[?]

Published on *The Communication Initiative Network* (http://www.comminit.com)

Credible Elections in Sierra Leone

Credible Elections in Sierra Leone

Author

Ambrose James
Frances Fortune

Search for Common Ground

Publication Date

January 1, 2007

Summary

This 5-page report, published by Capacity.org, documents the work of two civil society initiatives, the Independent Radio Network (IRN) and National Election Watch (NEW), supported by the non-governmental organisation Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in Sierra Leone. The report outlines how these initiatives assisted in achieving a peaceful election outcome.

According to the report, IRN was set up in 2002 to support that year's elections, and has since grown into a national network of 21 community and private radio stations. For the 2007 poll, SFCG and IRN placed 420 roving election reporters into areas where high tension existed between rival parties and in remote regions that otherwise had no broadcast coverage. The reporters, members of SFCG's staff and IRN member stations, were requested to report on the conditions they observed. This live news service aimed to give a clear view of how the elections were progressing throughout the country at district level. On election day, unofficial tallies from each station were broadcast as they were completed. Once the National Electoral Commission began issuing results, IRN reporters provided reports that analysed and explained them, in order to help enhance the populations' understanding of the result. According to the organisers, gradually releasing information in the period between the closing of the polls and the National Election Commission's (NEC's) initial announcements gave the public confidence that there was an independent watchdog monitoring the process and was a key element in reducing tension around the country. In addition, IRN invited leading political analysts and electoral experts to share their views with the public. In this way, they ensured that credible information and a clear voice was injected into the highly charged public debate.

The report also outlines NEW, which is a coalition of over 375 local and international civil society organisations including SFCG, Oxfam, and the Sierra Leonean teachers' union and farmers' association. For the 2007 polls, the organisation aimed to:

- deploy a trained observer at each polling station;
- implement a rapid reporting mechanism to get a clear snapshot of activities across the country; and
- conduct a parallel vote count.

According to the report, NEW used its network to mobilise observers in every small town and village and placed trained civil society observers in 97% of the polling stations around the country. As part of their rapid response system, observers were asked to respond by text message to selected questions from their "observer checklist". The text messages provided an instant picture of the situation at polling stations across the country. This data also allowed NEW to confirm results announced by the NEC.

The authors conclude that the presence of the observers and the amount of real-time communication gave voters confidence in the electoral process and helped ensure a peaceful election.

Click here to download this document in PDF format. [1]

Contact

Frances Fortune
Africa Director
Search for Common Ground

1601 Connecticut Ave, NW Suite 200

Washington
DC 20009
United States
Tel: +1 202 265 4300
Fax: +1 202 232 6718
SFCG website [3]
[4]
[4]
ffortune@sfcg.org [5]

Ambrose James
Country Director
Search for Common Ground - Sierra Leone

Talking Drum Studio
P.M.B. 1039

44 Bathurst Street

Freetown
Sierra Leone
[4]

[4]

ajames@sfcg.org [9]

Related Summaries

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) [12]

Source

Capacity.org website [13] on September 2 2008.

Placed on the Communication Initiative site September 04 2008
Last Updated April 02 2009

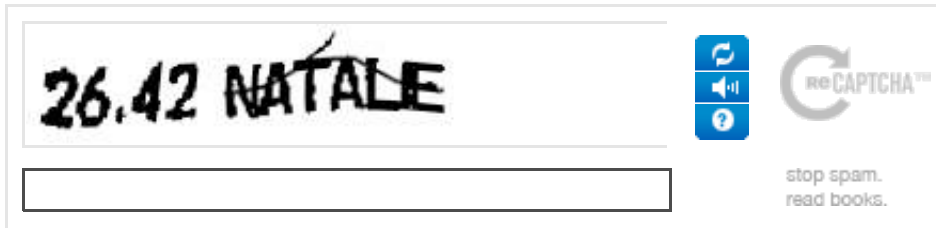**How useful did you find the knowledge and contacts on this page to your work?**

Post your comments (review comments from others below):

Subject:

Comment: *

CAPTCHA

This question is for testing whether you are a human visitor and to prevent automated spam submissions.

26.42 NATALE

stop spam.
read books.

[Post comment]

Global   ICT for Development   Democracy and Governance   Africa   SDC   Strategic Thinking   Access   Civil Society   Conflict   Democracy and Governance   New Technologies   News/Information   NGOs   Person-to-Person   Radio   Rights   Sierra Leone   Telephone   Voice

Source URL: http://www.comminit.com/en/node/275962

Links:
[1] http://www.comminit.com/redirect.cgi?m=b8bdc4b2fbfaec390190cf6e1b11b7e1
[2] http://www.comminit.com/en/node/275291
[3] http://www.comminit.com/redirect.cgi?r=http://www.sfcg.org
[4] http://www.comminit.com/redirect.cgi?r=
[5] mailto:ffortune@sfcg.org
[6] http://www.comminit.com/en/comment/reply/275291#comment-form
[7] http://www.comminit.com/en/forward?path=node/275291
[8] http://www.comminit.com/en/node/275976
[9] mailto:ajames@sfcg.org
[10] http://www.comminit.com/en/comment/reply/275976#comment-form
[11] http://www.comminit.com/en/forward?path=node/275976
[12] http://www.comminit.com/en/node/131165
[13] http://www.comminit.com/redirect.cgi?m=361e3df3efcc7a76cd8f642d67f73811