

WANEP, Election Watch Deploy 500 observers for Sierra Leone Elections

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in collaboration with the National Election Watch (NEW) of Sierra Leone has deployed 500 election observers for the March 7, 2018 elections. Drawing from its experiences of contributing to peaceful elections in several West African countries, WANEP is providing leadership and coordination for the Sierra Leone elections under the USAID supported project on Mitigating Elections Violence through the National Early Warning System (NEWS).

Prior to the deployment, WANEP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NEW detailing areas of collaboration. The Observers underwent series of trainings to prepare them for quality and accurate observation and reporting and were deployed to prioritized risk areas based on findings from the hotspots mapping and analysis conducted earlier.

In line with WANEP's philosophy of collaborative approaches to Peacebuilding, which is aimed at creating an enabling electoral environment before, during and after the elections, the organization works with critical stakeholders to establish platforms such as the Election Situation Room for monitoring electoral processes and results. WANEP opened an Election Situation Room for the Sierra Leone elections, with the central coordinating unit located in Freetown and a satellite room in Kono one of the identified hotspots. The ESR will operate from March 6 to 9, 2018 and will welcome major partners and stakeholders. It comprises the Data Gathering room, the Analysis Room, the Decision Room and the Communication Room.

The trained observers will report identified threats and violent incidents at the district and regional levels directly to the Election Situation Room (ESR) through an online Short Message Service (SMS) platform specially designed for this purpose. Additional information will be uploaded through dedicated WhatsApp platforms and phone calls from the ESR to the observers in the field.