

SPECIAL REPORT SERIES

THE  
CARTER CENTER



OBSERVING THE 2002  
SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

*Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope.*

THE CARTER CENTER STRIVES TO RELIEVE SUFFERING  
BY ADVANCING PEACE AND HEALTH WORLDWIDE;  
IT SEEKS TO PREVENT AND RESOLVE CONFLICTS, ENHANCE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY,  
AND PROTECT AND PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS WORLDWIDE.

# OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

FINAL REPORT



THE CARTER CENTER  
THE DEMOCRACY PROGRAM

ONE COPENHILL  
453 FREEDOM PARKWAY  
ATLANTA, GA 30307

(404) 420-5188  
FAX (404) 420-5196

[WWW.CARTERCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.CARTERCENTER.ORG)

MAY 2003





OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Carter Center Election Observation Delegation and Staff ..... 4

Terms and Abbreviations ..... 5

Foreword by Jimmy Carter ..... 6

Executive Summary ..... 8

**Background: From Brutal War to Fragile Peace ..... 12**

    Shifting Political Landscape Since Independence

    From ECOMOG to UNAMSIL

    A War of Atrocities

    Preparing for Elections

**Carter Center Delegation and Pre-election Assessment ..... 17**

    Pre-election Activities

    Election Mission Delegation

    Delegation Briefings

    Leadership Meetings and Coordination With Other International Delegations

    Pre-election Assessments

        Legal Framework for the Parliamentary Elections

        Voter Registration

        Voter Education and Media

        Political Parties: Nomination and Campaign Periods

        Allegations Against the NEC

**Carter Center Deployment and Election Observations ..... 26**

    Special Voting Day – May 10

    Deployment and Observation Methodology for the May 14 Elections

    Assessment of the May 2002 Sierra Leone Elections

        Turnout, Conduct, and Election Administration

        Consequences of Poor Voter Education and Imperfections in the Voter Lists

        Voters With Special Needs

        Counting and Tabulation

        Announcement of the Election Results

    Postelection Deployment

        Electoral Complaints and the Status of Opposition Political Parties

        Paramount Chiefs in Parliament

**Postelection Developments ..... 35**

    Paramount Chief Elections

    UNAMSIL’s Diminishing Role and the Renewal of Conflict in the MRU

    The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Special Court

**Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 39**

**Acknowledgments ..... 44**

**Appendices ..... 46**



OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

## CARTER CENTER ELECTION OBSERVATION DELEGATION AND STAFF

Sierra Leone Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, May 14, 2002

### Delegation Leaders

The Honorable Nicéphore Dieudonné Soglo, Former President, Benin

Dr. Gordon Streeb, Former United States Ambassador to Zambia, USA

### Delegation Members

Ashley Barr, Mission Director and Senior Program Associate, The Carter Center, USA

Thomas Crick, Senior Political Analyst, Conflict Resolution Program, The Carter Center, USA

Dr. Elwood Dunn, Professor of Political Science, University of the South, USA

Dr. John Harker, Delegation Senior Adviser and Consultant, Harker Associates, Canada/U.K.

Rev. Plezzant Harris, Secretary General, Liberian Council of Churches, Liberia

Sheila Jaghab, Political and Economic Development Consultant, SDJ Consulting, USA

Francis Johnson-Morris, National Director, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Liberia

Saran Daraba Kaba, Director, Mano River Union Women's Peace Network, Guinea

Derreck Kayongo, Acting Director, Southern Regional Office, Amnesty International USA

Sheik Kafumba Konneh, Executive Director, Inter Religious Council, Liberia

Amymusu Jones, Mano River Union Women's Peace Network, Liberia

January Makamba, Formerly of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Staff, Tanzania

Steve Maxwell, Freelance Writer, CARE and The Carter Center, USA

Dr. Carrie Manning, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Georgia State University, USA

Faya Foko Millimono, Journalist, Guinea

Hon. René Mongbé, Former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Benin

Dr. RONALDA MURPHY, Assistant Professor of Law, Dalhousie University, Canada

Saa Philip-Joe, Founder and Chairman, Civil Society Movement, Liberia

Sarah Skorupski, Program Coordinator and Research Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies, USA

### Carter Center Staff Delegates and Interns

Alex Bick, Mission Coordinator, The Carter Center, USA

Nell Bolton, Deployment Coordinator, The Carter Center, USA

Caroline Branch, Intern, Human Rights Office, The Carter Center, USA

Jennifer Green, Intern, Human Rights Office, The Carter Center, USA

Penelope Spain, Office Manager, The Carter Center, USA

Joshua Walker, Medium-term Observer, The Carter Center, USA



OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

## TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
CDF	(Kamajors) Civil Defense Force
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
CSM	Civil Society Movement
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU-EOM	European Union Election Observation Mission
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems
IRC	Inter Religious Council
LTO	Long-term Observers
LURD	Liberians United for the Restoration of Democracy
MARWOPNET	Mano River Union Women's Peace Network
MRU	Mano River Union
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NEC	National Election Commission
NEW	National Election Watch
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
OAU	Organization of African Unity (now African Union)
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLBS	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNAMSIL	U.N. Mission in Sierra Leone
UNSC	U.N. Security Council

### POLITICAL PARTIES IN SIERRA LEONE

APC	All People's Congress
CUPP	Citizens United for Peace and Prosperity
GAP	Grand Alliance Party
MOP	Movement for Progress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PLP	Peace and Liberation Party
RUFF	Revolutionary United Front Party
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
UNPP	United National People's Party
YPP	Young People's Party



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

## FOREWORD

The Carter Center, which my wife, Rosalynn, and I chair, has been committed to fostering peace and stability in the Mano River Union (MRU) subregion of West Africa for more than a decade. We have contributed to this goal through long-term democracy and human rights activities in Liberia, monitoring the Liberian national election in 1997 and supporting civic and national dialogue among the peoples of Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, and elsewhere in West Africa. I have traveled to the subregion on several occasions.

Unfortunately, conflicts in the MRU have repeatedly spilled over national borders, and progress towards peace has been elusive. The subregion has seen some of the worst atrocities in the world, and the citizens of Sierra Leone have borne the worst of these crimes against humanity. Several events during the past 10 years brought hope, including the 1996 Abidjan Accord and the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement, but multilateral and civil conflicts persisted. When peace was finally declared in Sierra Leone in January 2002 and national elections were planned for May 2002, we were hopeful that the Sierra Leone election process would be a turning point for this troubled area of the world.

Although it is still much too early to declare victory throughout the subregion, the Sierra Leone presidential and parliamentary elections of May 2002 represent a tremendous step forward for Sierra Leone and for the prospects of lasting peace in the MRU. After 11 years of devastating civil war, and facing almost insurmountable odds, the Sierra Leonean people made a courageous

choice in favor of peace and democratic development. We applaud their courage and take inspiration from their resilience.

Several groups deserve special recognition for their contributions to the electoral process. Voters turned out in high numbers for the polling, which was almost entirely free of violence. By itself, this accomplishment is astonishing given the recent history of the country. Domestic observer groups, which were present throughout the country, played an important role, and we are hopeful that these civic organizations will continue to build on their positive experiences during the election period. Political party agents also were essential to the integrity of voting day. The presence of representatives from several parties in many polling stations encouraged transparency and enhanced voter confidence. Political parties generally showed dedication to finding constructive, peaceful ways to participate in the governance of Sierra Leone and to strengthen their own internal capacity to represent their constituencies. Carter Center observers also encountered many energetic and competent election officials who demonstrated a sincere commitment to making the process inclusive, especially for disabled, displaced, and other persons who needed special assistance. Security personnel from both the Sierra Leone Police and UNAMSIL played a critical role in maintaining order without interfering in the process.

The progress in Sierra Leone demonstrates the profound role that can be played by the United Nations, which deserves enormous credit for helping to establish peace in Sierra Leone and to ensure the success of the election process. At a



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

time when many people are challenging the effectiveness of the United Nations, events in Sierra Leone remind us of the institution's value.

The election in Sierra Leone, however, is only one part of a challenging and ongoing process. A long road still lies ahead for Sierra Leoneans as they seek to consolidate democratic institutions, reaffirm the rule of law, and build a framework for sustainable development. We are hopeful that the confidence Sierra Leoneans have placed in democratic processes and institutions is matched by the dedication of the new government and by the continued support of the international community.

It is incumbent upon the new government, all political parties, and the people of Sierra Leone to recognize the fragility of peace and work collectively to build a more tolerant, unified society. To achieve these goals, it will be necessary to reach out to opposition leaders and to find creative ways to address the concerns of those groups that believe they have been marginalized in the past. The new government will need to support the efforts of those trying to steer the youth of Sierra Leone toward a more constructive engagement with their country's future. This future will also require commitment to a genuine healing and appropriate judicial processes. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, both of which have begun their important work in 2003, are an unprecedented pair of institutions designed to contribute to this goal.

All observers agree that the elections in Sierra Leone must be viewed within the context of the longstanding conflicts among and within countries of the MRU. A stronger, peaceful Sierra Leone is a major victory for regional peace. However, Sierra

Leone remains deeply connected to its neighbors and shares the subregion's collective fate. The Carter Center shares the concerns of people in the MRU and the international community that the escalating crises in Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire have the disturbing potential to threaten Sierra Leone's impressive democratic gains as well as the international community's substantial investment there.

Rosalynn and I would like to thank former Benin President Nicéphore Soglo and former U.S. Ambassador Gordon Streeb for their leadership of the Carter Center's election delegation in Sierra Leone. We offer special thanks to the members of the delegation from Liberia and Guinea, the other countries in the MRU. The Center's election delegation in Sierra Leone was stronger because of the dedication and professionalism of these individuals from West Africa, who brought regional expertise to the process and who share to some extent in Sierra Leone's success. We also would like to thank Ashley Barr for directing the project and all of the Carter Center staff and observers for their tireless work under extremely challenging circumstances.

We are especially grateful for the generosity of The Ashcroft Foundation, established by philanthropist Lord Ashcroft KCMG. Our Sierra Leone election observation mission would not have been possible without this vital support.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain in 1961, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and All People's Congress (APC) dominated the political landscape until 1992, with a series of coups deposing four leaders between 1967 and 1997. This recurring political upheaval was exacerbated by a breakdown of the traditional paramount chieftaincy system of local governance and corruption within the Sierra Leone Army (SLA).

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group seeking control over diamond-rich areas of the country, took advantage of the instability

to begin a terror campaign against the citizens of Sierra Leone in 1991 that would last more than a decade. Liberian warlord Charles Taylor supported the RUF, and the Mano River Union (MRU) subregion of West Africa became engulfed in a complex humanitarian crisis characterized by mass population displacements and atrocities including mutilation, sex slavery, and forced child conscription.

The 1990s saw several failed peace agreements, and troops from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations intervened in the mid- and late-1990s. When fresh violence threatened to undermine the fragile 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement, Britain sent reinforcements and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) committed the largest peacekeeping force in history, which eventually consisted of almost 18,000 troops and personnel.

Sierra Leone's 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted only four months after a formal declaration of peace. UNAMSIL conducted a national Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation (DDR) process for 72,000 former combatants and provided security and logistical support for the elections. The National Election Commission (NEC) organized the elections on a short timetable, in the context of a devastated

infrastructure and a traumatized electorate. Carter Center delegations visited the country twice, in 2001 and early 2002, to assess the progress towards elections and to continue its long-

---

*Sierra Leone's 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted only four months after a formal declaration of peace.*

---

term involvement in peacebuilding and democratic development in the subregion. President Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah welcomed Carter Center engagement in elections planned for 2002.

The electoral process got underway with voter registration for an estimated 2.7 million eligible Sierra Leone citizens from Jan. 24 to Feb. 10, 2002. Approximately 20,000 names were added to the lists during the exhibition period, March 9-13, and a special registration period was organized on April 20-24 for thousands of returning refugees. The voter registration process was hampered by high illiteracy rates, limited media and voter education outreach, inadequate materials and staff at some registration sites, and changes in the voter registration system compared to the 1996 elections. Nevertheless, over 2.3 million citizens registered, representing about 85 percent of eligible voters. Opposition parties and domestic monitors raised



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

serious concerns about political bias in the selection of election officials, the uneven distribution of voter education materials around the country, and the influence of local paramount chiefs during the registration process. The pre-election period was also clouded by unresolved Anti-Corruption Commission indictments against three NEC commissioners, including the chairman.

The candidate nomination deadline was April 2 but was extended to allow the political party formed by former RUF fighters (RUF) to replace rebel leader Foday Sankoh as their presidential nominee. Sankoh was in prison on murder charges, and he would be indicted later for war crimes for his part in the decade-long civil war. Ten political parties contested the parliamentary elections, and nine parties nominated presidential candidates. Among these were incumbent President Kabbah of the SLPP, Ernest Bai Koroma of the APC, and former coup leader Johnny Paul

Koroma of the Peace and Liberation Party (PLP). The campaign period between April 5 and May 11 was remarkably peaceful, given the recent history of the country. However, serious complaints surfaced regarding intimidation of opposition parties and the NEC's failure to distribute information to all parties equally, including polling station lists and accreditation forms for party agents who would monitor the elections. One violent incident between the SLPP and RUF in Freetown immediately before the elections also caused concern.

A 22-person Carter Center delegation arrived in Sierra Leone in advance of the May elections, co-led by former Benin President Nicéphore Soglo and Carter Center Associate Executive Director Ambassador Gordon Streeb. The delegation included seven civil society leaders from the MRU and several human rights experts. Eight members of the delegation were deployed during a May 10 Special Voting Day for NEC officials, military



*A woman, carrying her baby on her back, receives a ballot listing political party logos from a polling station official.*

STEVE MAXWELL



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

personnel, and others with essential duties to perform on May 14. Delegation briefings were held on May 10-11, and on the next day, two-person observation teams were deployed in 10 of the 14 districts throughout Sierra Leone's four regions. Meanwhile, the delegation's co-leaders held meetings in Freetown with presidential candidates, NEC and U.N. officials, and local election monitoring groups. The Carter Center co-leaders also coordinated closely with other major international observer groups, traveling with their delegations' leaders to Bo and Kenema and meeting before and after the elections to compare assessments.

In organizing the Sierra Leone elections, the NEC faced enormous logistical challenges. One of the most significant issues was the need to facilitate voting for as many as 450,000 people displaced during the war, who were allowed to register in one location and vote in another with "transfer vote" documents. The weakness in the voter registration lists and the complexity of the transfer vote system led to widespread reports early on May 14 of voters being turned away from the polls. In response, the NEC announced a policy change midmorning on election day that was interpreted differently around the country, causing disenfranchisement of some voters and a lack of uniformity in the voting process.

Nevertheless, a total of 1.9 million voters, or 83 percent of those registered, cast ballots on May 10 or 14. The electoral environment was remarkable for its lack of violence, for the dignity and patience of Sierra Leonean voters, and for the competence and enthusiasm of polling station officials, many of whom were young and new to the election process. The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and UNAMSIL personnel performed their duties admirably, providing security during the election without interfering in the process. Women

participated fully in many aspects of the political process, though they were underrepresented as candidates.

Administrative and other weaknesses in election preparations led to predictable problems on voting day. The need for polling officials to provide last-minute instructions to voters about how to mark their ballots slowed the process, and polling stations officials sometimes accompanied voters into the voting booths to render assistance, potentially compromising the secrecy of the vote. Reports of multiple voting and underage voting were common. Political party agents and domestic monitors were present in most polling stations, but smaller opposition parties were underrepresented in many areas, and inadequate training by the parties for their local agents limited their effectiveness. In some locations, opposition party agents reported that they were prevented from entering polling stations. The ballot counting took place at polling stations immediately after the closing of the polls, and Carter Center delegates reported that in some locations counting procedures were not followed accurately. Inconsistencies in the transparency of the tabulation process around the country were more pronounced, with several cases of almost 100 percent voter turnout remaining unresolved.

Incumbent President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah won a decisive 70.1 percent of the presidential votes, and his SLPP also won an absolute majority of 83 seats in the 124-member Parliament. Two other political parties won seats in the parliamentary elections—the APC with 27 seats and PLP with two seats. The SLPP's overwhelming victory raised concerns about one-party domination, particularly given lingering corruption indictments against NEC commissioners, ministers, and other government officials. However, the APC pledged to act as loyal opposition in Parliament, and



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

President Kabbah made strong commitments in his inaugural address on May 19 to ensure government accountability and to consolidate Sierra Leone's democratic gains.

The Carter Center presented its preliminary assessment of the elections at a press conference organized jointly on May 16 with the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM) and the Commonwealth delegation. Overall, Carter Center observers concluded that, despite significant irregularities, the electoral process in Sierra Leone enabled voters to freely express their democratic choices and the official

results reflected the will of the voters. The success of the 2002 Sierra Leone presidential and parliamentary elections demonstrated the strong desire of Sierra Leone's citizens to put the brutality of the war behind them and to create an enabling environment for reconciliation and democratic development.

In a spirit of mutual respect and recognizing that the people of Sierra Leone must decide what is best for their country, The Carter Center offers in this report a number of recommendations for improving future elections and fortifying democratic development. These include [1] ensuring the effective reintegration of former combatants and providing support to victims of past violence; [2] conducting a comprehensive census for electoral purposes and to facilitate the equitable allocation of resources; [3] holding a national consultation on the electoral system, including the district block system and the possibility of continuous voter

registration; [4] organizing broad civic education campaigns on government accountability and constituency representation; [5] strengthening political parties' capacity to remain active between elections and to weigh in on the difficult public policy choices ahead; [6] building on nongovernmental organizations' (NGOs') past successful contributions to voter education, election monitoring, and policy advocacy; [7] conducting a review of the 2002 election procedures and improving training for election officials, especially regarding counting and tabulation processes; and [8] combating bias and corruption at the NEC through transparent investigations and comprehensive reform.

Sierra Leone's future peace and democratic consolidation will depend upon the government's vigilance in addressing the culture of violence and impunity that has evolved during the past decades. The new Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Sierra Leone Special Court will contribute to this process and must be absolutely free from government interference. Escalating conflicts in Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire also have the potential to destabilize neighboring Sierra Leone again, unless the international community takes strong action. The renewal of sanctions against Liberia in May 2003 is a hopeful sign, as is the potential of the Special Court to hold accountable individuals from any country who bear greatest responsibility for crimes committed in Sierra Leone. ■

---

*The success of the 2002 Sierra Leone elections demonstrated the strong desire of Sierra Leone's citizens to put the brutality of the war behind them and to create an enabling environment for reconciliation and democratic development.*

---



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

# BACKGROUND: FROM BRUTAL WAR TO FRAGILE PEACE

### SHIFTING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Sierra Leone's political history since gaining independence from Britain in 1961 has been marked by frequent upheaval involving a series of coups, elections, new constitutions, and changing political systems. A multiparty constitutional democracy at independence, the country's political landscape was dominated by the SLPP until elections in 1967 in which the APC, headed by former SLPP leader Siaka Stevens, won by a narrow majority. Stevens was temporarily prevented from assuming the presidency by a military coup, but he eventually took office in 1968 and introduced a one-party system through a new constitution in 1978 that declared the APC as the sole legal party.

Stevens handed over power in 1985 to his chosen successor, Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh, who restored the country to multiparty democracy with another new constitution in 1991 to try to stabilize the country's increasing problems.

One such problem was the emergence of the RUF, a rebel group headed by former army corporal Foday Saybana Sankoh and backed by Liberian warlord Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia. RUF forces invaded the Eastern region of Sierra Leone from Liberia in 1991 and instigated a gruesome civil war that would last over a decade, funded by illicit trade in arms and diamonds. The fighters included Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, and mercenaries from Burkina Faso who had been trained in guerilla warfare in Libya and Burkina Faso. The RUF's campaign, like that



*The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) funded its 11-year war against the government of Sierra Leone with illegal trade in diamonds and support from former Liberian warlord and current President Charles Taylor.*

ASHLEY BARR



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

of Charles Taylor, was motivated not by ethnic divisions or political ideology, but by an uncomplicated desire for power and for control over the diamond-rich areas in the East of the country. Their brutal tactics, including murder, torture, rape, abductions, and their signature mutilation of civilians, prevented the RUF from garnering substantial support among the terrorized citizens of Sierra Leone.

The breakdown of the traditional paramount chieftaincy system of local rule and corruption in the SLA also fueled the war. Some SLA soldiers were supporting both sides and were dubbed as “sobels” – soldiers by day, rebels by night. The SLA overthrew President Momoh in 1992, later establishing the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), led by SLA Captain Valentine Strasser. The NPRC strengthened the forces under Strasser’s command by gathering the support of thousands of youths, troops from Nigeria, and assistance from Executive Outcomes, a South African private security company. The RUF was significantly weakened by August 1995, and peace negotiations were initiated. Strasser announced that the first multiparty elections in nearly 30 years would be held in February of 1996.

Shortly before the elections, members of the NPRC deposed Strasser, believing that he would break an earlier commitment not to run for president. NPRC Brigadier Maada Bio controlled the country until elections took place in February. SLPP candidate Ahmad Tejan Kabbah won the 1996 elections, which were clouded by some accusations of fraud. The RUF never accepted the results of the elections, but President Kabbah was able to broker a peace accord between the government and RUF forces in Abidjan in October 1996. Despite this progress, the SLA’s Major Johnny Paul Koroma overthrew Kabbah in May 1997.

## FROM ECOMOG TO UNAMSIL

Johnny Paul Koroma remained in control until March 1998 when the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) drove his forces out of Freetown and aided President Kabbah’s return to power. Established in 1990, ECOMOG had been active in Sierra Leone since the RUF’s initial invasion in 1991 with an estimated 4,000 troops from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, and Gambia. Charles Taylor promised revenge for Sierra Leone’s support of ECOMOG during an earlier intervention in Liberia, and he kept his word by supporting the RUF and allowing them to maintain bases in Liberia throughout the war in Sierra Leone.

In 1998 ECOMOG forces remained in Sierra Leone to help keep the peace while Johnny Paul Koroma renamed his rebels the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and joined with the RUF movement. The United Nations also established the U.N. Observer Mission in Sierra Leone that year, but heavy fighting continued between government and AFRC/RUF rebel forces. On Jan. 6, 1999, the RUF invaded Freetown and seized control of parts of the capital for the first time. After six weeks of brutal fighting, ECOMOG drove the rebels out, leaving behind 5,000 dead, including nearly 3,000 civilians and a devastated capital city. Six months after the Freetown invasion, a peace agreement was signed between the government and the RUF in Lomé, Togo. Under the agreement, AFRC/RUF rebels were given government posts and guarantees of amnesty for their actions during the war.

During this period, the United Nations expanded its presence in Sierra Leone, deploying the largest peacekeeping mission in the world, which at its height consisted of 17,500 peacekeepers and 400 civilian police and other international



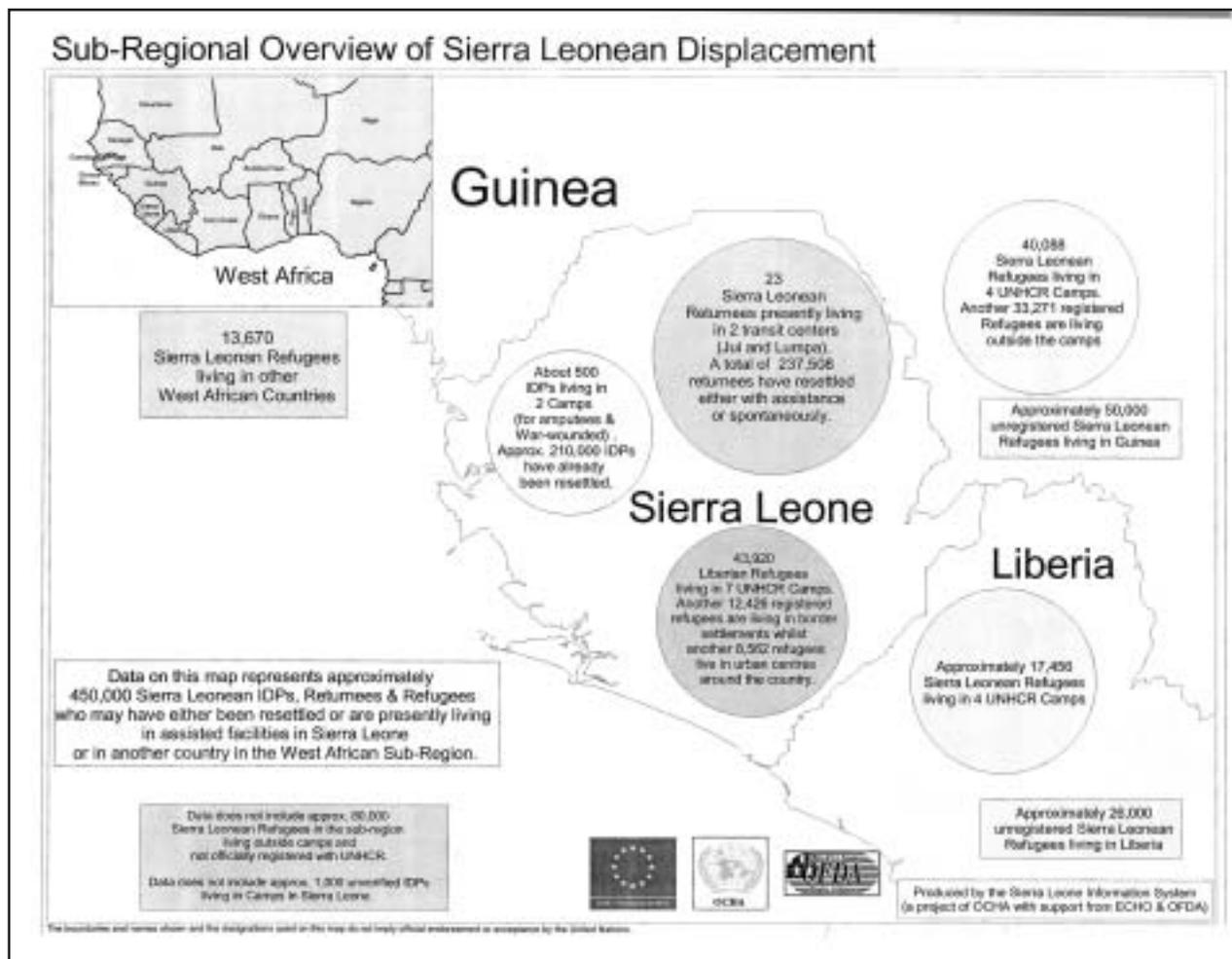
## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

personnel. However, in early 2000, RUF rebels took hostage approximately 500 UNAMSIL peacekeepers, and fighting broke out once again. To counter the return of the civil war, Britain committed troops to Sierra Leone to aid UNAMSIL in 2001, and together these forces gradually returned stability to the country. Between March 2001 and January 2002, UNAMSIL demobilized and disarmed as many as 72,000 rebel and other fighters, registering 56,000 for reintegration programs.

### A WAR OF ATROCITIES

The strong response of the international community to the situation in Sierra Leone was due in part to the regional character of the conflict and in part to the unrelenting viciousness of the atrocities committed by the combatants. Although RUF rebels are blamed for the majority of the brutality, other groups also bear responsibility for significant human rights violations, including the

*The United Nations has assisted as many as 380,000 refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) to return to their homes in Sierra Leone. An estimated 70,000 refugees from Sierra Leone remain in neighboring Guinea and Liberia, the countries making up the Mano River Union (MRU) subregion.*



U.N. OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (OCHA) AND U.N. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), ABRIDJAN, JAN. 17, 2003



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

recruitment of child soldiers and sexual violence. These groups include Johnny Paul Koroma's AFRC, the SLA, and the Kamajors Civil Defense Force (CDF), a government-affiliated militia with particular influence during President Kabbah's first term in office.

The war in Sierra Leone is notorious for the widespread crimes against civilians that resulted in as many as 100,000 deaths and almost 450,000

refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), representing in total about 10 percent of the 5.2 million population. The civil war also saw tens of thousands of limb amputations and other cases of mutilation; as many as 20,000

abductions, including 10,000 forcibly conscripted children; and more than 200,000 estimated cases of sexual violence including rape. One of the most disturbing aspects of these crimes is that combatants induced abducted civilians, including children, to commit crimes against others, including members of their own families.

As many as half of the 20,000 abducted rebel fighters in Sierra Leone were children, and RUF rebels recruited or abducted children as young as six years old. Child combatants committed atrocities under the forced influence of drugs and the threat of death or torture and have testified to the ease with which they killed, mutilated, and raped civilians. RUF rebels, including child combatants, used a horrific system of limb amputation as the most extreme tactic of political intimidation. Elderly people and children as young as two months old were mutilated. It is estimated that for

every one survivor, three amputees died from shock, infection, or loss of blood. Carving "AFRC" or "RUF" on victims' bodies was also common.

The pattern of sexual violence during the war was more prevalent than amputations but received less public recognition until very recently. A Physicians for Human Rights report on "War-related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone"<sup>1</sup> concludes that

the majority of abuses were attributable to RUF forces. More than 53 percent of women, including IDPs, who came in direct contact with the RUF were subjected to sexual violence, and 90 percent of abductees are

believed to have been raped. The organized way in which victims frequently describe being rounded up and the number of rebels participating in the abductions and gang rapes over many days or weeks indicate premeditation and planning by the RUF command. Some women were held for years as forced laborers or sex slaves for combatants.

#### PREPARING FOR ELECTIONS

The end of the brutal decade-long civil war was officially declared in January 2002, and the presidential and parliamentary elections took place only four months later. President Kabbah's five-year term in office had expired in February 2001, but a formal state of emergency begun in 1999 enabled Parliament to invoke a constitutional provision to extend his term twice in six-month

---

*The war in Sierra Leone is notorious for the widespread crimes against civilians that resulted in as many as 100,000 deaths and almost 450,000 refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).*

---

<sup>1</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, "War-related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone: A Population-based Assessment," 2002, Executive Summary, page 2.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

increments. Elections were called for February 2002, but continuing instability led to a further postponement until May. As the DDR process made steady progress, the state of emergency was lifted in March to allow campaigning and other election activities to proceed.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted a resolution in January 2002 giving UNAMSIL an expanded mandate during the elections. The mandate included assisting the NEC with the logistical aspects of the elections, such as communications and the storage and

transfer of election materials before and after polling day. Other duties included supporting the efforts of the SLP to assure the peaceful conduct of the elections; facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance; supporting the NEC's voter education strategy; and organizing an electoral unit to enhance coordination among the government of Sierra Leone, the NEC, international observers, and others. UNAMSIL's role in Sierra Leone's May 2002 elections would prove to be critical to their success. ■



*An NEC poster encourages “Handikaps” (in Krio, or Creole, language) to vote. Amputations were a signature form of mutilation by the RUF during the civil war.*

ASHLEY BARR



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

CARTER CENTER DELEGATION  
AND PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT

The Carter Center has extensive experience working for peace, democracy, and human rights in West Africa. The Center maintained a field office in Monrovia, Liberia, for most of the period between 1991 and 2000. President Carter visited the subregion on several occasions during the early and mid-1990s to contribute to peacebuilding efforts. For the 1997 special elections in Liberia, President Carter co-led a 40-person delegation to monitor the process. Following the elections, the Center worked with media, human rights groups, and other civil society organizations to create an enabling environment for their activities. Other initiatives in West Africa have included a project organized jointly with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to observe the multi-stage election process in 1999 in Nigeria, culminating in a 66-person delegation co-led by President Carter to observe the February presidential elections. During May 2002, The Carter Center also observed the presidential elections in Mali.

## PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITIES

As part of the Carter Center's ongoing monitoring of the conflict situation in the MRU, the Sierra Leone presidential and parliamentary elections were identified as a critical event in the process towards peace in the subregion. Carter Center representatives made two trips to Sierra Leone in August 2001 and February 2002 to assess programming options related to West Africa peacebuilding efforts and to evaluate the electoral environment and the potential for Carter Center involvement. The delegations also traveled to Liberia, Guinea, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire.

President Kabbah strongly encouraged Carter

Center engagement in Sierra Leone during a meeting on Aug. 1, 2001, with Carter Center Associate Executive Director for Peace Programs Gordon Streeb. Carter Center delegates also met with other senior government officials, opposition politicians, human rights activists, NEC authorities, U.N. officials, Western diplomats, and NGO representatives. The Sierra Leone government later welcomed the participation of all international observers in the elections, and a formal invitation to observe the elections was issued to the Center by the government in March 2002. The Carter Center was the only major NGO based in the United States to field an international observation delegation in Sierra Leone.

## ELECTION MISSION DELEGATION

The Center's 22-person observation delegation in May 2002 consisted of election experts, regional specialists, human rights experts, and civic leaders, including seven NGO representatives from the MRU. The international delegation brought together representatives from eight countries and was co-led by former Benin President Nicéphore Soglo and former U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Gordon Streeb. Among the dignitaries joining the delegation from the MRU were a former chief justice of the Liberian Supreme Court and leaders of the InterReligious Council (IRC), Civil Society Movement (CSM), and Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET). The acting director of Amnesty International USA's Southern regional office, who is a Ugandan national, and a refugee resettlement expert from Tanzania also joined the delegation.

The role of the Center's delegation in Sierra



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

Leone was to observe in an impartial manner and to convey our findings to the people of Sierra Leone and the international community. The Center's presence was intended to demonstrate the international community's support for peace, democracy, and human rights through elections that reflect the will of the electorate of Sierra Leone and that meet minimum international standards. More specifically, the delegation's goals were to strengthen public confidence in the elections, deter potential abuses, focus international and domestic attention on the process, reinforce the work of domestic observers, and promote respect for internationally protected human rights.

In addition, the mission sought to reinforce the efforts of regional civil society organizations to enhance cooperation among the peoples of the MRU and to contribute to peacebuilding processes. Before and after the May 14 elections, the Center facilitated two meetings of civil society leaders from the MRU. The first meeting was hosted by the local director of the International Human

Rights Law Group, a Liberian national and long-time activist for peace and civil society development in the MRU. Carter Center election delegates from Guinea and Liberia joined with their counterparts from the CSM and IRC in Sierra Leone, as well as representatives of other human rights and peace organizations. The gatherings enabled participants to share information about ongoing conflicts and peace efforts in their individual countries and to plan a future MRU civil society conference and other joint activities.

The vital—but dangerous—role played by these civil society leaders in working for peace and democracy in the MRU was underscored when one invited delegate for the Carter Center's observation team, Tiawan Gongloe, a human rights activist from Liberia, was arrested by the Liberia government as he attempted to board his plane for Sierra Leone. Aggressive intervention by a fellow civil society leader in Liberia and the international diplomatic community led to his release from custody, but he was prevented from traveling



*The Carter Center's delegation was co-led by former Benin President Nicéphore Soglo and former U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Gordon Streeb. The delegation also included seven senior representatives from civil society organizations in Liberia and Guinea.*

STEVE MAXWELL



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

to Sierra Leone to observe the elections. Mr. Gongloe later fled into exile in the United States in fear for his safety.

### DELEGATION BRIEFINGS

A small staff team arrived in Freetown on May 1 to set up deployment plans around the country. The majority of the delegation arrived on May 10, and briefings began that evening with presentations by Dr. John Harker, senior adviser to the delegation, Dr. Comfort Ero of the International Crisis Group (ICG), and Tom Perriello, a Yale Law School fellow in Sierra Leone. The theme of the evening panel was “Elections, Governance, and Conflict in Sierra Leone.” Delegates then received a full day of briefings on May 11 from local and international experts on the political, electoral, and human rights context in the country. Human rights was an essential part of the delegation briefing process, both because of Sierra Leone’s unique history of mass atrocities and refugee flows and because of the close connection between human rights standards and the standards that define “free and fair” elections.

Representatives of several civil society groups in Sierra Leone made presentations to the delegation describing the election monitoring plans of National Election Watch (NEW), a coalition of 18 local organizations, and the role of civil society in the process of consolidating democracy. The NGO panel included Olayinka Creighton-Randall of the Campaign for Good Governance (CGG). Joe Hall of NDI and Simon Clarke from International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) provided information and insights regarding the political parties and the technical preparations of the NEC, respectively. Carlo Accame, deputy chief observer of the EU-EOM, summarized the pre-election assessments of EU long-term observers

(LTOs). A supplementary briefing session was organized by the NEC for all international delegations.

Carter Center briefings continued with Sarah Muscroft of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, who explained the importance of returned refugees and IDPs to the election process. Rodolpho Matarollo, chief of the U.N. Human Rights Office in Sierra Leone, described the history of human rights violations committed during the civil war and the relevance of a new Special Court and Truth and Reconciliation Commission to long-term peacebuilding. Corinne Dufka of Human Rights Watch and Tom Perriello offered reflections on the current human rights situation in Sierra Leone.

### LEADERSHIP MEETINGS AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

On May 13, while the majority of the Center’s observers were deployed, delegation co-leaders President Soglo and Ambassador Streeb, with senior adviser Dr. John Harker, met NEC Chairman Walter O.F. Nicol, Sierra Leone civil society leaders, and representatives of diplomatic missions and the United Nations. The leadership team held private meetings with presidential candidates from six political parties, including the PLP’s Johnny Paul Koroma, Alimamy Pallo Bangura of the RUFF, the APC’s Ernest Bai Koroma, and Zainab Hawa Bangura of the Movement for Progress Party (MOP). These meetings were supplemented by a coordinated set of activities undertaken with other international delegations.

UNAMSIL organized an electoral unit to assist in fulfilling its mandate during the election period in Sierra Leone. One of the purposes of this office was to facilitate coordination and exchange



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

of information among international observer groups. In an effort to enhance this cooperation, The Carter Center cultivated a close working relationship with other major international observer groups, and especially the delegations of the EU-EOM, the Commonwealth, the Organization of African Unity (OAU, now the African Union), and ECOWAS. Special efforts were made to ensure that the various international observer missions did not create additional confusion in Sierra Leone's complex electoral context and that the people and government of Sierra Leone received relatively consistent messages from the international community. Logistical and safety concerns were other factors that led to close collaboration among observer groups.

At the invitation of The Carter Center and the EU-EOM, the leaders of each of the international delegations met before the elections to discuss their preliminary reflections on the process and to decide upon the appropriate balance

between coordinating efforts, on the one hand, and maintaining the independence of each group, on the other. On May 12, the delegations' leaders traveled together by helicopter to Bo and Kenema, two district centers, to receive briefings by locally based EU-EOM LTOs and to hold joint meetings with district election officials, political party representatives, domestic monitoring groups, and other civil society organizations. The delegations' leaders met again immediately after election day to exchange information received from deployed delegates and to seek general agreement about key recommendations. The Carter Center, EU-EOM, and the Commonwealth later held a joint press conference to announce each group's preliminary observations about the elections. Although the delegations agreed in advance that they would not issue a unified statement in order to retain each group's autonomy, the joint press conference demonstrated a collective international commitment to Sierra Leone and presented a consistent set of



*NEC efforts to educate rural voters reached those areas most effectively through community-based education sessions.*

STEVE MAXWELL



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

recommendations to the government and people of Sierra Leone.

### PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENTS

In addition to insights gained through pre-election meetings, the Carter Center's evaluation of the electoral climate prior to voting day benefited from observations reported by EU-EOM LTOs and domestic monitors including CGG, which observed the voter registration and campaign periods nationwide.

#### *Legal Framework for the Parliamentary Elections*

After a decade of war and massive population dislocations, Sierra Leone lacked reliable census data to determine constituencies of equal numbers of inhabitants, as required by the single-seat constituency system for parliamentary elections mandated in the 1991 constitution. During the 1996 elections a national list proportional representation system had been adopted, but it was unpopular because members of Parliament had no clear constituencies to whom they were accountable. Sierra Leone therefore adopted a provisional arrangement for the May 2002 elections, called the district block system. Each of 14 districts was considered a constituency with a block of eight parliamentary seats, for a total of 112 members of Parliament. Parties submitted prioritized lists, and voters cast ballots for parties rather than candidates. Seats were allocated in proportion to the number of votes for each party in that district. Parties were required to reach a threshold of 12.5 percent of the vote in order to win a single parliamentary seat, making it difficult for small opposition parties to secure any seats. Twelve seats in the 124-member legislature were reserved for paramount chiefs, who were to be chosen at a later date.

One of the primary concerns about the adoption of this new district block system was that the size of the electorate in each district varied widely. Elected members of Parliament represent constituencies that range from fewer than 9,000 registered voters per seat to more than 35,000 registered voters per seat. This system, therefore, gives significantly greater value to some votes compared to others. Nevertheless, given the lack of reliable census data, the continuing movement of large numbers of refugees and IDPs around the country, and the resulting impossibility of drawing constituency boundaries according to population size, the district block system was a reasonable provisional innovation.

#### *Voter Registration*

The voter registration process entailed a major change from the 1996 procedure of house-to-house voter registration in favor of a system of registration centers. A total of 5,278 registration centers and about 600 photo centers were established around the country. Voters were required to register in person at the place where they would eventually cast their ballots. The original time frame for voter registration was from Jan. 24 to Feb. 7, but it was extended by three days to compensate for logistical problems. These included inadequate supplies of ink, forms, and materials for taking photos for identification (ID) cards, as well as limited and poorly trained staff. Some observers alleged that problems were more significant in areas of the country where the SLPP expected to have a weaker showing. Underage and multiple registrations, some observers contended, were most common in SLPP strongholds in the South and East of the country.

The exhibition period for the voter lists was March 9-13, and approximately 20,000 names



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

were added to the lists during this period. Over 2.3 million citizens, or about 85 percent of the estimated 2.7 million eligible voters, registered to vote in the 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections, a significant increase over the 1.5 million voters who registered in 1996. Approximately 50 percent of registered voters were women.

The NEC's commitment to inclusiveness made the process of registering voters particularly complex and created the potential for abuses, but was commendable and ultimately essential for the success of the elections. For example, since many potential voters lacked sufficient ID documents, the election law allowed a community leader or other credible witness to testify that the individual was qualified to vote. In addition, special registration centers were set up on April 20-24 for returning refugees, who had to provide documentation that they had returned under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. More than 13,000 returning refugees registered to vote at these centers.

Another special procedure was established for "transfer voting," which allowed refugees and IDPs to register in one location and vote in another. In this way, as many as 380,000 dislocated people were allowed to return to their homes between the registration period and election day without being disenfranchised. The time period for requesting a vote transfer was extended until May 5, only nine days before the election, in order to accommodate as many people as possible. However, election offi-

cial were unable to prepare transfer vote lists in time in some areas of the country, and observers anticipated that administering the vote transfer system would prove to be extremely difficult on election day.

---

*The consequences of limited and uneven voter education around the country included a poor turnout at the beginning of the voter registration process and reports of disproportionately high numbers of registered voters in SLPP strongholds.*

---

### **Voter Education and Media**

The NEC had primary responsibility for voter education, with political parties and UNAMSIL also contributing to the process. NGOs, including the CGG, played an impor-

tant role in supplementing the educational materials available to voters. The change in registration procedures compared to the 1996 elections amplified the need for early and intensive voter education. The nearly 80 percent illiteracy rate was also a challenge, making community education sessions and radio broadcasts the most effective means to reach the majority of the population.

The national Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) radio, UNAMSIL radio, and a healthy free press were positive factors in the voter education process, though limited broadcasting and distribution to rural areas was a concern. SLBS and UNAMSIL produced special programs on the elections, had the greatest broadcasting outreach around the country, and were perceived as the most credible sources of information. Still, an EU media monitoring team found that the ruling SLPP received significantly more coverage on SLBS than the opposition parties. Although there are more than 30 newspapers in Sierra Leone, their circulation is limited primarily to Freetown, their reporting is often biased or unreliable,



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

and high illiteracy rates limit their effectiveness for public education. Several private radio stations, including Radio Democracy, played a useful role but remained limited in their outreach beyond Freetown and other urban centers.

Funding constraints and logistical problems caused NEC voter education efforts to begin late and to have limited outreach. Some opposition parties complained that they received the NEC's voter education materials, such as sample ballot papers, later and in lesser quantities than the ruling SLPP. Poor political party organization and the limited resources of smaller parties were also relevant to their inadequate contributions to the voter education

process. The consequences of limited and uneven voter education around the country included a poor turnout at the beginning of the voter registration process and reports of disproportionately high numbers of registered voters in SLPP strongholds. Observers expressed concerns that the inadequacy of the voter education efforts would have significant implications for election day.

### *Political Parties: Nomination and Campaign Periods*

Nine political parties nominated presidential candidates for the May 2002 elections, and 10 parties competed for parliamentary seats with a total of 1,351 registered candidates. Presidential candidates included incumbent President Kabbah of the SLPP and his primary opponent Ernest Bai Koroma of the APC, which ruled the country from 1978 to 1992. Other contenders were 1997 coup leader Johnny Paul Koroma of the PLP and the United National People's Party's (UNPP) Dr. John Karefa-Smart, who rivaled Kabbah in the second round of the 1996 presidential elections. The MOP nominated the only female presidential candidate, Zaineb Bangura, the former head of CGG, a prominent local human rights and democracy organization. Smaller parties included the Citizens United for Peace and Prosperity (CUPP), Grand Alliance Party (GAP), RUFPP, and Young People's Party (YPP). The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) only contested the parliamentary race, and the CUPP only ran in the presidential election.

The deadline for nominations of presidential candidates, originally scheduled for April 2, was

*Weaknesses in the voter registration process enabled underage voters like this one to acquire voter registration cards.*

THE CARTER CENTER





## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

reopened on April 8 to enable the RUFP to replace rebel leader Foday Sankoh as their nominee. Sankoh was in prison on murder charges stemming from an incident in 2000 that left 20 people dead. The RUFP unsuccessfully protested an NEC ruling that disqualified Sankoh because he was ineligible to vote and could not appear in person to present his nomination papers. Most observers welcomed the NEC's decision to extend the nomination period in order to allow the RUFP to name its secretary-general, Pallo Bangura, as a candidate. The fact that the former rebels were making a serious effort to transform themselves into a political party and participate in the elections was a significant positive development.

On the other hand, a significant election dispute arose over the disqualification of the APC vice presidential running mate and parliamentary candidate Alhaji Abu Bakarr Jalloh on the grounds that he was out of the country during the voter registration period and that his name appeared in two different districts on APC candidate lists. The NEC's procedure for disqualifying Jalloh and a High Court judge's determination that the court was incompetent to rule on the matter were sharply criticized. One consequence of this dispute

was that the NEC could not publish the final list of candidates until the court ruling on May 10, only four days before the elections.

The campaign period, between April 5 and May 11, was remarkably peaceful given the history of election-related and other political violence in the country. However, during pre-election meetings and during the helicopter tour of Bo and Kenema with other observer groups' leaders, The Carter Center heard complaints from several political parties regarding intimidation, especially by the SLPP and by local paramount chiefs who were loyal to the SLPP. Opposition parties faced difficulties in campaigning, especially in rural areas, both because of logistical constraints and due to intimidation, including being prevented from organizing campaign rallies. The most significant violent incident took place on May 11 in Freetown in front of the RUFP headquarters when a clash between RUFP and SLPP supporters during simultaneous, NEC-authorized rallies left as many as 19 people slightly injured. SLPP supporters also allegedly ransacked the RUFP office during the incident. The NEC and seven political parties immediately issued a press release denouncing the violence.



THE CARTER CENTER

*In many locations, such as this polling station in Pujehun, men and women formed separate voting lines.*



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

Opposition parties raised other concerns, including the use of state resources by the ruling SLPP, the undue influence of paramount chiefs in the South and other areas in favor of the SLPP, and the NEC's failure to share information equally with all parties. In particular, provincial party officials stated that the SLPP had received final candidate lists and lists of polling stations in advance, making it much more difficult for other parties to prepare their agents for election day deployment. This uneven access to information was a recurring and serious complaint. There were also reports that parties received NEC forms for accreditation of party agents too late, except in the case of the SLPP, which allegedly received the forms earlier.

Domestic monitoring groups noted other limitations in political parties' organization prior to the elections. For example, with the possible exception of the SLPP and APC, political party agents lacked adequate training about their role and were not active in monitoring the voter registration process or the exhibition of the voter lists. Most parties also were not well-prepared to mobilize their supporters for voter registration and did not produce meaningful party manifestos or take full advantage of free airtime offered by UNAMSIL and other media outlets.

### *Allegations Against the NEC*

Given the short time for election preparations and the enormous logistical obstacles in the post-war context of Sierra Leone, the NEC's administration of the elections was impressive. The United Nations and IFES provided significant technical advice and support to the NEC, which was essential to the success of the process. Members of the international community were understandably reluctant to criticize the NEC too harshly either before or immediately after the elections,

which could have compromised the election process and thereby the fragile peace and democratic progress. However, it is important to record and reflect on some of the serious allegations that were leveled against the NEC by opposition parties and others in order to highlight areas where improvements are needed for future election administration in Sierra Leone.

Taken together, some of the critical assessments noted above regarding uneven voter registration and education in different regions of the country and inconsistent treatment of political parties suggest NEC bias towards the incumbent SLPP. Rather than pro-government bias, the NEC's conduct might be attributable to the fact that the NEC's limited capacity appeared to favor well-structured parties with greater access to resources. In any case, both the perception of NEC bias and the NEC's capacity weaknesses are important problems that must be addressed candidly.

The most significant and unresolved problem regarding the NEC prior to the elections involved allegations of corruption in December 2001 against three of the five commissioners, including the chairman. The Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission issued indictments against these individuals at the beginning of 2002, but they were not prosecuted. Observers noted that the person responsible for prosecuting the cases, Attorney General Solomon Berewa, later became President Kabbah's SLPP running mate. Since the attorney general in Sierra Leone is also the minister of justice responsible for the courts, and given the international community's reluctance to derail the election process, concerned citizens had no effective avenue to push for a full investigation into the corruption charges. ■



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

# Carter Center Deployment and Election Observations

### SPECIAL VOTING DAY – MAY 10

A Special Voting Day was held on May 10 to enable police, members of the armed forces, polling station officials, and some journalists and other citizens with essential duties during the elections to cast their ballots in advance. Sixty-three polling stations were opened around the country to accommodate this special voting process, which was conducted in a calm atmosphere that inspired confidence for the elections on May 14.

Eight Carter Center delegates and staff arrived in Sierra Leone prior to the Special Voting Day and attended a briefing session organized for all international observers by the UNAMSIL election coordination office. On May 10, four two-person Carter Center teams were deployed in and around Freetown to monitor the voting. At each polling station, observer teams completed a polling station observation form, or checklist, to record detailed information about specific aspects of the voting and their overall assessment of the process. This extra deployment day provided an opportunity for several relatively inexperienced election monitors,

especially from the MRU, to receive briefings and training in preparation for the May 14 polls.

### DEPLOYMENT AND OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE MAY 14 ELECTIONS

The Carter Center's observation plan called for delegates to observe the election process from May 12-16 in 10 out of 14 districts within the four provinces of Sierra Leone. Transportation, communication, and other logistics for the delegation were significant challenges. During the decade-long civil war, most of the infrastructure and many public buildings were destroyed. Planes, hotels, restaurants, phone lines, and other conveniences were rare. Almost all vehicles suitable for traveling long distances over difficult roads were in use by the United Nations, election authorities, and others in Sierra Leone during the election period. Security was always a concern, both in highly populated urban areas and in isolated rural locations.

The Carter Center provided its delegates with satellite telephones, all-terrain vehicles with extra fuel, emergency food rations, water, and all other basic necessities before deployment. Some delegates traveled to their deployment sites on U.N. helicopters and/or stayed with U.N. battalions in makeshift shelters. Most communication was accomplished through a prearranged U.N. faxing system made available to the NEC and international observer delegations. When possible, delegates communi-



STEVE MAXWELL

*Carter Center delegates Sheik Kafumba Konneh and Saa Philip-Joe from Liberia (right) monitored Special Voting Day on May 10 for essential election personnel, including Sierra Leone Army soldiers.*



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

cated with the Center's Freetown office at regular intervals to confirm their safety, report any logistical problems, and convey summary information about their election observations.

Polling stations were scheduled to open at 0700 and close at 1700. Teams of two observers traveled to various polling stations within their assigned districts throughout the day, observing the complete procedure for the opening of the poll at a single station and filling out checklists of detailed information at all stations visited. At the end of the day, observer teams monitored the closing and counting process in at least one polling station and completed another form to record their observations and assessments. Some teams then followed ballot boxes to district tabulation centers, where results for all of the polling centers in the constituency were collected and tabulated. The tabulation process continued for several full days.

Most Carter Center delegates returned to

Freetown on May 15-16 for rolling debriefings. Delegation leaders met with several presidential candidates, including President Kabbah of the SLPP, Ernest Bai Koroma of the APC, and Johnny Paul Koroma of the PLP. Additional meetings were arranged with the U.N. deputy special representative to the secretary general, Alan Doss, and U.S. Ambassador Peter Chaveas. Several teams also were redeployed to tabulation centers in and around the capital city.

### ASSESSMENT OF THE MAY 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

The leaders of all international observer groups met after election day to compare delegations' observations. On May 16, a joint press conference was held at which the EU-EOM, the Commonwealth, and The Carter Center presented their independent preliminary assessments of the election. The Center's observations, which were echoed by other delegations, are summarized below.



*Hundreds of voters waited patiently in lines for many hours at a Freetown school where a dozen polling stations had been set up.*

ASHLEY BARR



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

***Turnout, Conduct, and Election Administration***

Approximately 1.9 million voters, or 83 percent of those registered to vote, cast ballots on May 10 or May 14 in the Sierra Leone presidential and parliamentary elections. The Carter Center's preliminary statement commended the people of Sierra Leone for the remarkable lack of violence during the process, given the country's recent history of conflict, and for their patience and enthusiasm on election day. The majority of voters cast their ballots before noon, having waited since the early morning hours in very long lines. SLP and UNAMSIL personnel, who were present at virtually every polling station in the country, deserve special recognition for providing security during the election and increasing voter confidence, without interfering in the process.

The Center also praised the polling station officials, most of whom were young and new to the election process, for their professionalism and dedication under very difficult circumstances and with little support from the NEC. The large number of women participating in the election process was notable both among voters and among polling station personnel. The conduct of polling station officials was particularly noteworthy given the logistical challenges of conducting elections with very weak infrastructure. Problems included a limited number of enclosed buildings for polling stations, inadequate mechanisms for communication with NEC district and national offices, the arrival of election materials often only the night before the elections, and limited electricity and running water. UNAMSIL helped to overcome some difficulties by providing, for example, vehicles or motorbikes to transport materials.

Despite the generally positive assessment of polling officials' conduct, in some locations party

agents reported that they were not allowed to enter polling stations presided over by election officials who were considered to be SLPP supporters. Opposition parties complained that some election authorities had been recruited from among the ranks of the SLPP, compromising the integrity of the process. There were also isolated reports of fraudulent activities by polling authorities, especially in Bonthe and Koinadugu districts.

The NEC's failure to meet its deadlines for the publication of the polling station lists created significant difficulties for political party agents and domestic election monitors. Nevertheless, the presence of these observers was essential to the legitimacy of the election process, helping to deter fraud and increase voter confidence. In almost every polling station visited, Carter Center observers met representatives of political parties and domestic monitoring groups, who were consistently enthusiastic and conscientious in the fulfillment of their roles. However, smaller opposition parties were underrepresented in many areas, and inadequate training by the parties for their local agents limited their effectiveness.

***Consequences of Poor Voter Education and Imperfections in the Voter Lists***

Deficiencies in voter education and in the voter registration process led to predictable problems on election day. Reports from Carter Center observers included incidences of suspected multiple voting, underage voting, and direct interference by polling officials with the marking of ballots, especially in the South and East. Lack of understanding of polling procedures among voters slowed the voting process and compromised the secrecy of the ballot. In many locations, polling station officials had to provide on-the-spot instructions to voters about how to fill out ballots and, in



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

some cases, followed voters into voting booths to provide assistance, thereby increasing the potential for inappropriate influence over voters' choices. Inadequate voter education also resulted in a high percentage of spoiled ballot papers.

Voters were also confused in some areas about where they should cast their ballots, and many voters arrived at polling stations where they had registered only to find that their names were not on the voters list. Part of the confusion stemmed from the last-minute merging in some locations of two or more polling stations with few registered voters and the division of other stations with more than 1,200 voters on the register. The job of polling station officials was rendered particularly complex because of the need in many locations to consult a regular voters list, a separate refugee registration list, and a transfer voters list. Many transfer voters lists had not reached polling stations on time, exacerbating the problem. Polling officials then had to create handwritten lists of voters with transfer vote receipts, as well as others, described below.

Early on May 14 there were widespread reports of voters with valid registration cards being turned away because their names were not on voters lists. In response, the NEC issued an election-day policy change authorizing polling officials to allow voters with valid ID cards to cast their ballots at the location where they had registered, regardless of whether their names were on the voters list. This decision demonstrated the NEC's responsiveness to reported problems and avoided the disenfranchisement of thousands of voters. However, communication of the policy change to more than 5,400 polling sites around the country was a logistical challenge, and when the message did reach polling officials, it was interpreted inconsistently.

Carter Center observers reported that confusion about the NEC announcement led some polling station officials to continue as if no change in policy had been announced. At other polling sites, officials allowed all voters with ID cards from any registration center to vote. Many eligible voters who were turned away prior to the NEC announcement were disenfranchised, as were



*Poor voter education meant that polling station officials often had to provide last-minute instructions to voters about how to mark their ballots.*

ASHLEY BARR



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

voters who arrived late in the day to find that there were no more ballot papers. In general, the late NEC policy change created a lack of uniformity in voting procedures throughout the country, opened the door to multiple voting when indelible ink was not competently applied to voters' thumbs, and caused later confusion in the reconciliation of ballots.

### **Voters With Special Needs**

Other election procedures were designed to ensure that the process was as inclusive and accommodating as possible. For example, separate voting lines for men and women were established in some locations, and special procedures to register returning refugees and IDPs and to transfer their votes were put in place. Ballots contained the political party logos, rather than only printed names of parties or candidates, to make the process accessible to the approximately 80 percent of voters with limited literacy.

In addition, IFES/Sierra Leone piloted the first Tactile Ballot Guide known to be in use in the developing world, enabling blind voters to cast their ballots without assistance and in secret. The special ballot folder, with raised patterns of bumps indicating each candidate or party, was used in 810 polling stations in Freetown and in the regional capitals of Bo, Kenema, and Makeni. Representatives of the Sierra Leone Association of the Blind monitored the use of the Tactile Ballot Guide, contributing to the electoral and broader political participation of persons with disabilities.

Amputees, some of whom had been maimed as part of a campaign of political intimidation

during the 1996 election period, did not let history deter them from participating in the 2002 electoral process. Individuals who had both hands amputated were given opportunities to practice voting with their feet for several weeks before the elections. These voters left a print of their big toe on ballot papers. This effort at inclusiveness was also the first of its kind and was well-documented by the national and international media because it symbolized the strong will of the Sierra Leone electorate to overcome the brutality of the past and to participate in building a more secure and democratic future.



ASHLEY BARR

*A polling station presiding officer (center, seated) counts ballots using a dismantled cardboard voting booth as a ground cover, while a UNAMSIL soldier and party agents monitor the counting process.*



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

### Counting and Tabulation

The ballot counting took place at polling stations immediately after the closing of the polls, in the presence of political party agents and domestic and international observers. The NEC provided polling officials with candles, since the counting process often continued until after sundown and electricity was rarely available. Carter Center delegates reported that the counting process was transparent in most areas, but there were inconsistencies in the extent to which counting procedures were followed accurately. Problems included confusion about whether ballots should be considered spoiled and a lack of training about the order of procedures to be followed. The need to work by candlelight also presented difficulties in filling out the necessary forms and in party agents' and observers' ability to monitor the accuracy of each stage in the process.

At the completion of the count, polling station officials transported the resealed, transparent ballot boxes to chiefdom headquarter towns and then to district tabulation centers. Carter Center observers' assessments of the ballot tabulations ranged from very positive to very critical. Monitors noted that tabulation procedures were not always followed correctly or transparently and that some ballot boxes were not secured during their transfer from polling stations to tabulation centers or overnight at district centers. Election regulations provided that ballot boxes should be stored "in a secure place," but no standard practice was followed. This issue was potentially significant since ballot boxes

often were transported unofficially through chiefdom headquarters where there was potential for abuse and because election tally sheets sometimes were transmitted to regional centers while ballot boxes stayed behind in the districts.

Unfortunately, party agents and domestic observers did not monitor the accuracy of the counting and tabulation processes as closely as possible and often did not stay with the ballot

boxes overnight.

Domestic observers did fill out complex forms with extensive information about the voting process, and party agents noted the results of the count at polling stations. However, neither the monitors

nor the agents were prepared to compare this information systematically to results announced at the district level in order to detect discrepancies. Nor was there adequate planning to gather polling station and district results from around the country for timely analysis or to use the data collected in a meaningful way.

### Announcement of the Election Results

Incumbent President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah won a decisive 70.1 percent of the votes, avoiding the need for a runoff by exceeding the 55 percent margin required by the 2002 Electoral Laws Act. Since President Kabbah's government had overseen the end of the civil war, many voters perceived that a vote for Kabbah was a vote for continued peace and the ongoing commitment of the international community to Sierra Leone. The candidate with the second highest percentage of votes was Ernest Bai Koroma of the APC, with 22

---

*The 2002 presidential and parliamentary election results led the NGO International Crisis Group, among other observers, to express concern that Sierra Leone was "dangerously close to single-party rule."*

---



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

percent of the vote. Although he lost the presidential race, former coup leader Johnny Paul Koroma of the PLP secured a seat in the legislature. The NEC announced the results on May 17, and President Kabbah was inaugurated two days later.

The SLPP also dominated the parliamentary elections, winning 83 seats and an absolute majority. Only two other parties, the APC and PLP, won 27 and two parliamentary seats, respectively. Other parties, including the RUF, did not receive enough votes to meet the 12.5 percent threshold needed to win a seat. By comparison, six parties were represented in the 80-member Parliament elected in 1996. Eighteen women were elected to Parliament, representing 14.5 percent of the seats. The number of women elected to Parliament represented a 60 percent increase over the previous legislature. The new Parliament met for the first time on June 26, 2002, with full participation by the APC and PLP, and President Kabbah formally opened the legislative session on July 12.

The 2002 presidential and parliamentary election results led the NGO International Crisis Group, among other observers, to express concern that Sierra Leone was “dangerously close to single-

party rule.”<sup>2</sup> The APC increased their representation by 21 seats compared to the 1996 elections, but the UNPP lost its previously held 17 seats. All of the seats won by the APC were in the Northern and Western regions, whereas the SLPP secured all of the seats in the South and East, amplifying concerns about regional and ethnic divisions in the country. The SLPP’s seats in the Southern region were won with unusually high voter turnout rates of 99.4 percent in Pujehun, 99.2 percent in Bonthe, and 95 percent in Kenema.

Several aspects of the announcement of election results were matters of concern. NEC Chairman Nicols acknowledged that there were delays in collecting the results from some areas, which led to suspicions of manipulation in vote tabulations. NEC officials never satisfactorily addressed the issue of exceptionally high voter turnout in the three Southern districts, calling into question the results from those areas. Carter Center delegates’ requests for information from senior NEC officials on this subject elicited evasive and, at times, internally inconsistent responses.

2 International Crisis Group, “Sierra Leone After Elections: Politics as Usual?” ICG Africa Report No. 49, July 12, 2002, Executive Summary, page i.



THE CARTER CENTER

*UNAMSIL peacekeepers like these provided security on election day, along with Sierra Leone Police.*



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

Despite assurances from NEC Executive Secretary David Kai-Rogers, many *ad hoc* transfer voters lists compiled on election day remained in the districts, and there was no systematic effort to cross-check names against the master register. The failure of the NEC to collate spoiled-ballot totals further complicated efforts to resolve concerns about voter turnout.

Contrary to NEC rules, the ballots from most of the May 10 Special Voting Day polling stations, where essential personnel voted, were counted separately. Results from six of the stations were announced by the media. The special voting ballots were supposed to be mixed with ballots cast on May 14 at the same polling station and then counted together in order to ensure the secrecy of the May 10 votes. The Special Voting Day results were perceived to be significant, however, because they revealed strong support for former coup leader Johnny Paul Koroma of the PLP in areas where military personnel had voted and consistent support for the APC among the police. Chairman Nicol's press release on this issue emphasized that the Special Voting Day results also reflected the electoral choices of polling station officials and other civilians who voted that day. Soon after the election, President Kabbah made a point of visiting military bases and assuring members of the SLA and SLP that he respected their freedom to vote as they wished. Soldiers told the president that they had been promised gifts if they did not vote for the SLPP.

#### POSTELECTION DEPLOYMENT

Following the announcement on May 17 of the final results for the 2002 Sierra Leone elections, The Carter Center redeployed four teams to assess and report on the postelectoral environment. Of specific interest were the extremely high voter

turnout numbers in the SLPP-dominated Eastern and Southern regions, any formal petitions to the NEC, and preparations for the election of 12 paramount chiefs to Parliament. The postelectoral deployment also provided an opportunity for the Center to assess possible future programming in Sierra Leone regarding the rule of law and human rights.

Carter Center delegates traveled to Bo and Pujehun districts May 21-23, to Kailahun and Kenema districts May 23-24, and to Bombali district on May 29. Whenever possible, meetings were held with local NEC officials, political party representatives, U.N. staff, and local NGO representatives in each region. Additional meetings were held in Freetown throughout this period. After the closing of EU-EOM district LTO offices immediately after the election, The Carter Center was the only international delegation still deployed until the end of May. While the following reflections are based on a small sample of interviews soon after the elections, they were confirmed, when possible, by later published reports.

#### *Electoral Complaints and the Status of Opposition Political Parties*

There was a high degree of acceptance of the election results throughout the country, and there were no confirmed reports of significant postelectoral violence anywhere. Of particular concern was the potential for violence by former RUF fighters, whose political party did not garner any parliamentary seats. Those fears were unfounded. Carter Center delegates who were redeployed after the elections reported that local representatives of most opposition parties in the regions showed little resentment about the results of the election. However, some opposition leaders in Freetown reported cases of underage and multiple voting



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

and voiced more general concerns about the SLPP's overwhelming majority in the new Parliament and in President Kabbah's new cabinet. The APC, which had the second strongest electoral showing in both the presidential and parliamentary contests, enumerated serious specific complaints about the election process in a press release but publicly expressed its acceptance of the election results and its desire to act as a loyal opposition.

Although the acceptance of the results was a very positive sign, it was expected that some formal complaints would be presented to the NEC, as provided for by the Electoral Laws Act. However, very few official complaints were filed by any of the participants in the process. Of the four significant complaints that were lodged with the NEC, none received a timely response. These included reports of intimidation against MOP presidential candidate Zainab Bangura and her supporters in three locations and a contention by the MOP that a supporter had been fired from his civil service job for political reasons. Two calls for the rejection of the results were made by five political parties in Koinadugu on multiple grounds and by the APC secretary general in several parts of the country because the number of valid and spoiled ballots allegedly exceeded the number of ballot papers issued.

Other aspects of Carter Center observers' reports raised concerns about the future health of opposition political parties in Sierra Leone. The APC retained a strong presence in Freetown and the North, but the party quickly and almost completely disappeared from the South and East, where their offices were closed and party members

were difficult to locate. The RUF also underwent a rapid process of fragmentation and disintegration, with the leadership abandoning offices in the South and East and leaving its headquarters in Freetown inactive immediately following election day. RUF members began defecting to the SLPP and APC, and some loyal RUF members who were interviewed expressed feelings of isolation and resentment. Members of the MOP were understandably frustrated by the party's poor showing in the elections and its inability to establish itself as a progressive alternative to the SLPP and APC. The MOP had provided some of the most salient criticisms of the electoral process, including the government's failure to investigate corruption charges against high-level NEC officials.

#### *Paramount Chiefs in Parliament*

Twelve of the 124 parliamentary seats were reserved for paramount chiefs, one of whom was chosen from each of 12 districts, excluding Freetown. Originally scheduled for May 5, the elections for paramount chiefs in Parliament were delayed until June 10. Each paramount chief was selected by the members of a district's multiple chiefdom councils, whose councilors each represent 20 male taxpayers. There are a total of 149 chiefdoms in Sierra Leone. In six districts, the councils identified a consensus candidate for paramount chief, thereby avoiding the need for an election. Chiefs chosen without an election were understood by many observers as being closely allied with the SLPP. In districts with more than one parliamentary paramount chief candidate, elections were held in June. A nationwide election for more than 60 other chiefs was scheduled for the end of 2002. ■



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

## POSTELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

## PARAMOUNT CHIEF ELECTIONS

Paramount chiefs are the traditional community leaders in Sierra Leone and an essential part of the administrative and judicial order at the local level. Protecting community safety and resolving disputes are among the responsibilities of paramount chiefs.

After independence in 1961, the paramount chieftancy system deteriorated, contributing to the erosion of law and order in the country

and to the civil war. According to a statement by President Kabbah in January 2003, the restoration of local rule by paramount chiefs through elections is an “attempt to restore the past, and where necessary, modernize the governance structure of the chieftancy to make it more effective, relevant, and democratic.”<sup>3</sup>

Traditionally, a paramount chief was the most senior, suitable male descendant from among the original founders of the territory he ruled. The British colonial administrators of Sierra Leone reinforced this hereditary system of territorial power. Later, politicians in Sierra Leone appointed paramount chiefs who were not recognized by their communities in an effort to control local areas through their designated chiefs. Among the casualties of this political interference were the

traditional dispute resolution systems to address contentious issues such as land tenure and family matters. The dissolution of the corrupt local government system by President Stevens in 1972 and the creation of a separate system of local civil service administration, including local courts as part of

the executive branch of government, further complicated the situation.

In 2002, President Kabbah’s government initiated a local government reform and decentral-

ization program designed to clarify and improve the structures of government at the local level, beginning with nationwide paramount chieftancy elections. Chieftom councilors, each representing 20 taxpayers in an area, formed the electorate. Significant features of this election system include the fact that traditionally women did not pay taxes and were therefore not represented and could not be elected. The tenure of chieftancy positions is also a matter of concern, with councilors essentially “taking turns” and holding long or unspecified terms in office. In addition, the tax collection system is manipulated in many areas so that only supporters of powerful councilors are given receipts for their taxes and can therefore be represented.

Elections in 63 chiefdoms across the country were originally scheduled for October-November 2002 but were postponed until December 2002–January 2003. Polling in at least three chiefdoms was postponed due to accusations of political

---

*After independence in 1961,  
the paramount chieftancy system deteriorated,  
contributing to the erosion of law and order  
in the country and to the civil war.*

---

3 Statement delivered by President Kabbah on the formal recognition of paramount chiefs at Kenema, Bo, Makeni, and Port Loko from January 26-30, 2003, paragraph 1.3.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

interference. Violence erupted for a short time in one chiefdom in Koinadugu district and was restrained with help from UNAMSIL. Nevertheless, monitors of the chieftancy elections, including the CGG, concluded that the process was largely credible. At least one woman was elected paramount chief, defeating five male contestants for the post. Local government elections are expected in late 2003.

#### UNAMSIL'S DIMINISHING ROLE AND THE RENEWAL OF CONFLICT IN THE MRU

At the request of President Kabbah, the UNSC extended UNAMSIL's mandate for another six months in September 2002 with the intent to decrease gradually the number of peacekeeping troops in Sierra Leone over time. UNAMSIL's objectives under the renewed mandate include providing technical support to the SLP, the SLA, the judiciary, and other divisions of the government of Sierra Leone. Strengthening the government's administrative capacities is considered essential to the consolidation of peace and democratic development in the country. Other aspects of the mandate include facilitating the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons, as well as the reintegration of the remaining 24,000 ex-combatants. Of particular concern are the large numbers of disaffected and unemployed youth, primarily in urban centers, as well as the security of the diamond-producing areas of the country and the renewal of fighting in Liberia.

In spite of these concerns following the successful 2002 elections, 4,500 out of 17,500 UNAMSIL personnel were scheduled to leave the country by May 2003. Only about 5,000 international peacekeepers and support personnel are expected to remain in Sierra Leone by the end of 2004. The

continuing role of the United Nations after UNAMSIL's mandate expires will center on supporting a broad national recovery strategy and responding to the long-term humanitarian needs of refugees and IDPs.

One of the most important factors affecting the future of Sierra Leone is the escalation or renewal of conflicts involving Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire during the year after the May 2002 elections. Former Liberian warlord and now President Charles Taylor is regarded by many people as the primary source of West Africa's current instability. An ICG report, "Sierra Leone After Elections: Politics as Usual?" notes that President Taylor has "destabilizing ambitions and the tools to pursue them."<sup>4</sup> However, the governments of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire share responsibility for the recent escalation in regional conflicts. Guinea has violated the arms embargo against Liberia by supplying arms and military assistance to Liberians United for the Restoration of Democracy (LURD) insurgents. In addition, a new civil war in western Côte d'Ivoire is characterized by abuses against civilians, including reprisal killings and rape, by government forces, rebels, and mercenaries from Liberia and elsewhere.

Despite elections and a formal return to civilian rule in 1997, Liberia has yet to consolidate any democratic gains and remains in deep crisis. Fighting between the Liberian government and LURD insurgents intensified during the electoral period in Sierra Leone, and the Carter Center's delegation tracked events closely, with particular concern for the delegates from the MRU. A state of emergency was declared in Liberia in February 2002, and the UNSC extended sanctions against the country just before the Sierra Leone elections.

4 ICG Africa Report No. 49, page ii.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

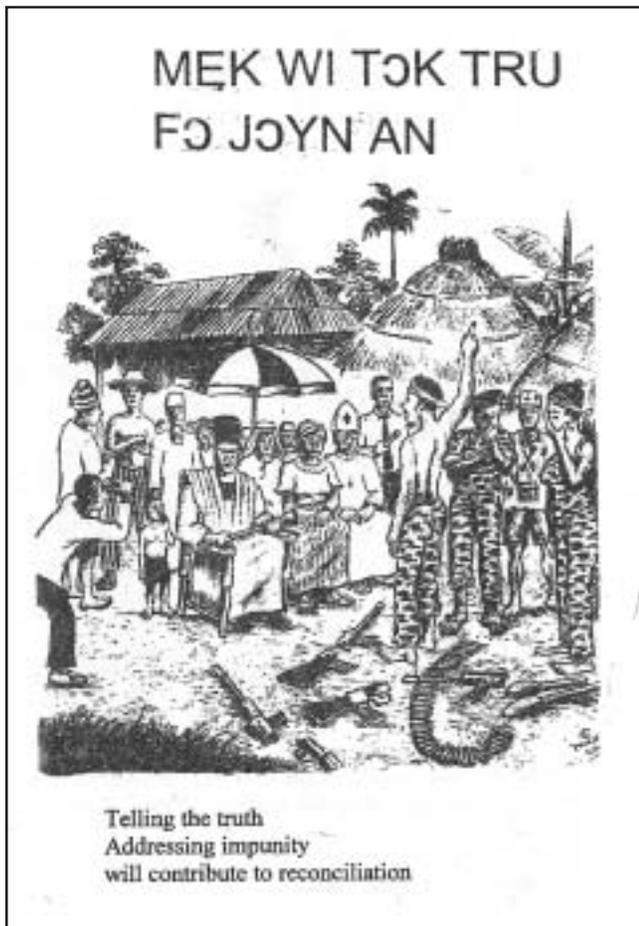
The renewed violence in Liberia resulted in a fresh influx of more than 32,000 refugees fleeing to already crowded camps in Sierra Leone, with more going to neighboring Guinea. Combatants crossed into Sierra Leone to loot or escape fighting and renewed their tactics of abducting people for ransom and forced labor. The history of the MRU demonstrates that violent conflict in one country is cause for serious concern for other countries in the subregion. Continued vigilance

and commitment from the international community will be necessary to protect Sierra Leone's fragile peace.

### THE SIERRA LEONE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC) AND SPECIAL COURT

The 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement authorized the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to "address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, [and] get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate healing and reconciliation."<sup>5</sup> The TRC began gathering written statements from approximately 6,000 individuals in 2002 and hearings commenced in April 2003, presided over by four commissioners from Sierra Leone and three non-nationals. It is anticipated that approximately 700 people will testify at the TRC, including victims and perpetrators, who can seek public forgiveness without retribution. This impartial documentation and public acknowledgment of the crimes committed in Sierra Leone are intended to help fulfill the Lomé Peace Agreement's aspiration for reconciliation and lasting peace.

Procedurally, the TRC has jurisdiction over human rights abuses committed by any party between 1991 and July 1999. The TRC has no power to prosecute or punish, but it may compel testimony and conduct any investigations it perceives as necessary to the establishment of the truth. Procedural safeguards are provided for the confidentiality of testimony and protection of witnesses, and special provisions are made for receiving testimony from women and children. The hearings, which are



*Pamphlets on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), with text in local languages and English, were widely distributed to encourage both victims and perpetrators to participate in the commission's proceedings.*

<sup>5</sup> Peace Agreement Between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (Lomé Peace Agreement), July 7, 1999, Article XXVI, subsection 1.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

expected to last 18 months, will culminate in a report documenting human rights abuses, analyzing the conflict, and making binding recommendations to the Sierra Leone government. These recommendations will address reparation, the prevention of future human rights abuses, and the continuing facilitation of the reconciliation process. A national committee will be established to monitor the implementation of these recommendations.

Sierra Leone is unique in that the TRC and an *ad hoc* tribunal, the Sierra Leone Special Court, have been established simultaneously. The Lomé Agreement included an amnesty for all parties in order to facilitate disarmament and reconciliation. However, the failure of the RUF to comply with the terms of the agreement led the Sierra Leone government to reconsider this amnesty provision. The government appealed to the United Nations to establish a Special Court to prosecute those "who bear the greatest responsibility for the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law and crimes committed under Sierra Leonean law."<sup>6</sup> In fact, under prevailing international jurisprudence and in the opinion of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, no amnesty may ever be given for crimes against humanity. Sierra Leone's request for a Special Court was approved by the UNSC, and the Sierra Leone Parliament adopted implementing legislation in March 2002.

The Sierra Leone Special Court is a unique hybrid tribunal, applying both international and Sierra Leone law and composed of Sierra Leonean and non-national judges, with a prosecutor from the United States. Located in the country where

the crimes took place, the court is intended to avoid some of the bureaucratic pitfalls of the tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and is expected to complete its mandate within three years. The Special Court is also the first tribunal to address the crimes of child abduction and forced recruitment. For these reasons, the court is of special interest to legal observers. This is particularly true

given the establishment of, and the United States' opposition to, a permanent International Criminal Court established at The Hague during the same year.

The Special Court

in Sierra Leone has broad jurisdiction to indict citizens of Sierra Leone and other countries for crimes committed in Sierra Leone between November 1996 and 2002. However, the court is expected to prosecute only approximately 20 individuals who had the greatest authority and responsibility for crimes committed. Of greatest potential importance is the issue of whether the court will indict and prosecute Liberian President Charles Taylor for his role in the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone. The first indictments were handed down in March 2003 against seven individuals, including the RUF's Foday Sankoh, former AFRC leader and current member of Parliament Johnny Paul Koroma, and former leader of the Kamajors and current Interior Minister Sam Hinga Norman. Charles Taylor is mentioned by name in several of the indictments. ■

---

*Sierra Leone is unique in that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and an ad hoc tribunal, the Sierra Leone Special Court, have been established simultaneously.*

---

---

<sup>6</sup> Agreement Between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone On the Establishment of a Special Court for Sierra Leone, January 16, 2002, preamble, paragraph 2.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The presidential and parliamentary elections of May 2002 demonstrated the profound desire of the Sierra Leonean people to put the horrors of the past behind them and to build a future of reconciliation and democratic development. The lack of political violence during the elections was particularly remarkable given the recent history of the country, the pressures exerted by ongoing conflicts in the subregion, and the physical and psychological damage suffered by so much of the population. If the victims of past abuses had chosen retribution and revenge, Sierra Leone would still be mired in violence. The citizens of Sierra Leone opted, instead, for peace.

Sierra Leone's future is as dependent on the progress of the subregion as it is on the consolidation of democracy at home. Conflicts involving Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire have the real

possibility of spilling over borders through increasing refugee flows or by political design. The people of Sierra Leone and the international community have invested too much, however, to allow Sierra Leone to return to war. Consolidating stability and democracy will require, as a matter of urgent priority, a vigilant commitment to resolve the conflict in Liberia, both for the sake of the people in that country and for all people in the subregion. The United Nations and ECOWAS are to be commended for their efforts in Sierra Leone, and they should match this success with equal dedication to Liberia. The international community also should consider extending the arms embargo to Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire and should hold those governments accountable for their contributions to regional chaos and atrocities.



*The leaders of the EU-EOM and Commonwealth delegations joined with President Soglo (right), representing The Carter Center, for a press conference on May 16 to present the preliminary election assessments of each delegation.*

STEVE MAXWELL



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

Meanwhile, Sierra Leone has an unprecedented opportunity to become a model of reconciliation and democratic development for its neighbors. The United Nations has never before committed so much energy and so many resources to a country in transition. As UNAMSIL begins to phase out, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Special Court both are beginning their historic work. The international community and the government and people of Sierra Leone should do everything possible to ensure that these institutions are free from political interference and that their work is understood and respected by the public.

Sierra Leone also must use the remaining time in UNAMSIL's mandate, and the period before the next elections, to strengthen its electoral, administrative, financial, legislative, and judicial systems. Democracy is not secured by a single election, no matter how successful; democratic governance is not a static event, but an ongoing process of political development. The Carter Center offers the following recommendations for the consolidation of Sierra Leone's progress during the 2002 elections:

### **DDR and Census**

The completion of the DDR process and a comprehensive census are essential to the effective reintegration of as many as 450,000 returning refugees and IDPs, 70,000 of whom are still in Guinea and Liberia, as well as the demobilization of 72,000 former combatants, including approximately 24,000 former RUF fighters and 37,000 CDF. Both perpetrators and victims, including

former child combatants who committed atrocities and abducted women who experienced sexual violence, need support during this process of national resettlement and reconciliation. NGOs should supplement the efforts of the government and the international community to accomplish

these goals. Following a decade of war and mass dislocations of the population, a comprehensive census also will help facilitate the government's equitable allocation of state

resources for the reintegration and long-term development of the country.

### **Review of the Electoral Framework**

Sierra Leone's 1991 constitution calls for a single-seat constituency system for parliamentary elections, but a national list proportional representation system was adopted for the 1996 polls and a district block system was used in 2002. A national consultative process is needed to determine whether to return to the single-seat system under which voters in a constituency would elect a representative who is directly accountable to them. If the next elections are held using single-seat system, a census would be particularly important for defining constituencies of relatively equal numbers of citizens. The electoral system review also should address whether to retain the provision for a Special Voting Day.

### **Voter Registration Process**

Sierra Leone should consider adopting a process for continuous voter registration to replace the house-to-house system used in 1996 and the short-term voter registration centers established in 2002. The NEC should make strong efforts to

---

*If the victims of past abuses had chosen retribution and revenge, Sierra Leone would still be mired in violence. The citizens of Sierra Leone opted, instead, for peace.*

---



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

ensure that voter registration is handled equitably around the country in order to avoid perceptions of regional, ethnic, or political bias. Underage and multiple registrations should be expunged from voters lists, and all voters should be provided with photo ID cards. NGO observers and political parties should scrutinize voters lists closely both in their present form, in order to make recommendations, and during the exhibition of the lists prior to the next elections.

### ***Voter Education***

The confusion created during the 2002 elections among voters about registration and voting processes should be addressed by continuing civic education during the years between national elections. This educational process should be spearheaded by the NEC, NGOs, and political parties. Better voter education in advance of the next elections will help avoid the need for polling officials to assist voters, thereby protecting the secrecy of the vote

and diminishing the risk of political interference. Broad civic education should focus on issues of government accountability, including the relationship between constituents and their elected representatives, and the civic responsibility to remain politically engaged in nonelection years. The equitable allocation of resources for building schools and enhancing the educational system would help foster a more literate and informed electorate. The media also should improve its outreach beyond Freetown and regional centers and should take steps to improve the accuracy and objectivity of reporting. During the next election campaign, the SLBS and other media outlets must make greater efforts to provide equal access and airtime for all political parties.

### ***Political Party Strengthening***

Many political parties in Sierra Leone are active only during electoral periods and even then do not take full advantage of opportunities to



*An SLPP billboard bears a photo of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the slogan "He Delivered What He Promised."*

THE CARTER CENTER



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

influence the process positively. Available media time was not used consistently by all political parties, and parties failed to educate and mobilize their supporters fully during the elections. Formal electoral complaint procedures also should be utilized to address problems as they arise. Improved outreach to constituents is relevant to all parties, and especially those represented in Parliament. During current and future legislative sessions, the Center urges parties to build their capacity to respond to constituents' needs and opinions.

The Carter Center also recommends that the political parties develop meaningful manifestos articulating their positions on issues that matter to the citizens of Sierra Leone. Difficult public policy choices will need to be made in the coming years to define development priorities, allocate limited state resources, promote accountability at all levels of government, and resolve inevitable disputes over land tenure and other matters. The electorate renewed the SLPP's mandate in 2002 primarily because they perceived that a vote for President Kabbah was a vote for peace. The next elections will be a fuller referendum on governance and accountability. Opposition parties should enhance their ability to engage in robust political debate and to propose positive alternatives to government policies on the issues of the day.

### **Civil Society**

Both political parties and domestic civil society groups have an essential role to play in civic and voter education and in monitoring the next elections. These groups should design training programs to

improve their members' capacity to monitor effectively all phases of the election process, from voter education and registration to final tabulation and resolution of disputes. During the year prior to the 2002 elections, several NGOs were instrumental in raising public awareness about corruption and other problems and influencing government decisions

---

*The electorate renewed the SLPP's mandate in 2002 primarily because they perceived that a vote for President Kabbah was a vote for peace. The next elections will be a fuller referendum on governance and accountability.*

---

about the electoral framework. Civil society groups should build upon this important work, forging coalitions whenever possible and deepening their capacity to harness the energy of the citizenry, respond

to their concerns, and affect public policy for the benefit of all people in Sierra Leone.

### **NEC Election Administration**

The NEC must conduct a systematic review of the 2002 electoral process in order to identify problems in the administration of the polls and take remedial action. Although voting was well-administered in most cases, procedures during later stages in the process were not followed consistently. Election officials need more training about the detailed steps to be taken for counting, reconciling, and tabulating ballots. These procedures, as well as the regulations for securing and transporting ballot boxes, should be made as transparent as possible. Communication systems among polling stations and district, regional, and national election offices must also be enhanced. This will be particularly challenging without the support of the United Nations during the next elections, unless there is a significant investment in the infrastructure of the country.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

***Bias and Corruption***

The most consistent theme heard from political parties and observers during the elections was the perception of political bias at the NEC, among registration and polling officials, and through the influence of paramount chiefs. The Carter Center offers these recommendations for procedural and administrative change at the NEC in order to address these perceptions:

- Recruit registration and polling station officials broadly from every area of the country, in consultation with all political parties, and provide comprehensive training in the neutral administration of elections.
- Minimize the political influence of paramount chiefs during elections, or include them in training exercises to enhance their neutrality.
- Ensure that all political parties receive information and materials equitably and in a timely fashion. For example, voter education materials, polling station lists, and accreditation forms should be provided as early as possible and in sufficient quantities to ensure full participation by all parties at every stage in the process.
- Enhance voter education efforts in multiple languages, and ensure that all areas of the country benefit from these programs equally.
- Resolve candidate nomination disputes through the courts, as provided by law.
- Exercise vigilance against interparty intimidation and violence, and provide clear procedures for receiving and resolving complaints, especially during the campaign period.
- Respond promptly and thoroughly to post-election formal complaints, and ensure that there are transparent procedures for doing so.

The government of Sierra Leone also is urged to ensure that the corruption charges brought against NEC officials in 2002 are fully investigated by the Anti-Corruption Commission and that prosecutions are sought, if appropriate. The commission must be empowered to pursue vigorously these and all other allegations of corruption among government officials, including members of the cabinet. The Carter Center also recommends that the positions of attorney general and minister of justice should be separated in order to provide greater accountability through an independent judicial system.

Sierra Leone faced almost insurmountable hurdles in the effort to organize elections that conformed to international standards, ranging from enormous logistical challenges to the fact that combatants who had only recently laid down their weapons were campaigning and voting side by side. In general, however, The Carter Center concludes that the electoral process in Sierra Leone enabled voters to freely express their democratic choices and that the official results reflected the will of the voters. Although the elections were far from perfect, they were characterized by robust political participation, inclusiveness, competence, and dignity. There is a long road still ahead, but the people of Sierra Leone have many reasons to be proud of the distance they have already traveled. The peaceful and credible elections in Sierra Leone, the continuing commitment of the international community to UNAMSIL, and the first indictments handed down by the newly established Sierra Leone Special Court provide reasons for hope. ■



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Carter Center wishes to acknowledge the generosity of the Ashcroft Foundation, established by philanthropist Lord Ashcroft KCMG. Our Sierra Leone election observation mission would not have been possible without this vital support. The Center also expresses its appreciation to the government and the NEC of Sierra Leone for inviting the Center to observe and assess the electoral process in their country.

We are particularly grateful for the collaborative efforts of Sierra Leonean and international groups who were essential to the success of our delegation. Sincere thanks go to the representatives of civil society groups in Sierra Leone who joined with their colleagues from the MRU on the Carter Center's delegation to coordinate future peace-building efforts. Samuel Kofi Woods of the International Human Rights Law Group office in Sierra Leone played a key role in this process. For their guidance throughout the Center's observation mission and during our postelection programming assessment, we offer special thanks to Olayinka Creighton-Randall and Abdul Tejan-Cole of CGG and to Tom Perriello.

Joe Hall of NDI and Sue Palmer and Simon Clarke from IFES deserve special mention for their generous and consistent support to our delegation and for their organizations' strong contributions to the Sierra Leone election process. We also would like to acknowledge other individuals who made significant contributions to the Carter Center delegation briefings sessions, including Dr. Comfort Ero of the ICG, Sarah Muscroft of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Rodolpho Matarollo of the U.N. Human

Rights Office in Sierra Leone, and Human Rights Watch's Corinne Dufka.

Delegations from the EU, the Commonwealth, the OAU, and ECOWAS worked in close cooperation with The Carter Center during the Sierra Leone election process. We are especially grateful to Carlo Accame, deputy chief observer of the EU-EOM, and Christopher Child of the Commonwealth Observer Group, who were instrumental in facilitating this collaboration. The leaders of each of the international delegations, including Johan Van Hecke of the EU and Dr. Lloyd Axworthy from the Commonwealth, also deserve acknowledgment. Thanks go to the EU-EOM LTOs, and especially those in Bo and Kenema, who provided briefings during the joint helicopter trip for international delegations' leadership teams. In addition, we wish to acknowledge the support of the U.N. election office, which facilitated coordination and information-sharing among all observation groups, particularly with regard to logistics and security.

The Carter Center delegation would not have been possible without the dedication of all of its delegates, who gave their time and energy to support the mission, and who were always professional and enthusiastic in difficult and potentially dangerous circumstances. Special thanks are owed to former Benin President Nicéphore Soglo for his leadership of the election mission, demonstrating professionalism and personal commitment to the progress towards peace in West Africa. We are very grateful to delegates from the MRU, and especially from Liberia, who assumed personal risk to travel to Sierra Leone, separating them-



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

selves from their families and colleagues during a time of escalating conflict at home. These delegates enriched the Center's election mission in many ways, including through their vibrant contributions to planning meetings with civil society colleagues from Sierra Leone. The Center would like also to offer sincere thanks to Dr. John Harker, senior adviser to the Carter Center's delegation, for his valuable analysis, insightful guidance, and good company before and during the elections.

The Carter Center wishes to acknowledge the tireless work in very challenging circumstances of its Sierra Leone election mission staff. Gordon Streeb co-led the delegation and Ashley Barr managed the election observation project. Alex Bick, Nell Bolton, Joshua Walker, and Penelope Spain traveled to Sierra Leone in advance of the delegation to set up the Carter Center office, to prepare for deployment around the country, and to lay the foundation for the mission. The project would not have happened without their around-the-clock work and their unfailing good judgment and good humor. Delegate Tom Crick, senior political analyst in the Conflict Resolution Program at the Center,

and staff member Alex Bick have monitored and traveled to the region on behalf of the Center for several years. Their contributions to the election project were essential to its success in many ways. Nell Bolton also traveled to Guinea after the elections on behalf of the Center as part of our ongoing assessment of events in the subregion.

Other invaluable support to the delegation was provided in Sierra Leone by interns Jennifer Green and Caroline Branch and project financial manager Tom Eberhart and in Atlanta by intern Maury Mendenhall and Public Information Assistant Director for Peace Programs Kay Torrance. Special thanks also go to Sarah Tindall Ghazal, formerly a Carter Center field representative in Liberia and more recently responsible for the funding of the Sierra Leone project. Her advocacy from Atlanta on behalf of Liberian delegate Tiawan Gongloe helped ensure his safety. Carter Center Democracy Program Director Chuck Costello had overall responsibility for directing the Sierra Leone project, and Ashley Barr drafted this report, with support from Heather Curran and Jennifer Green and editorial assistance by Janet Tinsley, among others. ■



OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

APPENDIX 1



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Thursday, May 16, 2002

**CONTACT:** In Atlanta, Kay Torrance  
+001 (404) 420 5129  
In Freetown, Alex Bick  
+232 076 639 178

**Sierra Leone 2002 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections**  
INTERIM STATEMENT

FROM FORMER BENIN PRESIDENT NICEPHORE SOGLO – On behalf of The Carter Center election observation delegation and my co-leader, Ambassador Gordon Streeb, I would like to offer the following preliminary remarks about the Sierra Leone presidential and parliamentary elections on May 14, 2002:

**Broader Democratic and Peace Processes**

The May 14 elections represent a tremendous step forward for Sierra Leone. After ten years of devastating civil war, the Sierra Leonean people have made a courageous choice in favor of peace. They should be congratulated for this choice and every effort must be made to ensure that the peace will be a lasting one. Election day itself is only one part of this process. A long road still lies ahead for Sierra Leoneans as they seek to consolidate democratic institutions, reaffirm the rule of law, and build a framework for sustainable development.

It is incumbent upon the new government, all political parties, and the people of Sierra Leone to recognize the fragility of peace and work collectively to build a more tolerant, unified society. To achieve these goals, it will be necessary to reach out to opposition leaders and to find creative ways to address the concerns of those groups that believe they have been marginalized in the past. The new government will need to support the efforts of those trying to steer the youth of Sierra Leone towards a more constructive engagement with their country's future. This future will also require commitment to a genuine healing and appropriate judicial processes.

The elections in Sierra Leone also must be viewed within the context of the conflict among and within countries of the Mano River Union. Sierra Leone remains deeply connected to its neighbors and shares the sub-region's



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

collective fate. A stronger, peaceful Sierra Leone is a major victory for regional peace. Carter Center delegation members from Liberia called on the international community to recognize that the escalating crisis in Liberia has the strong potential to threaten Sierra Leone and the international community's substantial investment here.

**Democratic Participation**

Several groups should be recognized for their contribution to the electoral process. Voters turned out in high numbers for the polls, often waiting in line for several hours to cast their ballots. An important role was also played by domestic observer groups that were present throughout the country. We are hopeful that these groups will continue to build on their positive experiences during the election period.

Political party agents were essential to the integrity of voting day. The presence of representatives from several parties in many polling stations encouraged transparency and helped to enhance voter confidence. The role of party agents would have been improved if certain materials had been available earlier, especially the list of registered voters. More generally, political parties showed their commitment to find constructive, peaceful ways to participate in the governance of Sierra Leone and to strengthen their own internal capacity to represent their constituencies.

Sierra Leone should be commended for holding the May 14 elections under extremely difficult circumstances. Carter Center observers encountered many young, energetic and competent election officials. In addition, these officials showed a great deal of commitment to making the process inclusive, especially for disabled, displaced, or other persons who needed special assistance. Security personnel from both the Sierra Leone Police and UNAMSIL played a critical role in maintaining order and did not interfere in the process.

**Pre-Electoral Period**

While The Carter Center delegation observed only the immediate electoral period, our discussions with political parties and long-term observers included pre-electoral issues. Activities such as voter registration and campaigning, including the use of state resources and media coverage, typically help to determine whether the electoral environment is tilted toward one party or another. The registration process poses particular difficulties, not only in Sierra Leone, but throughout Africa and elsewhere. The imperfections of voter registration here and the absence of accurate census information had significant repercussions on polling day. For example, our observers noted a number of minors voting and found that many voters were confused about polling station locations.

The Carter Center has also received reports of intimidation of party agents during the campaign period and up to election day. Party representatives in Freetown as well as the districts have complained to our delegation that they lacked sufficient communication with or information from the National Electoral Commission. In particular, they should have received greater quantities of educational materials to train their polling agents, and copies of voter lists in a timely manner. NEC interaction with political parties appeared to favor well-structured parties with greater access to resources. Finally, our observers found voter education to be sorely deficient. In some instances where polling officials and domestic observers had to intervene, the secrecy of the ballot was compromised.

While we welcome the intention of the NEC to ensure security on voting day by providing for a Special Election Day for members of the military, police, and specific election officials, and we noted high levels of participation and order, this format created some specific problems.



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

Despite assurances given by the NEC that it would not be possible to identify the votes cast by specific units, ballots were counted separately and the information released. This compromised the secrecy of the ballot.

### **Election Day**

By and large, Carter Center observers found that election day proceeded smoothly throughout the country, with no substantiated reports of violence. This is an extremely important achievement. Materials also appeared to be in ample supply and polling officials and party agents worked together at many polling stations to assist the voting process.

However, at many stations voters and polling officials alike had too little information about the process, especially concerning the provisions for absentee and transfer voters. Lists were incomplete or lacking in many cases, causing confusion and some frustration. The mid-morning decision by the NEC to allow voters to cast their ballots at any polling station upon presentation of their voter ID cards was responsive to a tense situation and improved the atmosphere and the flow of voters. However, NEC announcements were inconsistently interpreted by polling officials and opened the door to potential abuses.

In meetings with political parties after election day, the leaders of our delegation heard other specific complaints. There were concerns that party agents were denied entry to polling stations and prevented from monitoring the process in several districts. There are also accusations that some ballot boxes were not secured during their transfer from polling stations to collation centers. Better communication between the NEC and UNAMSIL would have reduced these concerns.

Preliminary reports from Carter Center observers suggest problems in some districts, including multiple voting, underage voting, and direct interference with the marking of ballots. Whether witnessed by our observers or reported by others, these problems must be taken seriously in the interest of a transparent and credible process capable of winning the endorsement of all stakeholders.

### **Carter Center Delegation**

The Carter Center's 22-person observation delegation consists of election experts, regional specialists, human rights activists, and civic leaders from eight countries, including seven civil society representatives from the Mano River Union sub-region. Representatives of The Carter

Center traveled to Sierra Leone twice during the past year for pre-election assessments, and a small staff team arrived in Freetown on May 1, 2002. The majority of our delegation arrived on May 10 and held meetings with candidates from several political parties, the National Electoral Commission (NEC), Sierra Leonean civil society leaders, and representatives of diplomatic missions and the United Nations. Observation teams were deployed from May 12-16 to ten districts in each of the four provinces of Sierra Leone. The Center will issue a final statement about the elections once all delegates have reported their findings and the electoral process has been completed.

The role of our delegation in Sierra Leone has been to observe in an impartial manner and to convey our findings to the people of Sierra Leone and the international community. Our presence is intended to demonstrate the international community's support for peace and democracy through elections that reflect the will of the electorate of Sierra Leone and that meet minimum international standards. In addition, the mission's specific composition



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

sought to reinforce the efforts of regional civil society organizations as they work to enhance cooperation between the peoples of the Mano River Union.

The Carter Center is a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter, and based in Atlanta, GA, USA. Since 1989, the Center has observed more than 30 elections in 20 countries around the world. As observers, we remain partial to the democratic process, but strictly impartial to the results. Our goals are to play a supportive role in strengthening public confidence in the elections, deterring potential abuses, focusing international and domestic attention on the process, and reinforcing the work of domestic observers.

The Center has extensive experience working for peace, democracy, and human rights in West Africa. President Carter co-led a 40-person delegation to monitor the special elections in Liberia, and he visited the country on several other occasions. The Center's field office in Monrovia worked with human rights and other civil society groups from 1991 to 2000. The Center also worked with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to observe the multi-stage election process in Nigeria, culminating in a 66-person delegation co-led by President Carter to observe the February 1999 presidential elections. A Carter Center team is also currently in Mali observing the presidential election process.

### **Acknowledgments**

The Carter Center would like to express our appreciation to the delegations from the European Union, the Commonwealth, ECOWAS and the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in Sierra Leone, who have worked in cooperation with us during the last two weeks. In addition, we are grateful for the efforts of the United Nations Electoral Unit, which has facilitated coordination and information-sharing among all observation groups, particularly with regard to logistics and security. Our thanks also go to representatives of Sierra Leonean and international civil society groups who contributed to the briefings for our delegation on the politics, law, and electoral process of Sierra Leone prior to the election.



OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

APPENDIX 2

**May 2002 Election Results in Sierra Leone**

<b>President</b>	<b>percent</b>
Ahmad Tejan Kabbah (Sierra Leone People's Party) . . . . .	70.1
Ernest Bai Koroma (All People's Congress) . . . . .	22.3
Johnny Paul Koroma (Peace and Liberation Party) . . . . .	3.0
Alimamy Pallo Bangura (Revolutionary United Front Party) . . . . .	1.7
John Karefa-Smart (United National People's Party) . . . . .	1.0

<b>Parliament</b>	<b>seats</b>
Sierra Leone People's Party . . . . .SLPP . . . . .	83
All People's Congress . . . . .APC . . . . .	27
Peace and Liberation Party . . . . .PLP . . . . .	2
<b>TOTAL SEATS</b> . . . . .	<b>112</b>

*Sources: [www.electionworld.org/election/sierraleone.htm](http://www.electionworld.org/election/sierraleone.htm)  
and [www.ifes-sierraleone.org](http://www.ifes-sierraleone.org)*



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

# THE CARTER CENTER AT A GLANCE

**Overview:** The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. A nongovernmental organization, the Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 65 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; improving mental health care; and teaching farmers to increase crop production.

**Accomplishments:** The Center has observed 45 elections in 23 countries; helped farmers double or triple grain production in 15 African countries; mediated or worked to prevent civil and international conflicts worldwide; intervened to prevent unnecessary diseases in Latin America and Africa, including the near eradication of Guinea worm disease; and strived to diminish the stigma against mental illness.

**Budget:** \$33.9 million 2001-2002 operating budget.

**Donations:** The Center is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization, financed by private donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and international development assistance agencies. Contributions by U.S. citizens and companies are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

**Facilities:** The nondenominational Cecil B. Day Chapel and other facilities are available for weddings, corporate retreats and meetings, and other special events. For information, (404) 420-5112.

**Internships:** The Center's internship program has been rated one of America's best by the Princeton Review.

**Location:** In a 35-acre park, about 1.5 miles east of downtown Atlanta. The Jimmy Carter Library and Museum, which adjoins the Center, is owned and operated by the National Archives and Records Administration and is open to the public. (404) 331-3942.

**Staff:** 150 employees, based primarily in Atlanta.



MARTIN FRANK



## OBSERVING THE 2002 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Carter Center, in partnership with Emory University, is guided by a fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering; it seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and improve health.

While the program agenda may change, The Carter Center is guided by five principles:

- The Center emphasizes action and results. Based on careful research and analysis, it is prepared to take timely action on important and pressing issues.
- The Center does not duplicate the effective efforts of others.
- The Center addresses difficult problems and recognizes the possibility of failure as an acceptable risk.
- The Center is nonpartisan and acts as a neutral in dispute resolution activities.
- The Center believes that people can improve their lives when provided with the necessary skills, knowledge, and access to resources.

The Carter Center collaborates with other organizations, public or private, in carrying out its mission.

inside back cover



THE CARTER CENTER  
THE DEMOCRACY PROGRAM

ONE COPENHILL  
453 FREEDOM PARKWAY  
ATLANTA, GA 30307

(404) 420-5100 ◆ FAX (404) 420-5145

[WWW.CARTERCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.CARTERCENTER.ORG)