

NDI expresses support for the PRVT methodology used in Sierra Leone

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has been closely following the post-election environment in Sierra Leone and the views and reactions to the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT, previously known as PVT) methodology used by National Elections Watch (NEW) for the 2023 elections. Specifically, some commentators alleged that NEW’s PRVT failed to “meet NDI standards” on this methodology. NDI provided technical assistance to NEW, a coalition of hundreds of Sierra Leonean organizations founded in 2001, in conducting its PRVT and is fully confident that it was conducted properly. The PRVT is a well established methodology to promote accurate election results that has been used repeatedly around the world and across Africa since the 1980s.

NDI has worked for over two decades with Sierra Leoneans from across the political spectrum as well as from civil society to strengthen the country’s democratic institutions and advance more inclusive, transparent and accountable elections. NDI is the global leader in supporting citizen observers to employ the PRVT methodology. The Institute has supported independent and non-partisan civic organizations, including NEW, to conduct more than 170 PRVTs in more than 50 countries around the world. Specifically, NDI has provided technical assistance to African organizations that have conducted more than 35 PRVTs in 10 African countries.

As part of its overall observation effort, NEW used the PRVT methodology to provide systematic information on the conduct of voting and counting and to independently and impartially assess the accuracy of the official results as announced by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL). The PRVT results projections are based on the official results announced at each of the polling stations by ECSL officials at the close of counting. The PRVT sample and calculations were made in strict accordance with widely accepted statistical principles. NEW employed the same PRVT methodology in 2023 as it used, without controversy, for the 2018 presidential election.

NDI regrets that Sierra Leonean citizens who organized themselves to observe their elections under the umbrella coalition of NEW are now subject to harassment and personal attacks. The Institute notes that United Nations Special Rapporteurs [consider election observers like NEW as human rights defenders](#) who therefore should be afforded all the same protections. The United Nations Special Rapporteurs explicitly urged Member States to “take all necessary steps to establish conditions that allow national and international election observers to effectively do their work, and to protect them from any violence, threats, retaliation... as a consequence of their legitimate exercise of their rights and freedoms.”

Based on NDI’s global experience and drawing from best practices from other African countries that also adhere to the [open election data principles](#), the Institute agrees with recommendations by the European Union Election Observation Mission, the Carter Center, NEW and others who have called on the ECSL to release polling station level results to the public. Releasing these results would enhance transparency and accountability, which is essential for public confidence in the declared outcome. NDI calls on the leadership and members of the two major political parties -- the SLPP and APC -- and other political parties to refrain from actions and declarations that can further polarize Sierra Leonean society, and take concrete steps to safeguard the country’s peace and democracy.

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