

## Summary of counting and tallying process

### Background

The counting, tallying and official announcement of results for the 11 August 2007 election will be an extremely sensitive part of the electoral process. In some respects it will be the pinnacle of the electoral process and it is therefore essential that each phase – counting, tallying and announcement – is carried out according to clearly defined procedures and is accurate, transparent and timely.

This paper outlines how and when each phase of the process will be carried out, the responsibility for each phase and the role of the various stakeholders in each phase.

More detailed procedures on the actual counting and tallying of results as well as guidelines on the release of results will be developed later by the National Electoral Commission (NEC).

### Counting

In accordance with the electoral law the counting of the votes for each polling station shall take place at that polling station immediately following the close of voting. Counting will be carried out according to procedures developed by the NEC.

At the conclusion of polling the Presiding Officer will seal both ballot boxes and prepare the polling station for the count. All counting activities and preparation activities related to the count should be carried out in the presence of party and candidate agents as well as observers (local and international).

At the conclusion of the count the Presiding officer will complete all documentation including the **Presiding Officer Ballot Paper Reconciliation Form** (which is a summary of what happened to all ballot papers issued to the polling station – one form covering both elections) and the **Polling Station Results Forms** (which is the results by candidate – one each for the Presidential election and for the Parliamentary election).

Copies of each **Polling Station Results Form** shall be prepared for:

- display at the polling station
- transfer to the District Electoral Office
- transfer to the National Tally Center.

The Presiding Officer shall place one copy of the **Polling Station Results Form** in public view at the polling station. This will be carried out only after the Polling Center Manager has verified these results. Party and candidate agents as well as observers may copy the results from this form.

### Results Verification and Compilation

The Polling Center Manager will check all documentation from each of the polling stations and where necessary, in the case of mistakes or miscalculations, make corrections to the documentation in consultation with the relevant polling station Presiding Officer. This verification, and any corrections required, will be carried out in view of party and candidate agents as well as observers.

The Polling Center Manager will also complete a summary of the results from all stations in the center in the **Polling Center Return Sheet**. A **Polling Center Return Sheet** will be completed for both the Presidential and the Parliamentary election. These compiled results will also be displayed at the polling center.

The polling station results and the polling center returns are provisional results. Results will only be final after they have been verified and tallied at the National Tally Center at NEC HQ in Freetown and certified by the National Returning Officer.

### Transfer of Results

2. Copies of the **Presiding Officer Ballot Paper Reconciliation Form**, **Polling Station Results Form** (for each election) and **Polling Center Return Sheet** (for each election) will be packaged into two Tamper Evident Envelopes (TEE) – one for the district office and one for the tally center. Each of the two TEEs will have one copy of each of the aforementioned forms. These TEEs will be collected by the Constituency Election Monitor.
  - Without opening any of the TEEs the Constituency Election Monitors will bring the TEEs to the District Electoral Office. One of the TEEs will be held at the District Electoral Office and the other TEE will be brought, unopened, to the National Tally Center at NEC HQ by the Assistant District Electoral Officer.
4. Where possible the TEEs will be collected from the polling centers by the Constituency Election Monitors on the evening of 11 August 2007. If required they will be collected on 12 August or as soon after as possible. Collections will be carried out according to the retrieval plan which will have been agreed and drawn up by the District Electoral Officer and the Constituency Election Monitors prior to polling day.
5. In all cases the Polling Center Manager and one of the Polling Station Presiding Officers will remain with the TEEs and all other polling materials at all times until they are handed over to the Constituency Election Monitor.
6. Party and candidate agents as well as observers will be permitted to remain with the TEEs and materials until they are collected. Agents and observers are also permitted to travel with the TEEs and materials to the district electoral office but **not** in NEC vehicles. They will be required to make their own transportation arrangements.
7. The District Electoral Officer will retain one TEE (for each polling center) at the district office and forward the other TEE to the National Tally Center with the Assistant district Electoral Officer. The District Electoral Officer will send TEEs to the NEC Tally Center as soon as a reasonable amount of TEEs have been received from the polling centers and will not wait until all TEEs have been received. These deliveries are expected to commence on 12 August 2007. With the exception of very distant or difficult to access polling stations these deliveries are expected to be completed by 14 August 2007. The District Electoral Officer will maintain careful records of which Center TEEs have been sent to the Tally Center, when they were sent and which TEEs are outstanding.

### District Office Activities

8. The District Electoral Officer will carefully store all TEEs and electoral material received in a safe and secure location. This location will have been agreed with NEC HQ Operations prior to polling. The District electoral Officer will **not** open any TEEs or ballot boxes unless instructed to do so by the National Returning Officer, through the Director of Operations. In accordance with the Presiding

Officers record of the seals all ballot box seals applied on polling night in the polling station, after finalization of the count, must remain on the boxes.

### National Results Tally

9. The NEC will establish a National Tally Center at the NEC HQ to verify results and compile the official results for the Presidential election and for each constituency of parliament.
10. The Tally center will be ready to commence operation on 11 August 2007. It is anticipated that the center will only become fully operational on 12 August 2007.
11. Once a TEE arrives at the tally center it will be logged, sorted and then the results **from each of the polling stations** will be logged into the results database under the supervision of the Commission (Regional Returning Officers) and in the presence of party and candidate agents and observers.
12. Double blind data entry will be used to ensure the integrity of the data. Other quality control systems will also play an integral part in the system. Detailed procedures will be developed for the operation of the tally center. Agents and observers will be allowed to view the process throughout its operation.
13. Results will be displayed in the tally center progressively as they are verified and compiled. The progressive results by constituency, district, region and nationally will also be made available as required to the Board of Commissioners on a regular basis.
14. Where a TEE is received at the tally center and it appears to have been opened or tampered with **or** there appears to be reason to doubt the accuracy of any of the forms contained in a TEE the matter will be referred to the Director of Operations for consideration by the Board of Commissioners. Any other inquiries or discrepancies with regard to results will also be referred to the Board of Commissioners for advice on what action needs to be taken. This action may include referral back to the District Electoral Officer and the ballots contained in the sealed ballot boxes.

### Final National Results

15. Following the conclusion of the tally and any investigations or decisions by the NEC the National Tally Center will produce the **final national results** for the Presidential election and for each constituency (including final station and center results). These results will only be officially released following certification by the National Returning Officer.
16. It is estimated that the **final certified national results** will be available around 23 August 2007.
17. Final results will be sent to all district offices for posting at the district office and around the district.

### Presidential Run-off Election

18. In accordance with the Constitution the run-off election, if required, will be held within 14 days from the announcement of the result from the previous election. The results are taken to mean the **final national results** and therefore it is estimated that the run-off election, if required, will take place around 6 September 2007.