

Project Title: “Enhancing Domestic Electoral Observer Organizations and Citizens Participation in Democratic Governance Reforms Leading to the 2022 and 2023 Electoral Cycle”

Result 2 Activity 3

Civil Society Consultation on the Review of the Decentralization Policy

Civil society leaders across the country met at the Buxton School Hall Freetown on Tuesday 22nd September 2020 to input into the draft Decentralization Policy by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD).

The presentation of the policy statements and justification was done by Mr. Alex Bonapha, the Director of Decentralization and Local Government. Civil society leaders agreed that the policy is quite progressive for local level democracy, citizen’s participation and inclusion.

However, the absence of constitutional provision for Local governance, the continuous redrawing of our territorial boundaries, the implementation of non- partisan elections, MP’s participating in councils as ex-officios are very critical issues that require further discussions as the implications are many.

For example, Sierra Leone is a democratic state and democracy proposes healthy competition. Efforts must be made to build and nurture democracy through competitive multi-party elections.

Civil society leaders further urged that the peculiar structure of Western Urban and Rural Districts be given careful consideration because both districts do not fall into the current structure and form of sub-national governance.

CSO leaders welcome a standalone policy on fiscal decentralization and argue that based on the backward trend analysis of 2-4% allocation from 2015-2019, that 5% of domestic revenue is relatively small.

A clear policy statement for inclusion of women, youths and PWD's was strongly recommended. It was agreed that constitutional review must take a holistic approach and the Government of Sierra Leone must endeavor to reopen discussions on the Constitutional Review process now to help solidify the progressive policy statements in the draft Decentralization Policy.

The meeting was facilitated by National Election Watch (NEW) with support from the European Union.