

CEPPS Quarterly Report: Sierra Leone
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Reporting period: January 01 to March 31, 2018

If available, add an image or graphic from the quarter.

This table should not exceed one page. Total report (excluding annexes) should not exceed 20 pages.

CEPPS Program Summary – Sierra Leone											
Program Title	SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS DIALOGUE SERIES (SLEDS)										
Program Dates	September 30, 2016 - September 30, 2018.										
Program theory of change	<p><i>Briefly describe the program theory of change. What will change look like, and which main actors will bring about this change?</i></p> <p><i>This section should generally not change from quarter to quarter. The exception is when there is a major scope of work change.</i></p> <p>SLEDS will address two major challenges of this elections cycle: 1) promoting an issue-based public discourse and issue-based campaigns while enhancing citizens’ participation in debates and dialogues during the said cycle, and 2) increase the professionalism of Sierra Leone’s media and journalists.</p> <p>CEPPS’ theory of change is as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">If citizens, including disadvantaged groups, have the opportunity to share their views, needs, and expectations through dialogues and debates in the lead-up to the elections</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">then candidates will be better informed about citizen priorities when setting their policy agendas.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">If electoral stakeholders – such as political parties and candidates– are accurately informed of voter electoral concerns and priorities,</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">then electoral stakeholders will be able to develop political platforms that address them.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">If the NEC and the Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) increase interaction with and dissemination of information to the public through media,</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">then the public will be better informed about the elections, and the transparency of the process strengthened.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">If presidential candidates participate in well-organized debates with questions based on key issues identified by citizens, including marginalized groups,</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">then voters can choose candidates based on policy positions rather than on ethnic and/or regional affiliations.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">If voters choose candidates based on policy positions, as articulated in debates and through the media, and civil society tracks adherence to policy positions post-election,</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">then elected candidates will be more likely to create policies that are in line with all citizens’ priorities, political agendas will be influenced by citizens’ real needs, the temptation for politician to popularity will decrease</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	If citizens, including disadvantaged groups, have the opportunity to share their views, needs, and expectations through dialogues and debates in the lead-up to the elections	then candidates will be better informed about citizen priorities when setting their policy agendas.	If electoral stakeholders – such as political parties and candidates– are accurately informed of voter electoral concerns and priorities,	then electoral stakeholders will be able to develop political platforms that address them.	If the NEC and the Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) increase interaction with and dissemination of information to the public through media,	then the public will be better informed about the elections, and the transparency of the process strengthened.	If presidential candidates participate in well-organized debates with questions based on key issues identified by citizens, including marginalized groups,	then voters can choose candidates based on policy positions rather than on ethnic and/or regional affiliations.	If voters choose candidates based on policy positions, as articulated in debates and through the media, and civil society tracks adherence to policy positions post-election,	then elected candidates will be more likely to create policies that are in line with all citizens’ priorities, political agendas will be influenced by citizens’ real needs, the temptation for politician to popularity will decrease
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		use divisive, ethnic- and identity-based discourses to gain
	<p>Additionally, if professional and citizen journalists are capable of conducting investigative research and producing and disseminating high quality, objective content reflecting citizens' social and economic priorities; and if media professionals agree on a common strategy to analyze and broadcast important political, social, and economic issues that drive political party platforms,</p>	then voters will be better positioned to influence policy agendas and make informed decisions during elections
Program objectives	<p>Contributing to Global EPT Objectives 1 (Promoting meaningful participation of all citizens in their political systems, including women, youth and other traditionally marginalized groups) and 2 (Incorporating the comparative advantages of media and technology to promote citizen understanding, engagement, and transparent political competition).</p> <p>The goal of this action is to support free and fair elections and peaceful political transition in the March 2018 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections in Sierra Leone through enhancing the public's understanding of key national political, economic and social issues that are directly relevant to democratic governance and the electoral process. To achieve this goal, CEPPS will pursue the following two objectives:</p> <p>Objective 1: To increase the participation of women and disadvantaged groups in debates and dialogue sessions relating to the March 2018 general elections;</p> <p>Objective 2: To support increased professionalism of Sierra Leone's press and mass media coverage of March 2018 general elections.</p>	

CEPPS Quarterly Program Snapshot	
Key Activities this Quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize key activities undertaken during the quarter, using brief, clear and targeted bullets (Max. 1-2 bullet points per Partner) Citizens' Priority Workshop: Search in collaboration with Elections Management Bodies and district stakeholders, conducted 14 district-level citizens priority workshops (6th-12th February 2018) for politicians, representatives of women groups, youth and person with disabilities to identify citizens priorities for more sustained action. The total number of attendance was 780 (Male 523 and Female 257) Chiefdom-Level Public Issues Discussions: Search conducted 70 public issues discussions (18th -26th March 2018) at chiefdom level and convened 3,500 persons (Male 2,240 and female 1,260) women, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups to identify voter concerns and other public policy issues. These activities were completed on the eve of the run-off elections and positioned voters to meaningfully participate in the electoral process

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open Candidates Debates: In collaboration with IRN local radio stations, political parties, EMBs, CEPPS/Search conducted 45 lower level candidate debates (21st February to 6th March 2018) for 15 constituencies and, 30 local councils selected randomly but with a focus in the new districts of Karene and Falaba. The total attendance for the debates was 3,375 (Male 2,329 and female 1,046)
<p>Key Results this Quarter</p>	<p><i>Summarize and highlight key results achieved during the quarter, using brief, clear and targeted bullets (Max. 1-2 bullet points per Partner). Remember to highlight inclusion and capacity building results.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 14 districts, 780 citizens (31% female, 16% youth, 14% PwD) gathered to list and prioritize their concerns and demands regarding public policy issues, for onward discussion with their political candidates. ● 6,875 persons (31% female, 21% youth) participated in 115 candidates debates and public issues discussion – by doing so, they contributed in shaping the political agenda of candidate and their political parties, increase candidate’s accountability towards their constituents. Participants were also more equipped to cast an issue-based vote, based on their increased level of understanding of the candidates’ programs.
<p>Key Challenges and Constraints this Quarter</p>	<p><i>Highlight key challenges faced in program implementation this quarter using brief, clear, and targeted bullets (1-2 bullets max per partner). Remember to focus on any inclusion and capacity building issues in particular.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insufficient time to properly mobilize communities for workshops and community meetings affected participation although the participation of women, youth and disabled persons proved to be a big plus because it gave them the rare opportunity to ask questions on their needs and priorities. Considering the start time of this project, Search had no other choice but organize the activities at a time where most candidates were campaigning, hence little available to attend such meetings. Stakeholder collaboration in Bo, Portloko, Bombali and Kenema proved to be particularly difficult because they were more interested in other forms of campaigns or consolidating their gains than attend all our slated activities. While Search managed to have significant contribution to the discussions and public policy dialogues, an increased level of participation could have been witnessed if the project had started earlier in 2017 ● Perpetual political tensions especially between the ruling party and the main opposition party affected our work and in some cases, some of Search’s planned activities had to be postponed for calm to prevail before recommencement of the activity.

I. POLITICAL UPDATE RELEVANT TO PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The first round of voting had no candidate secure the required 55% to win the elections. When an injunction was slammed a few days before the run-off presidential elections, it tested citizen's resolve to participation in the electoral process. Although the political environment remained calm, the program timetable was affected by this new development. Community meetings, voter education and public issues discussions were delayed and engagement with Elections Management Bodies was difficult to achieve within the compressed timetable

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Pre-Election Assessment: In collaboration with other CEPPS partners, Search participated in a week-long pre-election assessment (22-26 January 2018). The purpose of the mission was to assess preparations for the March 2018 general elections and support Sierra Leone's efforts to conduct credible and peaceful polls. It also introduced the project to the stakeholder community through which relevant electoral public policy issues related to the program activities were identified. Representatives from all the consortium partners took part in this exercise and it provided partners an opportunity to examine appropriate approaches for on-field collaboration in program implementation. The assessment team visited, among others, the United States Ambassador, USAID's country team, the European Union Delegation in Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the Political Parties Registration Commission, Civil Society Organizations, and the Media. At the end of the mission it was agreed that USAID and the International Republican Institute coordinate on the development of the electoral poll questionnaire before sign-off by the U.S Embassy, and that Search and Internews work closely with World Vision and their domestic networks for successful implementation of the activities. The pre-elections assessment report has been shared among all CEPPS members



Engagement with CSOs



CEPPS Partner's meeting

Objective 1: *Increase the participation of women and disadvantaged groups in debates and dialogue sessions relating to the March 2018 general elections*

Citizens Priority Workshops:

Activity	# Planned	# Implemented	Completion rate
Citizens Priority Workshops	14	14	100%

CEPPS and Search, in collaboration with young community mobilizers, conducted 14 district-level citizens priority workshops (one in each district) to identify citizens priorities for constructive actions by authorities at district and local levels. These workshops brought together 780 persons (including 130 youth, 109 persons with disability and 247 women) including CSOs, women, youth, persons with disability and other marginalized groups, district and local stakeholders. They reflected on the Citizen's Manifesto and PWD Agenda, which was developed by a Consortium of seven civil society organizations led by Search for Common Ground, for more constructive actions by politicians. Focus group discussions and plenary sessions stimulated in-depth discussion on citizen's priorities and provided the space for marginalized groups to meaningfully participate in discussions that effect

change in their communities. Women particularly shaped the dimensions of the discussions, pursuing their interests rather than being standoffish in the sessions.

Each workshop agreed on a list of priorities, including: access to affordable and quality health care, access to quality education for all including compulsory primary education, access to loans and livelihood opportunities, improve the road and housing infrastructure, provision of electricity and safe drinking water, introduction of mechanized farming to improve on yields, frequent interface sessions with politicians and improve governance systems. These priorities will be followed by community-led evaluation committees who will continue to provide space for public policy dialogue and mediation at all levels. These workshops established new relationships and consolidated Search’s local networks; identifying new areas of collaboration and cooperation with CSOs, community stakeholders, local advocacy groups.



NEC staff facilitating workshop in Kenema district



Group discussions in Bombali district

Open Candidate Debates:

Activity	# Planned	# Implemented	Completion rate
Open Candidate Debates	45	45	100%

CEPPS/Search conducted 45 open candidate debates for 3,375 persons (including 10 disabled political candidates, 70 women political candidates, 785 youth, 1,182 women), including 15 at constituency level (77 male politicians and 28 female politicians) and 30 at local councils for councilors, mayors and chairpersons (168 male politicians and 42 female politicians).

The purpose of this activity was to encourage candidates and their parties to put forward an issue-based political agenda that reflects citizen’s priorities. It provided an opportunity to directly interact and engage politicians on public policy issues. At the Ward level, candidates responded to well thought-out questions/concerns from the audience and constituency level, independent moderators of high reputation and proven knowledge, through a questionnaire, presented citizen’s priority questions to the candidates. Candidates were drawn from seven political parties (with the widest reach) and the audience included women, youth, disabled persons, local stakeholders, journalists, the security forces, local CSOs and partners. Debates were conducted by well-established journalists from major media houses and were recorded or broadcast live by the local IRN stations for greater reach. Audio and video clips produced at each debate will be further used by the radio stations to amplify the issues discussed for sustained action by local authorities.

In collaboration with World Vision’s Women Empowerment for Leadership and Development (WELD) project, women in its operational areas participated as debaters which motivated many others to meaningfully participate in the March 2018 electoral process. Working with media houses and the local communities to conduct debates

strategically increased community buy-in of the project and as well increased search's community reverence and local networks



MP Debate in constituency 078 Jimmy Gbagbor, Bo district

Local Council debate in Ward 113 Safroko Limba, Bombali

Chiefdom-level public issues discussion

Activity	# Planned	# Implemented	Completion rate
Chiefdom-level public issue discussion	70	70	100%

CEPPS and Search conducted 70 chiefdom-level public issue discussions for 3,500 people (including 665 youth, 175 persons with disability, and 897 women) to identify voter concerns following the first round of polling. The purpose of these meetings was to increase citizen engagement with authorities and collectively agree on actions for community development. The meetings convened chiefdom stakeholders, paramount chiefs, women groups, youth groups, disabled persons, journalists. Discussions include concerns on voting irregularities, PWD inclusion especially in Koinadugu, Bombali and Moyamba districts, civic voter education, electoral violence and intimidation, transparency, accountability and good governance, access to basic services and understanding the electoral process. Each meeting was well mobilized by local youth volunteers and sets itself agreed actions and recommendations that include: set up evaluation committees on the performances of elected officials, reintroduction of Native systems of Administration at chiefdom level, effective engagement with the media for information dissemination, invite elected officials to chiefdom meetings to update on progress, if any, on citizens priorities, work closely with EMBs to increase knowledge on the electoral process, sensitization on violence mitigation, ward/chiefdom development committees capacitated to be more effective, promote gender and disability mainstreaming at all levels. The team collaborated with World Vision and the West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP) who provided expert support on gender mainstreaming and violence mitigation at the meetings.



Chiefdom-level discussions in Gboajibu



Chiefdom discussion in Makari chiefdom

III. RESULTS ACHIEVED FROM PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES (BY OBJECTIVE & INTERMEDIATE RESULT)

Intermediate Result 1.1.1: Citizen Priorities, particularly those of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, are identified, discussed, and prioritized through public opinion research and public issue discussions

Citizen's priorities, especially those of women, youth and persons with disabilities, contributed in shaping the political agenda of candidate and their political parties. This is evidenced by the commitments made at the community debates and dialogue sessions to include such priorities in their agenda when elected. Limited post activity tests conducted indicate that there is increased knowledge on the roles and responsibilities of citizens, local councilors, MPs and the president

Community engagement– at chiefdom and district level – agreed on key actions to achieve the priorities identified. Such actions include: political candidates include citizens priorities in their manifestos; annual evaluation of progress in the implementation of priorities; effective engagement with the media to amplify citizens priorities; religious leaders engage their communities during congregational prayers; representatives of marginalized groups and other stakeholders cascade discussions and agreed actions to their memberships; increased sensitization campaigns in communities. Following recurring discussions on accountability and transparency, citizen's evaluation committees were set up as 'promise trackers' on elected officials. Whilst the finer details of the modus operandi are been sorted, the evaluation committees among other things shall conduct annual or periodic evaluation of the performance or progress of politicians in the implementation of citizens priorities

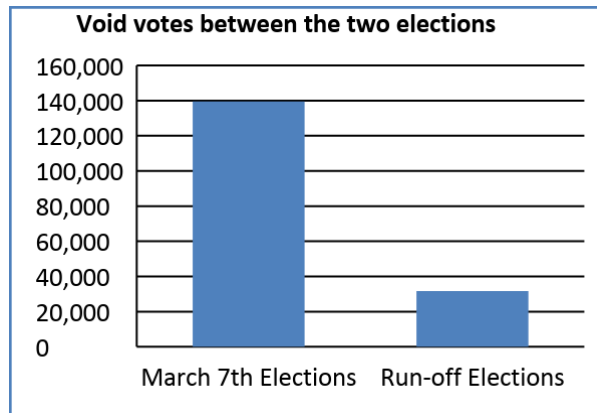
In most parts Northern Sierra Leone. women are not allowed to become chiefs and other ceremonial heads. This provoked intense discussions for greater advocacy and increased lobbying for their rights. There were discussion for the review of the land and property rights, devolution of estates act and other laws that discriminate against women. Actions were directed at increasing access to loans and livelihood opportunities through Micro Finance Institutions, the private industry and other big employers. International treaties that establish complaint and inquiry mechanisms in promoting the rights of women, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), were deemed to be cosmetic than practical in the fulfillment of their mandate. Therefore, elected officials and local authorities must not only promise taking action but must be seen taking action. If candidates and electoral stakeholders are better informed about the priorities and aspirations of citizens, then they will take actions that address them adequately. It is for this reason therefore that, and simply because development is an inclusive and participatory process, that, women, youth, PWDs should meaningfully participate in the electoral process and governance of their communities

Intermediate Result 1.1.3: Debates and dialogue sessions at the national and chiefdom level provide information to citizens on the policy stances and manifestos of political parties and their candidates to inform voters choices on election day.

Exceeded targeted participants at the debates indicate that citizens remain interested in actions that aim at improving their lives. This is demonstrated by the flurry of questions posed to the candidates on citizen's priorities and they included women and children's affairs, disability mainstreaming, youth empowerment and general governance issues. These debates and dialogue sessions provided the rare opportunity for direct engagement with politicians on the one hand and also allowed citizens to choose their candidates based on their policy stances and manifestos

The first round of voting was littered with electoral irregularities, including thousands of registered void votes. Void votes recorded in the first round totaled **139,472** but the chiefdom engagements and other

NEC-supported and party-level community engagements prior to the runoff elections, which included voter education, contributed in cutting down this figure to **31,694**. This situation positively impacted the run-off elections and greatly influenced the results as demonstrated in the graph below:



The debates and dialogue sessions contributed in shaping candidates’ manifestos. It provided the platform for candidates to consider a shift from the traditional street dance, carnivals and rallies to a more structured issues-based campaigning that is driven by the priorities and needs of the citizens. Without cost, and with utmost ease, thousands of people will be reached. For the first time, many had the opportunity to physically meet their ward/constituency representatives and as well know their functions and roles in society. Each debate was broadcast live or recorded for subsequent rebroadcasts and video and audio clips used to remind candidates about their commitments and promises. These self-audits are also mechanisms that promote accountability and transparency even at local levels. Post-debate questionnaires and focus group discussions indicate that the debates contributed in increasing citizen’s understanding of governance issues and the electoral process. When citizens are better informed about public policy issues it will allow them make informed choices at the polling day that is devoid of ethno-regional and personal sentiments.

IV. ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

To organize 14 district-level citizens’ priority workshops, 45 lower-level candidate debates and conduct 70 chiefdom-level public issues discussions in two months is an enormous logistical and human resources challenge. In a country where the road infrastructure, especially at chiefdom level is bad, this could have taken several more month to achieve. Using our local networks (community mobilizers, local CSOs and other partners), we put together well-drilled and experienced teams who implemented the activities in time, although we had to move the chiefdom public issues discussion to the run-off period to allow more time for proper coordination and planning. In the future, CEPPS should consider enough time between activities for measurable and higher impact results.

Violence and intimidation among political parties was a recurring event right through the electoral process. This situation affected the timely and effective implementation of the activities. In some cases, as with the inter party (running party and the main opposition party) violent incidents in Mile 91 and Port Loko, scheduled project activities had to be abandoned and deferred to some convenient dates. There are several incidents of violence-related incidents which either delayed project activities or affected attendance and participation. In collaboration with WANEP and other local stakeholders, mediation and conflict mitigation efforts helped to ease tension and allow peace and calmness to prevail. Violence

expressed in any way affects the electoral process and pose serious risks in the conduct of free and credible elections. This was the case of Sierra Leone elections right after announcement of the elections results.

Collaboration with political parties could have been made better if the project had started earlier than its current date. This could have given ample time to increase project buy-in and assure satisfactory political parties' participation in the process. However, the team made inroads in engaging the political parties at the national level which was a bit easy considering the timeframe for the activities. In the case of NEC, there were insufficient materials to support voter education on the electoral process. This situation could have reduced the number of void votes and elections irregularities recorded during the first round and run-off elections.

An immediate outcome of our citizens engagements – local and national levels – was the formation of evaluation committees (made up by citizens) to follow up on the actions agreed at workshops and meetings in addressing citizens priorities. As a community-led accountability and promise tracker mechanism, they require relevant skills and capacity to follow up on agreed actions. Their formation might well be described as an output but going forward this should be translated to tangible measurable outcome. Considering the limitations, lifespan and remit of the Search's activities, this gain stands the risk of being abandoned. Sustaining this as a long term future of the project intervention is therefore recommended and efforts to promote similar community-led interventions should be encouraged in the future.

There are still systemic and cultural barriers to women's participation, disability mainstreaming and youth empowerment. They are marginalized in public issues discussions, planning and decision-making processes. The case is rife for communities in Port Loko, Kambia, Moyamba, Karene and Bonthe districts. This project is by no means the only answer to these issues although we must acknowledge the tremendous potentials it brings in promoting inclusion at all levels.

Elected officials struggle to keep in touch with their constituents although the situation is far better for the local councilors than the MPs. In the case of the MPs they hardly visit their constituencies and update them on progress of their work. Most of them, if not all, relocate to Freetown or other district headquarters towns where social services are better than in their localities. This does not bode well in the pursuit of recruiting accountable officials. The councilors generally live locally and participate in community actions. This interaction can be exploited to strengthen their relationship and nurture officials that promote citizen's priorities at all levels.

Most of the candidates lack the required skills and capacity to participate in debates; bringing out succinctly their agenda and national interests. Instead of responding to issues-based questions and concerns, they resort to personality checks at each other. Gaps exist on time management, context and purpose of debates, relationship among debaters and providing clarity on questions. This situation puts at risk the voters in making informed choices at voting day. Providing continuous mentoring prior to debates can help aspirants better articulate their political agendas. It is therefore recommended that aspirants are supported with the relevant skills both at national and lower levels to improve knowledge on voter education and governance issues.

V. SUCCESS STORIES

Community-led promise tracker and evaluation committee for elected officials. Promoting accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and good governance for a prosperous nation

Community-led promise tracker and evaluation committee. Promoting accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and good governance
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Gbane chiefdom in Kono district, Eastern Sierra Leone, is notoriously known for electoral violence and land disputes; perpetrated by youth gangs and rebel groups and supported by politicians. Situated 30km from the district headquarter town of Koidu, this chiefdom, as with many others in Sierra Leone, is deprived of basic services such as good road infrastructure, healthcare facilities, access to education, safe drinking water and access to loans and micro-credit facilities. It takes over 3 hours with a four-wheel drive vehicle to go from Koidu to Gbane, and much longer during the rainy season. Politicians from this chiefdom hardly reside there and rarely make visits. Local residents, including Sia Gborie, a petty trader, do not know her politicians, although she mandatorily voted in the general elections of 2007 and 2012. As she mildly and unassumingly put it, “the chief says we should vote in the elections and I did exactly so”. Politicians therefore prefer to maintain close relationships, in reward, with the chiefdom authorities, then the people, and the chiefdom continues to be deprived, impoverished and poorly represented.

Through the Sierra Leone Elections Dialogue Series (SLEDS) project funded by USAID, women, youth, persons with disabilities, local authorities, CSOs and the media were invited into town hall meetings to identify citizen’s priorities for more sustained action by the local authorities. These meetings created the platform and gave a voice to the people to discuss and collectively find solutions to address their community concerns, reflecting the citizen’s manifesto and PWD agenda, put together by the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium prior to the March 2018 elections. The Gbane chiefdom community engagements identified, among others, the following priorities: access to health care, clean water and quality education, access to loans and micro-credit facilities, improved road infrastructure, and implementing by-laws on illegal mining.

During the debate and dialogue sessions, Politicians promised, if elected, to be transparent and accountable on the utilization of the constituency development fund through the formation of a constituency development committee (made up of Gbane people) who will directly manage and report on its use. On illegal mining, they promised that only licensed miners will access the mining sites and assured the people that proceeds from the sale of diamonds will go directly towards provision of healthcare facilities, build more schools and provide safe drinking water. Other actions promised was more women will be encouraged to take leadership positions and sit in constituency committees and a skills training center will be provided for persons with disability to increase their employability chances. As the SLPP candidate declared, ‘I will work with the infrastructure committee in parliament to pave the road to Koidu town and get you reconnected with the rest of the country’.

Following on the politician’s promises and commitments was the formation of a six-person community-led promise tracker committee which will monitor and engage elected officials on their promises for accountable, transparent and results-oriented governance.



Promise tracker committee of Gbane Chieftdom

The committee comprised a female note taker and bookkeeper, Kumba Kamachende, a chairman, Sahr Kartequee, and the following members: Aiah Dennis Sandy, Sahr James, Thomas Moiwo and Paul S. Massaquoi. These people were identified from the chieftdom ward committees (15 in total), youth groups, women representative groups and from the local CBO – United Brothers and Sisters Organization. Their selection is based on their experience working in community projects but also to have different interests groups and sections of the chieftdom represented. It is the expectation that they will cascade committee proceedings and other engagements to their different memberships. The only woman in the team, who is also called ‘iron lady’, was unanimously selected by the women because of her no-nonsense approach in dealing with women and children’s issues. They agreed to hold monthly committee meetings and quarterly meetings with elected officials to better plan, engage, and coordinate chieftdom activities in meeting pre-election promises. In his ‘thank you’ message to the community, the committee chairman, Sahr Kortequee, praised Search for providing the platform to hear their voices and promised to “invent new ways of engaging politicians for the development of Gbane chieftdom”

Similar actions have been taken in the districts of Pujehun, Koinadugu, Bombali, and Bo to hold officials accountable, but there are capacity and resource constraints that potentially limit their scope and operations. Electing accountable officials guarantees service provision, promotes transparency, accountability, and good governance. In the grand scheme of things, it contributes to eliminating poverty, exclusion and degradation. The people of Gbane chieftdom put their hopes in this maiden committee as elected officials commence their 5year term of office. This committee will provide ongoing support to elected officials but will specifically take actions for increased transparency and accountability for improved service delivery. They will hold regular update meetings with officials to gauge progress on pre-election promises, audit the utilization of chieftdom funds, have officials update their contributions at on-going parliamentary debates, conduct six-monthly and annual evaluation of chieftdom activities and hold annual town hall meetings to update the rest of the residents on community actions.

VI. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Performance Management Plan Update

ANNEX 2: Workplan Update

ANNEX 3: Other

