

## **Chapter 4**

### **Election Campaign**

#### **Methods**

In accordance with the official elections timetable of the NEC of Sierra Leone, the official campaigns for Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Councils' elections were to take place from 15 October 2012 to 15 November 2012;

Political parties held peaceful rallies across the countries in all districts. On 15 November 2012, the Group witnessed large, organised, peaceful concluding rallies in almost all regions of Sierra Leone that they were able to visit.

Co-existence during elections prevailed in almost all regions of Sierra Leone; however, there were allegations of sporadic intimidation in some areas during the campaign period. There were reports of conflicts where some parties changed their campaign calendars in violation of the NEC calendar. There were posters in all major cities and some rural areas throughout the campaign period. However, contrary to the electoral guidelines, the APC posters remained in place until the Election Day in some polling centres.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Calendar**

All political parties were obliged to adhere to a campaign calendar. However, there were allegations that the campaign calendar was not fully respected. The team witnessed campaigns during the cooling off period in Kono in the stronghold of the governing party, this kind of conduct was equally observed on Election Day where a prominent member of the governing party behaved in a manner tantamount to campaigning where supporters (especially youth) chanted loudly as they voted.

#### **Issues**

Major political parties' campaign issues did not differ significantly. Sustainable economic development was the central issue raised in all parties' rallies. While the governing party emphasised infrastructural development, the leading opposition party's agenda was investing in employment and education as well as rural development. Fighting corruption was also part of the incumbent's manifesto. However, critics in the media and opposition (both national and international), alleged that the APC candidate was unfaithful to this commitment since nobody within or without his party has ever been prosecuted.

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<sup>4</sup> Such anomalies were observed at polling centre Code 02012 in Kenema.

The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission was a step in the right direction. The Group noted that this followed a recommendation by the Commonwealth Observer Group to the 2007 election that recommended Integrity Legislation. The Integrity Legislation was subsequently introduced which requires Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and other senior State officials to declare their assets and liabilities prior to the assumption of office, during their tenure of office and at least three years after demitting office. This step would have inspired confidence among citizens and strengthened the fight against corruption. Despite elaborate party manifestos, support of political parties was evidently based on regional and tribal lines.

## **Environment**

The elections were highly competitive. The campaigns were conducted in a carnival-like atmosphere that attracted a high turnout of young men and women. Music characterised the entire period of campaign.

The democratic principles of participation and representation as well as basic freedoms of association, assembly, expression and movement were largely met.

Election campaigns were generally peaceful. However, there were some incidents reported involving clashes mainly between supporters of the two leading parties specifically in the North, the stronghold for the governing party. There were reports of the use of state resources for campaign. The incumbent used the inauguration of projects as a way of campaigning, since colour symbols, especially party tee-shirts, were worn on those occasions. This is in violation of Article 16 of The Code of Election Campaign Ethics that states 'All Parties that have subscribed to this Code shall not use state power, privilege or influence or other public resources for campaign purposes'.

There were allegations of voters being enticed with money by various political parties. One source alleged that as much as 80 thousand Leones was being given as enticement.

In accordance with the Constitution of Sierra Leone, freedom of expression was evident during election campaigns. However, contrary to this constitutional right and provisions of section 148 of the PEA 2012, and the Code of Conduct to which all political parties subscribed, the campaign space remained free for the governing party and the major opposition party with little or no space left for other smaller parties' candidates that contested the presidential seat. The involvement of citizens in choosing Members of Parliament and Councillors received little or no attention in the campaign rallies and other means of campaigning.

## **Gender**

Although women were active in campaigns, this was not reflected in the list of candidates.

There were allegations of women candidates being prevented from entering certain villages by some Paramount Chiefs. The Women's Situation Room had some influence in calling for gender equality and peaceful and non-violent campaigning, especially deploring gender-based violence. Women were visible in the campaign rallies especially young women who participated as they moved among various locations.