Press Statement for Immediate Release

Freetown, Tuesday, 9th March 2021: NEC Conducts Peaceful Bye-election in Ward 192, Khonimaka Chiefdom in Kambia District


National Election Watch (NEW) observed the entire process, including opening, polling, closing and counting, tallying and the announcement of provisional results at the Kambia District Council. NEW recruited, trained and deployed observers in all the 7 polling centres. NEW also deployed 4 supervisors and a roving team from the Secretariat.

Findings

- All polling stations opened on time.
- Voter turnout was low at 43.5%.
- 3 political parties (APC, NGC and SLPP) deployed party agents in all the polling stations.
- NEC staff in the polling stations were mainly youth and PWD with gender consideration.
- Police presence was visible in all polling centres.
- Hand-washing and face masks compliance was observed in all polling centres.
- There were no thermometers in all polling centres to test temperature of voters, except for 1 polling centre and it ran out of battery at the early hours of voting.
- Stakeholders that observed on polling day were Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), Election Conflict Prevention and Mediation Group and the Media.
- The NEC Commissioner for the Western Region and other senior NEC officials were on the ground to support the process.

Incidents

- At the KDEC Primary School in Barikuya, Centre Code 08035, Polling Station 01, the SLPP Party Agent was giving voter education to voters as they entered the polling station. The NGC party agent objected, stating that it is the responsibility of NEC officials and not party agents. The argument which ensued between the two party agents, led to the voting being held-up for about 15min. The issue was however resolved by NEC officials.

- At Umarr Mucthar Primary School, Turaya, Centre Code 08034, Polling Station 02, voters who said they have lost their voter ID Cards came to vote but the NEC officials could not find their details in the Voter’s Register and so they were not allowed to vote. The SLPP party agent questioned the NEC official as to why he was sending them away without voting. The NEC Polling Centre Manager however explained the procedures to him but refused to understand which led to an argument between him and the APC Party Agent. This disrupted the voting process but was resolved by the police who asked both parties out and called for replacement.
Recommendations
NEW recommends that:
• Political parties should ensure electoral procedures are well explained to their agents to avoid unnecessary interference with the electoral process and confrontation with the NEC officials.

National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of local and international organizations in Sierra Leone with a common objective of supporting free, fair and peaceful elections.

This Electoral Observation was realized with the financial support of the European Union. The contents of this statement are the sole responsibility of National Election Watch – Sierra Leone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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