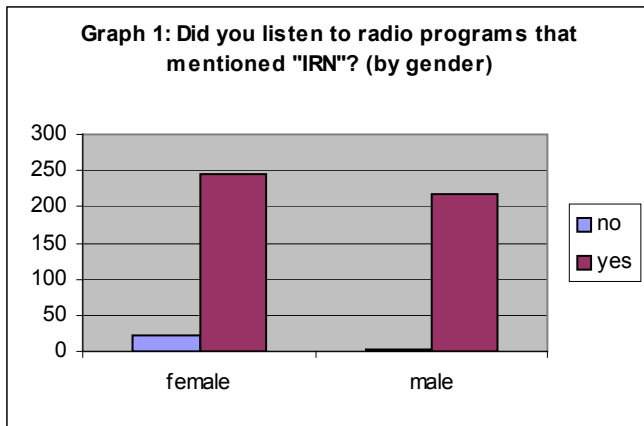
A.1. Coverage and Reach of the Strategy Tools

Presented here are responses regarding IRN radio programs, NEW observers, SFCG’s 10-episode TV drama on the elections.

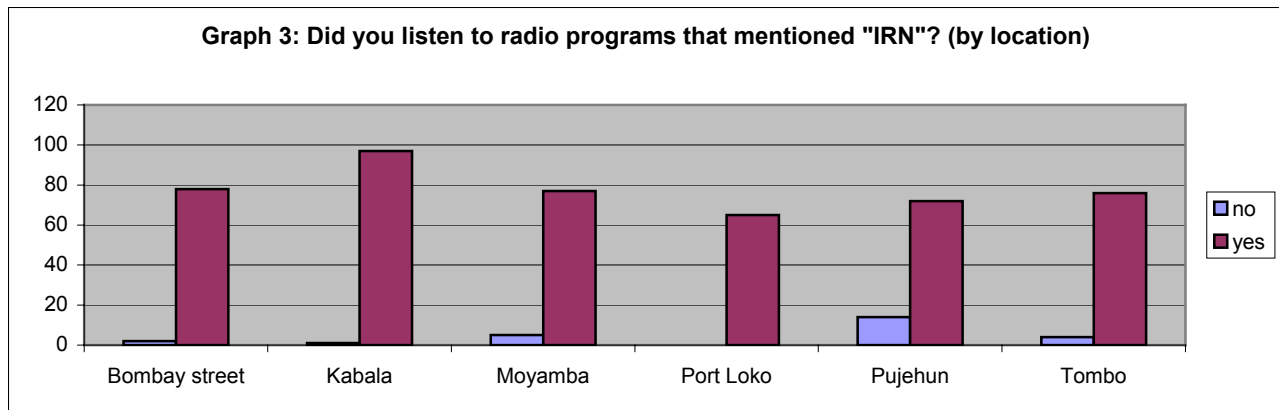
Reach of IRN and radio programs

The majority of participants in focus groups, across the study sites, said they listened to IRN programs. The surveys show that of the 491 respondents, 464 said they listened to radio programs that mentioned “IRN”. Graphs 1 & 2 below show the distribution of responses by gender and age group.

⁴ This comment was challenged by one other participant in the discussion who said that there was fear (as echoed by focus group participants in some study locations) but there was no violence.



When the same results are disaggregated by location, the significance of respondents' acknowledging IRN is as evident, but the negative responses appear for the most part in Pujehun and Moyamba, both districts in the South of the country.



When the 491 survey participants were asked to name three radio programs they enjoy listening to, SFCG-TDS⁵ and IRN radio programs were named as follows.

- 239 named Atunda Ayenda;
- 119 named IRN;**
- 109 named Salone Uman;
- 26 named Parliament Bol At; and
- 41 named Golden Kids news

Non TDS or IRN programs mentioned by survey respondents included: election time, Pikin to Pikin, Enkicha en Lappa; Meri go round, and BBC Focus on Africa to name a few.

Most focus group participants across the study locations listened to the radio during the election. Radio was reported as the main medium for getting information regardless of gender, age group

⁵ Prior to and during the elections, SFCG-TDS continued airing its regular programs such as Atunda Ayenda, Salone Uman, Sisi Aminata, Golden Kids News and others.

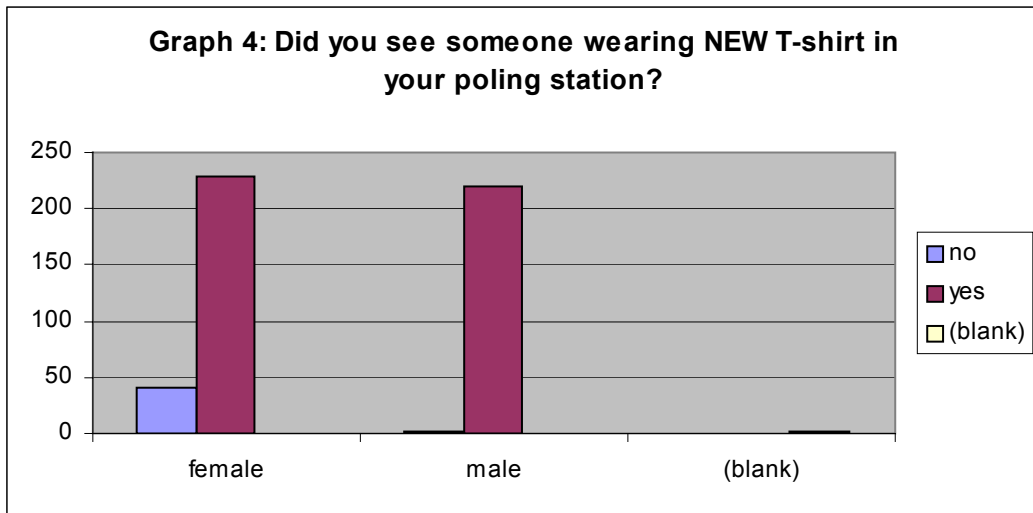
and location, which was confirmed with the DfID PIVOT strategy baseline study. The box below presents focus group participants list of preferred radio programs.

Radio programs focus group participants liked listening to
 IRNTP¹PT
 Parliament Bol At -TDS
 Election talk
 Atunda Ayenda – TDS
 Monologue
 Women’s voice
 Salone woman – TDS
 Golden Kids News – TDS

Other strategy tools mentioned as Programs⁶ were the poems on the elections and jingles for voter education. “IRN they” was a refrain heard in many of the focus groups. Older women in Freetown and younger women in Kabala would sing the first few lines.

Reach of NEW observers

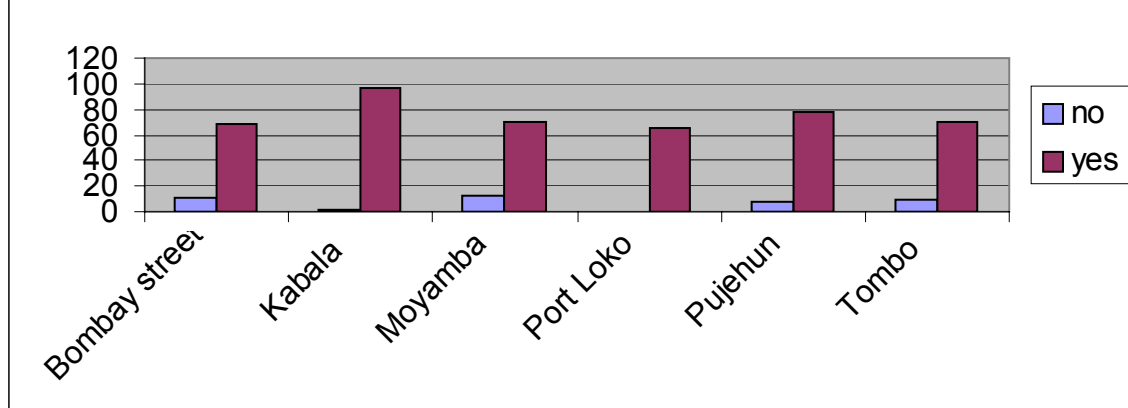
With regards to NEW observers, over 90% (448 out of 491) of all surveyed participants saw NEW observers, who were wearing black T-shirts⁷, in their polling station. Graphs 4 and 5 show, respectively, the gender and the location distributions of the response.



⁶ Note that some participants could not remember the name of the radio programs, but could say what they were about, and others did not differentiate between a radio program and a radio station.

⁷ NEW black T-shirts were shown to them when asked the question to refresh their memory.

Graph 5: Did you see someone wearing NEW T-shirt in your polling station? (by location)



Focus group participants unanimously said they saw NEW observers. In Tombo, a participant told us “they are our people, we know them very well”. In Kabala a woman said that “they [NEW observers] had a pen and paper to write what was happening and they did not interfere with election process, were just there to observe situation”. When respondents were asked what they thought NEW observers were doing in the polling stations some of the answers included: “Assisting in organizing the lines and controlling the crowd so they did not fight”, “observing how votes were cast”. An interesting comment was that NEW observers check “if NEC official was doing the right thing”. Another important perception of NEW observers was that they “ensured that elections were free and transparent” and “they were there to stop fraudulent activities”. A male participant in Moyamba clearly linked their presence to “Freetown” when they said “see what was happening and report it to Freetown”. In Pujehun, a woman reported, “We saw them tell people not to vote twice⁸, to be in line and not to interrupt others”. Other participants said they “were holding mobile phones and texting results” and “report[ing] security threats to the police”. In Kabala a participant said, “they were asking us to go home after voting”.

“We know them, they were working for different organizations who came together to work for NEW”
 Woman, Kabala

Reach of the election TV show: “Insai di Saloon”

Insai Di Saloon was the very first TV production of TDS and one of the few local productions in Sierra Leone. There are many challenges to producing television shows in Sierra Leone, as in many countries in Africa. The main challenges are ensuring access for all, which is compounded by the lack of appropriate infrastructure. Well aware of those challenges, the strategy used by TDS to show *Insai di Saloon* included renting out TV sets in various locations and using video clubs.

⁸ Note that the question of double or triple voting came out mostly in discussions with participants in Pujehun District and, in one instance, in Moyamba District.

With regards to the reach of the SFCG-TDS 10-episode drama, only very few focus group participants said they saw it. Most of those who saw it were in Freetown, Bombay Street, Kabala and Port Loko. In Pujehun a participant said, “yes, but we don’t know much about it”. In Moyamba another reiterated the same point by stating, “yes, but we don’t have knowledge of it”. This correlates with the information received by colleagues on where the show was shown and the fact that the tapes were sent fairly late to the locations up country. But those who saw the film shared with us the locations where it was shown. The table below details their responses:

North	PORT LOKO⁹ UP Space Entertainment Center Note: no women mentioned seeing it in Port Loko	KABALA Gbawuria Court Barry Note: Older women only and male groups mentioned it
South	PUJEHUN Pujehun Court Barry Soldier Camp Note: Only older male youth mentioned it	MOYAMBA NIL
Freetown (urban & rural)	BOMBAY STREET WAN Family Video Center Note: All groups mentioned it.	TOMBO¹⁰ NIL

When focus group participants were asked whether they had heard about a show called “*Insai di saloon*”, what they thought of it, and the link with elections, the responses were

“I think they tried to educate us about the election process, especially the women and youth”.

Young male, Kabala

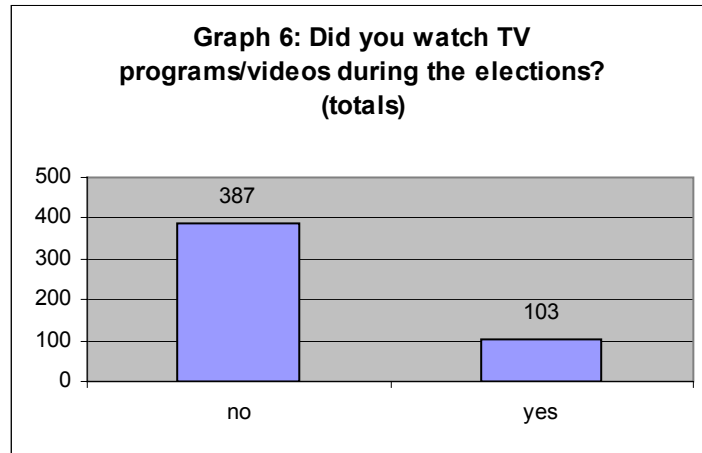
very clear. An older youth in Pujehun said that the show “taught us about the election process e.g. how to vote and participate in the elections”. Another said that the show was about “women in saloon discussing election issues”. Yet another thought the show “was used as one of the strategies for the election education”. A young woman thought, “there was a connection because during the show women were taught by their colleague women about participation. The show gave us political tolerance.” A young man in Kabala said “I think they tried to educate us about the election process, especially the women and youth”. One of the young male participants thought it was also a way of empowering them. “It told us the future of Salone”... “that the grassroots are considered as stakeholders in the decision-making process”. In Kabala, in Koinadougou District, a region known for its gender disparities particularly in decision-making, a woman said, “It was educative, sensitising us on our rights as human beings. We have equal rights to stand on our own”.

Survey data was less conclusive. In order to avoid guiding the responses, the question asked was “did you watch TV programs/videos during the elections?” and out of 490 survey participants, 103 said they did and 387 responded “no” (see graph 6 below). The following question was where they saw the program. Some mentioned court barriers,

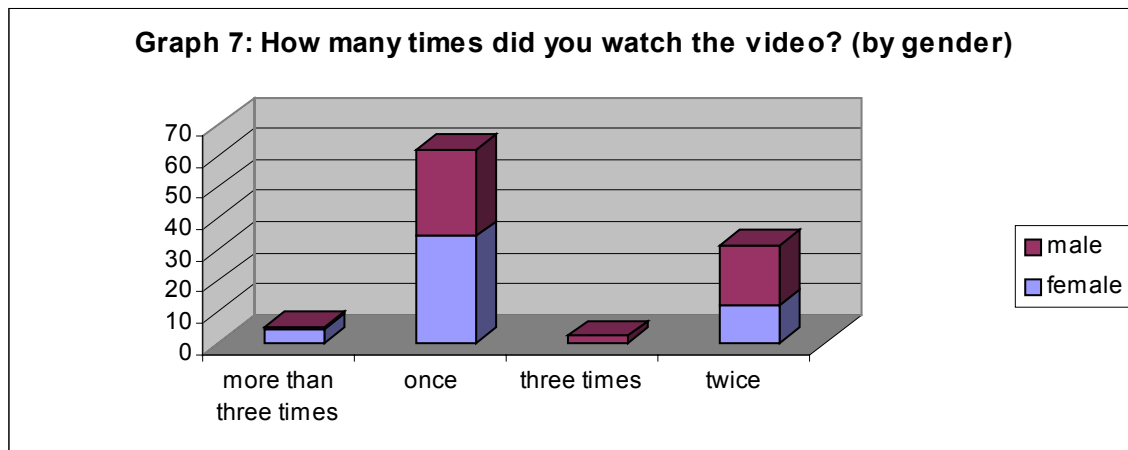
⁹ Port Loko SFCG officers did say that they were given episodes 1 to 6, which they played in two communities two days before the elections. People were busy seeing candidates campaigning.

¹⁰ SFCG staff mentioned that they went with their own equipment and showed it once, 1 episode only, 2 weeks before the elections in Entertainment center La Sonda.

others mentioned boat yard by NEC, others said in my house on TV, and, in Bombay Street, some mentioned Wan Family Centre.



Survey participants were also asked how many times they watched the TV program and videos. Six out of 10 said they saw it “once”. Graph 7 below shows the distribution of responses by gender.



Only when survey participants were asked to tell the names of the TV programs/videos they watched was there some mention of “*Insai di saloon*”. Of the lists mentioned by those participants who responded to the question (96 total), “*Insai di saloon*” was mentioned 10 times. One respondent said “TDS video show” and many others mentioned “how to cast my vote” or “sensitisation about the elections”. As mentioned earlier with the radio shows, people do not often remember the names of the programs, so in the responses to this question, some responses gave us clues that respondents were referring to *Insai di saloon*, such as “women’s rights” and “stealing of ID cards” (both themes very central to the drama) or “how not to vote on personal linkages”.

A.2. Effectiveness and Impact of the Strategy Tools

With regard to the effectiveness (what some may call “impact”) of the strategy tools, the responses to both focus group discussion and surveys shed light on the implementation of the strategy. The findings will be presented by tool as in the preceding section.

Effectiveness/impact of IRN and radio programs

The table below, extracted from the focus group discussions, shows which radio programs people enjoy listening to and why. In orange are those programs that are directly related to SFCG and its partners. The comments made by participants speak for themselves and give clear indications on SFCG’s goal of transforming audiences’ knowledge and attitudes and empowering them in decision making.

Radio programs liked listening to	Reasons
IRN - was recognized by almost all participants across study locations, some even spelt out the acronym.	They gave us facts we wanted to hear IRN was neutral and independent IRN gave election results from different polling stations and districts The readings of results during the elections
Election talk	Because candidates could speak to us through this program
Atunda Ayenda ¹¹ – TDS	Teaches us to avoid conflict Very entertaining.
Monologue	Helped us know about our country
Women’s voice	- Showed us how to vote - They sensitized women to participate in elections
Parliament Bol At ¹² - TDS	Because we were told current issues
Salone Uman ¹³ – TDS	Because the program talks about good things and brings out the voices of women. It was educative and inspiring
Golden Kids News ¹⁴ – TDS	Because they talk about children and their problems
Tok you mind	- Allows people to express their mind - Helps youth work with other youth in the community
Agogo (UN radio)	Enjoyed it because it was well presented

Of the programs participants did not like, there was one mention of an IRN station that “for a particular day it was confusing to us”¹⁵.

One of the attitude assessments in the survey was whether or not respondents had an issue of concern about the elections that was talked about in radio programs. It was presented as a statement to which respondent were invited to share their agreement or disagreement. The answers were very telling: 203 agreed and 199 strongly agreed (as graph 8 below shows), making 8 out of 10 who agreed. Those few respondents, who said that they strongly disagreed, most were in Tombo and most were men. There was no reason given to their disagreement.

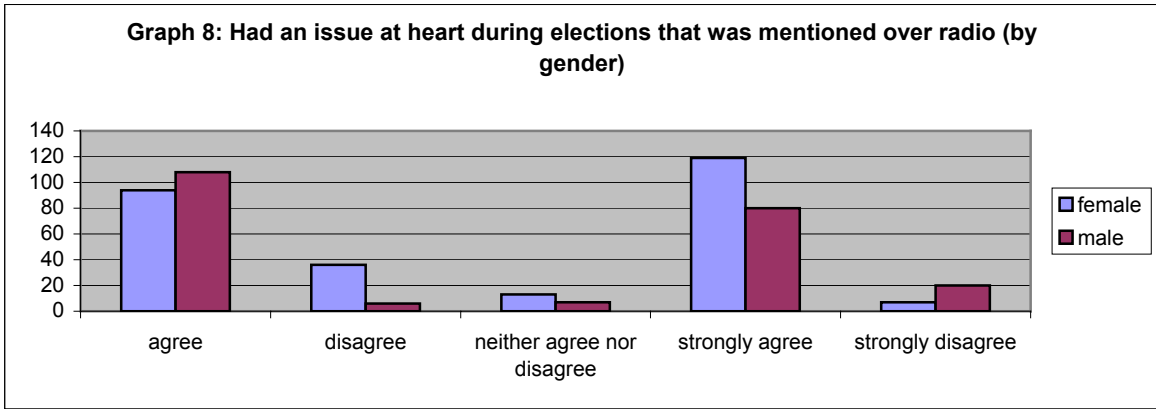
¹¹ Atunda Ayenda (‘Lost and Found’), a radio drama series (soap opera) which addresses a range of social issues of particular concern to youth- including corruption, HIV/AIDS, their role in decision making, livelihoods etc.

¹² Parliament Bol At is a joint production of IRN membership to support an informed and open electoral process to achieve quality leadership

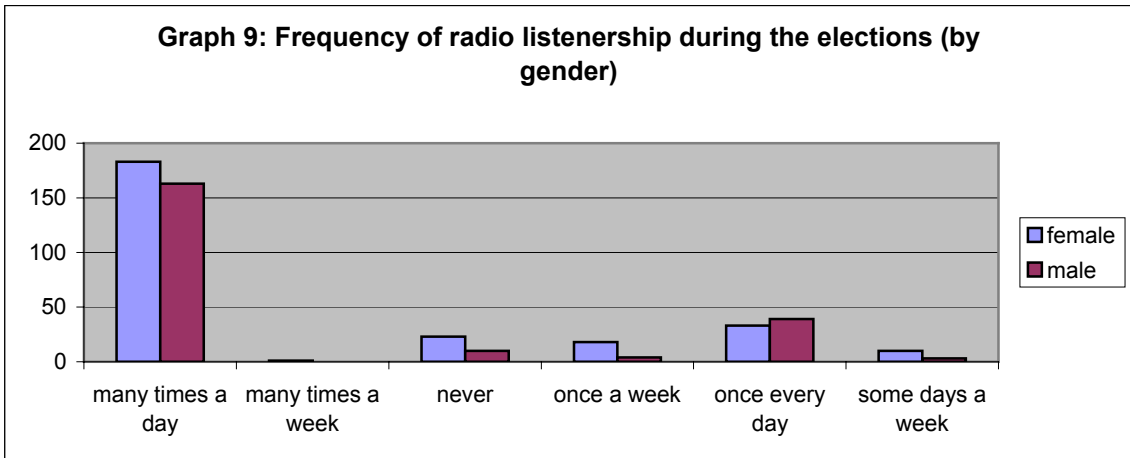
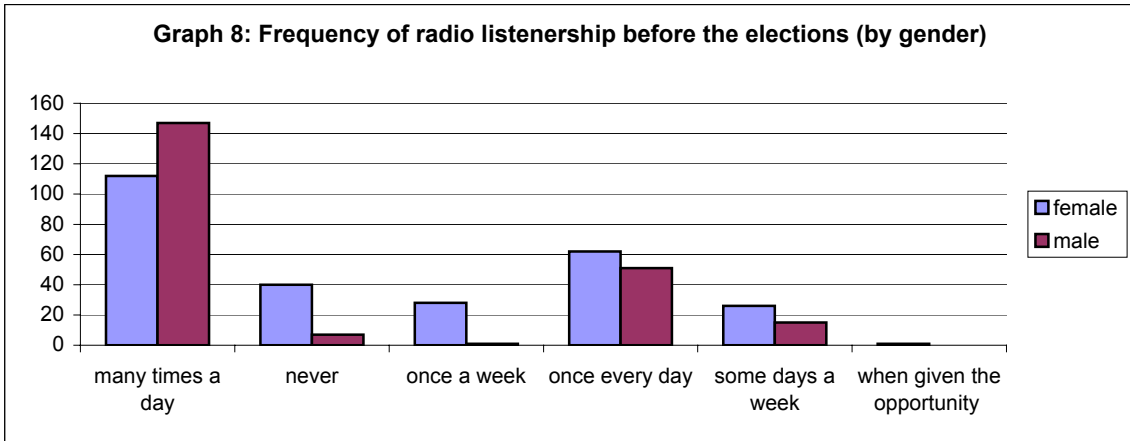
¹³ Salone Uman is about key issues affecting women in post conflict Sierra Leone. In collaboration with local human rights groups, issues that affect the status of women and require exposure and reflection are identified. Two fifteen-minute programmes highlighting the predicament of women are produced per week and air on twelve stations.

¹⁴ Golden Kids News is a radio programme that engages networks of children of mixed backgrounds from around the country to serve as producers, reporters, and actors. They identify issues for broadcast that affect children across the country and advocate on their behalf.

¹⁵ I asked different colleagues what this was referring to and they told me that it was the day that IRN announced results before NEC and there was confusion on what were the real results.

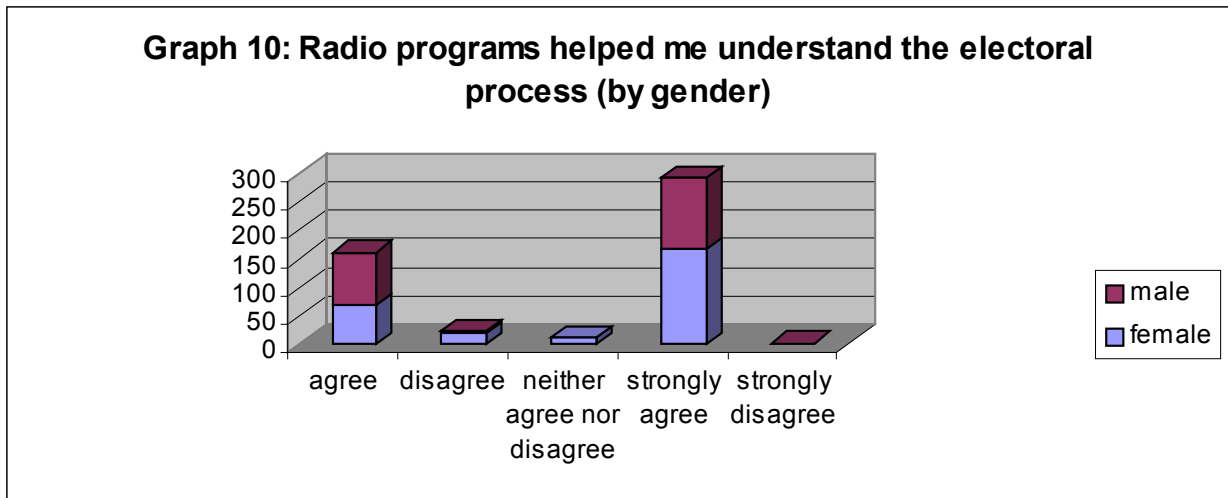


To give some perspective to the answers to questions related to radio listening, survey respondents were asked the frequency at which they listened to the radio before and during the elections. TDS' assumption, which stemmed from the findings of DfID's PIVOT baseline study, was that radio was the best way to reach people and that by creating IRN, they wanted to use the wider network of radio stations to do just that. The results show that TDS was right and that both before and during the elections radio listenership was high. Graphs 9 & 10 present the responses by gender.

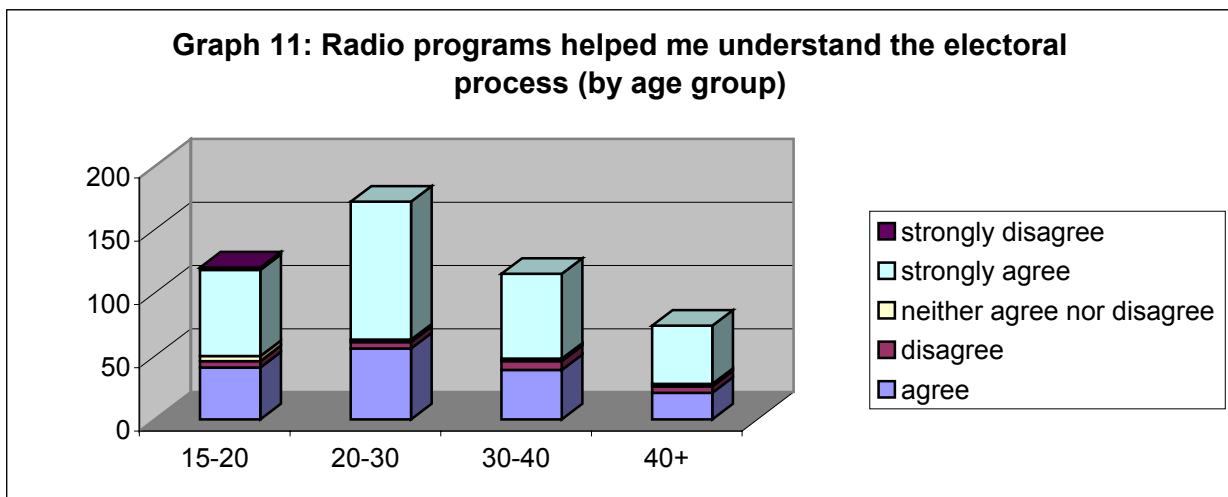


Both graphs show that people listened to the radio many times a day. One of the limitations of the second question was that it did not specifically ask on the 11th of August, which would have been more telling of the role IRN played during the elections.

Another survey statement tried to link the radio programs with better understanding of the electoral process. When asked about their level of agreement with the statement “Radio programs helped me understand the electoral process,” the overwhelming majority of respondents (454 out of 488) agreed or strongly agreed as graph 10, disaggregated by gender, shows.



Graph 11 below presents the responses to the same statement disaggregated by age group. The light green and blue colours represent the main responses.



We asked focus group participants whether they had heard the voices of their peers (of “women” if they were women and of “youth” if they were youth) in radio programs. The majority of women and youth heard the voices of their peers and were happy about that because as one youth put it, “they know our issues and

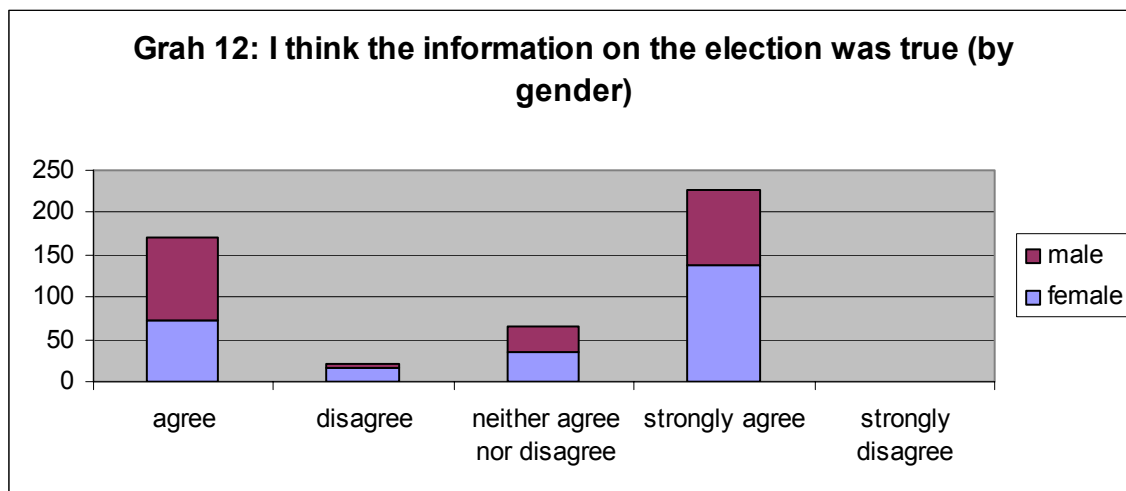
“It helped change the behavior of youth”
Young man, Tombo

they spoke their mind”. Women in Port Loko said that it “inspired them to hear the voice of other women on the radio to participate in the elections”. A younger youth in Port Loko proudly said, “Youth are now considered important in society because they now can speak on the radio”. An older youth said that “hearing them made us more convinced and confident about the election process due to the involvement of youth”. Another one added, “their voices are very motivating. They speak the truth and in the interest of youth.”

“It sensitized us to stand firm and sensitize our children”
 Older woman, Tombo

One youth in Kabala said that it “also felt good to hear the voices of women over radio, because from this part of the country it was always difficult to see women talking to people”.

Finally, the survey also tried to have a sense of people’s attitude toward the truthfulness of the information given on the radio during the election. As graph 12 below shows, the distribution of responses by gender is very positive. Out of the 485¹⁶ respondents, 387 (or 80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.



Effectiveness/impact of NEW Observers

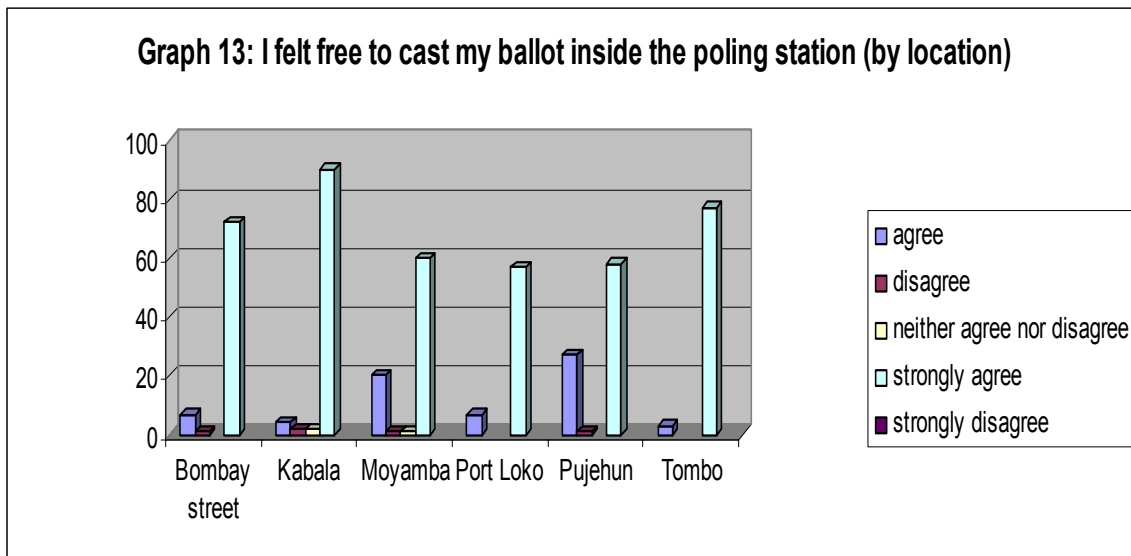
The effects of deploying observers into polling stations across the country came out mostly in the focus group responses to the question “did they [NEW observers] change anything at the polling station?” The responses included preventing double voting. In Pujehun a woman said, “Yes somebody went to vote twice, the NEW observer recognized him and reported it to electoral officers. Because of his presence people were afraid to commit fraud during the elections”. A male youth in the same location added, “They frightened people who wanted to manipulate the elections.” Another male said, “Here there was a quarrel

“Their presence made us to be confident and satisfied. They were there from beginning to end of voting, checking seals and to see how counting was done, they were patient to see that everything went on fine”.
 Woman, Kabala

¹⁶ Note that some respondents, who started the survey, opted out after the first few questions. In Pujehun alone, 5 respondents stopped the interview saying that they had other things to do and some said that unless the survey team provided them with something, they had to get food for their families. That is why the total number of respondents varies from 491.

between party agents, but they [NEW observers] promptly intervened and controlled them.” In Kabala a youth said, “they gave us confidence, their presence helped keep NEC staff and political agents on their toes”. An older woman described the observers’ actions at the polling station, saying, “their presence made us to be confident and satisfied. They were there from beginning to end of voting, checking seals and to see how counting was done, they were patient to see that everything went on fine”. A very interesting quote came for a male youth, who held that “they changed the attitude of people. They served as a caution to the election staff.”

In Moyamba another role for the observers came up - that the NEW observer prevented people from influencing the vote of others. A focus group participant said, “A woman was stopped from talking to people where to cast their votes on the ballot paper”. This is an interesting quote that echoes the survey results about feeling “free to cast the ballot in the polling station”. The responses to that statement were overwhelmingly positive (graph 13 plotted by location), with 9 out of 10 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The survey did not include a follow up question asking “why they disagreed/strongly disagreed,” but one element of response could be found in the focus groups in Bombay street, where one of the participants said that he was forced to vote for a candidate by the NEW observer.



Effectiveness/impact of the election TV show: “Insai di Saloon”

Although the data do not show a wide reach of the TV drama, the focus group discussions with those who had watched the show provided depth about the content and insights into the understanding of the themes and underlying messages. Focus group participants were asked a series of questions; responses are presented below by question.

“We saw the reality of the show particularly on the day of the elections”.

Man, Bombay Street

Findings from focus group discussions show that many of the scenes in the TV drama were similar to what happened before and after the election. A couple of examples came up in many groups such as “thieving of voter ID cards” or “husbands forcing wives to vote for

their candidates” or even “party colours were not allowed on voting day”. A man in Bombay Street summarized the point by saying “most of what was shown in that show was a complete replication of what happened in our community”[...] “ballot papers were bought from people”.

Some of the participants were very vocal in giving examples of situations they had experienced that were depicted in the show. A woman in Bombay Street said that “youth were given money to vote for other candidates.” A younger woman added, “people would pay you to vote for them” for example “a man gave 10000 Ls and a polo shirt to vote for SLPP”. A man in Bombay Street said that in the show “Yapoo was beating his wife to vote for the party of his choice; that happened in our area too.” another man in the same group added, “we ate [took] money from candidates, who were not our choice, we saw the reality of everything that was explained”.

“Men candidates were using money for people to vote for them” ... “Some characters in the film are also in our community”...“it was real”.

Man, Kabala

In Port Loko (another district in the North of the country), a man said, “women participated in election process [...] my uncle prevented his wife from participating in the election”. A youth mentioned the character in the TV show that was wearing clothes with all party colours. The youth said in their community there was a “woman dressed in all party colours; in the film it was a man”.

The responses that show attitude and behaviour change are very eloquent. The question was whether the show had changed their perceptions of themselves and what they can achieve and of others and what they can achieve. Responses touched on recognition of agency with statements like: “Through the film I knew that whenever I want public position I need to go down to grassroots”, as stated by an older youth in Kabala. Another youth understood the main message of the show saying, “we learned that youth should not vote by sentiment but for those we think can deliver”. A woman in Bombay Street said, “it gave us knowledge on how to make decisions”.

Other statements had to do with ways of resolving conflicts. In Port Loko a man said the show “changed my perception because now I know that conflict is not the only way to solve my problems or change the system”. Another added that “It changed my way of thinking especially of political party”.

“I felt, after the show, that conflict was not the only way to bring change”

Man, Port Loko

“I wanted to take a bribe but because I watched the film, it changed my perception. Mamy Kamara changed my perception of what a woman can do”

Woman, Bombay Street

There were interesting statements about behaviour change too. In Bombay Street a young woman shared with us her experience and linked it directly to the message in the show. She said, “I wanted to take a bribe but because I watched the film, it changed my perception. Mamy Kamara changed my perception of what a woman can do”.

A male youth said, “yes, it helped me protect my ID card”. A young woman in Bombay Street said, “my uncle was coercing me to vote for his candidate, but

“It gave me confidence that the election was going to be free and fair”

Male youth, Bombay Street

because I watched the film, I chose to vote for my own candidate”.

“We now know that women have the right to vote and be voted for”

Man, Port Loko

When asked what the show changed in their perception of others, responses were also very interesting, particularly with regards to male youth understanding of the messages and the role that women should play in society¹⁷. Young men in Kabala said that “Women felt that they should also increase their participation in not only development programs but even elections”. Another added “now women are motivated to participate in politics and development programs”. A young man in Kabala said in a matter of fact way “Women participation in last election is an indication of change”.

“We now accept women as partners in development rather than just caretakers of the home”.

Another telling anecdote from my discussion with the Manager of Radio Tombo 96FM was the impact of the poems that IRN aired during the election period. The quote refers to a metaphor used in the poem to express the idea of peace and cooperation, and the radio manager said he heard a speaker at a community meeting use it after the elections.

I actually attended a meeting after the election, when they used the parable of tongue and teeth to reflect the importance to work together.

Tombo Radio Manager. IRN member

To put the above response in perspective and to inform the production of future TV shows, two additional questions were asked. One was about the format and production of the show and the difference with other shows that appear on TV in Sierra Leone, and the other was about viewers’ likes and dislikes regarding the characters and why.

To the question about whether they liked the way the show was produced, a young man in Port Loko said, “Yes because it was somehow real, like we saw the reality of what was shown in the video”. Another echoed that by adding, “It was more natural than other TV shows”. “The difference” with other TV shows “was that we were sensitised about elections”, said a young man in Bombay Street. Another one added, “the language was to our own level”. Women saw it as a targeted sensitisation campaign for them in Kabala. One said, “It was more of sensitisation for we the women”. A man in Bombay Street said he liked it “because we were sensitised about just the election process” showing his preference for focused storylines.

The likes and dislikes of viewers with regards to the characters of the show were very clear. The table in appendix 6 shows that Characters displaying positive attitudes were attractive to the viewers. For example, Mamy Kamara who protected her voting card and chose to vote for her own candidate. These findings are useful to TDS scriptwriters as it

¹⁷ It is interesting to note that viewers saw it more as a women’s show than one targeting youth. In Kabala, one of the Ministry of Youth officials (who could not remember the title of the show but could remember that it was about women in a salon) said that he had tried to see the show but it was full of women, there were few youth.

allows them to assess if the audience recognised the various character behaviour models they intended.

The very last question in the survey asked those who had watched the TV show What they thought about it. The question was anchored with a series of response options in the form of adjectives. They included: Enjoyable, Interesting, Different, Boring, Good, Bad, Useful and other.

The options were not read out to the respondent, but when s/he said one of them, the enumerator would tick it. We said we wanted a maximum of three adjectives. The top four responses given by the 92 respondents who had said they'd seen it were: enjoyable (29 responses), interesting (28 responses), good (28 responses) and useful (20 responses).

B. Findings on the Election Strategy Partnerships

The sources of the findings of this section are, for the most part, discussions with IRN, NEW, NEC members and staff (at different levels – community, district & national). These findings are, where possible, supported or correlated with findings from the focus groups and surveys with the population.

B.1. Coordination of Strategic Partners

The coordination of SFCG and its partners at the national level and then each partner at district and local levels was a titanic task. It meant putting in place communication and decision lines, and ensuring that people knew what they were doing, where they were supposed to be and what to do in any given situation. It also meant organising logistics, ensuring that software was working, that money was spent and documented. In brief, it required strong leadership and commitment to brave the many drawbacks and obstacles that came along the way. The tools reached the intended goal, but much work had been done upstream in preparation for the elections.

TIN A NUTSHELL

Independent Radio Network

Established in 2002 specifically to support that year's national elections the Independent Radio Network (IRN) has grown into a national network of 20 community and private radio stations, with an office and production studio in Freetown. Each member station from the 14 districts in the country feeds local news to a central hub where news programming is packaged for simultaneous broadcast back across the network. In addition, member stations carry SFCG programming to inform and entertain their listeners on key social and political issues in their country. The IRN was developed by SFCG in partnership with the Media Foundation for Peace and Development and with technical support from the BBC World Service Trust, and the US NGO Developing Radio Partners, with the long term aim of creating West Africa's first self supporting national public radio service.

National Election Watch

A coalition of over 375 local and international Civil Society Organisations including members as diverse as SFCG, Oxfam, the Sierra Leone Teacher's Union, and religious groups. From its engagement in the 2002 and 2004 elections, NEW developed a strategy to guide its engagement in the 2007 process, focusing on transforming its organizational structure and capacity in order to rise to the challenge of the following three goals:

- Deploying a trained observer in every poll station,
- Implementing a rapid reporting mechanism to get a clear snapshot of the country,
- Conduct a parallel vote count.

Before the elections, training and logistical support was provided to both IRN and NEW members. Since its inception at the last presidential elections in 2002, IRN has grown

rapidly both in terms of membership (currently 20 radio stations across the country) and in its ambitions.

IRN reporters were sent to areas with high-tension party lines, areas difficult to access, or places with no broadcast coverage, and they were mandated to report to their own stations and live to national audiences through IRN on the conditions they found, and to monitor and investigate allegations of electoral fraud. The 420 radio reporters deployed (from member radio stations and TDS) were trained and met many a time, and radio stations were provided funds to allow all candidates an equal amount of air time to present their manifestos. Before being deployed to their locations, 6,000 NEW observers were trained on their roles, and the lines of communication and authority were explained.

Coordination meetings were regularly held during the run up to the elections. These included: IRN monthly rotational meetings, IRN strategic management group meetings, NEW national meetings, planning meetings between NEW and IRN, IRN media support to NEW, and networking in the field among IRN reporters and NEW observers.

During the election, everyone gave the best of themselves. The heavy rains had made many roads impracticable, but many reporters and observers braved the elements and did their jobs. Discussions with radio managers and NEW supervisors and observers validated this commitment.

In fact during the election and still today for IRN news, we link up to them and tune in so we all broadcast the same days at the same time.

Tombo Radio manager, IRN member

On the day of the elections, reports were sent from the field to IRN headquarters in Freetown, giving producers a clear view of how the elections were progressing nationally and feeding into a live rolling news service from early morning until mid afternoon, and again in the evening.

With so many areas covered for the first time, and with the reporters able to report both through IRN and to their local radio stations, ordinary people were in effect reporting to each other, providing authentic reports on the district activities that supported significant national trends and success stories; bolstering confidence in the process and the peacefulness of the outcome.

“During elections, we have priority observers, they had mobile and were trained by NEW on how to text. – the text message would come straight to the computer at HQ, that way we can monitor them and receive incident reports and whether results were sent on time before the next day when NEW would read the results in press conference”

NEW Supervisor for eastern Freetown

Meanwhile behind the scenes, IRN producers in Freetown were making key decisions on the stories that should go on the air, balancing reporting news that people deserved to hear about their own country and making sure passions were not inflamed by news reports unreflective of the general trend around the country. Among the programming being aired by the IRN on Election Day were public service announcements reminding voters of electoral procedures and the need to bring their voter identification cards. While there were still an unacceptably high number of invalid votes from voters mistakenly spoiling their papers, officials at the booths turned

back very few people for not having the correct documents, unlike at previous elections, enhancing the excited public mood around their opportunity to participate.

In a discussion with Strategy leadership, all agreed on the inclusiveness of the partners in decision making. This was echoed by less senior staff of the partner organisations in a separate meeting. A NEW supervisor in Freetown said on the point of autonomy, the strategy “gave enough support to engage CBOs to go out and engage the community”.

NEW was very well organised in a stratified system, with supervisors, observers and priority polling stations that were given special attention with an incident report officer (who was in direct contact with Freetown HQ). “We had national meetings quarterly (starting a year before the elections) to plan. Then when you come back to your district you start the activities according to plans” said one of the NEW observers. The observers, all from NEW member organisations, underwent training before they were sent to their polling stations. The quote in the box summarises the process.

“It is the first time of having the idea to have observers in every polling station. Before, only some were selected. We also had priority polling station observers who would send information to Freetown (we coordinated with MoH who had radios) and incidents were reported back to base in Freetown. The system worked well.”

NEW Supervisor, Kabala

As in any partnership coordination, there were many points for improvement that were raised by various actors. They included:

- That the money was released late. A point mentioned by both IRN members and NEW members. That impacted the activities and training (and to some extent recruiting the best people).
- Another point that was raised was to increase the membership of NEW and IRN to cover more remote areas.
- Transport and mobility was an important point, which was not only due to the bad roads (due to the rains) but also to transport. As one participant said, “not all CSOs have transport facilities. If not for TDS it would have been difficult to do the work. Hiring motorbikes is expensive.”
- Voter education - information and campaign documents (fliers, posters etc.) arrived too late, only a few days before the elections (a point for improvement by NEC).
- “More recognition for field reporters and observers” one participant pointed out, “they told us go and work, we will send you top up cards, but people had to pay for them from their pocket”.

“Bring more CSOs on board. You see, NEW is a membership organization - the more organizations join, the larger NEW will be and it will help increase coverage. But in some chiefdoms civil society doesn't exist. That way if we recruit locally there will not be any additional cost.”

NEW Supervisor, Kabala

Strategy leadership, who are well aware of the shortcomings of the coordination, also raised many of these points. In the SWOT analysis conducted with them, they identified the following weaknesses:

- Timely availability of tools
- “TDS was working with other organizations...so some of our daily work had to be postponed”, said a TDS employee

- “Voter education campaign was not very strong. A lot of it was centrally done. It would behoove us to decentralize it”
- Relying on the mobile service providers. On Election Day there was a breakdown in reporting.
- The women producers we trained to engage female aspirants did not work very well, not much engaged.
- Better planning
- Knowing when to train and improving the checklist training

B.2. Complementarity of and Coherence between Strategic Partners

Complementarity of partners in a strategy is critical to its success, because it ensures that implementation is effective with actors that strengthen each other’s work and have a multiplier effect. As we have seen above, the level of coordination to achieve the results was incredibly good given the different challenges faced (weather, availability of funds etc.)

During the very first brainstorm sessions with SFCG-TDS staff before starting the fieldwork, we went through the strategy approach, tools and partners. It was initially presented as three (SFCG, IRN & NEW) independent circles that interconnect and the common area would be the election strategy. But interestingly, one colleague said that she did not see the elements of the strategy (radio, observation and coordination) and the three partners as different entities, but as a whole working for a common goal. The metaphor that she used was that of a tree where the Trunk is the vision of a “peaceful and inclusive Salone”, large branches would be TDS, IRN & NEW and small branches stemming from each of the main ones would be member radio stations, member CBOs and TDS projects. The whole would form a tree that provides protection to Sierra Leonean citizens. That was the first depiction of the strategy as much larger than just the sum of its components. Discussions with partner staff and members reiterated that vision of the strategy. In discussions with Strategy leadership, an IRN representative said, “it’s difficult to divorce them. No one can work without the other”. We had invited the NEC outreach officer to the discussion, who brought in an *outsider’s* perspective, but she also echoed the complementarity of the partners.

“Voter education couldn’t have been done without NEC, and information wouldn’t have reached the whole population without IRN, and IRN reporters wouldn’t have been able to work in remote areas without the help of NEW who had strong local presence. We all depended on each other.”

During a discussion with IRN and NEW members in Freetown, one of the participants commended SFCG for its work, saying that they could not have achieved what they have without the help of SFCG-TDS. I asked why, to ensure that the comment was not free and related to the fact that I was a staff of SFCG. I was surprised at the answers given as they showed the level of commitment of SFCG to achieving the goal of the strategy and the vision of a peaceful Salone. He said “because on the day of the election, we needed cars to move and all other INGOs, who were also members of NEW, impounded their cars because there were reports of violence. SFCG-TDS was the only one that gave all their cars with drivers to help us cover the regions”. Another participant added that “one day, just before the elections, I needed to speak to the Chair of NEW, who is also SFCG’s

Africa Director, on an urgent matter. I called her at 4 am and we found a solution to the problem. We knew that we could call anyone at SFCG at anytime of the day”.

The SWOT analysis conducted with the strategy leadership group highlighted some of the points above. The strength section included the following:

- Cooperative leadership
- Quick response mechanism
- Expertise of various personnel to carry out activities
- Representation of all strategy actors across the country
- Protection mechanism (network membership)
- Respect for each of the organisations to have their initiative (‘...rather than SFCG bullying’)
- Credibility that allowed us to achieve so much
- Information flow between IRN, NEW, NEC and Community
- Transfer & exchange of new skills/capacity building¹⁸
- Increased the profile of smaller radios
- Model leadership
- Strategy complements work of each organisation

Coherence, very much related to complementarity, is much more about the linkages and the strategic choice of partners. It is important that all partners in a strategy have a common goal, similar modus operandi and ethics. The common goal and vision for all partners was “broadening the space” for Sierra Leonean citizens and “contributing to peaceful and inclusive Sierra Leone”. Some of the quotes above show the coherence and common vision. Time, it seems, has also helped nurture and strengthen the relationship between partners. Indeed, SFCG-TDS has been a member of both IRN and NEW for over 5 years and is very much seen as a Sierra Leonean organisation.

B.3. Credibility of Strategic Partners

SFCG-TDS’ credibility among Sierra Leonean citizens has been confirmed many a time. A 2004 independent evaluation¹⁹ found that 89% of people surveyed had listened to TDS programs. It also revealed that “SFCG has not only disseminated information, but has also put that information into a format people will understand and pay attention to because it is entertaining, independent, and trust-worthy.” When a strategy so heavily depends on partnerships and alliance building, the credibility of the chosen partners should also be assessed.

We have seen in the first section of findings that the population interviewed felt the information received was true, and focus group discussions showed that IRN was listened to and appreciated. Only a few people reported perceptions of bias from IRN radio

“It was a challenge to media houses – before the elections we thought there would be very much violence, but just because of intervention of media there was none apart from minor skirmishes – once you know something goes out, then you calm down...everyone knows about it. It was punchy!”

Radio MODCAR Reporter, Moyamba

¹⁸ This was an unintended positive outcome of the strategy. For example, small CBOs managed to provide receipts on the second round. As one participant put it “no one would believe that we provided the receipts for \$360 000”.

¹⁹ Everett, Williams & Myers (2004). Full report available at [Hhttp://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/sierra2.html](http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/sierra2.html)

members or reporters. The discussions with the population also showed that NEW observers were seen in polling stations and their role was understood. The survey protocol and focus group discussions also included, respectively, a statement and question regarding the level of trust with regards to the observers. The survey data shows that 83% of the 489 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they trusted the observers, with the majority choosing the latter. Graph 13 below provides a distribution of responses by gender. An analysis of the distribution by location shows that of the 46 respondents who “disagree” with the statement, the majority (17) were from Moyamba.

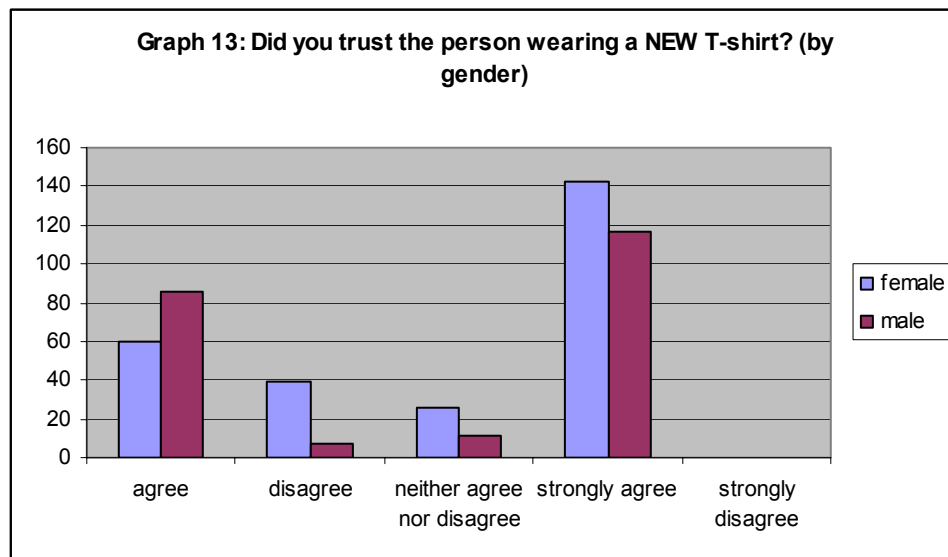
The comments made during the focus group discussions both echoed and explained some of the survey responses with comments such as: “I trusted him because he was trained”, as a woman in Port Loko said. Another added, “They had no time for anybody and were effective”. A young man in Kabala affirmed that he trusted the observers because “they came from different organizations and had no party colours”. A young woman in Bombay Street said, “I trusted them because they were vigilant, they did not involve themselves in any malpractice, they were very neutral”. In Moyamba, an older youth said, “I trusted them because they represented everybody in the country”.

NEW observers were trusted more than NEC officers because they came from the community, people knew them and knew they were neutral.

NEW Supervisor, Kabala

The lack of trust reported in the survey results was also present in the focus groups and sheds some light on instances where the NEW

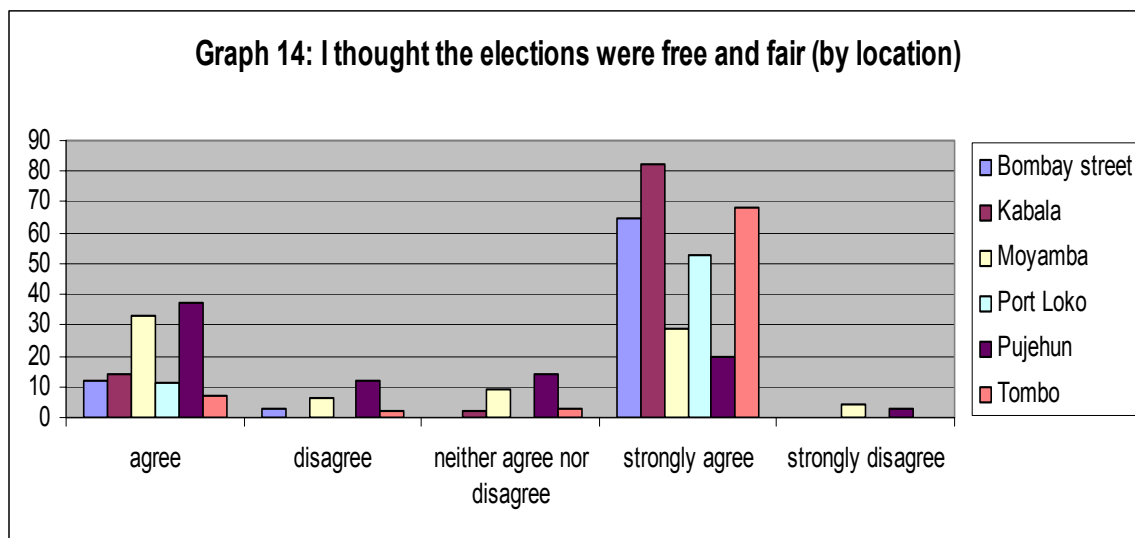
observer was not trusted. A male participant in Moyamba said, “I don’t trust them because one of them told me to vote for a particular candidate and they were playing around with ballot papers”.



CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNED

A. Conclusions on the implementation of the election strategy

This election strategy aimed at “broadening the space” to ensure that Sierra Leonean citizens were included in the election process and that the country remained peaceful. The results of the elections show that most people accept the elections as being free and fair. One of the survey questions was whether the elections were free and fair. The responses were nearly unanimous: out of 489 respondents, 431 agreed or strongly agreed, 23 disagreed, 7 strongly disagreed and the rest were neutral. Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed were for the most part from Pujehun and Moyamba. Graph 14 below shows the distribution of responses by location.



The survey did not include “why?” questions to ensure that we only captured attitudes toward statements. We do not know what the implications will be for the post election environment of those who “disagreed” with the statement (and to a certain extent those who answered neutral about the statement). The graph above gives an indication of the location, where we can see again that the responses of interviewees in Pujehun and Moyamba fall under these categories. We can only correlate this to the responses from focus group discussions, the reactions of people when asked to answer a survey and other election actors. The SLPP councillor in Pujehun told me: “You know, we felt cheated, but we have had a enough of war, we didn’t want to open the Pandora’s box again”.

There were many other actors working to achieve the same goal as SFCG and its partners, but the findings presented above, and the direct attributions, warrant the claim that SFCG and its partners played a large role in ensuring that the elections were peaceful and transparent. It transpires that the strategy achievements exceeded the expectations of its proponents. I have heard, during the two weeks, many people commending IRN, NEW & SFCG for pulling it off. SFCG complemented its partners by bringing in the strategic vision, the technical expertise and the logistical support

“This is a rolling thing, you start and before you know it, it becomes an elephant”

SFCG-SL Director

during the elections. One staff member said to me in the Freetown office, “you should have seen this place during the elections, it was full of people; we actually lived here for a few days.”

Apart from achieving its intended goal, the strategy also achieved unintended goals such as strengthening the capacity of radio stations to produce quality programs and conduct live reporting, and CSOs to manage funds and organise their staff.

B. Conclusions on the outcomes achieved by the tools of the strategy

This study covered six locations in three regions of the country (North, South and Freetown). It had a sample of 491 survey respondents and 217 focus group participants. Although we cannot make any generalisation about the whole Sierra Leonean population, we can say that out of a sample of 700+ women and youth, the three main tools that were used by the strategy have reached the majority of the sample.

Both survey respondents and focus group participants listened to IRN programs. Many shared that they appreciated the fact that they could know what was happening in different places of the country during the elections. People mentioned the advantage of listening to their peers on the radio, that they thought the information was true for the most part²⁰ and that it helped them make informed choices on their candidate.

The decision to choose NEW observers from the communities proved to be a very good one. The majority of focus group participants appreciated the presence and understood the role of the observers (only two out of 217 thought that the observer was not neutral). Some participants told us they were from their community and they knew them. Others said that because they worked with organisations in their community.

C. Conclusions on the outcomes of the TV soap opera

The TV show did not reach a wide audience. Few episodes were shown if at all. In Bombay Street it was shown at a video centre and it attracted many viewers. In some locations, Port Loko and Kabala where it was shown in a public space, it attracted many women. The fact that the viewing was followed by a discussion was appreciated in those locations. That said, the focus group discussions highlighted the fact that themes and messages were understood, that the show was different from other TV shows because it was realistic, the language was simple and it focused on a particular issue. On the other hand, although the show targeted women and youth, most viewers perceived it as being mostly for women. Although some mentioned the youth character, the attitude and behaviour change he modelled did not come out clearly in the responses.

²⁰ Some respondents in Pujehun felt that the local IRN member radio station was biased. This was echoed by the discussions I had with the party representative of APC. SLPP representative said, referring to Wanjei radio manager “this kid is being blamed for not giving enough air time, well every party got air time and then parties had to pay for additional air time, the radio needs to make money”.

D. Lessons Learned and Looking Forward

Preparing for the Local Elections in Sierra Leone

As Sierra Leone prepares for the upcoming local elections, a number of lessons learned can be extracted from this evaluation to feed into the strengthening and improvement of the last phase of the strategy. Generally, a challenge raised during the SWOT analysis with strategy leadership was the fact that the local elections will involve smaller units and it will take longer to explain the ward system and other specificities. This is an important point that should frame discussions on the preparations for the next elections.

In terms of *coverage*, more areas need to be covered. Local radio stations can be strengthened (equipment and reach) and more local radio stations should be recruited to IRN. Many areas of the country still do not get radio, which needs to be looked into to ensure that the population in remote areas is informed on the election process.

The recruitment of new members also applies to NEW. As a network it depends on reaching a critical mass of membership to allow for nationwide coverage. That, as a NEW supervisor pointed out, does not need to cost much money because people will be local to the polling station areas they will be posted to. If the next elections also fall during the rainy seasons, then training should be completed and money disbursed at least one week before the Election Day.

Another way of increasing coverage and involving youth is, as one youth suggested in Kabala, to train them in voter education using theatre/drama. They would go to remote locations and entertain while providing information, particularly for illiterate people who do not understand the voter education posters, despite the fact that they used pictures. Finally the use of appropriate language was reported as being important for reaching out to the larger, non-Creole speaking, Sierra Leonean population.

With regards to TV production, *Insai di saloon* was a very good pilot and it was an incredible tour de force to produce it before the elections with a very tight budget and timeline. The lessons learned are many. They fall under two categories, which are lessons learned for TV production and lessons learned with regards to *Insai di saloon* and the next elections. They are presented in the table below for clarity purposes.

<i>Lessons learned with regards to TV production</i>	<i>Lessons learned with regards to Insai di saloon and the next elections in Sierra Leone</i>
SFCG-TDS can produce TV shows in Sierra Leone and it can be done again. Common Ground Production will support that effort as SFCG builds that tool further.	Audience understood the main messages, and the themes will be appropriate for the next elections - where more women should be encouraged to present themselves and where people may be pressured to vote for candidates other than their choice.
Experience with <i>Insai di saloon</i> showed that the audience understood the main messages and characters. It would have been useful for the evaluation to have based the survey questions and focus group discussions on a list of knowledge, attitude and behaviour changes intended by the show. It is very important that for future productions, a curriculum is developed alongside a character bible to show the theory of change behind	The show could be shown more widely and in remote areas – SFCG should find creative ways of bringing the show to remote areas and get into partnership with a large number of private video centres that will be asked to show it. Incentives may need to be identified to ensure that video centres do not charge any entry fee.

the episodic drama.	
When we asked evaluation participants about their preferred means of receiving information, the overwhelming majority of respondents said radio. TV is not available in most of the country. Therefore, unless only a section of society (those who can afford to have access to a TV) is targeted or that SFCG finds ways of bringing TV to remote areas, TV production will not have the far reaching effects of radio.	The format of showing the film and then having a debate was appreciated. It may offer a good opportunity to get feedback and answer any questions that audience may have. It was also mentioned that public squares could be used in the evenings to project the video. Study participants also suggested that the video show should be given wider publicity a week ahead or so, for people to come in their numbers.

With regards to *Coordination*, the main lesson learned is start early, whether it is the observers training or money transfers. As the next elections will be more local and thus more specific, more observers could be recruited early on.

In terms of *Credibility*, stronger monitoring systems should be put in place to ensure that IRN and NEW members are not seen as being biased or taking sides during the elections. This is another area that will be more complicated in the coming elections because of their local nature. Another point that came up, particularly in Pujehun, was the role of Paramount Chiefs. Finding creative ways to train them on their role during the elections could be useful. This is a point particularly targeted to SFCG with its conflict transformation mandate.

Continuing the Efforts to Build Sustainable Institutions

The discussions with all levels of the election strategy partners showed that the strategy contributed to building strong alliances. This goes hand in hand with SFCG's objective to build sustainable local institutions to increase public participation in governance in Sierra Leone.

“Now we know other CBOs.
We have a new set of friends”

SFCG has supported NEW by (a) providing leadership to the organization and leading its development into an autonomous, nationally-led coalition; (b) sharing its implementation capacity to support NEW members' efforts, through its infrastructure on the ground and contacts in the donor community; and (c) working with the Secretariat of NEW to develop a strong support function without taking decision making power away from the district and local level. Through this leadership NEW gained powerful cohesiveness, which will sustain it into the future, and the deployment of observers to the polling centres generated institutional knowledge and capacity for future operations.

By fostering new partnerships among these groups and individuals at the local, regional and national level, the real impact of SFCG's and NEW's work will be seen over the next few years, as new projects, synergies and ideas emerge.

“There is an increase of partnership with other member radio. We interviewed them to hear what was going on in their area. Before we didn't even know any other radio! We are still in contact weekly for IRN news. It was the first time our reporters worked like that and it was the first time they did live reporting. It really increased their exposure and skills.”

Radio MODCAR Reporter, Moyamba

Overall, this election strategy has presented the Sierra Leonean society with a new model for the media, civil society and the public to participate in the governance of their nation. It proved positive and had many more repercussions than initially anticipated. To end this report I will leave the election strategy leadership with a table that shows what they have identified as opportunities and threats for the strategy and its components.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with NEW staff • In terms of reach a big opportunity for NEC to work with IRN • Awareness about election is very high • In terms of funding – more funding will be allocated • Learning process for us as media workers • First time we had live broadcast, a first for SFCG & IRN • Use of a database – technology exists – text messaging to computer²¹ • Post election activities will help us get people engaged and put more commitment into their work • We have now identified skills sets – we know who can be flexible • Increase reach/coverage with network members • Existence of community radios • IRN provided opportunities for community radios to address issue of conflict after the elections • Opportunity for people of SL to be given information • Tried the strategy so we can learn from it – the performance was much better in the second round of elections • Immediate problem solving mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is new government going to be responsive to this/ political will • Security in the country • The strategy is a very big thing and SFCG is seen as holding all of them – it can be off putting for people (leadership) • SFCG cash flow problems – the election strategy calls for a lot of money and in a short space of time. • That media space remains open and freedom of expression is upheld – but there are laws that ensure that

²¹ This is also an opportunity for all of SFCG, beyond election work, in terms of collecting feedback. People can send in text messages to comment on a radio or TV show and it can be centralised in a computer.