



## PROJECT REPORT - PHASE ONE (1)

**PROJECT TITLE:** Sierra Leone Democracy Strengthening Project

### INTRODUCTION

The “Sierra Leone Democracy Strengthening” project aimed at supporting democratic institutions and civil society (including the media) in Sierra Leone towards a credible and peaceful conduct of the 2023 elections, as well as providing support to reform processes in the years after the elections to contribute to further consolidation of democratic gains in Sierra Leone.

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to the achievement of the European Union’s (EU’s) strategic objectives in Sierra Leone - to support the country in view of its transition from a post conflict context towards an inclusive and sustainable developmental path by enabling conditions for inclusive, credible, transparent, and peaceful electoral and political processes. At the global level, the project will contribute towards progress in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.6.

In that light, the National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), agreeing to work with International IDEA, along other government and non-governmental organizations to implement Strategic Objectives (SO) of the “Sierra Leone Democracy Strengthening” project, which focuses on enhancing “active and inclusive participation of citizens in electoral and political processes, with a particular focus on women, youth and persons with disability.

NaCCED is a national institution committed to deepening democracy and good governance and promoting national cohesion and sustainable development through civic education and development communications, civic engagement, community mobilization and knowledge management. NaCCED has a mandate to devise innovate approaches for the promotion of good citizenship.

### THE PROJECT SET OUT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THREE SPECIFIC (SO) OBJECTIVES:

- SO 1: To enhance active and inclusive participation of citizens in electoral and political processes, with a particular focus on women, youth and persons with disabilities;
- SO 2: To strengthen the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone’s (ECSL’s) capacity to conduct credible and inclusive presidential, parliamentary and local elections in 2023 and beyond;
- SO 3: To improve ECSL and relevant civil society organizations’ capacity to contribute to resolving election disputes timely and peacefully before, during and after the elections;

### PLANNED ACTIVITIES:

As part of NaCCED’s role in the implementation of the “Sierra Leone Democracy Strengthening” project, several pre and post-election activities were identified:

- MOU with International IDEA
- Youth political perception survey
- Message development seminar
- Bulk SMS Text message dissemination
- Stakeholder/ Duty bearer dialogue sessions
- Smart voter App development
- Train and deploy Youth Ambassadors (Regional level)
- Bullhorn campaign
- Information, Education and Communication materials

- Develop audio- visual jingles
- Pre-test audio -visual jingles
- Air audio-visual jingle
- Radio discussions
- Edutainment (Regional level)
- Community dialogue session (Regional level)
- Bullhorn campaign

**ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT:**

- **NaCCED Signed MOU with International IDEA:** following several engagements and discussions between staff of International IDEA and NaCCED, a Memorandum of Understanding was drafted, reviewed and later signed on Wednesday April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at NaCCED’s 21 Steward Street office in Freetown. This was done by NaCCED’s Chairman Mr. Kalilu I. Totangi, Dr. Roba Sharamo - Regional Director for IIDEA, and witnessed by Dr. Idrissa Mamoud Tarawallie - Head of Program, Mr. Francis Kobie Director of Administration and Human Resources. Other staff present were Mr. Tawanda Chimhini – Consultant, Ms. Benigna Ejimba - Program Officer Ms Patricia Conteh Communications Coordinator, Mr. Kissma Gassama Director of Communication and Outreach. This was to have a formal partnership agreement in the implementation of the project



- **Youth Political Perception Survey Outsourced to the Institute for Governance Reform (IGR):** this activity was outsourced to the Institute for Governance Reform (IGR). This perception survey was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches targeting both male and female youths but also included some elderly male and female stakeholders across the country, on youth perception, attitudes and participation in electoral processes in Sierra Leone. Specifically, the research focused on the following: Youth and participation in governance, barriers and enablers of voting for young men and young women, perceptions about election management bodies and political parties, policy priorities for the 2023 election and electoral violence and innovative contributions to peace. The survey was done in June.



- **Press Conference to Disseminate Findings of the Survey Targeting Key Stakeholders (Freetown).** Total number of fifty-six (56) participants, which included but not limited to: NaCCED staff, International IDEA, EU, National Youth Commission, PPRC, IGR, the Media (TV and Radio),

the Security Sector, Traditional Chiefs, youth groups, women’s groups, persons with disabilities, etc. It was held on Tuesday May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the Bank of Sierra Leone Complex, Kingtom in Freetown. We shared the survey findings, discussed them, and promoted critical aspects of the results. This was followed by several media engagements to promote the survey findings nation-wide.



- Voter Education and Violence Prevention Message Development Seminar:** a total of sixty-two (62) participants took part in this event, and it was held at the Sierra Leone Bank Complex. Mr. Umaru Fofanah BBC reporter chaired the sessions. There were participants from the Sierra Leone Police, student representatives from Fourah Bay College (FBC) and Institute of Public Administration and Management (University of Sierra Leone), Njala University, National Youth Service corps, NaCCED, National Youth Commission, Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Institute of Governance Reform (IGR), the Media (TV and Radio), etc. It was held on Thursday May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the Bank of Sierra Leone Complex, Kingtom in Freetown. During the session, stakeholders identified and discussed potential threats and issues around the 2023 elections, and also developed messages and messaging strategies to address them.



- SMS Text Message Dissemination:** Apphive SL Limited- a text messaging service provider was contracted to send voter and electoral education messages. A total of 1.6 million people were targeted. This was to encourage and promote citizens participation in the collection of Voter ID card, voting, and to maintain peace.
- Production and Broadcast of Information Education and Communication Materials-** Reflexx Media was contracted to produce audio jingles in four languages (krio, mende, Temne, English), video jingle, as well as aired them on radio and television stations nationwide. This was to convey and disseminate accurate and adequate information relevant to increasing democratic participation and violence prevention. Cutting Edge Printing services produced four thousand (4000) posters with messages promoting participation and non-violence, and we recruited young people across the country who helped us paste them at strategic locations in their communities.
- Regional Community Engagement/Duty Bearer Dialogue Session:** dialogue sessions with duty bearers or stakeholders in the regional headquarter towns were conducted. This was to encourage and improve democratic participation especially of marginalized and vulnerable groups, as well as to

help ensure the spread and dissemination of relevant information. The sessions were held at the District Council Hall in Kenema on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2023, the Bo Pastoral Centre on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, District Council Hall in Makeni on June 8<sup>th</sup>, National Disaster Management Agency conference hall in Port Loko on June 12<sup>th</sup>, and the New Brookfields Hotel in Freetown on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023. There were representatives from ECSL, IIDEA, NaCCED, Inter-religious Council, Paramount Chiefs, PPRC, Security sector (SLP, RSLAF, ONS), Senior District Officers, women’s groups, and young people from different demographics (okada and kekeh riders, ataya bases, traders, etc).



- **Bullhorn Campaign** – 290 young men and women within the youth age bracket were identified and trained in the five (5) regions. The training focused on: Civic Education, Citizen’s Rights and Responsibilities, Diversity and Peaceful Coexistence and Elections and Non-Violence Campaign. After the training, they were handed megaphones, posters, and provided stipend to take the campaign to promote participation and to maintain peace to various communities in all regions.



- **Radio discussions-** Several radio discussions were held in five (5) regional headquarter towns. The discussions promoted electoral and voter education and participation. We also used this platform to announce the regional engagements (duty bearer engagement, youth training and the edutainment sessions). In Makeni the radio discussion was done at Amza and the engagement was moderated by a staff of the radio. The panelists were staff from NaCCED, Hindolo John Langba- Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) Officer, Mr. Ibrahim Jalloh- Northern Regional Coordinator, Ibrahim Tejan-Volunteer. In Kenema the discussion was held at the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC Kenema)- panelist were Mr. Batilo Janneh- Regional Coordinator East, Hindolo John Langba-Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Kissma Gassama, Director of Communications and Outreach. In Bo it was also held at Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC Bo), the panelists were Mr.

Paul Sengeh-Regional Coordinator South, and Hindolo John Langba, the M and E Officer. In Freetown, several radios were engaged to achieve the same objective.

- **Edutainment Sessions-** Five Education and Entertainment (Edutainment) sessions were held in Kenema, Bo, Makeni and Port Loko and Freetown. The edutainment session in Makeni was hosted at the Makeni Clock Tower, in Port Loko it was done at the Port Loko Independent Square, both Bo and Kenema's edutainment sessions were hosted at the plazas respectively. The last edutainment session was held in Freetown at the Cotton Tree Siaka Steven Street. These sessions featured five (5) local artistes from each district, who helped us reach out to their communities with customized peace and participation messages. These events were done in the evenings and anchored by the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of NaCCED, Mr. Hindolo John Langba.



#### **ACTIVITIES THAT WERE NOT CARRIED OUT:**

- Smart voter App development
- Train and deploy Youth Ambassadors (Regional level)

#### **High Level Project Success**

It is worth noting that various international and local partners provided technical and financial support to election management bodies, the Media, civil society organizations etc, towards increasing citizens participation and ensuring violence-free elections. Against this backdrop, and given that NaCCED is yet to evaluate the project - to determine our contribution in the mix of other interventions, we are unable to quantify the project success at the moment.

However, it is clear that this project is largely successful so far. Generally, the project interventions contributed significantly to citizens participation and maintaining peace before and during elections.

#### **CHALLENGES**

Although the project is considered very successful so far, there were challenges that impacted the smooth execution of the project. They include:

- The International IDEA approach to managing project has inherent challenges. The project budget is managed by IIDEA finance team; sometimes it took the team longer time than expected to access funds from the organization's regional office. This largely impacted NaCCED relationship with service providers
- Delay to address some concerns either due to busy schedule or slow response to emails affected project timelines.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

For improved project performance and relationship management, NaCCED recommends the following:

- International IDEA to open a bank account with a Sierra Leone bank where project funds are remitted. This will improve access to project funds when needed. This action is believed to

positively impact project financial management, project schedule, and NaCCED relationship with service providers.

- Prompt response to emails and project concerns: we believe that responding to concerns in real time helps improve project implementation and stakeholder relationships.