

SEARCH FOR  
COMMON GROUND

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# BETTER GOVERNANCE OF CONSTITUENCIES THROUGH CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION

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## TOWN HALL MEETINGS PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT



I developed a plan through the Town Hall Meeting which my constituents used to track and rank my progress. My interaction with them has improved which was not the case before now because the position of Members of Parliament (MPs) was sacred"  
- Honourable MP

DECEMBER 2020

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## Acronyms

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ADP	Alliance Development Party
APC	All People's Congress
C4C	Coalition of Change
CAPs	Constituency Action Plans
COI	Commission of Inquiry
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EPT	Election Promise Tracker
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MP	Member of Parliament
PWD	Persons with Disability
RUFPP	Revolutionary United Front Party
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
THMs	Town Hall Meetings
Tv	Television

## Executive Summary

Demanding for accountability in an environment where party patronage and politics seem to outweigh the interest of elected leaders is a serious issue in Sierra Leone. Although electoral processes must be followed to become an MP, most people usually use political parties as a gateway to occupy such positions. However, as soon as they are elected into office, MPs' accountability becomes an issue. This project was implemented in a post-election period - a very crucial moment to consolidate peace, security and stability. Rather than responding to frustration and the effects of violence from the recent general elections, the THM project sought to address the accountability of elected leaders in response to the demands of electorates. This might seem cynical to those who were aggrieved by the outcome of the parliamentary and presidential elections. In a logical sense, however, projects like this are necessary to ensure elected leaders stay focused and deliver what they promised their constituents during political campaigns.

Following the completion of the project, an evaluation was conducted by an external body. This report is produced to reflect the findings and results of the consultant. Key findings of the evaluation as well as major recommendations are summarised in bullet points here below. The summary provides the reader highlights which are further explained in the main body of the report.

### Key Findings

- **Relevance:** From all indications, the project was relevant to the needs it sought to address. The results achieved can be related to the activities of the project. At no point in time did the target groups refuse to participate in the project implementation exercise. The project achievements positively affected the key target groups in different ways indicating that the project was relevant. While the CSOs strengthened their capacity through different forms of engagements, the MPs improved interaction with their constituents and the electorates benefited from development programs in their constituencies as promised by their MPs. Notably, the Election Promise Tracker (EPT) was a “Game Changer”.
  
- **Effectiveness:** Convincing evidence exists to report that the project met effectiveness criteria with almost all outputs delivered as planned. Key findings to support this conclusion are highlighted as follow:
  - 54.4% of respondents consciously admitted that CSOs were helping in promoting MP’s accountability within their constituency.
  - 91.4% of respondents reported that CSOs have the human resource required to promote accountability
  - 55.4% of respondents acknowledged that CSOs have a permanent office within their district
  - 64.9% of respondents dismissed any doubt about CSOs skills and experience to promote MP’s accountability in their constituency
  - 64.4% of respondents –similar to the baseline (64.0%) – reported that CSOs had constituency action plans in place
  - Performing executive members of 26 out of 27 CSOs supported, went through series of training and refreshers which influenced their performance in diverse ways
  - Overall, 96.5% of respondents were aware of THMs held in their constituencies

- 67.0% of respondents claimed that the THMs held in their constituencies were meant for discussions related to their community development
  - 86.3% of respondents attended such meetings in their constituencies
  - 89.5% of respondents attended the last THMs preceding the evaluation in less than six months
  - 60.2% of respondents admitted during the baseline that their MPs paid visits to their constituencies, while the evaluation finding confirms such visits amongst 94.9% of respondents.
  - 86.7% of respondents compared to 73.4% of respondents at baseline that reported THMs were held by MPs in their respective constituency
  - 47.1 compared to baseline 37.7% of respondents confirmed that the visit of their MPs occurred more than four times
  - The MPs have made outstanding progress on their campaign promises. The highest performing constituencies are 088 (91.7%) and 087 (90.0%) all in Bo district, while the least performing constituencies are 006 (27.3%), 027 (27.3), and 016 (23.5%) of Kailahun, Kono, and Kenema.
  - 46.0% of respondents strongly agree and 42.6% agreed that youth and women-led organizations have been engaged in public sensitization to inform community members about CAPs MPs developed long before they were elected into office
- **Efficiency:** The overall findings of the evaluation have shown no area of overlap nor duplication of activities in any form. Activities undertaken by the project team produced the desired outputs so much that cost-effectiveness was justified. However, the time taken to deliver all project outputs exceeded the actual period of the project. Reasons advanced for this delay implied that the project implementation activities were stalled due to the outbreak of CO VID -19. Important to note, however, is the efficient ways and means the project resulted to achieve the results that could have been achieved in normalcy.
  - **Impact:** Overall, the evaluation found strong evidence to report that this project contributed to peaceful co-existence resulting from improved interaction between the MPs and their constituents. The MPs who were key participants alongside community women and youth who were voters during March 2018 general elections, were engaged in discussions and interviews to ascertain the impact of the project. The project activities implemented built on the gains and achievements Search attained during phase one of the project. In conclusion, the impacts of this project very much aligned with the two dimensions of change the project was designed to achieve: strengthening CSOs' capacity and improving the interaction between MPs and their constituents. The evaluation found strong evidence to report that the project strengthened CSOs' capacity to facilitate accountability sessions. As a result, improvement in CSOs engagement with local leaders was recognized as one of the major impacts of the project

## Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the findings is that the project has succeeded not only to urge MPs' delivery on their campaign promises but also to a large extent, enabled the electorates to hold their

elected leaders to account. It was impressive to learn about the improved interaction reported between most of the MPs and their constituents. The project can take credit to some extent for the improved interaction between these two parties because evidently, participants were able to attribute the observed changes to key activities of the project. More striking than anticipated is the partnership with CSOs which contributed greatly to the success of the project. The CSOs were very instrumental in monitoring the developmental activities of the MPs and the consistent sessions held to update the EPT was commendable. As custodians of the EPT, CSOs' involvement in the implementation of the THM project leveraged the effect of the EPT.

## **Recommendations**

- Search should therefore consider a better provision for capacity building of CSOs as a key element of their project design. Better provision for capacity building means that more resources with diverse methods - **empowerment for high performance**
- As a key component of program quality effectiveness, effective M&E should be supported with increased capacity to ensure consistent and systematic tracking as well as analysis of progress. This could be done by recruiting someone from among the partners that can help to keep up-to-date project monitoring records or a training session with frontline and reporting staff on the functions and principles of M&E, data collection and reporting techniques, etc.
- In future, provision should be made to educate aspiring candidates especially first-timers, on the responsibilities of MPs. Besides, tailor-made projects aiming at increasing public awareness on the responsibilities of MPs and resource mobilization for MPs should be considered in future project designs.
- Even though it is more cost-effective to have CSOs on the field, frequency in Search visits can assure participants the more to be connected and engaged on the issues of interest. Continuous follow-up through routine community visits can help for quality assurance but also, maximize project outcomes and support community resilience. Therefore, Search should strongly make considerations that will increase their presence or follow-up actions in the field.

## Introduction

### Overview of the Project

General elections in Sierra Leone, especially after one-party rule, opened doors for new expectations from the electorates, though the political divide and lack of accountability remain a public concern. Usually, citizens' support towards politicians who vie for parliamentary seats largely depends on the political affiliation of the candidates. What this simply means is that political candidates must be associated with a certain political party because that is a yardstick used by many voters to determine who they support when it comes to general parliamentary and presidential elections. Because of the strongholds of the 2 major political parties, All Peoples' Congress (APC) which has a stronghold in the North and North-West, and Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) which has a stronghold in the South-East, voters are most likely to vote along this political divide irrespective of the capacity of the candidates to deliver.

It is widely believed that politicians pave their way to succeed in getting party symbols and eventually parliamentary seats through ideologies ingrained in party politics. That is to say, almost all politicians come from political parties to which their allegiance is watertight. That is why in the course of campaigning to win the majority especially for parliamentary seats, politicians brainwash the electorates with political ideologies and campaign promises hoping that when they become elected their constituents will be primary beneficiaries. However, the failure to fulfil election promises by Members of Parliament (MPs) over time has caused serious distrust and displeasure among the populace.

In 2018, when Sierra Leone was due for its fifth parliamentary and presidential elections since the end of the war, a strategic political shift was anticipated because that was the end of the second term of former President Ernest Bai Koroma. Although the stakes were high with the incumbent hoping to remain in power, it was a crucial moment at which many citizens thought a political change was needed to improve not only the standard of living but Sierra Leone's democratic landscape. Even though the public distrust was rife as a result of poor performing MPs, misappropriation of public funds, and of course, the lack of transparency and accountability on the part of public officials, the first round of the national parliamentary and presidential elections went relatively peacefully. However, political tension underpinned by tribal sentiments and party patronage escalated, while preparation was underway for a runoff election between the candidate of the APC and the candidate of the SLPP. At the time of the elections, these were the incumbent and opposition parties respectively.

Despite the political tensions and pockets of violence across the regions, report<sup>1</sup> shows that a peaceful transition of power from one democratically elected leader to another was achieved as a critical milestone in consolidating democracy in Sierra Leone. Notably, Search for Common Ground (Search) played a crucial role in mitigating electoral as well as political violence. With funds from WellSpring, the organization facilitated constructive political dialogue with multi-stakeholder engagements alongside radio programs aimed at promoting access to reliable information leading to peaceful elections. Even though the need for change was met with the peaceful transition of power, key changes effected by the new administration of President Bio were perceived negatively by members of the current opposition party (APC).

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<sup>1</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission, Final Report, Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Council Elections, 2018

More souring than expected, a publication on Concord Times Newspaper highlighted that the dismissal of public and civil servants was ill-motivated by ethnicity and political affiliations (Chernoh Alpha M. Bar et al., 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020)

An instance that caught public attention in early the stage of the newly elected SLPP government, was the controversial election of the Speaker of Parliament in which case the main opposition walked out of parliament. (Eric Kawa, Africanews Correspondent, April 2018). Another instance in view is the investigation into the activities of former government officials through the Commission of Inquiry (COI). The latter is of course considered as an instrument of better democratic governance. However, in the view of the opposition party, this was a "witch-hunt" designed to ostracise and silence their political party (*Policy Brief No. 07, February 2019, IGR*). Given this scenario, development agencies like Search became concerned that if the post-election environment should remain peaceful, then, the increasing political tension and division must be brought under control for national cohesion.

Knowing fully well that access to information and public accountability of politicians were big issues, Search worked with political candidates for the March 2018 elections and their constituents to enhance social dialogue as well as political engagement across ethnic and political lines. At that time, political debates that took place in constituencies were filmed and presented openly in constituencies by Search to communicate election promises of political candidates for the March 2018 parliamentary elections. Evident on the remarkable progress recorded in phase 1 of the project, Search implemented phase 2 as a scale-up project with grants from Wellspring to promote public policy debate between politicians and their constituents.

The strategy of the project was focused on youth and women as key targets for sustainability. As the project activities were designed to build on phase 1 implementation, promoting the engagement between citizens and elected MPs through social dialogue platforms was a major intervention approach under phase 2 to ensure collective constituency action planning. In implementing the project, Constituency Action Plans (CAPs) were closely monitored through local stakeholders including civil society organizations (CSOs). In addition, the project worked with other key stakeholders such as local authorities who were supported to ensure continuous engagement between elected MPs and their constituents. These stakeholders were also required to provide a conducive environment for social dialogue and collaboration. While radio outreach programs were used to influence citizens' access to information for more engagement, platforms including Town Hall Meetings (THMs) were set up as demanded by electorates to hold MPs to account.

This project was beneficiary-driven because it was the target group Search worked with directly during the first phase that appealed for additional assistance to support post-election accountability and collaboration between citizens and MPs. On the other hand, the need for learning was thought of from the conceptual stage of the project to assess the effectiveness of social dialogue activities by variations. In this vein, an assessment was conducted by Search to understand the barriers and enablers for citizens' participation in democratic processes and MPs' accountability. This project was implemented to achieve the same long-term goal as phase 1: to contribute to better governance of constituencies through citizens' participation. However, different outcomes with related activities were undertaken. See table 1 below. The goal of this project does not only support the overall country strategy of Search but also aligns with Cluster 4 of the Government's Medium-Term Development Plan (2019 to 2023).

**Table 1: Project Results and Activities**

<i>Goal: To contribute to better governance of constituencies through citizens' participation</i>	
<b>Results</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>Outcome 4</b> : Youth- and women-led CSOs have increased capacity to serve as watchdogs and promote accountability in the post-election environment	<b>Act. 4.1:</b> Capacity Building to Youth- and Women-led CSOs
	<b>Act. 4.2:</b> Support to Trained CSOs to Carry out Ongoing Monitoring
<b>Outcome 5</b> : Engagement between newly-elected MPs and citizens is strengthened.	<b>Act. 5.1</b> Barrier Analysis
	<b>Act. 5.2</b> Town Hall Meetings
	<b>Act. 5.2</b> Radio Programming

From the previous activities implemented, there was a need to make the most out of the progress made in phase 1. Added to that, most of the MP candidates who were vibrant in constituency engagement sessions facilitated by Search during the pre-election phase, succeeded to be elected into the House of Parliament as Honourable Members. And because of that, there was increasing demand from their end to continue with the engagements from a constituency development viewpoint. Moreover, community members including women and youth, requested that follow-on actions be undertaken to ensure that elected MPs are held to account for their campaign promises. All of these gave impetus to the organization to embark on strategic follow-up activities thereby promoting post-election accountability at the local level and strengthening social dialogue and engagement between MPs and citizens. As a new foundation to uphold peaceful coexistence, the THM project recorded progress that this evaluation seeks to shine a light on.

### Project Location and Target Beneficiaries

Out of 35 constituencies initially assessed, the project was implemented in 28 because these were the constituencies that demonstrated great interest, buy-in, and willingness to participate in the activities of the project. Furthermore, key considerations for the selection of these constituencies included the following:

- Existence of women and youth civil society organizations (CSOs)
- Constituencies with differing barriers and opportunities for increased citizen-MP engagement
- Overall engagement and buy-in from the project participants, including elected leaders and MPs

As direct beneficiaries of the project, women, and youth were targeted at the constituency level. Among these beneficiaries were citizens who were influential such as the locations' traditional leaders. Another category of beneficiaries considered as voiceless included women, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and youth. In addition, the project targeted some CSOs who facilitated the interface between the influential and the voiceless. Members of Parliament and elected officials who were key in facilitating social dialogue and relationship building among their constituents were also direct beneficiaries of the project.

### Objectives of the evaluation

In December 2020, the evaluation exercise was commissioned by Search with an overall objective of tracking progress made since the inception of the second phase of the project. Specifically, the evaluation seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Generate data and analysis in response to the Phase 2 Project indicators

- Assess the relevance/appropriateness of the project as perceived by the target groups
- Assess the effectiveness of the project in achieving desired results
- Assess how the project has supported CSOs to promote monitoring of CAP initiatives being implemented by the MPs in the various constituencies, and the outcomes of this monitoring.
- Assess the major challenges and lessons learned in terms of the project implementation process, mechanism, achieving results and local ownership.

## Scope of work

At the planning stage of the evaluation, 12 constituencies in 7 districts were initially identified. However, the exercise coincided with the festive season and as a result, the consultants succeeded in conducting the exercise in 11 constituencies within 6 districts. See table 2 for sample districts and constituencies.

**Table 2: List of sample districts and constituencies**

No	District	Constituencies
1.	Moyamba	069
2.	Bo	088
3.	Bo	079
4.	Bo	087
5.	Kailahun	001
6.	Kailahun	004
7.	Kenema	012
8.	Kono	025
9.	Kono	029
10.	Port Loko	070
11.	Port Loko	075

Following the inception meeting with the Search technical team, an inception report was prepared and tools developed for data collection. A training session was held with enumerators and field supervisors followed by a pretesting exercise. As soon as the training was completed, 2 weeks of fieldwork commenced with a data collection team divided by districts. In the course of the fieldwork, interviews were conducted with a cross-section of direct beneficiaries of the project, MPs, representatives of CSOs, and local authorities.

## Approach and Methodology

### Approach and Design

In conducting the evaluation, the consultants adopted mixed methods to assess key variables of interest. This created room for qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis. Participatory approaches were applied with beneficiary contact surveys to maximize beneficiary involvement in the evaluation. Individual and group interviews were held with the provision for data triangulation to validate and verify key findings. While in the field, the assessment team sought the support of CSOs and local authorities who better understand the terrains and local dialects of the community members. Interviews conducted by the consultants' team were done with the consent of respondents and key

informants. In each constituency, key stakeholders such as MPs, CSO representatives and local authorities were identified as key informants with whom in-depth interviews were conducted while electorates who took part in sessions supported by the project were engaged as respondents of the survey. This was done to assess the opinions and views of ordinary members and the stakeholders regarding the subject matter of the study.

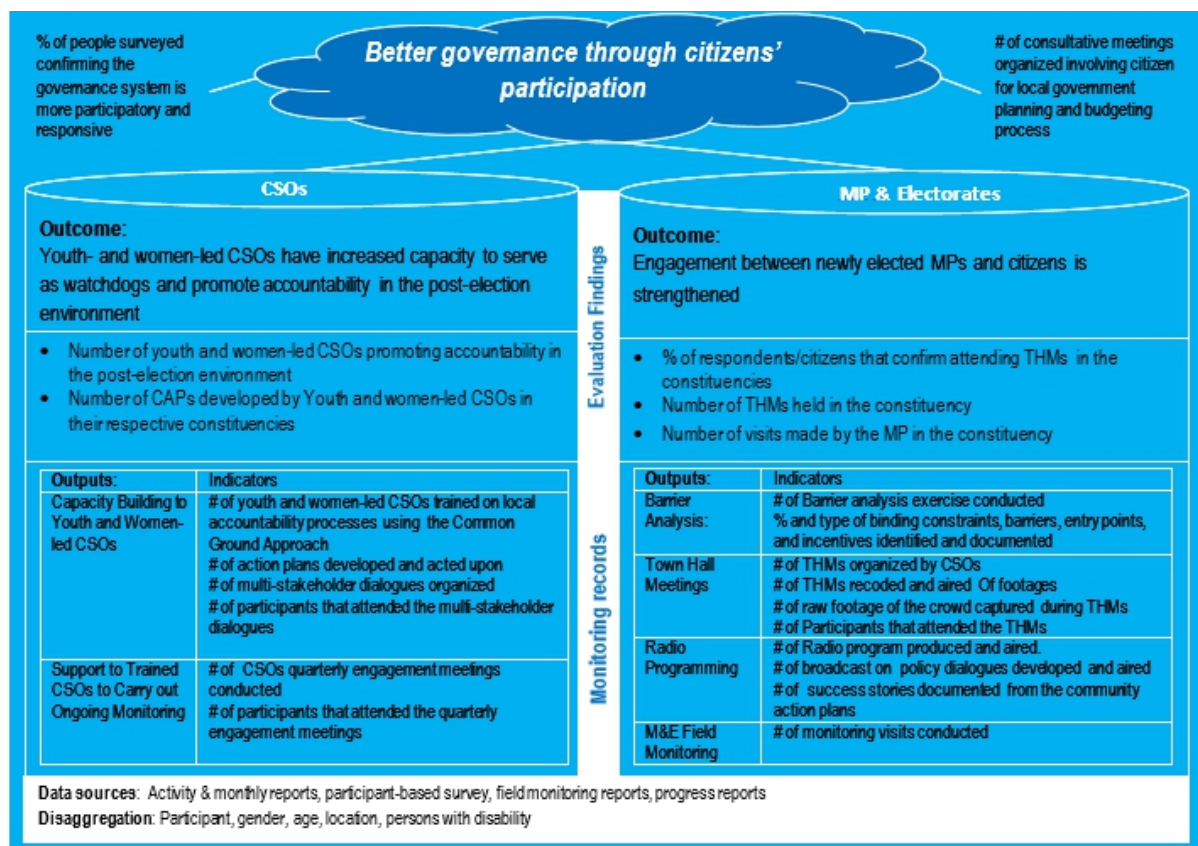
## Study Design

As the project was initially designed with the overarching goal “*to contribute to better governance of constituencies through citizens’ participation*”, the focus of the study was on the two key result areas of the second phase of the project. From the desk review conducted, the consultant recognized that there was a theory of change behind the project. Logically, this theory was based on the assumption that when voters are more enlightened on electoral processes to the extent that they can hold their elected officials accountable, then their contribution to good governance is assured. Based on this theory and from the reviews conducted, the consultants designed an evaluation framework to guide the conduct of the study. Figure 1 is a study framework the consultants used to conduct the evaluation. It illustrates the key elements the evaluation focused on while assessing the impact of the project. The framework clearly shows the key result areas of the project and its related indicators that formed the basis of the consultants’ investigation.

On one hand, the assessment targeted CSOs supported by the project to serve as watchdogs and promote accountability. And on the other hand, the MPs who were encouraged to strengthen their interaction with their constituents were engaged. This simply implies that youth and women-led CSOs, MPs and their constituents were key target groups of the project hence, they were involved in the evaluation process as respondents or key informants.

To ascertain the impacts made by the project, the indicators reflected in the framework were used to develop the tools. The various outputs produced from the activities were examined to assess the relationship between the outcomes and outputs. While the project outputs were generated through monitoring data collected beforehand, the evaluation closely examined the outcome indicators concerning appropriate data disaggregation.

Figure 1: Indicators, Targets and Reach



## Data collection team

A team of young men and women who were trained and experienced in research and community work made up the data collection team. Some of the team members recruited from sample districts were very instrumental during the fieldwork as they eased the burden of interpretation and communication in the local dialect. There were 3 teams each with a supervisor leading enumerator in the primary data collection process under the overall supervision and coordination of the consultant.

## Training

A training session was observed before fieldwork. This was done to prepare enumerators and field supervisors for field engagement and data collection. The focus of the training was on the data collection tools, interview skills and the use of digital devices. Ethical issues were also discussed at length during the training with a pre-test exercise conducted to familiarize with the tools but also to cross-check the relevance of the questions. At the end of the training, a data collection guide was handed over to each enumerator and supervisor as reference material to support their fieldwork.

## Methods and Tools

As indicated above, the evaluation was conducted using mixed methods. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and tools were used to gather data. The methods of data collection include field survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), consultation and literature review.

### Beneficiary Contact Survey:

A beneficiary contact survey was done with project participants with the use of a structured questionnaire which was uploaded on digital devices. The initial sample size of 400 surveys was predetermined by the Search team. However, the consultants added 10% of this figure which increased the sample size to 440. This was done with the assumption that significant errors may be observed in data analysis that would warrant the omission of questionnaires. Following a technical data screening and vetting exercise, the sample size used to run the analysis is 430. To select respondents for the survey, a randomized approach was applied by enumerators using the participants' list to cross-check that the respondents were indeed participants of the project.

### Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):

Interview guides were used to conduct in-depth interviews with key informants who were either direct beneficiaries of the project or had a stake in the project implementation. The selection of key informants was done through the purposive random selection technique. Among the informants were MPs, local authorities including councillors and youth leaders, CSO representatives and Staff members of Search.

### Focus group discussion (FGDs):

Focus group discussions were held with a collection of women and youth in each sample district. These FGDs were facilitated by the field supervisors while trained enumerators served as note-takers. The discussions were conducted with the use of a semi-structured interview guide. Because of the public health regulations, only 6 people were engaged at a time in FGDs with strict adherence to social distancing and the use of face masks.

### Literature review:

A literature review was done to review relevant documents. Among the documents reviewed were progress reports, monitoring reports, project proposals, MPs promise tracker and project log frame. These were internal documents obtained from the project point person. The EU election monitoring report was among other external documents reviewed.

## Findings of the Evaluation

Generally, the evaluation exercise was undertaken in six districts with 13 chiefdoms and 11 constituencies targeted by the project as shown in figure 2. The 430 surveys analyzed were conducted mainly with project participants who were regarded as electorates of the March 2018 general parliamentary and presidential elections. The unequal sample size by districts resulted from the fact that, in some of the districts, the project targeted more constituencies.

**Figure 2: Distribution of Survey by Districts, Constituencies & Chiefdoms**

Districts					Chiefdoms				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Bo	107	24.9	24.9		Bumpeh	35	8.1	8.1
	Kallahun	78	18.1	43.0		Dama	28	6.5	14.7
	Kenema	40	9.3	52.3		Fakunya	14	3.3	17.9
Valid	Kono	97	22.6	74.9		Kaiyamba	18	4.2	22.1
	Moyamba	34	7.9	82.8		Kakowa	71	16.5	38.6
	Port Loko	74	17.2	100.0		Kissi Tongi	39	9.1	47.7
	Total	430	100.0	100.0	Valid	Kombora	2	.5	48.1
						Koya	11	2.6	50.7
						Lei	51	11.9	62.6
						Luawa	40	9.3	71.9
						Maforiki	37	8.6	80.5
						Marampa	37	8.6	89.1
						Tankoro	47	10.9	100.0
						Total	430	100.0	100.0

Constituency				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	001	39	9.1	9.1
	004	40	9.3	18.4
	012	39	9.1	27.4
	025	50	11.6	39.1
	029	48	11.2	50.2
Valid	070	38	8.8	59.1
	079	35	8.1	67.2
	087	35	8.1	75.3
	088	36	8.4	83.7
	096	34	7.9	91.6
	075	36	8.4	100.0
	Total	430	100.0	100.0

### Characteristics of the respondents

As mentioned above, the survey respondents were project participants to whom structured questionnaires were administered with the use of electronic data collection devices. The survey registered 100% (430) consent indicating that all the respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the interview. Nearly all (98.1%) of these respondents said they cast their votes during March 2018 general elections.

The assessment of respondents' gender noted that men account for 61.2% of the respondents compared to 38.8% of women (Figure 3a).

Analysis regarding the age of participants indicates that 34.4% of respondents were of the age group 26 to 35, 27.0% within the age group 36 to 45, 18.8% within the age group 46 to 55, 14.9% within the age group 18 to 25 while as low as 4.9% were above age 55 (Figure 3b).

A cross-examination of respondents' educational level reveals that 40.7% of respondents have attained secondary education (that is JSS & SSS), 19.8% non-formal education, 18.1% university/college, 11.6% tertiary education, 5.3% other forms of education like Arabic learning and 4.4% primary education (Figure 3c).

On the categories of marital status, data show that 56.5% of respondents have been married, 25.8% single, 8.1% widowed, 4.9% in cohabitation and 4.7% have either divorced or separated their relationship (Figure 3d). As for respondents' religious confession, the survey data in figure 3e show that more Muslims (57.0%) than Christians (43.0%) took part in the survey.

When it comes to the work respondents do to earn their living, data on figure 3f show 41.6% of respondents mentioned business trading as their main occupation, 24.0% in various self-employed jobs, 16.3% were engaged in other jobs like non-skill labor, apprenticeship, etc. and 16,0% were either employed as civil or public servants.

An investigation to determine whether respondents were party members or supporters brought out that 64.0% of the respondents were supporters of political parties, 19.5% were neither supporters nor members of political parties, 12.8% were members of political parties while 3.7% could not tell whether they were supporters, members or neutral (figure 3g). However, figure 3h gives the indication that respondents had a different political affiliation with political parties: 51.4% of respondents being SLPP affiliates, 20.7% APC, 14.4% neutral, 9.3% C4C, 1.6% could not disclose their identity and about 1.0% were either supporting independent candidate, ADP or RUFP.

### Figure 3: Respondents Characteristics

Figure 3a: Gender of respondents

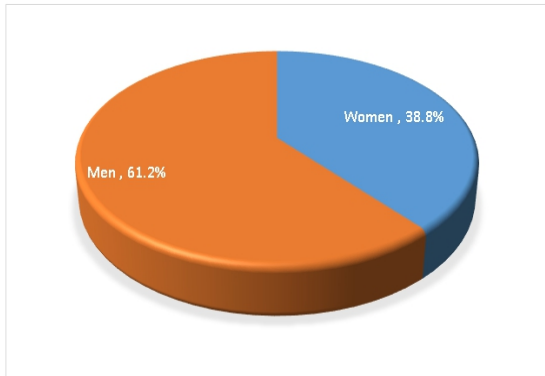


Figure 3b: Respondents' Age Range

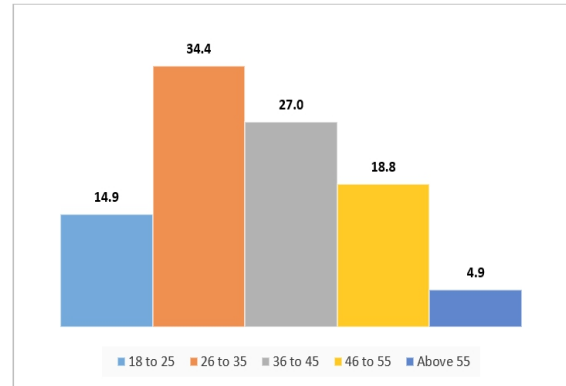


Figure 3c: Respondents' Educational Levels

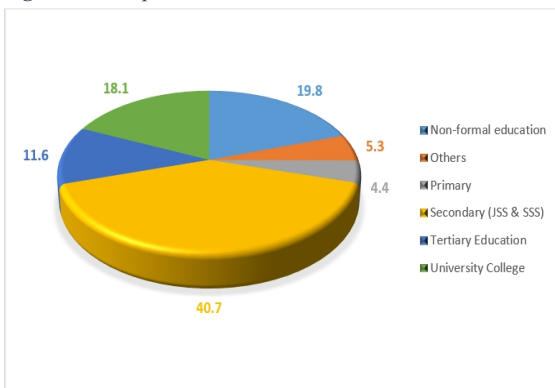


Figure 3d: Respondents' Marital Status

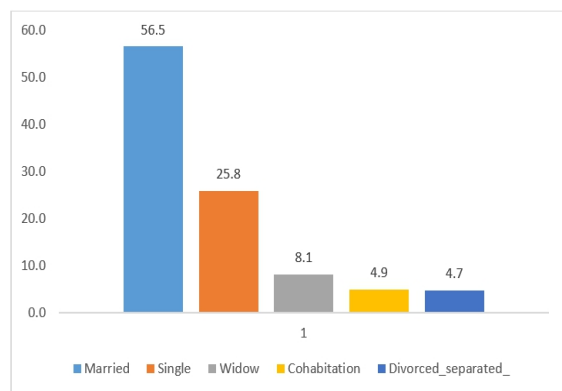


Figure 3e: Religious Confession

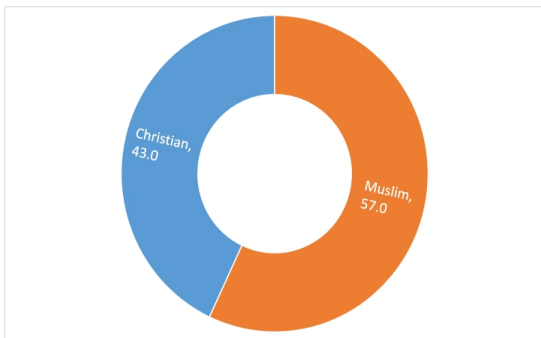


Figure 3f: Respondents' Occupation



Figure 3g: Respondents with Political Parties

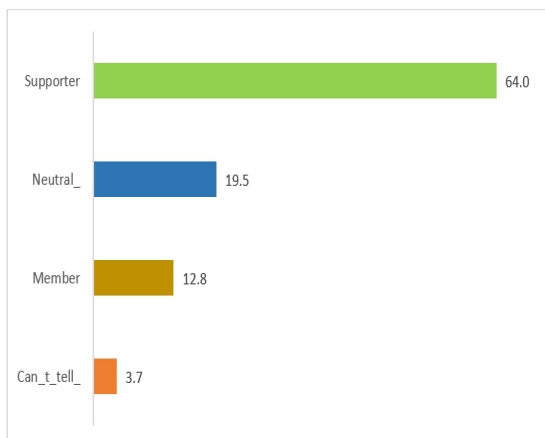
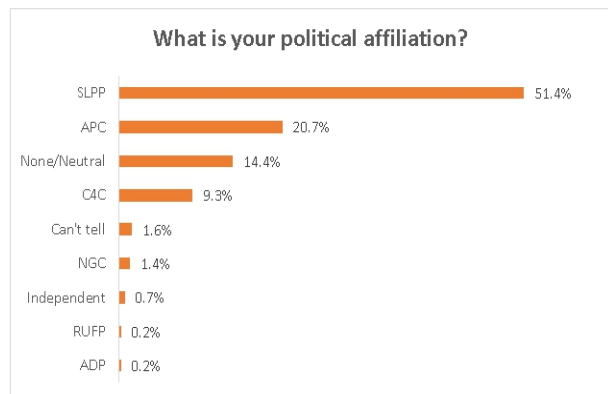


Figure 3h: Respondents' political affiliation



## Relevance

A review of the project documents brought to light that this project was a continuation of an initial project implemented within the period 2017 to 2019. Following the successful implementation of the first phase, a need expressed by beneficiaries led to a second phase which was initially designed for the period April 2019 to October 2020. The identified need was to establish platforms that could be used to demand accountability from elected officials. Requesting for platforms of accountability by then implies that citizens needed an opportunity to hold elected MPs to account for their campaign promises. In assessing the relevance of the project, the consultant noted that the project as a whole was relevant because the identified needs were addressed. Different reasons to further justify this conclusion to be true are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Conspicuously, the targeting approach was appropriate to achieve the intended objectives. The project targeted community-based CSOs, MPs and, women and youths at the constituency level as key participants or beneficiaries of the project. These target groups proved to be the key players so far, the accountability of MPs is concerned at the constituency level. Findings revealed that these target groups were consistently engaged in project activities aiming at promoting accountability and improving the interaction between the MPs and their constituents. The activities were structured in such a way that systematically laid a solid foundation to suppress political tension.

The project invested in building the capacity of CSOs who were partners to act as watchdogs in their constituencies. While promoting accountability during the post-election period, CSOs applied non-adversarial advocacy skills and sustained platforms the project supported them with. Also, multiple THMs were supported by the project each of which served as a platform where electorates questioned their MPs performance concerning their campaign promises. The evaluation found convincing evidence to report that these project activities appropriately produced the desired results. For example, some of the MPs reported that on several occasions, they have been engaged by members of their constituencies. Members of CSOs were also raising concern through different platforms including social media and radio programs to ensure MPs deliver on their promise. A notable action MPs took as a result of this project is the planning of their chiefdom development plan. Findings have shown that the same tool and approach introduced by the project to track MPs campaign promises, were used by the MPs to develop chiefdom development plan.

Notably, the CSOs as well as electorates targeted by the project – especially the women – have developed resilience to stand out publicly to demand MPs accountability. Other than THMs, the project participants were encouraged to utilize social media as another platform for asking questions and making complaints relating to constituency development. Testimonies recorded during interviews confirmed that the WhatsApp forum was established among CSOs, MPs and their constituents to dialogue and share information.

*“We have a WhatsApp group with the CSO and our MP where we complain and ask questions relating to the development of our constituency. We have experienced good interaction with the MP that is why you are experiencing active response and lively discussion with us”*

**29-year-old female teacher, Lunsar**

Another indication of relevance was observed in the partnership with CSOs. Right from inception, the project sought to work with community-based partners (26) who were either women or youth-led organizations. Without any compromise on quality, the CSOs were carefully selected and supported by Search to carry out activities the evaluation found appropriate to the results of the project. Field support provided by CSOs with the aid of the project facilitated community engagement and dialogue sessions between the MPs and their constituents. Respondents from various FGDs testified the good work of CSOs while describing how in different occasions they have observed organizations monitor the developmental activities of MPs. Some of the activities CSOs were engaged in according to the respondents include but are not limited to; writing letters, sending text messages and making phone calls as necessary. Furthermore, CSOs were reported to have invited MPs and other members of their constituencies to attend THMs where updates on campaign promises and developmental projects were reported with the use of Election Promise Tracker (EPT).

*"CSOs checked the actions and activities of our MP. Whenever they noticed that the MP was not doing what he promised to do, they wrote him a letter and also called or sent text message to him through WhatsApp. We were also invited to an open meeting where the MP gave feedback on his campaign promises."***28-year-old female trader, Kombayendeh**

In conclusion, the remarkable achievement of the project gives a clear indication that the project was relevant. The project positively affected the key target groups in different ways. While the CSOs' capacity was strengthened, the MPs improved interaction with their constituents and the electorates benefited from development programs as promised by their MPs. These results may continue to be relevant to the MPs and their constituents as long as the CSOs will remain functional in promoting accountability.

## Effectiveness

An investigation to ascertain the effectiveness of the project led the consultant to assess how well the project achieved expected outcomes. Different methods were used to ensure an objective and accurate affirmation of project effectiveness. On one hand, the assessment was about CSOs' capacity to serve as watchdogs while promoting post-election accountability. And on the other hand, the assessment of effectiveness was about MP's engagement with their constituents. The overall conclusion based on the results of the evaluation is that convincing evidence exists to confirm that the project met effectiveness criteria.

### **Outcome 4: Youth- and women-led CSOs have increased capacity to serve as watchdogs and promote accountability in the post-election environment**

The analysis of the field survey indicates 54.4% of respondents consciously admitted that CSOs (women and youth-led organizations) were helping in promoting MP's accountability within their constituency. When compared to the baseline (37.0%), a difference of 27.4% was observed as the increase achieved by the project. The need to strengthen capacity among CSOs was highlighted in the baseline report suggesting that there were areas of improvement.

To address some of the critical gaps in knowledge and skills, the project invested in activities aiming at building capacity amongst the CSO. The interim report (August 2019 to February 2020), as well as monitoring records, provides evidence to show that the project provided structured capacity building training, to increase the ability and skills of CSOs to demand accountability, promote the provision of quality services and monitor the implementation of campaign promises made by elected MP. From the

impression gathered and the body of reports reviewed, the consultants noted that the series of training CSOs received through the project increased their confidence to act as watchdogs.

Before the training, a mapping exercise and rapid assessment were conducted to identify needs and gaps amongst the CSOs. The results of these exercises supposedly informed the capacity building support exercise Search tailor-made on their approach, non-adversarial communication, community engagement techniques, local governance and accountability. The capacity building training was effective as the language of instruction was the commonly spoken dialect (Krio). The project report has shown that during the training session, a difference of 70% increase in knowledge was reported among participants at post-test. This gave the impression that participants left the training session knowledgeable of how to act as watchdogs and promote MP's accountability. Some of the effects of this capacity building support as recorded in reports include increased confidence among CSOs to monitor MPs action plans, increased understanding of local governance, the active promotion of greater transparency in CSOs engagement with MPs and consistency in the regularity of update on MPs' performance about campaign promise.

Technical support provided by the project strengthened the ability of CSOs to monitor the implementation of agreed Constituency Action Plans (CAPs). The technical support did not only enable CSOs to participate meaningfully in community meetings where accountability issues were discussed, but it facilitated CSOs linkage with the development committees established by MPs. Furthermore, the monitoring tool developed by Search was used by CSOs to track progress relating to the CAPs.

The project also supported CSOs with cash transfers through mobile money to augment their mobility and monitoring exercises according to the report (Project Report, February 2021). As part of this arrangement, the project connected the CSOs with social media platforms – mainly WhatsApp and Facebook – in addition to other local social structures to promote accountability. These investments in capacity contributed to better engagement between the local authorities and the CSOs.

Interviews with some of the key informants from the CSOs as well as the Search project management unit were endearing to conclude that key staff members of the CSOs applied the learning from Search to demand local accountability and quality service delivery. Some CSOs were reported to have facilitated conflict resolution and peace-building sessions in their localities. In various communities, participants of FGDs exclaimed the active role of CSOs and how they helped to raise awareness on local governance issues. Some of the MPs interviewed as well expressed that they have been engaged by CSOs several times either to follow up on their CAPs or raising concerns in the interest of citizens. For example, the MP in constituency 78 disclosed in an interview that CSOs engaged him on different occasions to raise public concerns relating to campaign promises.

Even though some of the promises made by the MPs were beyond their official mandate, the MP in constituency 001 proudly said she went the extra mile to fulfil her campaign promises. This MP succeeded in building a school, a community bank and supported women groups through savings and loan schemes for which she never received constituency development funds for. For all of her achievements the MP said, CSOs have been monitoring and providing feedback to the constituents accordingly through radio programs and THMs.

**Table 3: Project activities delivered under outcome 4**

Activity Code	Key Project Activities	Output Planned	Output Achieved
A 4.1	Capacity Building to Youth- and Women-led CSOs:	1	1

**Table 4: Indicators, Targets and Reach**

Indicators	Unit of measure	Target	Reach
<b>Outcome 4 (phase II): Youth- and women-led CSOs have increased capacity to serve as watchdogs and promote accountability in the post-election environment</b>			
# of youth and women-led CSOs promoting accountability in the post-election environment	Organization	27	26
# of CAPs completed by Youth and women-led CSOs in their respective constituencies	CAPs	26	26
Activity 4.1: Capacity Building to Youth- and Women-led CSOs		2	2
# of youth and women-led CSOs trained on local accountability processes using the Common Ground Approach	Organization	27	26
# of action plans developed and acted upon	Plan	26	26
Activity 4.2: Support to Trained CSOs to Carry out Ongoing Monitoring		4	4
# of CSOs quarterly engagement meetings conducted	Meeting	4	4
# of participants that attended the quarterly engagement meetings	Participants	52	52

Other elements the evaluation focused on while investigating CSOs' capacity level include the human resources, office space, skills and experience, and action plan. When respondents were asked about the human resource capacity CSOs have to promote accountability, 91.4% of respondents reported that CSOs have the human resource required to promote accountability, while 5.6% of respondents expressed uncertainty and only 3.0% of respondents expressed denial in response to the same question (Figure 4a).

Regarding the office premises of CSOs, data show that 55.4% of respondents acknowledged that CSOs have permanent offices within their district while 39.9% denied and 4.7% were unsure. Given the result, one may wonder why a significant proportion of respondents gave the impression that some CSOs lack presence in the district. In reality, however, CSOs usually establish offices in district headquarters from where they operate their programs. As such, there is little or no evidence of physical office structures in most of the constituencies (Figure 4b).

Evaluation finding regarding skills and experience indicates that 64.9% of respondents dismissed any doubt about CSOs' skills and experience to promote MP's accountability in their constituency, 32.5% of respondents were doubtful, while 2.6% of respondents expressed uncertainty in this regard (Figure 4c). The improvement in skills and experience among CSOs is well known to others in the constituencies. Project participants including the MPs commended Search for the exposure and proficiency demonstrated by CSOs. This, of course, emanated from customized capacity building training and other supports Search provided through this project.

In terms of CAPs, 64.4% of respondents similar to the baseline (64.0%) – reported that CSOs had constituency action plans in place, 30.9% of respondents denied any claim of such and 4.7% of respondents expressed uncertainty (Figure 4d). The equal admission on CAPs developed by CSOs is not surprising because the CAPs were developed since the first phase of the project.

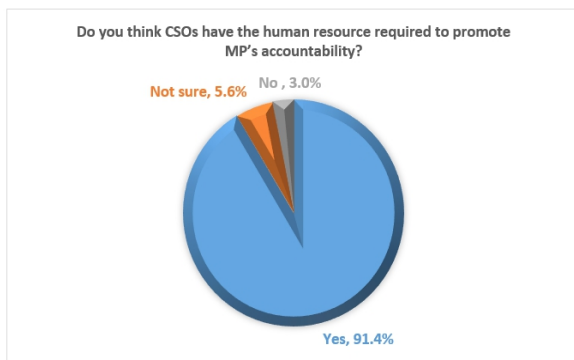
Evidence in the project report highlights that performing executive members of 26 out of 27 CSOs supported, went through training and refreshers which influenced their performance in diverse ways.

The evidence shows that these executives demonstrated skills in leadership, community mobilization and non-adversarial advocacy which were acquired from the series of training. In the same vein, when talking about the capacity of the CSOs, a key informant from Search vividly pointed to the training as a deliberate investment to leverage the capacity of CSOs in critical areas such as accountability, local governance and advocacy.

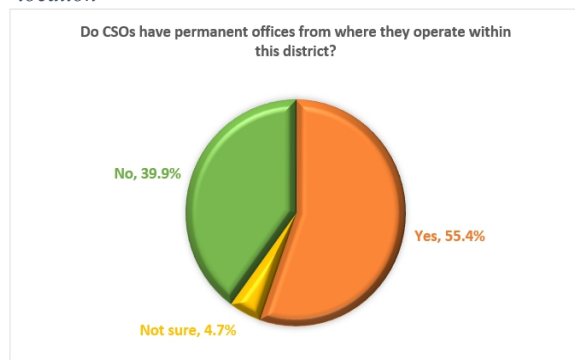
From the views of key informants (CSOs, MPs and Search), the consultant learnt that CSOs have made progress in the areas of professionalism and confidence in facilitating and handling accountability issues. According to the MP of constituency 087, before now, CSOs among others could hardly confront PMs on matters of accountability because they considered the role of the honourable sacred. But now, CSOs presentation in meetings and how they approach public officials have improved evidently on the testimonies of most of the MPs. To some extent, the project can take credit for this improvement because, until now, Search was the only organization that introduced CAP and EPT for MPs with support given to CSOs to monitor and promote the process in a participatory

**Figure 4: Responses regarding the Capacity of CSOs**

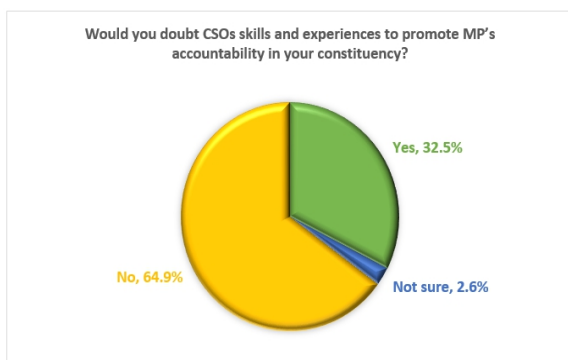
*Figure 4a: Responses regarding CSOs human resource*



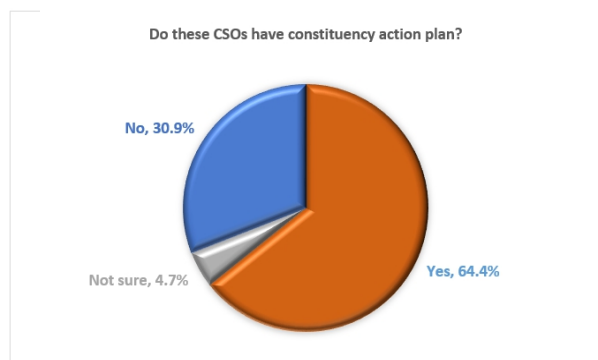
*Figure 4b: Responses regarding CSOs formal office location*



*Figure 4c: Perception about CSOs skills and experience*



*Figure 4d: Responses regarding CSOs action plan*



manner.

### **Outcome 5: Engagement between newly-elected MPs and citizens**

In phase one of this project, while political aspirants were in the process of campaigning for the position of the MP, Search introduced the THM as an initiative to let the aspirants share their

constituency development plans. During that period, CAPs of various aspirants were successfully documented. When Search secured funding for the second phase of the project, the THMs continued with a focus on tracking the progress of elected MPs in line with their campaign promises while promoting the demand for accountability and service delivery. Later in the second phase, the CAP was referred to as Election Promise Tracker<sup>2</sup> (EPT). The CSOs were custodians of the EPT.

While baseline finding indicates that 61.0% of respondents reported awareness of THMs, the general result of the evaluation shows that 96.5% of respondents were aware of THMs held in their constituencies with 2.1% respondents denying this claim and 1.4% of respondents were not sure if such meetings were held (Figure 5). The difference between the baseline and evaluation finding gives the impression more THMs were held during the post-election phase. On the other hand, however, data from the constituency viewpoint have shown that 7 out of 11 sample constituencies registered 100% of respondents' awareness of THMs in their constituencies. See table 9 in the appendices.

**Figure 5: Awareness about THMs in constituencies**

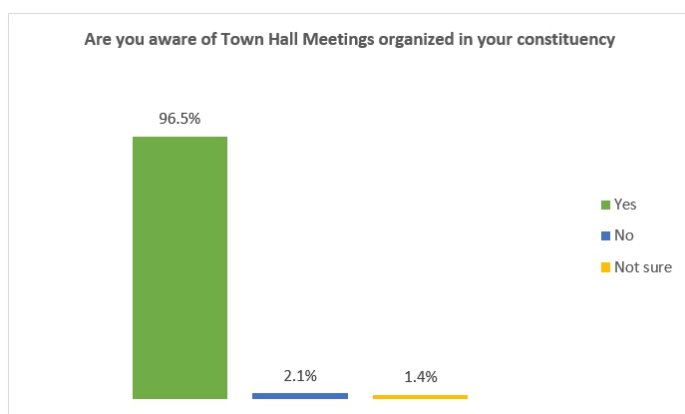
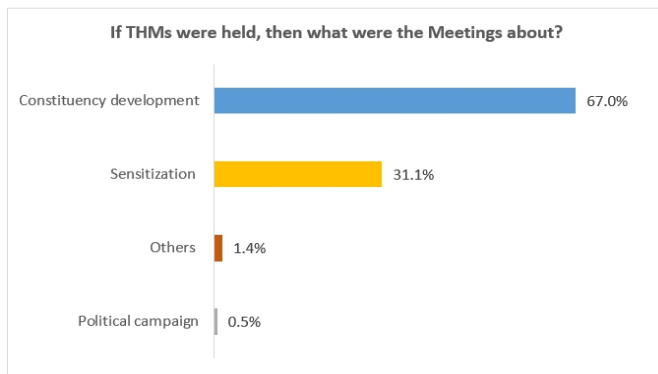


Figure 6 is a reflection of the data derived from an investigation into the purpose of THMs. From the overall analysis, 67.0% of respondents claimed that the THMs held in their constituencies were meant for discussions related to their community development, 31.1% of respondents reported that the THMs were about sensitization relating to accountability and local governance, and as low as 0.5 of respondents said the meetings were all about politics. Only 1.4% mentioned other reasons unrelated to any of the reasons stated. The other reasons mainly include family matters and occasional events. Based on the findings it is clear that the THMs were mostly held for their intended purpose. That is, to discuss constituency development issues and sensitize constituents about accountability and local governance.

However, the three constituencies where a very low proportion of respondents mentioned constituency development as reasons for THMs are 012 (9.4%), 096 (22.7%) and 004 (23.7). Given the result, one could be right to conclude that, unlike other constituencies, THM in the aforementioned constituencies could not fulfil one of the critical purposes it was meant for. See table 10 in the appendices. In this vein, comments from FGD respondents in these constituencies revealed that their MPs have not been frequent in their visit to these constituencies.

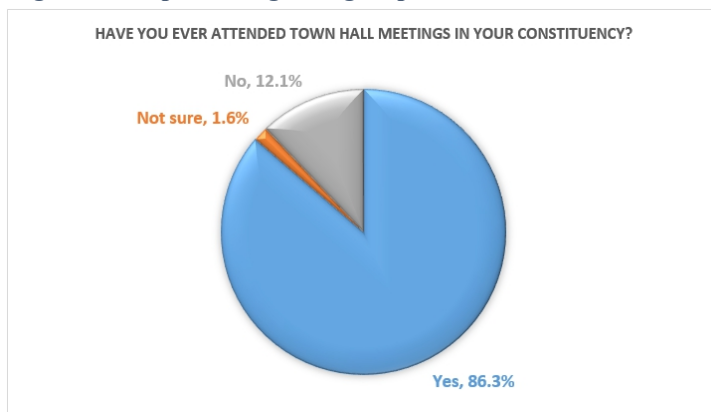
<sup>2</sup> A tool developed by the Search that enables voters to monitor the performance of their MPs and elected officials

**Figure 6: Main discussion topic of THMs held by MPs**



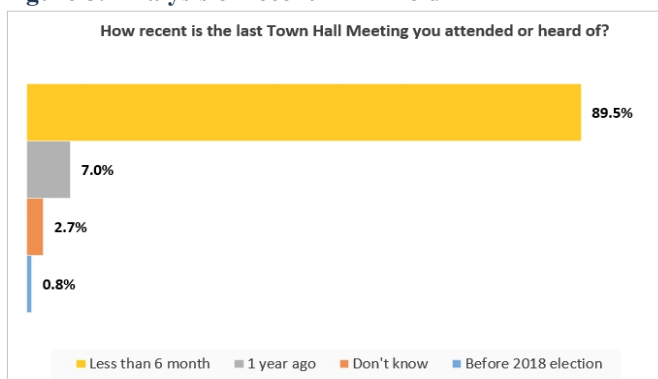
Attendance in THMs has been generally impressive as analysis in figure 7 indicates that 86.3% of respondents attended such meetings in their constituencies, 12.1% of respondents on no account attended such meetings while 1.6% of respondents could not tell whether they attended meetings or not.

**Figure 7: Responses regarding respondent THM attendance**



Further probe to determine how recent THMs were held in constituencies revealed that 89.5% of respondents attended the last THMs in less than six months preceding the evaluation, 7.0% of respondents attended one year ago, as 2.7% of respondents were not knowledgeable of such meetings and less than 1.00% reported that the last THM they attended was before the March 2018 parliamentary and presidential elections. See figure 8.

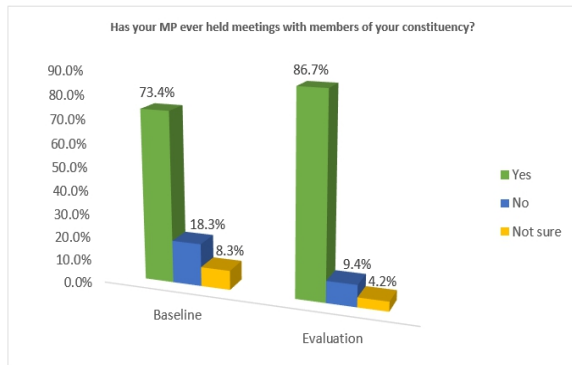
**Figure 8: Analysis of recent THM held**



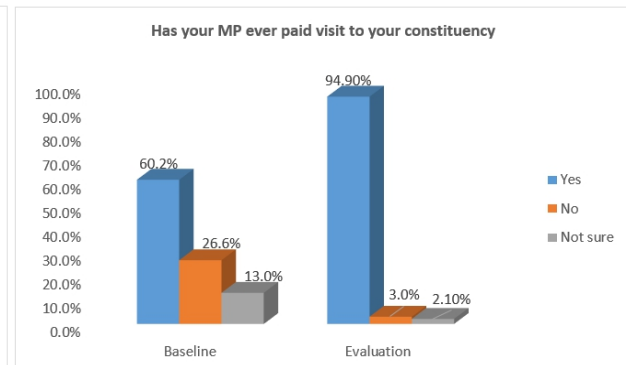
With regards to THMs, figure 9 indicates 86.7% of respondents compared to 73.4% of respondents at baseline that reported THMs were held by MPs in their respective constituency. In comparison, more (13.0%) and more (35.0%) respondents recognized MPs' THMs and visits to their constituencies respectively.

Figure 10 shows that 60.2% of respondents admitted during the baseline that their MPs paid visits to their constituencies, while the evaluation finding confirms such visits amongst 94.9% of respondents.

**Figure 10: Analysis of MPs' meeting with their constituents**

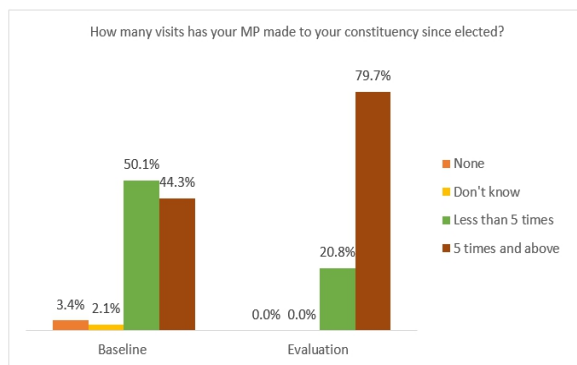


**Figure 10: MPs' Visit to their constituencies**

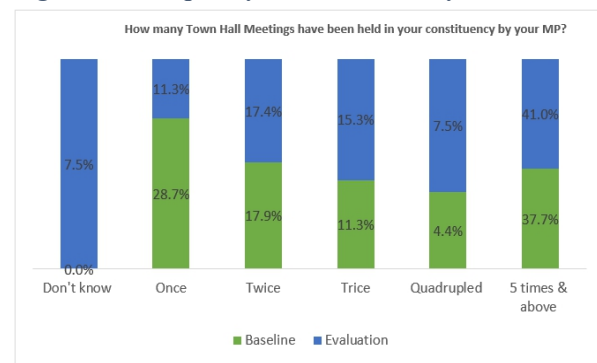


The frequency of such visits and meetings increased as reflected in figures 11 where survey data show meetings held by MPs increased from less than 5 times at baseline (50.1%) to more than five times according to evaluation results (79.7%). With regards to the visits, 47.1% compared to baseline 37.7% of respondents confirmed that their MPs visits occurred more than four times. See figure 12 for details.

**Figure 12: Frequency of MP's visits**



**Figure 12: Frequency of THMs held by MPs**



These impressive results regarding MPs meetings and visits were confirmed by respondents of various FGDs. In Constituency 001 for example, youth from FGDs attested that their MP paid frequent visits to their community much more than any other MP has ever done in their lifetime. Similar feedback came from women groups as well as local authorities from constituency 075, 087 and 088. The reason brought forward by respondents and some of the key informants for this change was attributed to the EPT because it was reported that MPs were encouraged to attend THMs were updates on their campaign promises were provided.

The project introduced EPT as a monitoring tool in constituencies to ensure monitoring over the developmental activities of MPs. As a result, the EPT became a 'game changer' by putting the MPs in the spotlight as pressure mounted from CSOs and their constituents for service delivery. Almost all the MPs interviewed strongly expressed this sentiment. According to the MPs, the EPT drew community attention not only on their performance but accountability and local governance. Consequently, their presence and frequency in constituencies were necessary because they used such moments to update their constituents on progress otherwise, provided reasons where the delay was observed in delivering any of their campaign promises. Findings of the evaluation also revealed that the CAP model was replicated by some of the MPs at the chiefdom level. In particular, the MPs of constituency 079 and 096 reported that the CAP tool was adopted to develop their chiefdom development plans.

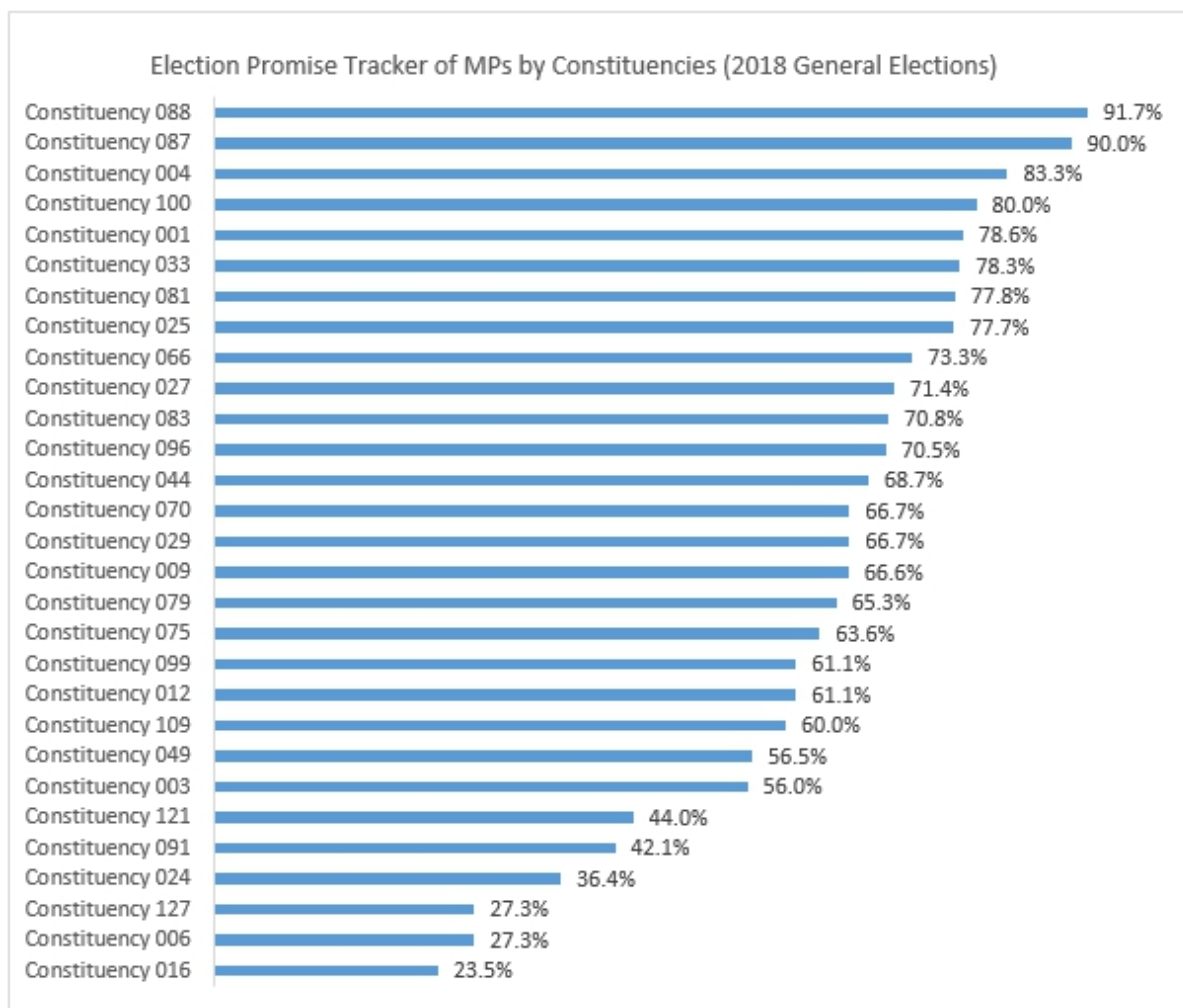
The evaluation found strong evidence to conclude that the progress made by MPs to fulfil their campaign promises is impressive. Even though their responsibilities mainly surround legislation, monitoring, supervision and oversight, most of the MPs went the extra mile (using personal funds, lobbying with development partners for projects etc.) to meet the development needs of their constituencies. A study case is the work done by the MP of constituency 001, where a female independent MP said she used non-constituency development funds as well as lobby skills to undertake projects some of which were not captured on her CAP.

Search may have not provided any resources to support the implementation of CAPs however, tracking the progress of MPs went well even though some of the MPs expressed their dismay over the lack of financial support. Most of the MPs shared the feeling that Search should have supported their projects in any form whatsoever. The reason being, the PMs felt that it was improper to ask for someone's action plan publicly and monitor the implementation of such a plan consistently without any form of support to aid delivery.

However, working along with Search was perceived as a moment of exposure and support as the project leveraged the actualization of CSOs mandates according to key informants. Findings from the field indicate that networks of CSOs have been developed around accountability and local governance issues using the CAP / EPT model. The major impact of this project as expressed by key informants interviewed from various categories is the effect of EPT on the MPs as well as CSO in terms of implementing development projects. While the CSOs were learning how to facilitate the process of THMs, the MPs on the other hand were urged by the demand of their constituents to deliver on their campaign promises.

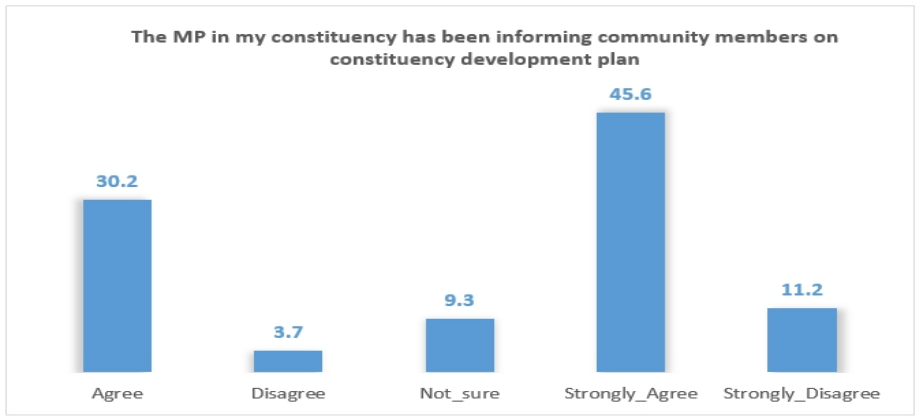
A comparative analysis of CAPs by constituencies shows that most of the MPs have made outstanding progress on their campaign promises. The highest performing constituencies as far as the evidence could show were 088 (91.7%) and 087 (90.0%) – all in the Bo district. Whereas the least performing constituencies at the time of the evaluation were 006 (27.3%), 027 (27.3) and 016 (23.5%) of Kailahun, Kono and Kenema respectively. For other performing constituencies see figure 13.

**Figure 13: CAP ranking by order of performance**



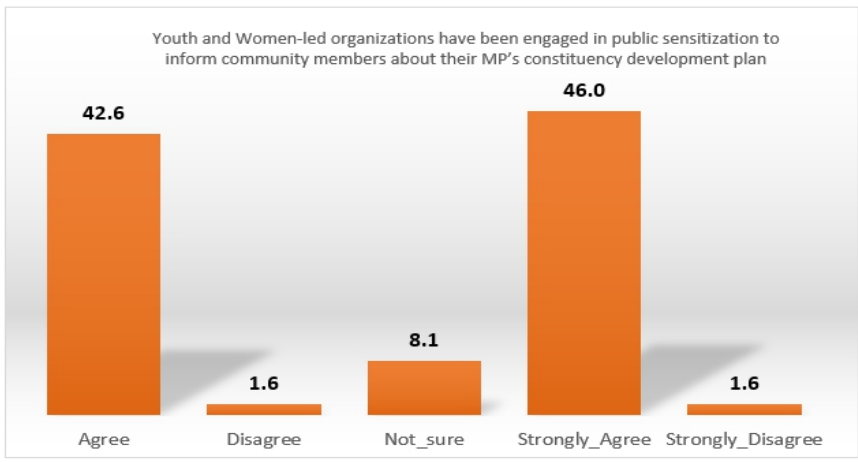
To further understand the engagement between MPs and their constituents, questions were posed to assess respondents' perception regarding the interaction of MPs with their constituents. Figure 14 below indicates that 45.6% of respondents strongly agreed followed by 30.2% who also agreed that MPs in their constituencies have been informing community members about their constituency development plan and what they have been doing since they were elected in office. However, 11.2% of respondents strongly disagreed and 3.7% disagreed with the same claim. On the whole, the result gives some positive indications that MPs were not only visiting their constituencies, but they engaged their constituents on developmental activities.

**Figure 14: MPs informing their constituents on the development plan**



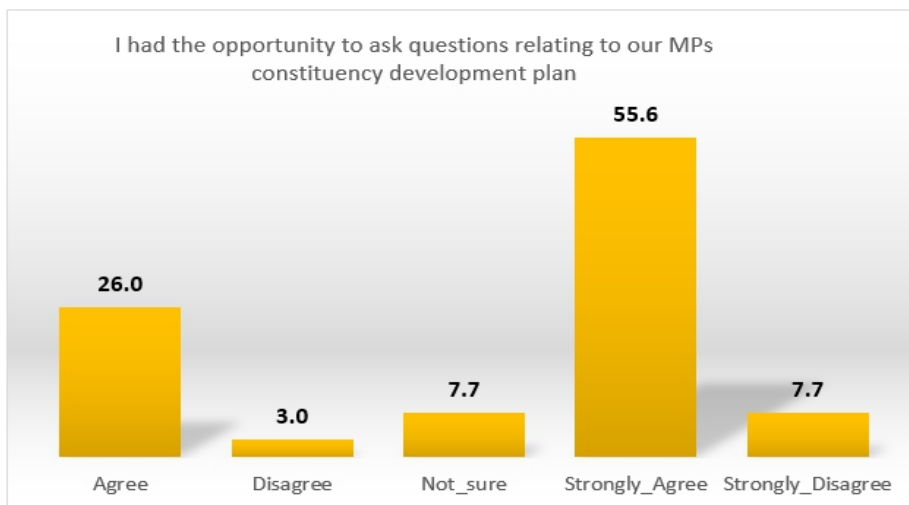
Youth and women-led CSOs that were working with Search on this project were supported to engage in public sensitization and raising awareness among community members about MPs CAPs. Data based on the perception of community members have shown that 46.0% of respondents strongly agreed and 42.6% agreed that youth and women-led organizations have been engaged in public sensitization to inform community members about CAPs MPs developed long before they were elected into office. On the contrary, only 1.6% of respondents strongly disagreed while respondents who disagreed accounted for 1.6%. See figure 15

**Figure 15: Perception on CSOs public engagement**



Concerning the opportunities for the electorates to question their elected MPs on their CAPs, analysis on figure 16 shows that 55.6% and 26.0% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they now have the opportunity to ask questions in respect of their constituency development. However, respondents who strongly disagreed plus those who disagreed account for about 10.7%. Given the analysis, one would be right to conclude that most of the electorates had the opportunity not only to meet with their MPs but to ask questions in a non-confrontational manner. Among the opportunities for engagement highlighted by various FGD respondents include the following radio, TV, social media and THMs.

**Figure 16: Perception on opportunities electorates had to question MPs**



On a whole, the analysis as given in figure 19 shows that 40.7% and 33.5% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed (respectively) that CSOs led by women and youth have developed confidence and skills to check on the development plans of MPs. While 24.0% of respondents were uncertain, the analysis further shows that less than 2.00% of respondents either disagreed (1.4%) or strongly disagreed (0.5%) on the confidence and skills CSOs have to monitor MPs' development projects. See

**Figure 17: Perception on CSOs capacity**

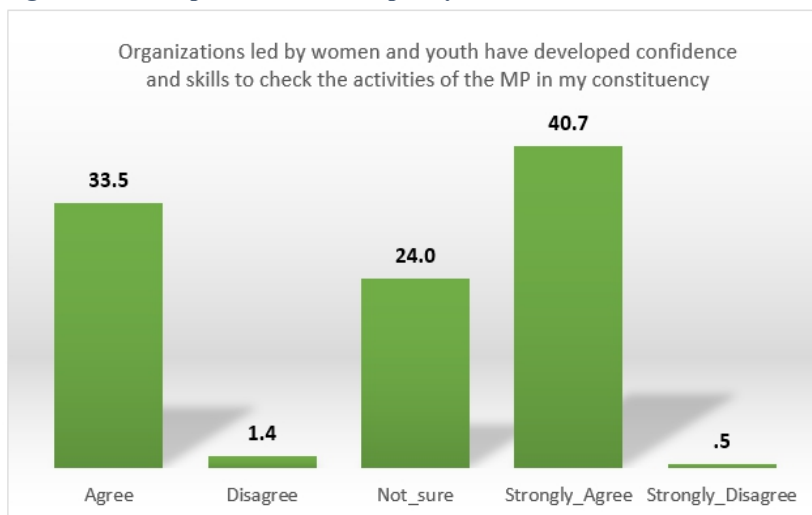


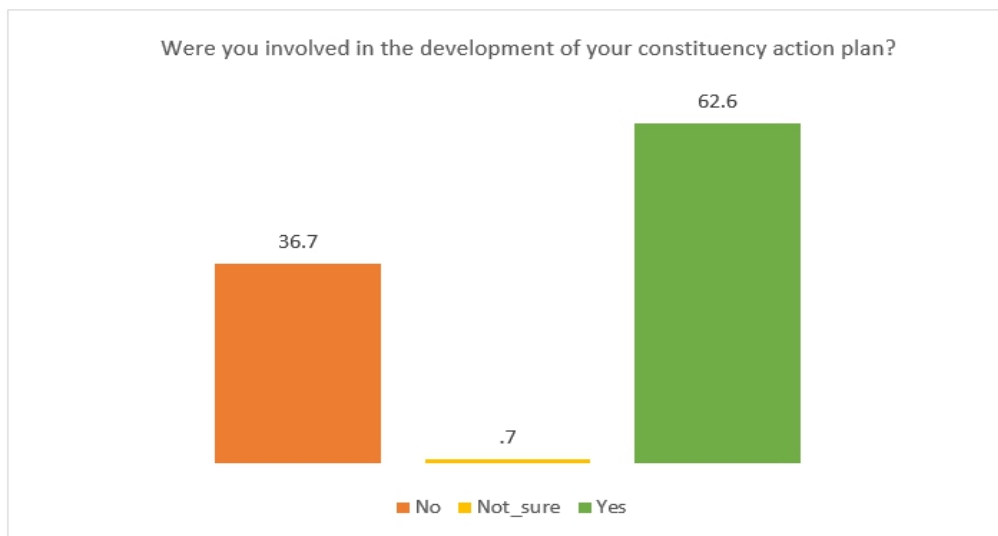
figure 17.

## Impact

With the ultimate aim of contributing to better governance of constituencies through participation, the project focused on two strategic result areas which were perceived as dimensions of change; 1) capacity building among CSOs and 2) MPs' engagement with their constituents. To achieve these results, project activities were systematically undertaken with the participation of community-based CSOs, MPs and, women and youth of selected constituencies. The activities implemented built on the gains and achievements Search attained during phase one of the project. While assessing this project, the consultant examined the impact of the project by investigating the long-term effects of the intervention. The MPs who were key participants alongside community women and youth who were voters during March 2018 general elections, were engaged in discussions and interviews to ascertain the impact of the project. Overall, the evaluation found strong evidence to report that this project contributed to peaceful co-existence resulting from improved interaction between the MPs and their constituents.

Data in figure 20 show that 62.6 % of respondents claimed they were involved in the development of CAPs as opposed to 36.7% of respondents who reported non - participation and less than 1.0% of respondents expressed uncertainty when they were asked the same question. This result as shown in figure 18 is an appreciable indication of electorates participation in the development of their CAPs.

**Figure 18: Participation in CAP development process**



However, the affirmation of participation was overwhelming in constituency 001 (100.0%) followed by constituency 096 (76.5%) and 029 (75.0%). The constituencies with low confirmation of participation are 075 (33.3%) and 012 (38.5%). See table 14 in the appendices.

The project implementation exercise reached 26 constituencies directly each with a CSO and respective MP. In implementing the project, training conducted at the constituency level supported key members of 26 CSOs to have improved engagement with local authorities, advocacy, improvement in their level of professionalism and reporting. The evidence at hand reveals that the training increased CSOs knowledge on accountability and local governance. Also, CSOs acquired skills and knowledge which strengthened their ability to engage MPs in a constructive and non-confrontation manner. While demanding actions from local authorities where necessary, CSOs

demonstrated professionalism and confidence in the exercise of their functions. To some extent, key informants especially from the MPs attributed the improvement observed among the CSOs engagement with them (MPs) to Search intervention. The CSOs have been engaged in raising voices on MPs' accountability and generally on public concerns relating to CAPs. This was confirmed by the findings of the evaluation.

Apart from the training, the EPT model introduced by the project was adopted by the CSOs to monitor other elected officials that were not directly targeted by the project. An instance cited by key informants suggests that a network of CSO using the CAP and EPT tools to design a project proposal that was funded by another funder. This implies that CSOs were using the methodology and tools of the project to develop networks for local resource mobilization. Some of these achievements which were also recorded in the project report can be attributed to the intervention of the THM project implemented by Search from 2019 to 2020.

As far as the evaluation findings could reveal, capacity strengthening had an impact on the CSOs ability to facilitate accountability dialogues with local elected authorities including MPs in a professional manner. Evaluation findings further showed that the extent of the knowledge and skills CSOs acquired through this project can lead to lasting effect even beyond the project lifespan.

On the side of the MPs, much improvement was reported in their community engagement and interaction with their constituents. Despite the emergence of COVID-19 since March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 when the first index case was reported in Sierra Leone, the frequency of MPs' visits to their constituencies was remarkably outstanding. A testimony given by the Project Officer pointed out that there has been a marked improvement in the visits of MPs in the constituencies under review.

*"We don't want to go back to those days when MPs will make promises and sit in Freetown. Before now there were constituencies that set eyes on their MPs only once ... But that has changed drastically in our intervention areas. Kudos to the project"*

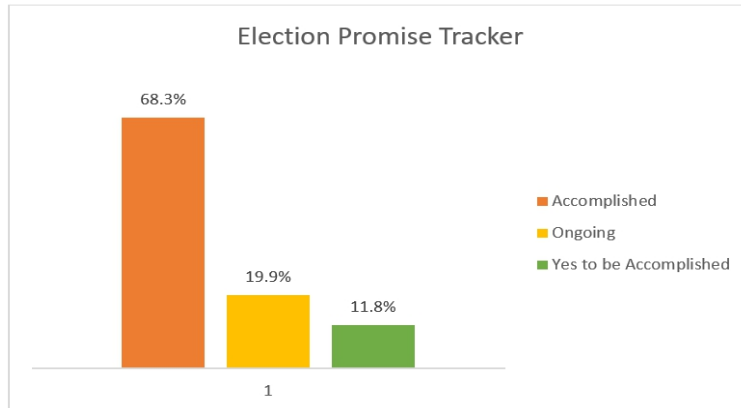
Project Officer, Search for Common Ground

The visit of MPs was also supported by data with analysis indicating that the visits of MPs increased from less than 5 times (50.1% - baseline) to more than 5 times (79.7% - evaluation) since elected into office in 2018. Comparatively, MPs who spent five years (2012 – 2018) paid fewer visits than MPs who have barely completed three years in office (2018 – 2021). This level of progress could be attributed to the urge that came along with the ongoing monitoring of MPs' developmental activities. More importantly, most of the MPs made frantic efforts to fulfil their campaign promises out of their resources. In the Moyamba district, for example, an MP facilitated the provision of loan schemes to support individuals with small and medium enterprises within record time. According to findings, the EPT gave the urge to this MP who went all out to fast-track credit and loan service in fulfilment of his campaign promises. While the provision of loans came as a surprise to many in constituency 096, a key informant disclosed in an interview that, Search intervention may have motivated the action of the MP in this regard.

To update the EPT, MPs were required to give feedback on their achievements relating to the CAPs. According to findings, the EPT was updated in an open session where MPs interacted with their constituents in a friendly manner. Figure 21 is a reflection of the EPT Search introduced in the course of the project implementation. From the analysis in figure 19, there is a clear indication that 68.3% of

all election promises reflected in the CAPs of MPs have been accomplished, 19.9% were in progress at the time of the evaluation while 11.8% were yet to be accomplished.

**Figure 19: Summary of 2018 Election Promise Tracker**



When talking about the most outstanding change the project contributed to, the feedback from various respondents signified that the interaction between the MPs and the electorates has improved tremendously. From the end of the CSOs, the consultant noted that MPs were accessible to their constituents at crucial times at least to address their constituents on developmental plans. Moreover, respondents from female and youth FGDs held in most of the districts shared the view that their current MPs were receptive and approachable much more than the former MPs.

In conclusion, the impacts of this project very much aligned with the two dimensions of change the project was designed to achieve: strengthening CSOs capacity and improving the interaction between MPs and their constituents. On one hand, evidence exists to report that the project strengthened CSOs capacity to facilitate accountability sessions. As a result, improvement in CSOs engagement with local leaders was recognised as one of the major impacts of the project. On the other hand, the EPT with sustained monitoring exercise created room for better interaction between the MPs and their constituents. Through this project, women, as well as youth, were bold enough to demand MPs accountability in organized sessions where Search and partners facilitated the interphase between PMs and their electorates. This was impossible with the former MPs as participants of FGDs revealed.

The Project Officer among others was inclined to conclude in an interview that the CAP and EPT, were appropriate tools that helped to transform the attitude of MPs positively and also opened doors for stronger CSOs networking. However, if the project is to be replicated elsewhere, a key informant from Search highlighted the following areas of improvement:

- Educate aspiring candidates, especially those who are new, on their responsibilities.
- Train elected MPs on how to develop concepts into project proposals for resource mobilization.
- Intensify public education on the functions and responsibilities of MPs.
- Encourage aspiring MPs to refrain from making overambitious promises during campaigns.
- Pre-parliamentary education to ensure political aspirants keep their promises within the scope of their mandate.

The project direct reach so far, the evaluation can confirm in terms of beneficiaries is 2,553 participants with women accounting for 34.9% compared to men 65.1%. Of the overall total participants served, 20.4% were reported as youth while 3.3% were persons with disability.

## Efficiency

In accessing efficiency as one of the criteria of the evaluation, the consultant examined the project results in line with the inputs to critically analyse how well the project resources contributed to the achievement of the project objectives. The overall findings of the evaluation did not indicate any area of overlap nor duplication of activities in any form. The activities undertaken by the project team produced the desired outputs so much that cost-effectiveness was justified. However, the time taken to deliver all project outputs exceeded the actual period of the project. The project implementation activities were stalled due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Important to note, however, is the efficient ways and means the project resulted in achieving the results that could have been realized normally. In this regard, virtual meetings and radio programmes were held as a remedy to achieve the desired outcome.

The partnership with CSOs was to the advantage of this project. Certainly, the selected CSOs added value to the project by sustaining the follow up monitoring Search could have done if they were based in the field. What this reveals is that the CSOs were engaged in project activities such as community outreach sessions to promote accountability. In any case, they served on the project as major players and knowing their capacity gaps, Search strengthened the knowledge and skills of the CSOs by providing the necessary support within their communities. The project support in this regard enhanced CSOs ability to deliver on the project. Apart from the training, the CSOs were exposed to further learning and funding opportunities in the course of the project implementation. Given the findings of the evaluation, partnership with local or community-based CSOs was efficiently in the best interest of the project.

Community engagement was more or less seen to be facilitated by the CSOs who may have not acquired the requisite capacity to fully represent Search. Working with partners to implement this project was of course cost-effective. But in a situation where the circumstance may arise for Search staff to make a decision or representation, the partners might not be in a position to adequately address some of the concerns of the beneficiaries. Moreover, what Search could have done efficiently is constant follow up and monitoring visits. These are critical project management functions which when performed directly by Search as designers of the project, could yield better results compared to CSOs who in fact, have their agenda and interest. To simply put, the prolonged absence of Search staff in the field tends to affect project quality and effectiveness. Rather than relying on CSOs who have their agenda and or implementation programme, Search could have field-based staff to keep close touch with beneficiaries. Continuous follow up can help for quality assurance but also, efficiently maximize project outcomes and can support community resilience.

## Challenges and Lesson Learnt

Like any other projects, the THM project encountered challenges with lessons learnt in the process of implementation. There may be more than what the evaluation recorded; however, the challenges and lessons captured in this report are key for the attention of the Search programme management unit.

## Key Challenges

- **Beneficiary Expectations:** The MPs in particular were expectant of Search supporting them to fulfil their campaign promises. As the project made no provision to support the projects of MPs in any form, some of the MPs became reluctant to cooperate with Search because the role of Search was perceived differently.
- **COVID -19 outbreak:** The outbreak of Covid-19 caused a global public health emergency. As a result, nationwide lockdowns were imposed restricting movement and large gatherings. This did not only prevent the conduct of large meetings in project communities but also delayed the delivery of project outputs that gave cause to a no-cost extension. However, until the restrictions became eased, Search resulted in virtual engagement with CSOs while public education continued through the media programmes – *Atunda Ayenda* and *Accountability Now*
- **Politicizing development work:** Some of the MPs were uncompromising with the efforts made by the CSOs to monitor their development activities. The reason is that the act of monitoring was perceived by some of the MPs as a political witch-hunt designed to smear their political ambition. Even though there was a need to investigate their work, a report (Narrative Report, February 2021) shows that in some of the constituencies, CSOs encountered challenges with local agents of MPs. To ensure their full participation and cooperation, the MPs were engaged by Search in a separate session. To further ensure their full participation and cooperation, a WhatsApp group was also created for information sharing while aiming at improving relations with MPs.
- **Partners professionalism:** Some of the CSOs were reported to be partisan in their engagement with the public. According to findings, Some of the CSOs tend to blow issues out of proportion where their interest conflicts with the MPs. However, the project attempted to put this challenge under control through the training Search conducted with the CSOs. The training was helpful as it helped to improve the confidence as well as the professionalism of CSOs. As a result, rather than conducting themselves in a way the PMs perceived as partisan, the CSOs acted as advocates of the constituents.

## Major Lessons Learnt

- In delivering project activities like the THMs and ETP, the CSOs indirectly developed skills in facilitation and monitoring. Project activities were structured in a way that created learning opportunities among CSOs.
- Local organizations can contribute meaningfully to development work if capacitated with the necessary tools and skills.
- Using CAPs to establish key performance indicators for EPT left no doubt for monitoring MPs development activities.
- Supporting local organizations to engage in constructive accountability processes can lead to sustained empowerment amongst CSOs.
- The objective use of EPT and THMs can prevent confrontation and tension between MPs and their constituents.
- Constituents can hold their elected leaders to account where a common ground for social interaction is established based on awareness, user-friendly tools and platforms.

- Right from the inception stage, project communications should highlight the scope of funding available for projects to remove the expectation that Search or partners would fund these MPs' projects?

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

The THM Project was implemented to consolidate another project that laid the foundation for accountability at the constituency level. During the post-election period, while the elected MPs were focusing on taking grounds in their new role, Search commenced the implementation of this project to call the attention of the electorates to demand accountability from their MPs. The project approach was structured in such a way that activities implemented systematically built on the existing gains of phase one. If not for the COVID-19 outbreak, the project took the grounds on good footing. However, Search strived even with the challenges, to produce the desired results. To emphasize the effect of this project, the following paragraphs have concluded key achievements that resulted from the implementation exercise.

Given the stunning achievements, one will be right to conclude that the project has succeeded not only in encouraging MPs to deliver on their promises, but also to enable the electorates to demand accountability. Community women like youth, participated in accountability sessions such as THMs to deliberate on constituency development issues as related to what the MPs promised to deliver. The evidence at the time of the evaluation shows that an increasing number of women and youth were directly engaged in sessions practically and virtually to discuss the developmental activities of their MPs.

The appreciation that comes after the THMs was very encouraging. From the findings of the evaluation, the consultant noted that some of the MPs have used the THM model the project introduced to facilitate chiefdom development plans. The conclusion this brings to mind is that this tool was impactful because project beneficiaries for whom it was used, have adopted it at least as a tool to reach a wider audience.

The impressive interaction reported between most of the MPs and their constituents is clear evidence to support the conclusion that the relationship between these two parties has improved in the course of the project. The awareness about MPs' role and how to hold them to account increased considerably with the support of this project. Participants putting the knowledge acquired from the project in exercise is a clear indication of relevance. Because the project activities can be resultantly attributed to the observed change amongst the target groups and their communities as a whole, it is therefore concluded that the THM project was effective.

Partnership with CSOs contributed greatly to the success of the project. As an approach to ensure better governance, partners were supported to act as watchdogs. Their role in follow-up, monitoring and facilitating sessions to update the EPT was outstanding. It is therefore concluded that their involvement in the project leveraged the effect of the EPT as they were the custodians of the tool.

### Recommendation

- Capacity building and system strengthening would always be needed as long as development partners keep changing scenarios. Search should therefore consider a better provision for capacity building as a key element of their project design. Better provision for capacity building means that more resources with diverse methods of professional development

session such as in-service training, peer assist, refresher training, workshops and seminars. (Empowerment for high performance)

- Effective M&E is a key component of programme quality effectiveness that cuts across all stages of the project management cycle. To ensure consistent and systematic tracking as well as analysis of progress, effective M&E should be supported with increased capacity. This could be done by recruiting someone from among the partners that can help to keep up-to-date project monitoring records or a training session with frontline and reporting staff on the functions and principles of M&E, data collection and reporting techniques etc.
- More would have come from the project in terms of impact if additional support was provided to MPs to fulfil their promises. Even though Search did not urge their promises, MPs using the Search platform to commit to constituency development created the impression that they would be supported. In future, provision should be made to educate aspiring candidates especially first-timers, on the responsibilities of MPs. Besides, tailor-made projects aiming at increasing public awareness on the responsibilities of MPs and resource mobilization should be considered in future project designs.
- Project participants expressed the prolonged absence of Search staff in the field as a weakness that can potentially affect project quality effectiveness. Even though it is more cost-effective to have CSOs on the field, frequency in Search visits can assure participants the more to be connected and engaged on the issues of interest. Continuous follow-up through routine community visits can help for quality assurance but also, maximize project outcomes and support community resilience. Therefore, Search should strongly make considerations that will increase their presence or follow-up actions in the field.

## Appendices

**Table 5:**

*Do you think CSOs have the human resource required to promote MP's accountability?*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Yes	91.4%	213
Not sure	5.6%	13
No	3.0%	7

**Table 6:**

*Do CSOs have permanent offices from where they operate within this district?*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Yes	55.4%	129
Not sure	4.7%	11
No	39.9%	93

**Table 7:**

*Would you doubt CSOs skills and experiences to promote MP's accountability in your constituency?*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Yes	32.5%	75
Not sure	2.6%	6
No	64.9%	150

**Table 8:**

*Do these CSOs have a constituency action plan?*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Yes	64.4%	150
Not sure	4.7%	11
No	30.9%	72

**Table 9:**

<b>Are you aware of Town Hall Meetings organized in your constituency?</b>				
Constituency	No	Not sure	Yes	N
001	0%	0%	100%	39
004	3%	3%	95%	40
012	10%	8%	82%	39
025	0%	0%	100%	50
029	0%	0%	100%	48
070	3%	3%	95%	38
079	0%	0%	100%	35
087	9%	3%	89%	35
088	0%	0%	100%	36
096	0%	0%	100%	34
075	0%	0%	100%	36
Total	2.1%	1.4%	96.5%	430

**Table 10:**

<b>If THMs were held, then what were the Meetings about?</b>					
Constituency	Constituency Development	Others	Political campaign	Sensitization	N
001	82.1%	0.0%	0.0%	17.9%	39
004	23.7%	0.0%	0.0%	76.3%	38
012	9.4%	0.0%	0.0%	90.6%	32
025	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50
029	97.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	48
070	91.7%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	36
079	48.6%	0.0%	0.0%	51.4%	35
087	71.0%	16.1%	3.2%	9.7%	31
088	58.3%	2.8%	2.8%	36.1%	36
096	22.7%	0.0%	0.0%	54.5%	44
075	94.4%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	36
Total	67.0%	1.4%	0.5%	31.1%	415

**Table 11:**

<b>Have you ever attended Town Hall Meetings in your constituency?</b>				
Constituency	No	Not sure	Yes	N
001	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	39
004	57.5%	7.5%	35.0%	40
012	35.9%	0.0%	64.1%	39
025	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	50
029	0.0%	2.1%	97.9%	48
070	7.9%	2.6%	89.5%	38
079	2.9%	0.0%	97.1%	35

087	11.4%	2.9%	85.7%	35
088	11.1%	0.0%	88.9%	36
096	8.8%	2.9%	88.2%	34
075	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	36
Total	12.1%	1.6%	86.3%	430

**Table 12:**

<b>How recent is the last Town Hall Meeting you attended or heard of?</b>					
Constituency	1 year ago	Before 2018 election	Don't know	Less than 6 months	N
001	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%	97.4%	39
004	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%	87.5%	16
012	64.9%	0.0%	13.5%	21.6%	37
025	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	50
029	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	97.9%	48
070	8.3%	0.0%	5.6%	86.1%	36
079	2.9%	0.0%	5.7%	91.4%	35
087	2.9%	8.6%	20.0%	68.6%	35
088	0.0%	4.2%	12.5%	125.0%	24
096	3.2%	0.0%	3.2%	93.5%	31
075	5.6%	0.0%	5.6%	88.9%	36
Total	8.3%	1.3%	6.0%	84.4%	397

**Table 13:**

<b>Has your MP ever held meetings with people of this constituency?</b>				
Constituency	No	Not sure	Yes	N
001	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	39
004	5.0%	0.0%	95.0%	40
012	48.7%	5.1%	46.2%	39
025	2.0%	8.0%	90.0%	50
029	2.1%	2.1%	95.8%	48
070	15.8%	13.2%	71.1%	38
079	0.0%	5.7%	94.3%	35
087	2.9%	0.0%	97.1%	35
088	0.0%	2.8%	97.2%	36
096	0.0%	2.9%	97.1%	34
075	25.0%	5.6%	69.4%	36
Total	9.1%	4.2%	86.7%	430

**Table 14:**

<b>Were you involved in the development of your constituency action plan?</b>			
<b>Constituency</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Yes</b>
001	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
004	55.0%	2.5%	42.5%
012	61.5%	0.0%	38.5%
025	28.0%	2.0%	70.0%
029	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%
070	57.9%	0.0%	42.1%
079	37.1%	0.0%	62.9%
087	28.6%	0.0%	71.4%
088	27.8%	0.0%	72.2%
096	23.5%	0.0%	76.5%
075	63.9%	2.8%	33.3%