



**Pan
African Women
Projects**

AN INTERIM REPORT

OF

**PAN AFRICAN
WOMEN PROJECTS**

AN

**ACCREDITATION FOREIGN OBSERVER GROUP
FOR SIERRA LEONE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL /GENERAL ELECTIONS**

HELD :

24TH JUNE, 2023.

PAWP... "ONE PEOPLE, ONE VISION, ONE GOAL"

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HELD 24TH JUNE,2023.

PREAMBLE

The 2023 Sierra Leone General elections will indeed have regional implications for West Africa, as successful elections within this coastal region can provide a positive electoral template in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region.

Since 2020, the West African region has faced democratic backsliding, with the ECOWAS governments of Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso toppled by military juntas.

A successful election in Sierra Leone could counter negative perceptions of governance within the ECOWAS region. Successful elections in Sierra Leone will also set a positive example for African continent in general as it will promote social and economic development in the continent.

The lessons learnt in this election will translate largely to the peace of the nations in Africa.

ORGANIZATION

Pan African Women Projects (PAWP) is an international non-Governmental organisation of African women from the fifty-four (54) nations of Africa and the Diaspora.

Our head office is situated in Johannesburg, South Africa and regional offices in the five (5) regions of Africa with Nigeria as the hub for West Africa.

Our primary mission amongst others is to promote good governance and sustainable democracy in Africa through developmental projects for women, youths and persons with disabilities in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Pan African Women Projects (PAWP) is one of the foreign Observer missions accredited by National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Sierra Leone for the 2023 Sierra Leone Presidential and General elections.

We have observed several elections in about seventeen (17) countries in Africa.

We have a mission team comprising mainly of women from various African nations that were deployed to various regions in Sierra Leone for election observations.

For the 2023 General Elections, our organisation observed both Presidential /Parliamentary Elections and Local Council Elections held on the 24th of June, 2023 across the various regions of Sierra Leone.

THE 2023 SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS

The Sierra Leone **2023** Presidential elections was keenly contested. The election is considered a straight contest between the president and candidate of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Julius Bio, and Samura Kamara, the flagbearer of the All Peoples Congress (APC).

Other Presidential candidates in the elections are Bah Mohamed Chernoh of the National Democratic Alliance; Coker Prince, People's Democratic Party; Jonjo Mohamed, Citizens Democratic Party; Kabuta Henry, United National Peoples Party; and Kakay Iye, Alliance Democratic Party.

Also on the ballot are Kamara Musa, Peace and Liberation Party; Margai Francis, People's Movement For Democratic Change; Saccoh Dougakoro, Revolutionary United Front Party; Sandy Patrick, National Unity and Reconciliation Party; Sowa-Turay Mohamed, United Democratic Movement; and Williams Victor, Republic National Independent Party.

In addition to the Presidential ballot, Sierra Leone voters also elected members of parliament and local councillors in what will be the fifth election since the end of the country's civil war, 21 years ago.

Chief Electoral Commissioner of ECSL Mohamed Kenewui Konneh said on Tuesday 27th June, 2023 while declaring the presidential results that Bio, 59, was re-elected with 56.17 percent of Saturday's vote. His top rival Samura Kamara, of the All People's Congress (APC), came second with 41.16 percent.

The total number of registered voters at this election was 3,374,258 while the total vote casted for Presidential election was 2,801,176 and turnout was 83 %.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. ARRIVAL OF MATERIALS.

Materials arrived polling stations in the Eastern, Northern and Southern regions early between the hours of 7. 30am to 9. 00am while materials for the Western region arrived late to many polling centres we visited between the hours of

10.45am and 12.00noon making the voters agitated and some elderly who were unable to wait left without casting their votes.

2. CAPACITY OF ADHOC STAFF:

The electoral body will need to improve in the recruitment of ADHOC STAFF for the next election. Many electoral officials did not wear their tags for proper identification at some polling station we visited.

Many were not also matured for the job as their communication was poor especially in polling stations where materials arrived late with the tension on the field, it was expected that the huge crowd who turned up early in many polling station should have been addressed to reduce unnecessary tension and confusion.

3. VOTER TURNOUT

This was very impressive. Despite the rains, we observed at every polling station we visited huge turnout at this election. This shows the passion the electorate had in this election in electing a leader of their choice.

4. VIOLENCE /INTIMIDATION

There was relative peace across the country at this election except few pockets of violence and intimidation recorded mostly in the Northern region of the country.

5. SECURITY

We applaud the security agencies for their role in stepping up security and surveillance before, during and after the elections in the country.

During our engagement on the field on election day, we observed their professionalism at all polling stations we visited which eased a lot of unrest.

6.ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULT

We observed the long collation and tallying of data's before the announcement of results. An election that had a total of 2,789,808 valid votes casted should have been announced in less than 48 hours if a more modern technology is in place.

Thus, the delay in announcement of this result as we observed generated tension and even questioned the credibility of the electoral body by the electorate.

7. WOMEN PARTICIPATION

Recently, the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) Act of 2022 was assented into law. The passage of the act is a welcome development that seeks to advance women's rights in Sierra Leone.

The law requires public and private employers to reserve 30% of jobs for women, including leadership positions.

It also stipulates that 30% of candidates put forward by any political party for parliamentary and local elections must be women.

Additionally, it extends maternity leave to 14 weeks, mandates equal pay, and grants women equal access to financial support and training opportunities.

For us in Pan African Women Projects this 30 percent affirmative action plan is a stepping stone for women empowerment and leadership opportunities in Sierra Leone which will promote good governance in Sierra Leone as a country. For this, we at PAWP applaud and give credence to the government and people of Sierra Leone.

It is also important to note here that there will be more women in the parliament and local councils in this new democratic calendar in Sierra Leone as more women participated in the just concluded elections across party lines.

SOME OF OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Capacity of Ad-Hoc Staff

We recommend that the Electoral Commission review the quality of Ad-Hoc staff engaged for future elections as the capacity of the ADHOC staff deployed for this elections left a lot of questions unanswered. Many of the Adhoc staff and even Polling managers were not properly kitted. Many had no identification tags which was very unprofessional. The Electoral Commission should train matured and persons who have experience in human relations as the tension we observed at many polling stations in the Western region when materials didn't arrive early would have been controlled if the polling managers had addressed the crowd politely.

2. Introduction of E-Voting: Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)

We recommend E voting for the next electoral season. This is so because the process of voting, counting and collating votes in this past elections is still manually done and this causes significant problems and often compromises the integrity and credibility of the entire election process.

With the introduction of E-Voting, ECSL will save costs and eliminate completely ballots paper. The Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), will end the paper ballots method which is widely criticized and gives no room for manipulation. It is important to note that several countries like the UK, the US, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malaysia, and even Namibia in Africa had since switched to an e-voting system.

3. Mobile Polling Units

The Commission should look into creating mobile polling units for people who happen to be in the hospitals and at other emergency facilities during the period of the general election. These sets of people should be enrolled into the database so that they can vote anywhere without necessarily having to go to the polling station where they had registered.

4. LOGISTICS

We recommend to the Electoral Commission to engage more with trusted transport companies even their unions or associations to convey electoral materials a day before the elections to polling stations to avoid delayed experiences that occurred and was observed in many polling stations in the western region at the just concluded elections.

5. VOTER EDUCATION / SENSITIZATION DRIVE

We recommend to the Commission more engagements in the area of voters' education and sensitization across the country before next elections. We sincerely urged ECSL to do more in this area as many voters complained on election day of irregularities in their names and pictures on the data registry

6. GENDER/ INCLUSIVITY DEPARTMENT

We recommend the Commission to engage with the Gender / inclusivity department and partner with other Gender and youth based NGOs such as PAN AFRICAN WOMEN PROJECTS to kick start a nationwide sensitization programme that will build the confidence of women and youths to get set to participate in politics and also contest for elective offices in the next political season. This programme is what our organisation is ready to promote.

CONCLUSION

We use this opportunity to appreciate the National Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone for the opportunity to serve as an International Observer Group at this election.

We commend the electoral body of Sierra Leone for the success of the 2023 Sierra Leone Presidential and General Elections held on the 24th of June, 2023 which was peaceful and in tandem with International best practices. A final report will be sent to your Commission in few months.



Signature

Dr. (Mrs.) Eno Udensi

Head of Mission

Pan African Women Projects.

OBSERVATION

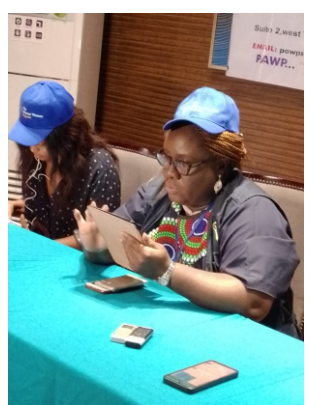
ON

PHOTOS

ELECTION DAY PHOTOS



PRESS CONFERENCE PHOTOS





A PRESS CONFERENCE

ORGANIZED BY:

**PAN AFRICAN WOMEN PROJECTS
(INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER GROUP)**

THEME:

“STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY”

DATE: 29TH JUNE, 2023 TIME: 11AM

VENUE: ATLANTIC HOTEL LUMLEY BEACH ROAD, FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

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**Pan
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