

# Report: National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED) 2023 Election Peace March/Float Parade

## Introduction:



The National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED), collaborating with the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) and other stakeholders organized a peace march/float parade in Freetown which aimed at promoting peace before, during and after the June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 general elections. The march took place on the 23rd June, a day before the elections. The event targeted mainly young people who are members (predominantly) of various clique groups and gangs in the Western Rural and Urban districts of the country.

Political processes in Sierra Leone over the years have been blighted by youths' extreme vulnerability to being manipulated into carrying out elections/political violence. This is much more so with the relatively recent trend of clique/gang culture among this category of young people.



To ensure that the impact of the event is felt across the regions (Western Rural and Urban), two separate routes were determined - one from Lumley in the West end and the other from Shell New Road in the East end, both finally converging at the Cotton Tree Roundabout at the center of the City.

As part of preparations for this event, the Chairman of NaCCED, Mr. Kalilu Totangi, held planning meetings with representatives of the 3 main clique/gang (Youth at Risk) groups in Freetown- East Hood, Crips and MOB. The Chairman further authorized his institution’s allocation of resources to the leadership of the groups to facilitate the event, including coordinating the groups.



They were also provided with promotional t-shirts and stickers bearing non-violence messages as well as tips to promote participation in the elections. In total, one thousand youths were targeted for the float parade.

**Event Objectives:**

- To ensure that the elections exercises were peaceful and violence free.
- To ensure that young people conducted themselves peacefully and avoided being used by politicians to perpetrate violence.
- To encourage and support the target groups to become peace ambassadors in their various communities.
- To enhance citizens’ safety before, during and after the elections.

**Event Participants:**

- Young people belonging to the three major gangs and others across Freetown
- NaCCED staff
- PPRC Staff

- Other partners (International IDEA)

### The Peace March:



On the day of the event, the target groups and other participants in the West end of Freetown set out from the Lumley Roundabout, and those in the East end started from Shell New Road, with both groups parading towards the Cotton Tree (the center of the City). At the Cotton Tree, they were addressed by several prominent figures including Mr. Kalilu Totangi, NaCCED Chairman, Mr. Abdulai Bangura, PPRC Chairman, Madam Benigna Ejimba, International IDEA Project Officer, and Mr. Habib Mansaray, Coordinator for the event, generally encouraging them to conduct themselves peacefully during the elections period. The event also featured peace promotion edutainment through songs and comedy performed by several musicians and comedians during the march as well as at the Cotton Tree Roundabout. These artists included Vamboi, C J Mack and Pastor George Bwanie. Additionally, staff of NaCCED, PPRC and other stakeholders also participated in the event. They also wore promotional t-shirts for peaceful elections. During the parade participating youths were provided with bottles of water for refreshment and stipends of one hundred new Leones (100 NL) each.

### Successes:

- The event mostly went as planned despite a few challenges.
- Coordination of the program was done very well.
- Youth representation from different backgrounds and political persuasions was high.
- Given prevailing elections related tensions, youth participants conducted themselves within the spirit of the event from start to finish.
- The youth participation also showcased the willingness of young people to be political/developmental game changers when given the right support and guidance as opposed to being used to perpetrate violence.

- The event was given substantial media coverage which helped to promote its purpose across the city.
- The event proved that unified, patriotic, and peaceful approaches and attitudes can be achieved in governance processes across the country.

**Challenges:**

- The event was conceived and executed on short notice - we carried out many tasks at the same time: keeping to time was a bit of a challenge.

**Recommendations:**

- That such promotional events be carried out on a nationwide scale to ensure national effect, not only in the context of elections but all governance aspects needing constructive youth participation.
- That follow-up media (radio, TV, documentaries etc.) programs be produced covering how the youth participants conducted themselves before, during and after the elections, including their recommendations on how relevant issues can be resolved.
- That the encouraging successes of this event be built upon with extensive post elections peace and unifying engagement activities targeting young people across the country to ensure an expansion and reinforcement of its effects.
- That a broader multi-stakeholder approach to supporting and carrying out such activities be generated to ensure sustainable nationwide effects.
- To ensure that adequate time and effort is given to the planning of future events including the timely allocation of funds.