



*Key dates
 for 2007:*

- **Feb. 26 - Mar. 18:**
Voter Registration Period
- **April:**
Arrival of the NDI Long-term International Observation Delegation
- **May 21-25:**
Exhibition of Provisional Voters' Register
- **May 28-29:**
Inquiry Process
- **Jun. 25:**
Dissolution of Parliament
- **Jul. 2-9:**
Nominations for President and Parliament Candidates
- **Jul. 10 - Aug. 9:**
Campaign Period
- **Aug. 11:**
Election Day

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Sierra Leone Election Day Shifts to August 11

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Sierra Leone has moved the date of presidential and legislative elections from July 28 to August 11, 2007.

The new election day means that Sierra Leone's elections will still be conducted at the height of the rainy season, an ongoing concern by stakeholders and election observers. However, the date change will also allow more time for logistical preparations and for the printing and distribution of ballots and election materials.

This two-week delay is a result of a decision by Sierra Leone's Parliament to dissolve on June 25, five years after

opening in 2002. Sierra Leone's constitution links the timing of Parliament's dissolution with the candidate nomination process and the campaign period, stating that the candidate nomination process should not be closed within 14 days after the dissolution of Parliament. Therefore, the decision for Parliament to dissolve on June 25 required delaying the candidate nomination process and campaign period as well as election day. The Exhibition and Challenges Period, which is the display of the Provisional Voters' Register (PVR), is scheduled to take place as originally planned between May 21 and 25.

NEC Chairperson Dr. Christiana Thorpe made the new election date announcement on May 10 after consultations with Sierra Leone's Parliament, central government, and political parties. Prior to the announcement, the NEC officially informed political parties at a special meeting of the Political Party Liaison Committee (PPLC) on May 4. The NEC also informed Sierra Leonean civil society organizations (CSOs) prior to the public announcement. Sierra Leonean media and CSOs had publicly discussed the potential scheduling conflict for a few weeks prior to the NEC's announcement.

NEC Displays Provisional Voters' Register

The display of the Provisional Voters' Register (PVR), or the Exhibition and Challenges Period, is occurring in Sierra Leone for five days between May 21 and May 25. During the Exhibition Period registered voters have four main activities:

- Receive information or confirmation regarding their registration status (*confirmation*)
- Request corrections to their registration details, such as name, age, and gender, on the PVR (*file for correction*)
- Registrants who were erroneously omitted from the list can apply to be added onto the voters' register (*file for inclusion*)
- Registrants and eligible citizens can request that a name be removed from the list if that person does not meet the eligibility require-



An Exhibition Officer from the NEC confirms registered voters in Gerihun Town, Bo District earlier this week.

ments to register and vote (*file an objection*). On May 7 and 8, the NEC conducted a training of trainers exercise on exhibition proce-

dures in Freetown. Exhibition Center Monitors (ECMs) then initiated additional training in

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Additional Voting Centers Created

According to NEC officials, the two-week delay in Sierra Leone's electoral calendar will allow the NEC to increase the number of polling sites in 13 of Sierra Leone's 14 districts.

In order to address the questions of distance and accessibility that have been raised by international and domestic observers and other stakeholders, the NEC will open 156 additional voting centers. The NEC is simultaneously working to ensure that provisions are in place to protect against double voting.

These additional centers will only be for election day and will not increase the number of Exhibition Centers. During the Exhibition and Challenges Period, registrants should travel to the location where they registered to vote to check their name on the Provisional Voters' Register.

Distribution of 156 additional voting centers:

Based on its assessment of each region's needs, the NEC has decided on the following distribution for the additional voting centers:

Eastern Region: 10

Kenema: 9

Kailahun: 1

Northern Region: 96

Koinadugu: 46

Bombali: 26

Tonkolili: 18

Kambia: 4

Port Loko: 2

Southern Region: 47

Bo: 23

Bonthe: 11

Moyamba: 7

Pujehun: 6

Western Region: 3

Western (Urban): 2

Western (Rural): 1

Provisional Voters' Register Displayed

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the districts. The NEC also launched a voter education campaign to encourage citizens to visit their Exhibition Center (the same location where they registered to vote) to confirm that their name is included correctly on the PVR.

The exhibition exercise is not meant to register additional citizens and NEC officials will not be able to replace lost voter registration cards during this time. **If a person has lost her/his voter registration card, it is important that he/she travel to the Exhibition Center to confirm that her/his name is on the PVR so that she/he may be able to vote on election day.**

Following the Exhibition Period, NEC officials will conduct public inquiries in each constituency on May 28 and 29 to decide upon objections, claims for inclusion on the list, and

Five facts from Sierra Leone's Voter Registration

1. **2,618,110** Sierra Leoneans, or **91% of potential voters**, registered to vote during the February 26 - March 18 Voter Registration Period
2. **51%** of those registered are male and **49%** are female
3. **56%** of those registered are youth
4. Registration took place at **2,740 Voter Registration Centers**
5. The NEC recruited **270 registration supervisors** and **12,000 temporary registration staff**

cases of persons rejected during the voter registration period.

International and domestic observers as well as representatives of political parties are observing the Exhibition and Challenges Period.

Constitutional Referendum Debate

Debate continues in Sierra Leone regarding a possible constitutional referendum. This debate centers around the timing of a potential referendum on an updated constitution as well as recommendations made by the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) in April 2007.

In September 2006 the CRC was established by the government of Sierra Leone to revise the 1991 Constitution in accordance with the Lomé Peace Agreement and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

While a formal request has not been made, the government has suggested that a constitutional referendum should occur on August 11 to coincide with presidential and legislative elections. However, the CRC and the NEC have recommended that a constitutional referendum be postponed to a later date, citing insufficient time to debate the proposed recommendations and make the necessary preparations.

In recent statements to the local media, NEC Chairperson Dr. Christi-

ana Thorpe made clear that the government has not yet requested that the NEC begin organizing for a constitutional referendum. The NEC Chairperson stated that "when it becomes necessary to hold such a referendum, it will be the Commission's responsibility to make the necessary arrangements and put plans in place for the exercise, and announce the date of the referendum."

International and domestic election observers have also noted that conducting a constitutional referendum coinciding with presidential and legislative elections on August 11 would require more extensive voter education.

The constitutional changes which the CRC has recommended include "a broadening of the criteria for citizenship; protection for the environment; the right to collective bargaining; the removal of provisions relating to gender discrimination; legal proceedings in cases of human rights violations; and the creation of a separate chamber of paramount chiefs in the Parliament."



Matthew Frumin (USA) and Miria Matembe (Uganda), members of NDI's pre-election assessment mission to the Voter Registration Period, speak with NEC staff at a Voter Registration Center in Kenema.

Officials Develop Mechanisms for Resolving Electoral Complaints

Sierra Leone is in the process of putting into place necessary administrative mechanisms to resolve complaints related to the electoral process. Appropriate mechanisms through which complaints can be filed and addressed in a timely and balanced manner are an important part of any electoral process.

There are two separate legal mechanisms guiding the election complaints process. The first is the Elections Offences Court (EOC) and the second is the Elections Petitions Court (EPC). Both fall under the legal jurisdiction of the High Court and are solely related to the parliamentary elections. Both the EOC and the EPC will be held concurrently under the auspices of the same judge. Any challenges to the presidential elections must be directed to the Supreme Court and fall under a different set of rules and regulations.

Sierra Leone's 1991 Constitution and 2002 Electoral Laws Act call for the establishment of an EOC. When

this important court is convened, it will cover offenses related to the conduct of the election, such as tampering with materials, ballot stuffing, and a host of other election-related irregularities. The court will operate for a six-month period and each case must be completed within three months.

The EPC must convene seven days from the date the final election results are announced and address specific challenges to the results from particular constituencies. The court will convene for four months and must hear all cases and render verdicts in this timeframe.

Petitions challenging parliamentary election results must be submitted in the procedural form set by the High Court and follow the Election Petitions Rules. In March, a public consultation was held to give political parties, CSOs, and citizens the opportunity to review and comment upon draft Election Petitions Rules. These draft rules are currently in Parliament awaiting final passage.

Political Parties Registration Commission Monitors Code of Conduct

Sierra Leone's Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) is working to monitor compliance with the Political Parties Code of Conduct, mediate any disputes between political parties, sensitize paramount chiefs on their role in ensuring smooth elections, and encourage parties to promote the participation of women in the electoral process.

The PPRC has established a national Code Monitoring Committee (CMC) to monitor and promote compliance with the Political Parties Code of Conduct. Each of Sierra Leone's eight registered parties adopted the Code of Conduct in January.

In May, the PPRC began inaugurating and training district-level CMCs. These monitoring committees have been inaugurated and trained in at least two districts and the PPRC plans to roll out additional CMCs in Sierra Leone's other twelve districts.

The CMCs are composed of representatives from all eight major political parties, members of civil society, and representatives from the Sierra Leone Police (SLP).

The PPRC, which was established by the Political Parties Act of 2002, has a mandate to register parties, as well as manage and monitor their conduct.

In order to ensure that parties adhere to the Code of Conduct, the Commission is opening offices and training additional personnel in each of the regions to assist the Commission's national members in monitoring parties' compliance.

Before beginning their work, members are receiving training on the mediation of disputes and conflict mitigation.

Glossary of Election Terms

NEC (National Electoral Commission): The independent body responsible for the conduct and supervision of the registration of voters and all public elections and referenda, currently chaired by Dr. Christiana Thorpe.

PPRC (Political Parties Registration Commission): The independent body responsible for the registration and supervision of conduct of all political parties.

Dissolution of Parliament: According to the Constitution, the dissolution of Parliament shall occur five years after Parliament's first sitting.

Voter Registration: A process undertaken by NEC during which every citizen of Sierra Leone eighteen years age and above and of sound mind is entitled to register to vote for the purpose of public elections and referenda.

Provisional Voters' Register: The

list of all citizens eligible to vote who exercised their right to register during the Voter Registration Period for the purpose of public elections and referenda.

Exhibition and Challenges Period: A time during which the NEC displays the Provisional Voters' Register for the review of the public. Registrants can confirm or correct their registration details; erroneously omitted registrants can apply to be added to the voters' register; and any applicant eligible to register can challenge names existing on the Provisional Voters' Register based on grounds of ineligibility.

Inquiry Period: A public procedure of deciding on objections, claims for inclusion, and rejections cases made during the Voter Registration and Exhibition Periods.

Final Voters' Register: Serves as the Voter Roll on election day. The Final

Voters' Register is the Provisional Voters' Register after changes are made during the Exhibition and Inquiry processes.

Exhibition Centers: Previously called Registration Centers, Exhibition Centers are the locations where voters can check their names on the Provisional Voters' Register.

Final Certified Result of Elections: The formal result of the elections announced by the NEC, and published in a National Gazette.

Referendum: A practice or principle of giving the people of a country the opportunity to state their opinion on a particular matter (on a law or proposal) by voting for or against it. A referendum on a constitution would give the citizens of a country an opportunity to vote for or against a new constitution.



Left : NEC District Officer Abubakar Koroma beside a poster encouraging voters to visit their Voter Registration Center during the Exhibition Period, from May 21 through 25. During the Exhibition Period, citizens can confirm and correct their registration details, and file for names to be added or removed from the PVR.

Right : NEC Chairperson Dr. Christiana Thorpe delivers an address to participants at the Voter Registration Kickoff event on February 23, 2007 in Freetown. NDI's civil society partners took the lead in organizing logistics and sponsorship for the event. Hundreds of citizens attended the event.



NDI in Sierra Leone

Since launching its Sierra Leone program in 2001, NDI has worked with a variety of actors to strengthen democracy in the country.

Currently NDI is working with all political parties, civil society, the media, and other stakeholders to enhance the prospects for a transparent, peaceful, and free electoral process. The Institute has partnered with Sierra Leonean organizations to conduct voter education campaigns. In conjunction with election authorities, NDI has supported political parties by providing technical assistance during the party registration process, training parties to monitor the electoral process, and ensuring compliance with the Code of Conduct. Through all of its programming the Institute aims to alleviate tensions and mitigate conflict in the periods before, during, and after the 2007 national and 2008 local elections.

In addition, NDI is providing support to independent Sierra Leonean election observation organizations and fielding additional teams of its own international election observers to promote transparency throughout the electoral process.

Additional information on NDI's programming in Sierra Leone can be found at: <http://www.ndi.org/worldwide/cewa/sierraleone/sierraleone.asp>.



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