

STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PARTY REGULATION IN SIERRA LEONE

Advancing Women and Youth Inclusion



Prepared by:
FRANCIS SOWA



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines Political Party Regulation in Sierra Leone, focusing on the inclusion of women and youth in politics, particularly party structures and operations. The Christian Democratic International Centre (KIC) commissioned the research to conduct a comparative legal and institutional analysis of the Offices of Registrars of Political Parties (ORPPs) in Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Malawi. It is part of the Women and Youth in Democracy Engagement (WYDE) Project, funded by the European Union and implemented by the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP), which seeks to promote inclusive democratic participation by strengthening the representation and leadership of women and youth in politics. It also explores the prospects for establishing the “Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA).” The study seeks to inform national political party regulators by providing recommendations to strengthen legal frameworks, funding models, institutional oversight of gender and youth inclusion, and the sharing of best practices for supporting women and youth within political parties. It also serves as a foundational document for the formation of the Africa Association of Political Parties Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA), spearheaded by the Kenyan ORPP.

The study’s specific objectives are:

To examine and analyse the existing legal and institutional frameworks governing political parties in Sierra Leone, with particular attention to how these frameworks facilitate or hinder the inclusion of women and youth in political leadership and participation.

To identify and compare the mechanisms, practices, and regulatory approaches adopted by the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and other Offices of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPPs) in Kenya and Malawi that promote gender and youth inclusion, with a view to distilling lessons and best practices.

To assess the opportunities and challenges for inter-country collaboration among the three ORPPs in advancing inclusive political party governance.

To propose a framework for potential collaboration among the ORPPs, including the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA), grounded in empirical evidence from the three country cases.

The study design is qualitative, utilising secondary sources (desk reviews, documentary and archival searches) and primary data (key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and a regional workshop at which preliminary findings were presented and validated.

The key findings on legal frameworks and regulatory mechanisms indicate that, unlike other jurisdictions where the conduct of elections and the regulation of political parties are handled by one agency, Sierra Leone has a separate Political Parties' Regulation Commission, established by the Constitution, 1991 (Section 34 (1)), as amended by the Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022 (Section 1 (1)), and reinforced by the Political Parties Act, 2022 (Section 3 (1)), to regulate political parties. The Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone deals with the conduct of elections. The Commission's governance structure consists of five Commissioners appointed by the President. The Executive Secretary serves as the Secretary to the Commission and oversees daily administration, supported by six directors and other staff. The Political Parties Act, 2022 requires political parties to apply to the Commission for registration, which is processed in accordance with the law (Sections 21 and 22), and grants the Commission the power to cancel the registration of political parties (Section 26). Regarding inclusion, the study shows that the Public Elections Act 2022 (Sections 58(2) and 105), the Political Parties Act 2022 (Sections 41 and 42), and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022 (Sections 2 and 3) address the inclusion of women in politics and leadership, but not youth participation. This is despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report 2024 recommending 10% youth inclusion in all essential political party decision-making, as partners in development, and assuming responsibility for their actions. The Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review Report, 2024, commonly known as the Tripartite Report, has proposed adopting a National Youth Development Act to allocate at least 10 per cent of members in elective and appointive bodies to youth. The Commission has established and continues to work with two unique structures: the All Political Party Women's Association (APPWA) and the All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA). The political parties' operational structures include women's and youth divisions, but their constitutions lack corresponding legal provisions guaranteeing inclusion. The inclusion provisions in the national laws cited above were promulgated in 2022, after the political parties had held their national delegates' conferences, at which such matters would have been discussed and actions taken. The political parties indicated that the review of their constitutions would take into account provisions for the inclusion of women and youth.

Collaboration among ORPPs offers an excellent opportunity for peer learning, training and capacity building, standardisation of compliance monitoring, and data sharing. This will strengthen cooperation in areas such as exchange visits, programming, sharing best-practice templates, joint research or comparative studies, regional advocacy or policy dialogues, compliance monitoring, political party financing, and inclusion audits. The establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA) is timely and necessary. Its main value for regional collaboration lies in outcomes such as peer review, learning, capacity development, compliance monitoring, and data sharing.



The key recommendations for Policy and Legal Reforms, Institutional and Capacity-Building Recommendations for Regional Cooperation and AAPRA include:

- Comply fully with the laws guaranteeing the inclusion of women in politics.
- Adopt a National Youth Development Act to allocate at least ten per cent of the members in elective and appointive bodies to youth.
- Develop specific tools and procedures manuals for ORPPS to implement their mandate.
- Organise joint training, exchange visits, peer-learning programmes, joint research, regional advocacy, and policy dialogues.
- Establish AAPRA as an ad hoc working group, which will ultimately lead to the creation of a formal association.
- Establish a Secretariat in an experienced ORPP country or at the African Union AU level.



Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAPPRA	Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities
AG	Attorney General
ADP	Alliance Democratic Party
APC	All Peoples Congress
APPWA	All Political Party Women's Association
APPYA	All Political Parties Youth Association
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
DACO	Development Assistance Coordinating Office
ENoP	European Network of Political Foundations
EU	European Union
EU EOM	European Union Election Observation Mission
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
KIC	Christian Democratic International Centre
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MoPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NEW	National Election Watch
ORPPs	Offices of Registrars of Political Parties
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UP	Unity Party
PPRC	Political Party Regulation Commission
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
WYDE	Women and Youth in Democracy Engagement

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Introduction:

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The formation and operation of political parties are vital to Sierra Leone's democratic development. The regulation of political parties is governed by law, including constitutional provisions and other statutes. The legal framework for regulating political parties has undergone substantial reforms aimed at addressing issues such as the inclusion of women and youth in politics and governance.

Good governance necessarily encompasses democracy, with an opportunity for the general populace to express its voice through regular elections. People should have opportunities to establish and belong to political parties, which, in themselves, should have organised internal systems for electing and replacing leadership according to the wishes of the membership (Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report, 2004). Political parties are supposed to conform to the democratic principles of participation, free choice, rule of law, political tolerance and transparency. However, support for political parties in Sierra Leone is polarised along ethnic and regional identities, that have been the most effective means of mobilising electoral support. In addition, traditional practices are used to prevent women from participating in the political process and many women, especially in rural areas, are deprived of political power (Abdullah 2010, cited in IDEA 2013).

Efforts continue to enhance the representation and leadership of women and young people in Sierra Leonean politics. Legislation such as the Public Elections Act 2022, the Political Parties Act 2022, and the Gender Equality and Empowerment Act 2022 aim to address issues related to women's participation in politics. However, challenges persist that much more progress is still required.

Addressing the challenges involves understanding the issues, as demonstrated by this Christian Democratic International Centre (KIC) commissioned research, which aims to conduct a comparative legal and institutional analysis of the Offices of Registrars of Political Parties (ORPPs) in Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Malawi. It is part of the Women and Youth in Democracy Engagement (WYDE) Project, funded by the European Union and implemented by the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP), which seeks to promote inclusive democratic participation by strengthening the representation and leadership of women and youth in politics.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study examines Political Party Regulation in Sierra Leone, focusing on the inclusion of women and youth in politics, particularly party structures and operations. It is part of a comparative assessment involving Kenya, Malawi, and Sierra Leone, undertaken within the WYDE Political Parties Project. It also explores the prospects for establishing the "Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPRA)."

The study aims to inform national political party regulators by providing recommendations to strengthen legal frameworks, funding models, institutional oversight of gender and youth inclusion, and the sharing of best practices for supporting women and youth within political parties. It also serves as a foundational document for the formation of the Africa Association of Political Parties Regulatory Authorities (AAPRA), spearheaded by the Kenyan ORPP.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

To examine and analyse the existing legal and institutional frameworks governing political parties in Sierra Leone, with particular attention to how these frameworks facilitate or hinder the inclusion of women and youth in political leadership and participation.

To identify and compare the mechanisms, practices, and regulatory approaches adopted by the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and other Offices of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPPs) in Kenya and Malawi that promote gender and youth inclusion, with a view to distilling lessons and best practices.

To assess the opportunities and challenges for inter-country collaboration among the three ORPPs in advancing inclusive political party governance.

To propose a framework for potential collaboration among the ORPPs, including the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA), grounded in empirical evidence from the three country cases.

METHODOLOGY

The study design is qualitative, utilising secondary sources (desk review, documentary, archival searches) and primary insights (key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs)).

Desk Review: Examined and analysed over 20 statutes and publications, including the Constitution of Sierra Leone (1991), Political Parties Act (2022), Public Elections Act (2022), the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (2022), and reports from local and international organisations.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Conducted with senior staff of the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone, ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions, political parties, civil society organisations, international organisations, and government ministries.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Three FGDs with the All Political Parties Women Association (APPWA), All Political Parties Youth Associations (APPYA), and youth groups. The FGDs were guided

by a structured focus group discussion guide with a set of pre-defined questions (including follow-up questions) to solicit responses and inclusive conversations among participants on the inclusion of women and youth in politics.

Legal Mapping: Utilised to understand the legal provisions on political party regulation and identify specific provisions on inclusion, identify inclusion provisions, implementation gaps, and best practices.

Regional Workshop: Conducted to present findings, critiqued and engaged in discussions and validation.

LIMITATIONS

The research was limited by time constraints, a dearth of comprehensive national and political parties' specific data on the inclusion of women and youth in politics and cooperation in conducting some KIIs.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is primarily organised around the study's objectives. Generally, it is divided into two parts and seven sections. The first discusses the institutional frameworks that govern political parties in Sierra Leone, emphasising the inclusion of women and youth in political leadership and participation. The second investigates the framework for potential collaboration among the ORPPs, including the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA).

It is organised into eight sections:

Section 1: Introduces the study, background, objectives, and methodology.

Section 2: Describes the national context for political party regulation and inclusion.

Section 3: Examines the legal and institutional frameworks governing political parties.

Section 4: Analyses PPRC's mechanisms and regulatory practices.

Section 5: Explores the opportunities and challenges for inter-country collaboration.

Section 6: Discusses prospects for the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA)

Section 7: Presents Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Section 8: Provides references and annexes

National Context for Political Party Regulation and Inclusion

This section offers the foundational context for understanding the environment in which political party regulation and inclusion efforts operate in Sierra Leone. It sets the scene for the more detailed legal and institutional analysis that follows.

OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND PARTY LANDSCAPE

Sierra Leone operates a presidential system of government. Section 40 (1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991) provides for a President who is the Head of State and the supreme executive authority of the Republic. The country has a three-tier government system, with the formal national government comprising an elected president, an independent judiciary, and parliament (Castillejo 2009, cited in IDEA, 2017).

The country has a multiparty system, as mandated by the constitution. Section 35 (1) of the Constitution (1991) provides for the establishment of political parties. The multi-party system has operated through competitive elections, an executive presidency, and a parliament. The general elections held on 24 June 2023 were the fifth consecutive elections since the end of Sierra Leone's civil war in 2002 (EU EOM, 2023).

There are 17 registered political parties, including the two oldest and leading parties – the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) represented in the country's parliament. Ahead of the 2023 elections, only

14 of the 17 registered parties met the minimum criteria to participate in the electoral process (PPRC Strategic Plan, 2024-2028). Most registered political parties are currently unstable and lack strong institutional foundations owing to insufficient structures and programmes, as well as human and financial resources; they primarily operate during election periods. The parties' offices are largely inactive, particularly after elections, when some funding is available.

In terms of their role in political representation, Section 35 (1) of the Constitution, 1991 provides that political parties are established, to, among other things, participate in shaping the political will of the people and to sponsor candidates for Presidential, Parliamentary or Local Government elections." Political parties are the main vehicle through which candidates are elected to parliament (Fogg cited in Tjernstrom, 2003).

Party regulation has evolved in response to two key political developments: democratisation and legal reforms. Party regulation preceded the establishment of the now Political Parties Registration Commission. Although Sections 34 and 35 of the 1991 Constitution and the Political Parties Act, 2002 (Act No. 3 of 2002) created an independent body to register and supervise political parties, the Commission was finally established in 2005. Before that, the electoral commission performed functions related to political party registration and, by extension, regulation. There has been a transformation from the Registration

to the Regulation Commission, pursuant to the constitutional amendment in 2022 and the Political Parties Act 2022, to ensure that political parties are appropriately regulated.

POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND HISTORICAL FACTORS SHAPING REGULATION AND INCLUSION

The 1991 constitutional reform reinstated a multi-party system after the one-party era, providing for the registration and establishment of political parties (Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, Section 34). However, the country suffered from a civil war that started in 1991 and ended in 2002.

In 1996, Sierra Leone held its first democratic elections after 27 years of one-party rule and four years of military government, resulting in the Sierra Leone People's Party coming to power. Numerous constitutional and statutory amendments and enactments were introduced. Among these was the passage of the Political Parties Act (2002), which validated the constitutional provision by establishing the PPRC to register political parties and oversee internal democracy.

A significant milestone was achieved with constitutional and statutory amendments to laws regulating political parties. This includes promoting women's participation in politics. However, the country still faces socio-cultural challenges that affect regulation and inclusion, such as discriminatory legal provisions, customs, and traditions that discourage and hinder women from taking on leadership roles in society.

Notable reforms have been implemented to increase women's participation in politics. Legislative measures have led to the passage of three significant laws that promote women's participation in politics and governance. These are the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (2022), the Public Elections Act (2022), and the Political Parties Act (2022). Advocacy for these reforms was led by women's organisations, including the All Political Parties Women Association, Women's Forum Sierra Leone, the 50/50 Group, Campaign for Good Governance, Women in the Media Sierra Leone, and the Sierra Leone Association of Women in Journalism. Prominent female politicians have championed and paved the way for greater female participation in politics, including Dr Femi Claudius-Cole, the first woman to

establish and lead the Unity Party (UP) and the sole female presidential candidate in the 2018 general elections; Augusta James Teima, Chairperson of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA); Alimatu Deen, Deputy Leader of the United Democratic Movement (UDM); and Iye Kakay of the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP), the sole female presidential candidate in the 2023 elections.

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES REGULATION COMMISSION

Sierra Leone has a separate and independent Political Party Registration Commission with its own governance and management/administrative structures. Section 34 (1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (1991) establishes the Political Parties Registration Commission, now known as the Political Parties Regulation Commission, pursuant to Section 1 (1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act (2022).

The Commission (governance structure), according to provisions in the Constitution and the Political Parties Act, consists of five Commissioners appointed by the President:

- A Chairman
- The Chief Electoral Commissioner (of the electoral commission)
- A Legal practitioner nominated by the Sierra Leone Bar Association
- A Member nominated by the Sierra Leone Labour Congress
- A member nominated by the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sierra Leone.

The Executive Secretary is the Secretary to the Commission. The Commission provides policy directives and oversight. They meet as a Board to take policy decisions on the Commission and are responsible for the overall direction of the PPRC's affairs (PPRC Annual Report, 2023).

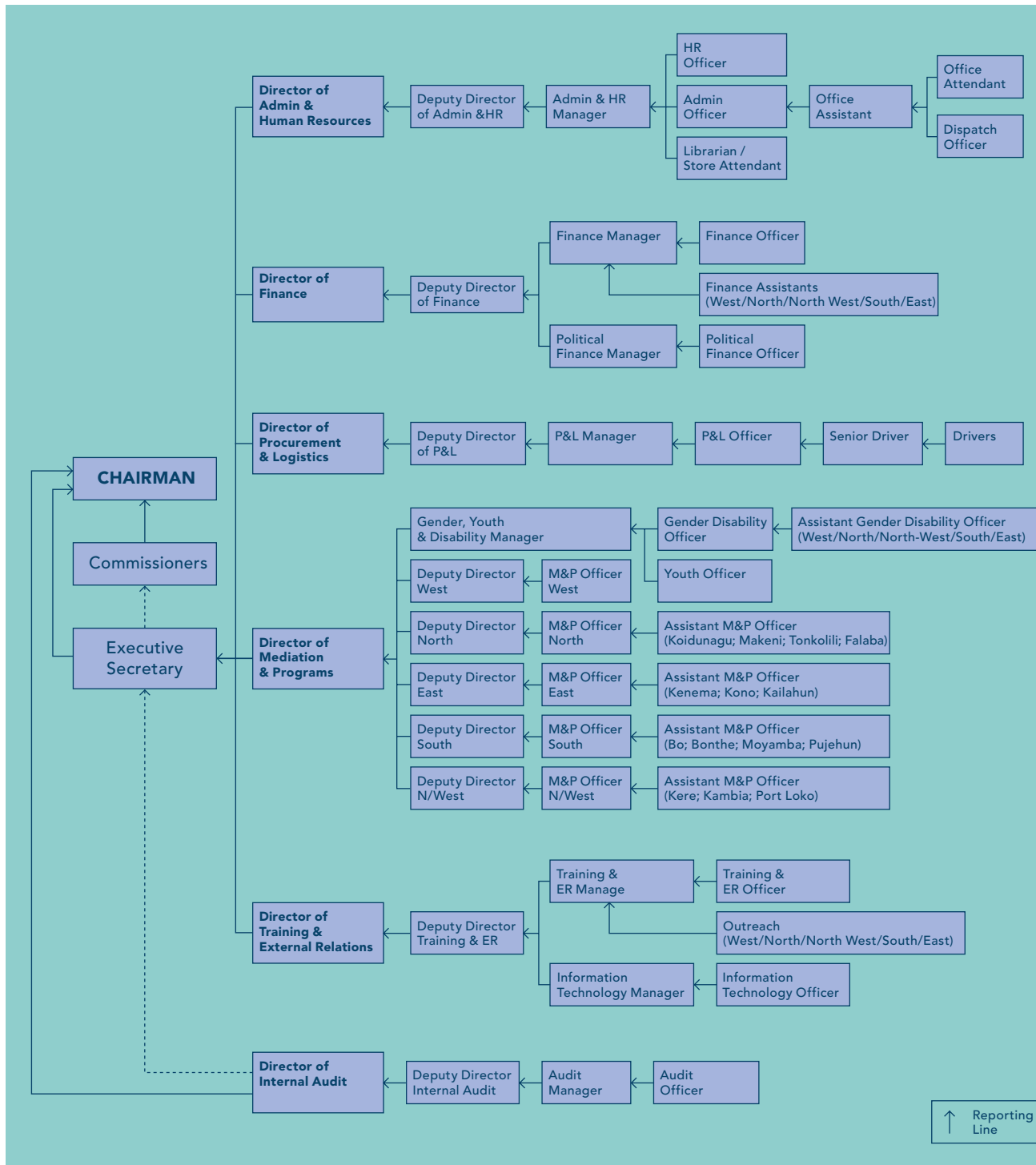
The Management Team coordinates the day-to-day work of staff to implement the Commission's mandate in accordance with its policies and approved work plans.

The Executive Secretary is the Registrar and Vote Controller responsible for overseeing the Commission's day-to-day administration of political parties supported by the six (6) departments headed by Directors (PPRC Annual Report, 2023).

They are:

- Director of Training and External Relations.
- Director of Mediation and Programs.
- Director of Administration and Human Resources.
- Director of Finance.
- Director of Procurement and Logistics and
- Director of Internal Auditor

The PPRC has some offices and staff at the national and regional levels to implement the law's provisions, including those related to inclusion. (See organogram below).



Organogram of PPRC. Source: PPRC Annual Report 2023.

Section 12 of the Political Parties Act (2022) provides that the Commission regulates political parties. The Commission's functions include regulating, supervising, and monitoring the affairs or conduct of political parties, as well as monitoring their compliance with the terms and conditions of their registration.

The mandate of the Commission, as prescribed by law, is to:

- Regulate, supervise and monitor the affairs or conduct of political parties so as to ensure their compliance with the Constitution and the Political Parties Act.
- Monitor compliance by political parties with the terms and conditions of their registration; monitor their accountability to their membership and to the electorates of Sierra Leone.
- Promote political pluralism and spirit of constitutionalism among political parties;
- Mediate any conflict or disputes within a political party and between or amongst political parties.
- Facilitate dialogue between and among political parties and other state actors to promote a democratic culture of peace, tolerance, participation and cohesion.

The Commission's legal powers allow it to register, monitor, sanction (as discussed above and in other sections below), and oversee funding for political parties. Section 35 of the Public Election Act addresses the Funding of Political Parties. It stipulates that 'political parties shall make full and frank disclosure to the Commission of the sources, amount, purpose, and use of funds raised by it.' This demonstrates the Commission's oversight of the political parties. But the political parties have not fully complied with this provision of the law.

Section 13 of the Public Elections Act 2022 guarantees the independence of the Commission, noting that "The Commission shall, in the performance of its functions, not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority except, as otherwise provided in the Constitution and this Act." The Commission is independent in the conduct of its functions and does not take directives from any organ of government, except where the law expressly states so (PPRC Strategic Plan, 2024-2028). Operationally, the PPRC is independent and not aligned with any government ministry for supervi-

sion or oversight. By law, the PPRC reports annually to the Office of the President. However, in terms of development cooperation and planning, the PPRC sits in the Multi-Stakeholder Governance Forum of Elections coordinated by the Directorate of Development Assistance Coordinating Office (DACO) of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED). In terms of its legal mandate and processes, the Commission works with the Ministry of Justice, the Law Officers Department, and the Parliament of Sierra Leone (PPRC Strategic Plan, 2024-2028).

The PPRC interacts with political parties through its inter-party dialogue forums and various other engagements. The Commission effectively engaged political party leaders on various national issues of concern across the country. The Commission, with support from the NDI, established the National and Regional Multi-Party Forum (All-Party Issues Forum) (PPRC Annual Report, 2023). The Commission works closely with the stakeholders and interacts with CSOs.

The Commission's Secretariat and regional offices implement mandates concerning inclusion. The Commission has a Gender and Youth division that mainly engages with women and young people. This setup allows the Commission to better understand and connect with, especially, the leadership of political parties. As the former PPRC's Gender, Youth and Disability Manager states, even before the new Act, the Commission had been actively working to empower youth and women. "We do so by working with structures established by the Commission with the support of UNIPSIL. We have the All Political Party Women's Association (APPWA) and the All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA)" (E.Y. Kamara, personal communication, October 11, 2025).

The interviewees and discussants described the PPRC as credible, independent, and effective in its regulatory functions. However, they also highlighted that the Commission needs ongoing reforms to improve its work and adherence to the regulatory framework, thereby preventing any government influence or control. One of the reforms is Recommendation 36 of the Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review Report (commonly called the Tripartite Committee), which calls for the creation of a Search and Nominating Committee to appoint the Chairman of the PPRC, thereby ensuring the Commission's independence in the discharge of its duties. It

recommends an amendment to Section 32(3) of the Constitution, Section 2 of the Public Elections Act, and Section 34 of the Constitution to provide for a Search and Nominating Committee for the appointment of all members of the Electoral Commission and the Chair of the Political Parties Regulation Commission. The Committee should undertake a selection process, including interviews, and recommend to the President a shortlist of three persons for each post who have met the criteria for appointment to the Commission. The President can only appoint a Commissioner from such a shortlist.

OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

30.37% (i.e. 42 seats) of the elected Members of Parliament were women, of whom one was a Paramount Chief Member of Parliament. For Local Councils, there are currently two female Mayors and District Chairpersons (Freetown and Bonthe). Of the 493 elected local Councillors, 195 are women (PPRC Strategic Plan, 2024-2028; NEW 2023). According to the 2025 Gender Budget Statement published by the Ministry of Finance (Sierra Leone), there are 29 Cabinet Ministers, of which 10 are women.

A few women are leading political parties in Sierra Leone. They include the founder and leader of the Unity Party (UP) and the Chairperson of the National Democratic Party (NDP), who together represent 12% of leaders of the 17 registered political parties.

Regarding nominations and election outcomes, only one of the 13 political parties that contested the 2023 presidential elections nominated a female presidential candidate [Iye Kakay of ADP]. Five female candidates were nominated as vice-presidential candidates. 32% of all candidates nominated for parliament were women. Of the 29 independent candidates who contested for a parliamentary seat, only one was a female candidate (PPRC Strategic Plan, 2024-2028). Of the 493 elected local councillors, 195 are women. The results show that, at the presidential and vice-presidential levels, women did not win any seats; however, they did win seats at the parliamentary and local council levels.

Various barriers and enabling factors (social norms, economic capacity, internal party practices) were highlighted by the focus group discussants and interviewees.

INTERNAL PARTY PRACTICES

- Failure to adhere to the inclusion provisions in the law.
- The culture of male dominance is particularly prevalent in political party leadership.
- Blackmail and intimidation of women. According to the APPWA discussants, "There are some people in our political parties who, as soon as they notice or find out that you have a passion or want to pursue something, they will see you as a threat. The easiest way to bring you down is through blackmail. They will set up a cabal to push you out of the party. They will even say all kinds of negative things against you, or they will use your own fellow woman to go against you."

LEGAL

- Full compliance with the laws guaranteeing the inclusion of women in politics.
- No legal provision on youth inclusion in politics, such as the 30% quota for women stipulated in the law.

SOCIAL NORMS

- Gender stereotypes and structural bias against women and "Youth are told they are too young or need time to mature within the party."
- Lack of education. Sometimes, some women genuinely want to participate in politics, but "their level of education is low because their parents or guardians did not send them to school."
- Religious beliefs: Some women genuinely want to belong, but because of their husbands, who are religious fanatics, they do not want us to participate in politics.

ECONOMIC CAPACITY

- Lack of financial resources. There is a prevailing ideology that politics is all about money. Those in power will not allow others to have a space and a voice. "Financial challenges and sexual exploitation are the key challenges that we face in our own political party," a female discussant emphasised.

VIOLENCE

- Intimidation and harassment. Women fear being attacked during the election campaign or while engaging in politics. "Therefore, if the government removes some of these barriers, it will be better for women. Cyber attacks continue to affect women politicians. They face violence, name-calling, body-shaming, online bullying, intimidation, and harassment."

The enabling factors identified include the existence of a legal framework and the political parties' commitment to the law. Since the enactment of the 2022 laws, the number of women involved in politics has risen. There is ongoing progress toward achieving the 30% representation target, as acknowledged by the political party leaders interviewed. Political parties are broadly inclusive in terms of general membership. The All Political Parties Women Association (APPWA) brings together female politician and leaders across political parties to articulate and promote inclusion of women in politics and governance.

Conclusively, both opportunities and challenges are present. The country's presidential and multi-party systems depend on the existence, operation, and regulation of political parties. The PPRC has established clear legal frameworks to promote the inclusion of women and youth in politics. However, barriers also exist that impede the effective implementation of these laws. There is a need for ongoing reforms at the Commission, along with the provision of financial, human, and other resources to support its work—particularly to ensure compliance with the regulatory framework and prevent government's interference or control.



Legal and Institutional Framework Governing Political Parties

Objective A: To examine and analyse the existing legal and institutional frameworks governing political parties in Sierra Leone, with particular attention to how these frameworks facilitate or hinder the inclusion of women and youth in political leadership and participation.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE FOUNDATIONS

Sierra Leone has the relevant constitutional and statutory provisions that establish principles of democracy, pluralism, equality, and inclusion. The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) contains the following key provisions:

Section 5 (1) states that the Republic of Sierra Leone shall be a State based on the principles of Freedom, Democracy and Justice.

Section 5 (2) (a) declares that sovereignty belongs to the people of Sierra Leone from whom the Government, through the Constitution, derives all its powers, authority and legitimacy.

Section 5 (2) (c) provides that the participation of the people in the governance of the State shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Section 6 (2) requires the State to promote national integration and unity and discourage discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, circumstance of birth, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties.

Section 13 (i) requires every citizen to participate in and defend all democratic processes and practices.

Section 26 (1) guarantees the right to the enjoyment of freedom of association, and in particular to form or belong to any political party.

Section 34 (1) provides that “There shall be a Political Parties Registration Commission”, which

Section 1 (1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022 (Act No. 22 of 2022), transformed it into a “Political Parties Regulation Commission.”

Section 35 (2) provides that political parties “shall conform to democratic principles.”

Pursuant to Section 35 (2), political parties’ internal structure should conform to democratic standards, including conducting periodic, free, and fair elections and providing a voice to the different groups within the political parties.

Regarding plurality, section 3 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022, requires the PPRC not to register an association as a political party whose “membership or leadership is restricted

to members of any particular tribal or ethnic group or religious faith.”

Section 22 (1) (e) of the Political Parties Act, 2022 provides for “proof of evidence of membership of at least 50 members in each electoral district.” These provisions establish the principle of plurality. Political parties are expected to be reflective and representative of people of various tribes, ethnicities, and religious persuasions.

In terms of equality, political parties should promote the interests and welfare of diverse communities and regions. The legal framework is explicit; compliance with it is the primary issue that needs to be addressed.

The constitution and the Political Parties Act 2022 clearly outlines the objectives, powers of the PPRC, party registration rules, compliance requirements, and sanctions.

The Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) is established to regulate and oversee the registration of political parties, in accordance with Section 34(4) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, and Section 12(1) of the Political Parties Act, 2022. The Constitution grants the PPRC the power, including the authority to make regulations governing political parties. These powers are reaffirmed in the Political Parties Act, 2022, which states the following key provisions:

Section 21: Political parties are required to apply to the Commission for registration.

Section 22: The process involves an association (seeking to be registered as a political party) submitting its application to the Commission along with the necessary documents and evidence.

Section 22 (3): The Commission can only register an association as a political party and issue a certificate of registration where it is “satisfied that the provisions of the Constitution and the Act have been complied with.”

Section 26: Commission’s powers to cancel the registration of political parties if they, among other things, contravene a provision of the Constitution or the Act.

The Commission is sufficiently empowered to register compliant associations as political parties and deregister non-compliant ones. While the Commission ensures compliance with these requirements during registration, it lacks the capacity and resources to fully monitor political parties’ compliance in their operations.

The two key legal frameworks for the electoral and political parties’ registration commissions, to some extent, explicitly address women, but not youth inclusion. The legal instruments on women are coherent and reinforce one another. The laws for inclusion of women are clear, largely progressive and a move towards meeting international standards as contained in Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

No	Legal text	Relevance to inclusion
1	Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022) amended section 35, subsection (5) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991	They provide the legal basis for the establishment and operations of political parties and require internal organisation of a political party to conform to democratic principles
2	The Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act No. 17 of 2022)	It provides for the compulsory nomination of one woman among every 3 nominees.
3	The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act, 2022 (Act No.23 2022)	It reaffirms adherence of section 58 of the Public Election Acts 2022 and appointments to positions in public offices.
4	The Political Parties Act, 2022, No. 25 2022	It also reaffirms compliance with provisions of Section 58 of the Public Elections Act 2022 and provides for 30% quota for female candidates in executive positions and 30% placement for women in executive positions from ward to national level.

Table summarising key legal texts and their relevance to inclusion.

The current legal frameworks on the inclusion of women, but not youth, were part of the reforms implemented in line with amendments to the Public Elections and Political Parties Acts in 2022. The Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review Report (commonly called the Tripartite Committee), released in July 2024, has proposed some reforms to Section 58 of the Public Elections Act concerning quotas to “adopt a National Youth Development Act, similar to GEWE, to allocate at least ten per cent of the members in elective and appointive bodies to be youth.” According to the Executive Secretary of the PPRC, the Public Elections Act and the Political Parties Act will definitely be subjected to review following the Tripartite Committee’s recommendation and, equally, following internal reviews by the PPRC on areas for improvement within the law (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025).

PROVISIONS ON INCLUSION

The Public Elections Act 2022 and the Political Parties Act 2022 require parties to promote inclusion through gender balance and quotas for women in politics and leadership, but not for youth participation. This is formally embedded in the legal and regulatory frameworks.

Section 58(2) of the Public Elections Act 2022 states that for every three candidates nominated, one shall be a female candidate. **Section 105** of the Act provides that sections 58 to 96 shall, with the necessary modification, apply to local council elections. In practice, **Section 58**, which requires one of three nominees to be a woman, was used in the 2023 elections only for councilors in local council elections. Political parties must comply with this requirement; otherwise, their nominations will be rejected.

Part IX of the Political Parties Act, 2022, addresses Political Inclusion. Section 41 establishes a 30% quota for female candidates in electoral districts, stating that “Political parties shall comply with the provisions of Section 58 of the Public Elections Act 2022.” The PPRC Executive Secretary explains: Section 41 is a replication of Section 58 of the Public Elections Act, which stipulates that when political parties conduct a nomination process, for every three nominees, one must be a woman. Therefore, it emphasises that a political party should adhere to the provisions of section 58 of the Public

Elections Act (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025).

Section 42 of the said Act established 30% quota for female candidates in executive positions, stating that “A political party may have at least 30% placement for women in executive positions from ward to national level.”

The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act, 2022, is a supplementary legislation that impacts party activities and inclusion. **Section 2** of the Act states that “There shall be public elections as stated in sub-section (2) of section 58 of the Public Election Acts 2022.” It also underscores the importance of including women in electoral processes. Section 3 (1) also mandates the inclusion of women in appointments to public office: “In making appointments to cabinet and other government positions, the President may take due consideration of the possibility of appointing women to at least 30%.” **Section 3 (2)** further specifies that “For appointment to public office made by persons other than the President, at least 30% shall be women.”

There have been numerous improvements, and inclusivity is now a top priority, even among political party leaders (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025). The interviewees’ responses align with the Executive Secretary’s position. There is progress in the numbers and percentages regarding women’s inclusion (S. Kendema, personal communication, October 30, 2025). The Secretary General of the main opposition APC stated that, before the PPRC could implement the quota or legislate it, the APC had already incorporated into its constitution a provision requiring that 30% of women be elected to all offices (L. Dumbuya, personal communication, October 10, 2025). The Secretary General of the ruling SLPP stated that they have strictly complied with the provisions of the Acts and are in the process of reviewing their constitution to expunge provisions that may conflict with any existing Acts or the Constitution. “In our recently concluded elections, we adhered to that provision. At the lowest level, the zonal or sectional level, we met the 30% quota across the board. Among our national executive officers, female representation is approximately 31.8%. Women are represented in the national executive from all regions of the country (U. P. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

The political parties' operational structures include women's and youth divisions, but most of their constitutions lack corresponding legal provisions guaranteeing inclusion. The inclusion provisions in the national laws cited above were enacted in 2022, after the political parties held their national delegates' conferences, at which such matters would have been discussed and actions taken, including safeguarding inclusion provisions in their constitutions and in leadership positions. The political parties indicated that the review of their constitutions would take into account provisions for the inclusion of women and youth.

Regarding conditions for party registration, Section 42 of the Political Parties Act, 2022 establishes a 30% quota for female candidates in executive positions, ranging from the ward to the national level. This means that political parties that do not meet these requirements are eligible for registration.

As part of the ongoing constitutional review process, provisions on gender equality and women's empowerment, including the 30% quota, will be integrated into the constitution if the constitutional review process is achieved. The recommendations made at the National Women's Conference on the ongoing 1991 constitutional review, held at the Sierra Leone Bank Complex in June 2024, will be incorporated into the review. (A. Sesay, personal communication, November 28, 2025). This will be an important step towards ensuring that women's inclusion is enshrined in the country's supreme law.

In Sierra Leone, there are no conditions for compliance with the inclusion provision for public funding, as the State does not fund political parties. Section 35 (5) of the Political Parties Act provides that "A political party shall not use the State's resources, facilities or officials to run its day to day activities, campaigns and other electioneering exercises."

In other countries where the State funds political parties, it is relatively easy to regulate them to ensure they comply with inclusion provisions, interviewees and discussants stated. During the 2022 review of the Political Parties Act, a provision was introduced requiring the State to fund political parties. The two main political parties, the APC and the SLPP, rejected it (I. M. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025). Officials of the PPRC confirmed that political parties had rejected

that provision. Implicit in the responses given by some political parties is the suggestion that such funding gives the State, the ruling government, control over other political parties. The notion that it serves to deprive some political parties, with little or no resources, of the ability to operate and function effectively was also highlighted.

Existing national laws promote the inclusion of women in politics and governance. Political parties have their own constitutions. The inclusion provisions, as mentioned above, are binding and comply with broader equality legislation. Penalties are outlined in the legal framework, especially the Political Parties Act. Enforcement relies on both voluntary measures and legal procedures, which need further strengthening.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT

This section examines the gap between legal design and practical implementation. The Commission has a dedicated unit focused on including women and youth in politics. "In all of our regulatory approaches, we are very mindful of inclusivity, not only limiting the space to that of women's empowerment, but equally youth empowerment and components of disabilities as well (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025). But the law does not explicitly provide for youth inclusion. In fact, the country has not ratified the African Youth Charter. Article 11 (2) (a) of the African Youth Charter, which addresses Youth Participation, states that States shall "Guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws; A proper framework in the form of a national youth policy and law is critical to the development of young people (Deen-Tarawally, 2018). This also represents a failure to follow the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report 2024, which called for 10% youth inclusion in all major political party decision-making, recognising youth as partners in development and urging them to take responsibility for their actions.

The views expressed by the discussants and interviewees indicate that a gap remains between the legal design of the inclusion framework and its practical implementation by political parties. According to participants in a focus group discussion (with the All Political Parties Women

Association, October 11, 2025), although other political parties have made efforts up to the national election, representation still does not reach 30 per cent. The Senior Programmes Manager at the Campaign for Good Governance stated that they recently conducted an assessment of political parties' compliance with the Political Parties Act. "It's interesting to note that at the national level, none of them got 30%" (S. Kendema, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

One of the things Sierra Leone is very good at is making laws and policies. However, enforcement presents a significant challenge. Unfortunately, the gatekeepers are mainly men who are also unwilling to accept the current thinking that women need to be in those spaces, not as tokens, but because they have a right to be there. Therefore, it remains difficult to ensure that women occupy the spaces they are expected to occupy, despite the provisions and legislation in place (V. Edwin, personal communication, October 31, 2025). The laws are sound; the challenge in Sierra Leone is implementation. For instance, the GEWE Act of 2022 was enacted after political parties had already conducted their lower-level elections. Although the quota for elective positions in parliament was met, these positions are not held by the party leadership. There is considerable room for improvement, including within the PPRC (I.M Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025). There is a gap that needs to be addressed because I have not seen much, to be frank (anon. personal communication, October 11, 2025).

According to the Chairman of the Legislative Committee of Parliament, there is a process called post-legislative scrutiny. "When a law has been in place for more than three years, we need to understand what the implementing institution and the people are saying about the law. The gender laws are due for post-legislative scrutiny to evaluate their effectiveness, benefits, and challenges." An institution that operates in accordance with and utilises the law can also facilitate this process. During implementation, some challenges may have arisen that should be addressed. The law has worked to some extent, but more could be achieved. There is room for improvement. The most important thing is that the law has laid the foundation for women's inclusion (A. Marray-Conteh, personal communication, November 30, 2025).

The analysis of responses regarding the PPRC's monitoring and enforcement of inclusion provisions indicates that, although some progress has been made, substantial work remains. The PPRC Executive Secretary acknowledged deficiencies in political parties' capacity. However, the Commission is actively monitoring and implementing the provisions of the law (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025). The President of the All Political Parties Women Association, who is also the chairperson of the NDA and Minister of Sports, stated that when they raise issues with the PPRC, they review them, adhere to the rules, and ensure that the correct actions are taken (A. J. Teima, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

Regarding fairness and transparency in enforcement, a media personality noted that the PPRC does enforce the laws to some extent. Depending on who has the matter and what the outcome is, that's how some people judge the PPRC's work. (M. Kabba, personal communication, October 30, 2025). There was a consensus that the PPRC is consistent in its enforcement action. However, the perception is that the government may influence them because it is a State institution. "There are significant challenges that persist. The commissioners and other board members of PPRC are appointed by the president, which has led other political parties to question the institution's neutrality" (M. I. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025). The Secretary General of the All Peoples Congress, the main opposition party, points out that the party has been working with the PPRC. In fact, it is the only institution so far that they are a bit comfortable with, not 100% because they feel that the "government sometimes twist their hands behind their backs on some issues." But so far, they have a good relationship with them. "In the past two elections, the regulations of the PPRC were more implemented towards the opposition than the ruling party" (L. Dumbuya, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

NEW (2023) notes that the GEWE Act (2022) and the Public Elections Act 2022 provided a favourable environment for women's representation in the 2023 elections. The GEWE Act is unprecedented in terms of a candidate's nomination and provided that for every three nominations, one must be a woman. PPRC should ensure that political parties have guidelines in their constitutions that ensure the election of 30% of women.

According to the EU EOM (2023), despite legislative progress, actual enhancement of gender equality is lagging behind, due to a number of factors, including the social and cultural context and developmental and educational challenges. Gender inequality hampers women's political participation, contrary to the country's international commitments and constitutional provisions on equality. To promote de facto gender parity, political parties could take more responsibility by making clear commitments to include women in all levels of their executive and providing for voluntary quotas in their constitutions or manifestos. Advance gender parity through a clear commitment by political parties to appoint women to decision-making positions within their structures at all levels.

The Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies' Review Report has proposed reforms to the PPRC, including the appointment of the Commission's Chairman.w

CASE STUDY WHERE PPRC HAS SUCCESSFULLY ENFORCED COMPLIANCE

In my political party, the chairman did not want to ensure inclusion by allowing me to perform my role as a leader. When this was going on at my party, I "took the bull by the horns" and went to the chairman, but nothing changed. I thought it was 'party talk' and that it should be settled within our party. Again, that did not work. So, I took him to PPRC. When I took the matter to the PPRC, his threats and behaviour towards me changed. He even called me to talk, but I told him to write a letter of apology. Then we can talk. That is a good case of a regulatory framework that brings change (Focus group discussion with All Political Parties Women Association, personal communication, October 11, 2025)

The PPRC's enforcement capacity is relatively weak compared to its legal provisions. For instance, the PPRC does not have a dedicated legal and research department, yet its work focuses on legal issues and research. The Commission recognises this: the PPRC lacks comprehensive study, learning, and legal departments (PPRC Strategic Plan, 2024-2029, p. 18). The Commission consistently applies its mechanisms in intra-party matters but is accused of favouring the ruling government in inter-party matters.



SUMMARY TABLE: LEGAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The legal framework for establishing and operating political parties is clear and appropriate. The institutional framework, the PPRC, is also clearly established in law. However, the legal framework on inclusion is limited; it remains silent on the youth. The emphasis and past actions have been on the inclusion of women. While progress has been made in this direction, for this study, the legal framework does not encompass the two areas it addresses: the inclusion of women and youth in politics. There are no laws advancing youth participation in politics in Sierra Leone. This is a significant gap to be addressed.

Full compliance with existing provisions on women's inclusion, along with addressing issues in monitoring, compliance, enforcement, and limited resources, impacts the Commission's work. Further improvements and essential reforms are needed. The current reform opportunity involves implementing the recommendations outlined in the Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review Report. As the Report highlights, the introduction of the Gender Empowerment and Women's Equality Act has increased the proportion of women in elected office. While a significant step forward for Sierra Leone, the country is also a party to international human rights instruments that require States to take similarly direct action to promote the inclusion of young people in the political process.

Law/Policy	Key Inclusion Provisions	Enforcement Mechanism	Observed Effectiveness	Gaps/Challenges
Constitution of Sierra 1991	Section 5 (1), Section 5 (2) (a) and (c), Section 6 (2), Section 13 (i), Section 26 (1), Section 34 Section 35 (2)	Courts, PPRC oversight	High/Medium	Full compliance and adherence to the provisions .
Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022	Section 1 (1), Section 3		High/Medium	Full compliance and adherence to the provisions.
Political Parties Act	Section 12(1), Section 21, Section 22, Section 26, Section 41, Section 42, section 44	PPRC	Medium enforcement due to limited resources.	Aligning the provisions in the Act with the constitutions of the political parties. Quota not extended to youth.
Public Elections Act	Section 58(2), Section 105	ECSL, PPRC	Highly implemented on women's inclusion for elections of members of parliament and councillors, but not youth	Clarity of the provision for different systems used to conduct election. Quota not extended to youth.
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act	Section 2, Section 3	Ministry of Gender, ECSL, PPRC	Partially implemented	Clarity of the provisions on women's empowerment.

Summary Table: Legal Framework Overview

Mechanisms and Regulatory Practices of the PPRC

Objective B: To identify and compare the mechanisms, practices, and regulatory approaches adopted by the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and other Offices of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPPs) in Kenya and Malawi that promote gender and youth inclusion, with a view to distilling lessons and best practices.

INSTITUTIONAL MANDATE AND TOOLS

This section clarifies the formal powers, tools, and operational mechanisms through which the ORPP promotes inclusion.

Both the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, and the Political Parties Act, 2022, stipulate that the PPRC is responsible for registering and regulating political parties in the country. While the constitutional provisions broadly outline the mandate of the Commission, the Political Parties Act, 2022, contains specific ones. Section 12 of the Act provides that the Commission regulates, supervises and monitors the affairs or conduct of political parties to ensure their compliance with the Constitution and the terms and conditions of their registration. The Commission should monitor political parties' accountability to their membership and to the electorate of Sierra Leone, promote political pluralism and the spirit of constitutionalism among political parties, and mediate conflicts or disputes within and between political parties.

The PPRC's direct and explicit role in regulation and registration involves supervision, monitoring, and enforcement. This occurs both during internal

elections and during the operations of political parties, and in their performance in national elections. The Commission's role in promoting inclusion is to ensure adherence to the inclusion provisions of its Act, as discussed above.

The Commission also works on inclusion provisions within the Public Elections Act and the Gender Equality and Empowerment Act. It collaborates with its sister Electoral Management Body (EMB), the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, to enforce the Act's requirements (Section 58 (2)), which specify that one woman must be nominated among every three candidates.

The Commission does not have separate, specific tools and procedures manuals for implementing its mandate, including party registration and deregistration criteria, compliance monitoring, periodic audits, oversight of political party constitutions and reports, and sanctions for violations of laws or party regulations. Instead, they are all contained in the Act and Code of Conduct (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025). The Guidelines for the Registration of Political Parties on the website confirm that they are identical to the provisions of the Act.

The party registration criteria (discussed above) are outlined in Section 3 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022, which repealed and replaced Subsection (5) of Section 35 of the 1991 Constitution and Section 30 of the Political Parties Act, 2022.

Regarding the deregistration criteria, section 26(1) of the Act (discussed above) states that the Commission has the authority to cancel a political party's registration if it is satisfied that the party has violated the laws in the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022, and the Political Parties Act, 2022.

The Commission operationalises inclusion-related requirements during party registration and renewal. It conducts compliance monitoring, periodic audits, and oversight of political party constitutions and reports. It imposes sanctions for violations of laws or party regulations, all in accordance with existing legislation. However, it lacks modern equipment, compliance-monitoring systems, audit capabilities, and research capacity. The PPRC lacks the technical and human resources to implement the mechanisms effectively. It lacks a comprehensive research and learning department or a legal department. This creates a significant challenge to implementing inclusive mechanisms. There are no specialised regulatory tools beyond the general provisions of the laws and the Commission's practices.

PRACTICES AND INTERVENTIONS

The PPRC conducts several daily activities, including processing applications from associations seeking registration as political parties, supervising and monitoring political parties' activities, conducting compliance audits, and disseminating information. It also implements initiatives, such as leadership training workshops and engagements, to promote the inclusion of women and youth in politics, and undertakes interventions, such as handling complaints and mediations.

The Deputy Chairperson of the United Democratic Movement acknowledged that "After every convention of political parties, if you don't have at least 30 per cent, the PPRC will reject the list of executive members" (A. Deen, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

With funds from the Government of Sierra Leone and the National Democratic Institute

(NDI), the Commission met with registered party representatives of the All Political Party Women's Association (APPWA) on the "APPWA's Political Parties National Inclusion Plan". The meetings also discussed the Gender Bill and the role of political parties in its enactment and implementation, as well as the Revised Political Parties Act and its provisions for gender inclusivity in governance (PPRC Annual Report 2023, p. 15).

On complaints handling and mediation, as at the time of writing this report, on Tuesday 11th November, the PPRC met with the leaderships of the All Peoples Congress (APC) Party and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) Party to discuss and warn both leaderships on the use of incendiary, inciting and inflammatory statements against political opponents, by members and/or operatives of both parties on the media. Both parties accepted their contraventions of the law and promised to work together to ensure that such utterances are no longer made (PPRC Press Release, 17th November 2025). The Commission was also handling an intra-party petition received from the former Vice President, Alhaji Samuel Samsumana, a member of the All Peoples Congress, objecting to a provision that disqualifies him and others from contesting leadership positions within the party.

The technical and operational work of the PPRC is supported by the government, various donors, international development partners, and a network of civil society groups. Among the Commission's main donor partners are the European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Irish Aid, International IDEA, and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The Commission's primary technical development partners include UNDP, International IDEA, and NDI. At the national level, the work of the Commission is aided by several civil society groups, including the Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL), the Institute of Governance Reform (IGR), 50/50, Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Independent Radio Network (IRN), and other locally based Community Based Organisations (CBOs) (PPRC Strategic Plan 2024-2028, pp. 7-8).

"Our donor partners, CSOs, have been very instrumental. They provide leadership training for party leaders and assist us with training women candidates from political parties. They have been very supportive in providing mentorship

programmes for candidates of political parties. They have also been very supportive in providing funding for the Commission to ensure that we embark on some other public awareness raising for the public to be aware of the role of women in politics” (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025).

With the intervention of partners, the Commission has been training women in political parties and youth. The only challenge is that few organisations support youth participation in politics. As in the past election, the 2023 election was also marked by the Commission’s inability to fully engage the youth (E.Y. Kamara, personal communication, October 11, 2025).

The Commission initiated nationwide verification of political parties’ offices to confirm their existence in accordance with the terms and conditions of their registration. The verification exercises revealed that some political parties do not have party offices in some regions, while others notified the Commission that they are on the verge of securing an office space (PPRC Strategic Plan, 2024-2028).

The inclusion provisions for women have led to some tangible changes in political parties. There is growing adherence to the quota system for women in politics. However, significant challenges have been encountered due to funding constraints and pushback from some political parties.

INCENTIVES AND SANCTIONS

There is no incentive beyond commendation for compliant political parties; however, the PPRC employs sanctions as enforcement mechanisms to influence political parties’ behaviour regarding inclusion. “For those who don’t comply, the sanctions are clear. Act (E.Y. Kamara, personal communication, October 11, 2025).

In terms of sanctions, section 44 of the Political Parties Act, 2022 provides that a political party that contravenes a provision on the 30% quota for women would be “liable to a fine of not less than Nle 25,000.00; or disqualified from submitting a nomination of a candidate for elections.” There are concerns about the enforcement of sanctions (See section 3.4 of this report). So what we need is proper enforcement, proper commitment and the political will to ensure that the political space that women need to occupy is given to them and they are allowed to occupy it (V. Edwin, personal communication, October 31, 2025).

Section 44 of the Political Parties Act, 2022, empowers the Commission to fine defaulting political parties or disqualify them from submitting nominations for candidates in elections. The PPRC cannot accept nominations or re-registration of political parties that do not conform to the gender quota. “They are almost always ringing in our ears. However, whether they have mechanisms in place to monitor our compliance is another issue” (U. P. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

While there are no explicit incentives in the law, the sanctions are clearly defined. However, there are concerns about the effectiveness of the Commission’s mechanisms in encouraging and ensuring compliance. There is no evidence of selective enforcement or political influence regarding adherence to the inclusion provisions.

No.	Incentives	Sanctions
1	There is none in the law, except in practice commendation from the PPRC to compliant parties.	A fine of not less than NLe 25,000.00
2		Disqualification from submitting nomination of a candidate for elections.

Table on Incentives and Sanctions

INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

The PPRC has an inclusion unit led by a manager responsible for gender and youth issues, supported by a senior youth officer and officers for youth and gender at both the national headquarters and regional levels, who serve as focal points for inclusion matters. The unit and its staff specifically promote inclusion in the Commission’s work by collaborating with other institutions that address gender and youth concerns.

The Commission and its partners established and continue to support the All Political Parties Women Association (APPWA) and the All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA). This is considered innovative because it provides a platform to address issues of women’s and youth inclusion in politics across diverse backgrounds.

SUMMARY TABLE: REGULATORY PRACTICES

While stakeholders perceive the PPRC's credibility in conducting its work as high, its effectiveness is hindered by a lack of required resources. The Commission effectively operationalises inclusion mandates within its available resources through constant engagement with the leadership of political parties and the APPWA and APPYA platforms. It collaborates with ECSL and international institutions, including UNDP and International IDEA, to address issues of inclusion.

The PPRC's establishment and continuous partnership with the APPWA and APPYA precedes the inclusion provisions in law. The Commission's approach is consultative and collaborative, an initiative that helps it to address various issues. These are good practices that other countries may learn from.

Mechanism/ Initiative	Objective	Actors Involved	Outcome/ Effectiveness	Lessons Learned
Monitoring political parties	To ensure they adhere to the registration criteria	PPRC, Political parties	Improved effectiveness of political parties	Requires adequate resources, research and monitoring
Handling complaints and mediations	To settle disputes between and among political parties.	Political parties	Improved peaceful co-existence	Requires research and legal supports.
Compliance Audits	To ensure parties adhere to legal inclusion provisions	PPRC, ECSL Political parties	Improved reporting accuracy	Requires capacity and data systems
Inclusion Training Workshops	Build awareness on gender/youth inclusion	PPRC, International partners CSOs	Increased participation of women in party structures	Sustainability remains a challenge

Summary Table: Regulatory Practices



Opportunities and Challenges for Inter-Country Collaboration

Objective C: To assess the opportunities and challenges for inter-country collaboration among the three ORPPs in advancing inclusive political party governance.

CURRENT OR PAST COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

The PPRC has, over the years, participated in joint meetings, study visits and conferences. The most recent has been the Commission's visit and relationship with the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties in Kenya. The institutions have gone so far as to develop a draft MOU, although it has yet to be signed (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025). As the Head of Mission, Sierra Leone Country Programme, International IDEA, notes, "We are very happy that when we took PPRC to ORPP in Kenya, the conversation is now leading to some more tangible possible intervention for a sub-regional network on political party regulators" (I. M. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

In 2023, the Chairman, Commissioners, and some staff members benefited from a study tour to the Gambia, supported by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Gambian High Commission in Sierra Leone. The study tour enhanced the Commission's knowledge of intra- and inter-party relations and of how they interact with and collaborate with their oversight bodies in the sub-region (PPRC Annual Report, 2023).

Sierra Leone is part of the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC). Until his tenure at the ECSL ended, the Chairman and Chief Electoral Commissioner was the President of ECONEC. The country has been part of ECONEC since its inception, and the then Chairperson of Sierra Leone's National Electoral Commission (NEC), Dr Christiana Thorpe, was the second President. "She was very influential in setting up the ECONEC. In fact, there was even an understanding or indication that the Secretariat would be based in Freetown, Sierra Leone. However, probably not due to financial constraints (M. K. Konneh, personal communication, November 16, 2025).

AREAS OF CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE (APPLICABLE IN THE SYNTHESIS REPORT)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

From the interviews and focus group discussions, peer learning, joint training, exchange visits, programmes, exchange of data and best-practice templates, joint research or comparative studies, regional advocacy or policy dialogues, compliance monitoring, political party financing, and inclusion audits were all highlighted as specific areas where collaboration could add value.

Developing and signing MoUs, establishing working groups, and creating digital platforms were noted as ways to facilitate collaboration. Already, Sierra Leone has an MoU with the ORPP in Kenya.

The exchange of data and best-practice templates, along with inclusion audits and compliance monitoring, were recognised as areas for quick wins and tangible outcomes. The PPRC, for example, largely relies on legal provisions and lacks the necessary specific tools.

According to the former President of ECONEC, “For PPRC, since they are more of a regulatory entity, the network will also help them to enhance their capacity and their influence in their jurisdictions. Because of the network, sometimes we have access and the possibility of direct engagement with the government (M. K. Konneh, personal communication, November 16, 2025).

No.	Priority collaboration areas	Expected benefits for your respective country
1	The exchange of data and best-practice templates	They will help in party regulation and development of standard tools for monitoring inclusion.
2	Inclusion audit	It will address the paucity of data regarding adherence to inclusion provisions in the law.
3	Compliance monitoring system	It will help the Commission to be on track in its regulatory function.
4	Capacity development	It will enhance the work of the Commission to perform effectively and efficiently.

Table on Priority collaboration areas and expected benefits

Resources, including human, financial, and technological, as well as communication equipment and channels, and leadership commitment, are needed for effective political party regulation.

The PPRC has distinctive structures to address the two main issues of inclusion. The All Political Parties Women’s Association and the All Political Parties Youth Association are notable for their design, which offers a platform for communicating and addressing concerns related to inclusion.

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

The first is the **legal or policy limitations** on cross-border cooperation. The PPRC is a constitutional and statutory body that must act in accordance with the provisions of the 1991 Constitution and the Political Parties Act 2022. The political will of the respective institution was identified as the first legal or policy limitation. Members of the association or network should recognise the need to be part of the network and be willing to do so. The interviewees and discussants stated that the governments of the various countries must be willing. The PPRC cannot simply join a network. Drawing on ECONEC experience, the former President noted that Sierra Leone joined ECONEC because it is embedded within the ECOWAS Commission (M. K. Konneh, personal communication, November 16, 2025).

The **unique nature and uniformity of the laws across countries** were highlighted. “Our laws are unique from those of Kenya and Malawi. The first constraint may be harmonising the laws to enable the ORPPs to work together. So I see uniformity in law as one challenge (U. P. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

The **governance cultures** may pose another challenge. Governance cultures vary across countries (L. Dumbuya, personal communication, October 10, 2025). There will be institutional, political and contextual constraints. “I know to some extent, some countries will say, no, this is how we do our own thing.” We are all Africans (A. J. Teima, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

Lack of financial resources from both the governments due to insufficient budgetary allocations, and from donors and international organisations as a result of shifting funding priorities of donor countries. Finance may be another issue, but if the will is there, the network can overcome these challenges (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025). This will involve voluntary regional participation that requires resources. Is the state willing? For instance, if we decide that Sierra Leone would be the Association’s headquarters, will the state be ready to invest resources in that? (I. M. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

However, the mere fact that Sierra Leone is part of ECONEC, for example, shows that, although some of these countries are not in West Africa, this is not

a hindrance to partnering with them. There shouldn't be any legal, cultural, or other constraints that would impede the formation of such a coalition (V. Edwin, personal communication, October 31, 2025).

Constraint	Impact on Collaboration	Possible Mitigation	Responsible Actor/Authority
Lack of political will	Negative/High	Engage the relevant government institutions to get the buy-in.	PPRC/ Ministry of Justice
Lack of financial, technical and other resource	Negative/High	Engage with the Ministry of Finance for approval on the country's commitment to the association.	PPRC
Lack of Donor support	Negative/High	Engage with the Ministry of Finance for approval on the country's commitment to the association.	PPRC and donor institutions in-country.

Table on "Challenges and Mitigation"

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The stakeholders conveyed essential perceptions and suggestions regarding the feasibility and desirability of collaboration among ORPPs.

The political parties' national executive members interviewed, including the women and youth who took part in the focus group discussions, noted that the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPRA) is timely and necessary. Its main value for regional collaboration lies in outcomes such as peer review, learning, capacity development, compliance monitoring, and data sharing.

It is a commendable initiative. If they can come together, sit down, and develop a policy for restructuring in their respective countries so that their appointments are such that the governing party cannot manipulate them, that would be beneficial. The collaboration will further develop Sierra Leone's capacity and serve as a peer-review mechanism. I know that the PPRC is an independent institution; however, governments may sometimes seek to utilise the PPRC for their own advantage. Therefore, if it collaborates with others, those others will serve as a peer-review mechanism for them (L. Dumbuya, personal communication, October 10, 2025).

This would be excellent. It will facilitate peer learning among themselves. In this way, they can cross-learn and cross-validate their tools and processes for effective regulation of political parties. This would be excellent (I. M. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

Regarding perceived benefits, all interviewees and discussants agreed that the collaboration could improve peer learning, training/capacity building, standardisation in compliance monitoring, and data sharing among the ORPPs.

The main perceived risks or concerns may involve loss of autonomy and political sensitivities. Such an association should be collaborative rather than authoritarian. Each country has its own context. The association must work with political will and align with ECOWAS or AU frameworks (Focus group discussion with Youth Organisations, personal communication, October 31, 2025).

Across the collaboration models, the consensus among the interviewees and discussants is that the network should be a formal association established through a legal instrument, such as a constitution, MoU, or declaration, to which States sign.

First, they need to draft a Memorandum of Understanding among themselves, then develop the network, and then establish the statutes. From there, it's

being adopted (M. K. Konneh, personal communication, November 16, 2025). Therefore, if we establish an association or network, the declaration must be presented to the members' parliaments so that it has the force of law and is legally binding (I.M. Tarawalie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

To start the initiative, **the most practical form of collaboration should be through ad hoc working groups and regional forums, which will ultimately lead to the creation of a formal association.**

Given the processes, procedures, and timeframe involved in establishing the formal network, it will initially operate on an ad hoc basis, using numerous regional forums to address key questions about the network and build confidence, thereby securing the necessary political will and support. Over time, this will develop into a formal network.



Prospects for the Establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA)

Objective D: To propose a framework for potential collaboration among the ORPPs, including the establishment of the Africa Association of Political Party Regulatory Authorities (AAPPRA), grounded in empirical evidence from the three country cases.

UNDERSTANDING THE RATIONALE FOR AAPPRA

This session captures stakeholders' perceptions of the necessity of AAPPRA. The primary benefits of regional collaboration include peer review, learning, capacity building, compliance monitoring, and data sharing. Various stakeholders reiterated these points during key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDS), noting that peer review will make the national ORPPs "know that they are being watched from outside." Consequently, they will act in their respective nations' best interests. AAPPRA then becomes the platform and meeting point for the analysis, evaluation, and promotion of best practices in the regulation of political parties across Africa.

A current gap in Sierra Leone, which calls for a regional platform like the AAPPRA, could help address issues such as the lack of shared standards, especially in regulatory tools, templates, and manuals, as well as capacity gaps. Beyond

constitutional and statutory frameworks, the Commission needs to develop a range of policies, templates, and manuals to enhance its work. Collaboration is key to ensuring that ORPPs harmonise regulatory standards and practices on gender reporting templates, political finance disclosure formats, or capacity-building modules, thereby promoting consistency and learning across association members. That is the reason why there is a need for this partnership and the creation of such an association that will bring all of the ORPPs together, having a common agenda to see how we can check and cross-examine ourselves in relation to their mandates (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025).

The anticipated benefits, as agreed, include peer learning and experience sharing, the dissemination of ideas among themselves, checks and balances, standardisation of regulatory practices, joint capacity development, and collective advocacy for political party reform.

THEMATIC FOCUS AND PRIORITY FUNCTIONS OF AAPPRA

The first priority should be **institutional capacity building for regulatory offices**. Merely establishing the ORPPs is not enough; they must be made operational. This involves ensuring they have the necessary financial, human, and technical resources and tools to carry out their responsibilities. For example, in Sierra Leone, “funding is the weakest area. PPRC lacks adequate resources and cannot even fully train party members” (Focus group discussion with All Political Parties Youth Association, personal communication, October 11, 2025).

Gender and youth inclusion. Inclusion has mainly focused on women’s issues. There is a tendency to prioritise youth inclusion in politics, which should continue. Regarding women’s participation, the network can learn from APPWA. “They will need our expertise because, for now, we are united despite our party differences” (Focus group discussion with All Political Parties Women Association, personal communication, October 11, 2025). ORPPs, like PPRC, should implement youth quotas, similar to the 30% women’s quota (Focus group discussion with All Political Parties Youths Association, personal communication, October 11, 2025).

Political party registration and compliance monitoring. Compliance mechanisms—such as monitoring and enforcing quotas—have helped advance women’s inclusion, but much remains to be done. ORPPs should ensure strict adherence to compliance with inclusion provisions during the registration of political parties (Focus group discussion with All Political Parties Youths Association, personal communication, October 11, 2025).

Political party financing and transparency. Political parties are not entirely transparent. They report what they want to report, and the Commission lacks the regulatory power, tools, and resources to ensure full compliance. Once the regulations are passed, it is hoped that they will provide the basis for more compliant and transparent political parties (I.M. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

Internal democracy and leadership renewal within parties. Substantial support is needed to strengthen the internal democracies of political parties. Most conflicts arise within parties rather than between different parties. Issues such as poor

leadership, lack of accountability, and undemocratic practices often cause these problems. Conventions, meant to renew party leadership, are sometimes skipped, or if they do occur, they can involve rancour and, occasionally, violence.

Data and research exchange. With the expansion of AI tools and production and dissemination of content, sometimes containing misinformation and disinformation, data and research exchange is critical to ORPPs. Adequate support will be required for data exchange and research.

The AAPPRA is expected to perform specific functions, such as an annual review, to serve the purposes of review and peer learning of the ORPPs’ work. Another will be the development of joint training modules that enhance knowledge exchange and transfer. The development of a regional portal, as a function of the network, will serve as a repository of information and material on party regulation.

LESSONS FROM COMPARABLE REGIONAL OR NATIONAL INITIATIVES

The lessons here are drawn from the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions.

The establishment of the ECONEC had the buy-in of electoral commissions. In 2008, the Presidents or Chief Electoral Commissioners (CECs) of various West African election management bodies convened to establish the network.

The network is embedded within the ECOWAS Commission’s Electoral Assistance Division, which falls under the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), thereby facilitating the implementation of protocols on democracy and good governance. This means that Sierra Leone became part of the network as an ECOWAS member state. Since the proposed network may extend beyond West African countries, it may need to be endorsed at the African Union level. In terms of governance structures and resource models, ECONEC is governed by statutes that were recently reviewed. The membership pays an annual subscription of about 5,000. However, that is another story, as not many people are paying (M. K. Konneh, personal communication, November 16, 2025).

Comparative Network	Key Functions	Success Factors	Challenges	Lessons for AAPPRA
ECONEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The promotion of free and credible elections in West Africa. — The promotion of independent and impartial election organisations and administrators. — Strengthening public confidence in the electoral process through free and credible electoral procedures. 	Peer review; exchange of best practices.	Lack of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Establishing the network the AU. — Establishing adequate resource mobilisation.

Lessons Table summarising insights from Regional

SUCCESS FACTORS AND ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR AAPPRA

Political will from the government and the leadership of ORPPs remains the most crucial condition for AAPPRA's success. "Once there is political will from the leadership of these institutions, then collaboration and the establishment of the network will not pose a challenge. But we do not just need political leadership; we also require capacity development for all ORPPs (O. A. David, personal communication, October 12, 2025).

Financial resources are necessary to ensure the network's operation. National budgets should allocate funding for the network. Organisations like International IDEA should be considered, but the primary funding will come from government sources. When PPRC prepares its budget, the government, in particular, should include its membership subscription to the network (I.M. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND GOVERNANCE OPTIONS

In terms of structure, the stakeholders agreed that AAPPRA should have a Secretariat based in one of the countries. "The ORPPs have to establish a Secretariat in a location that works and with strong leadership that can contribute to this process (M. I. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

The stakeholders agreed that membership should be institutional. This resonates with the ECONEC experience, members, it is institutional representation.

The decision-making arrangements should be established in the network's statutes and may be based on consensus, voting, or an executive committee.

Regarding Secretariat location considerations, and possible host-country arrangements can be from one of the experienced ORPP, such as Kenya or using ECONEC's approach with the Secretariat in ECOWAS, AAPPRA's Secretariat can be at the African Union AU level.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

The greatest challenge for the AAPPRA is resource mobilisation and sustainability. This can be addressed through the following:

- Subscriptions from the ORPPs for membership dues. The ECONEC framework for annual subscription can be replicated.

- Establishing a joint secretariat, holding regular review meetings, including online sessions, and establishing thematic working groups could help maintain continuity and accountability within these collaborative networks.

- Develop and implement an operating framework, a strategic plan, and a sustainability plan. Donor partnerships with the EU, UNDP, and International IDEA can also assist in resource mobilisation. They can provide initial capital through seed investments to support the network's work. "We can help strengthen best practices, use our convening to bring regulators together so they can develop strategies and solutions that work for them. We cannot tell them what to do, but we can support them in coming together" (I.M. Tarawallie, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

The governing statutes should explicitly address potential challenges in maintaining independence from donor reliance. For example, the Network's

Funding Source	Feasibility	Advantage	Risks/Limitations	Recommended Strategy
Member organisations-countries in Africa	Highly feasible	It shows commitment to the Network and helps to ensure independence.	It will be inadequate. The costs to run the Secretariat will be high.	Get the buy-in of the various government beyond the commitment of the ORPPs.
Donor partnerships (EU, UNDP, International IDEA)	Highly feasible	It indicates confidence in the work of the Network and provides some sustainable funding.	The donor support seems to be dwindling around the world.	Hold virtual donor round conference meetings to introduce the Network to them get their buy-in and commitment.
Foundations/charities supporting democracies around the world	Highly feasible	It showcases recognition of the work of the Network.	The foundations support may be difficult to get.	Identify, engage and build partnership with foundations working on democracy

Sustainability Table

Operating Framework can specify the funding sources available from each donor. The failure of member countries could increase donor dependence.

NATIONAL-LEVEL ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Country-specific assets or expertise that could enrich AAPPRA (e.g., Kenya’s digital registration systems, Malawi’s inclusion practices, Sierra Leone’s reform experience).

Sierra Leone’s reform experience on political party regulation can enrich the AAPPRA in several ways. Firstly, the country has a regulatory framework based on a separate Commission established from the outset in accordance with constitutional provisions. However, this was not implemented immediately. The country’s experience with the expansion of constitutional provisions can serve as a valuable learning curve for the Network. It presents a case of transition from an earlier entity.

This electoral commission initially performed the functions of registering and supervising political parties until the enactment of a specific Act that expanded the constitutional provision and led to the eventual establishment of the Commission.

Secondly, Sierra Leone’s reform experience can benefit the AAPPRA. The country has undertaken reforms in party regulation. The PPRC’s legal framework has been revised to transform it from a registration body into a regulatory commission, as well as to promote women’s inclusion. The AAPPRA will benefit from this experience, from its establishment to full operational capacity.

Thirdly, the Commission has substantial experience in mediation. This includes resolving disputes within and between parties. The law requires the Commission to handle disagreements among political parties. Over the years, this has helped build the Commission’s capacity and expertise in mediation.

Potential Risk	Likely Impact	Mitigation Strategy	Responsible Actors
Political sensitivities (e.g., intergovernmental rivalries, autonomy concerns).	High/Medium	Effective engagement and communication at the regional levels like ECOWAS and AU to provide an understanding of the Network.	The three ORPPs, Kenya, Malawi and Sierra Leone, spearheading the formation and Secretariat of ECOWAS and AU.
Administrative challenges (coordination, leadership turnover)	High/Medium	Establish clear statutes and operating framework for the operations of the Network	ORPPs
Resource challenges funding delays etc.	High	Secure diverse funding through reforms and international partnerships, and subscription from ORPPs.	ORPPs
Risk of fragmentation or inactivity.	High/Medium	Continuous engagement with governments, flexible operating systems, learning and necessary adjustment within the Network.	ORPPs

Risk Matrix

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS (ALIGNED TO EACH RESEARCH OBJECTIVE)

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING POLITICAL PARTIES (OBJECTIVE A).

Sierra Leone has relevant constitutional and legal provisions that establish principles of democracy, pluralism, equality, and inclusion. The country has a separate Political Parties Regulation Commission, established by the Constitution of 1991 (Section 34 (1)), as amended by the Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2022 (Section 1 (1)), and reinforced by the Political Parties Act, 2022 (Section 3 (1)), to regulate political parties. The Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies' Review Report has proposed some reforms to the Commission, including the appointment of its Chairman. Both the Constitution and the Public Elections Act 2022 guarantee the Commission's independence. The Commission's governance structure consists of five Commissioners appointed by the President. The Executive Secretary acts as the Secretary to the Commission and oversees daily administration supported by six directors and other staff. The Political Parties Act, 2022 requires political parties to apply to the Commission for registration, which is processed in accordance with the law (Sections 21 and 22), and grants the Commission the power to cancel the registration of political parties (Section 26). The Public Elections Act 2022 (Sections 58(2) and 105), the Political Parties Act 2022 (Sections 41

and 42), and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022 (Sections 2 and 3) address the inclusion of women in politics and leadership, but not youth participation. However, this constitutes a failure to adhere to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report 2024, which recommended 10% youth inclusion in all essential political party decision-making, recognition as partners in development, and taking responsibility for their actions. The Cross-Party Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review Report, released in July 2024, has proposed adopting a National Youth Development Act, similar to GEWE, to allocate at least ten per cent of members in elective and appointive bodies to youth. The Commission has established and continues to work with two unique structures: the All Political Party Women's Association (APPWA) and the All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA).

MECHANISMS AND REGULATORY PRACTICES OF THE ORPP (OBJECTIVE B).

The PPRC's clear role in regulation and registration includes supervision, monitoring, and enforcement. This occurs during internal elections, the functioning of political parties, and their performance in national elections. The Commission collaborates with its partner Electoral Management Body (EMB), the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, and the Ministry of Gender, among others. The Commission lacks dedicated tools and procedures manuals for carrying out its duties, such as party registration and

deregistration criteria, compliance checks, periodic audits, oversight of political party constitutions and reports, or sanctions for legal or regulatory breaches. Instead, all these are addressed in the Act and Code of Conduct. The Commission imposes inclusion-related requirements during party registration and renewal. It conducts compliance checks, audits, and oversight of party constitutions and reports. It issues sanctions for violations in accordance with existing laws. However, it lacks up-to-date equipment and systems for compliance checks and audits, as well as sufficient research capacity. It also lacks the technical and human resources necessary for effective implementation of mechanisms. There is no comprehensive research and learning department or a dedicated legal department. This significantly hampers the implementation of inclusive mechanisms. There are no specialised regulatory tools beyond the broad legal provisions and the Commission's current practices. The country does not provide state funding to political parties. There is no incentive beyond commendation for compliant political parties; however, sanctions are clearly defined, and the PPRC uses them as **enforcement mechanisms** to influence political parties' behaviour regarding inclusion. Nonetheless, concerns remain about the effectiveness of the Commission's mechanisms in encouraging and ensuring compliance.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR INTER-COUNTRY COLLABORATION (OBJECTIVE C).

The proposed network offers an excellent opportunity for peer learning, training and capacity building, standardisation of compliance monitoring, and data sharing among the ORPPs. It will improve collaboration in areas such as joint training, exchange visits, peer learning programmes, data exchange and best-practice templates, joint research or comparative studies, regional advocacy or policy dialogues, compliance monitoring, political party financing, and inclusion audits. These were identified as specific areas where collaboration could add value. Developing and signing MoUs, establishing working groups, and creating digital platforms are ways to facilitate collaboration. For example, Sierra Leone already has an MoU with the ORPP in Kenya. The exchange of data and best-practice templates, along with inclusion audits and compliance monitoring, were recognised as areas for quick wins and tangible outcomes. The PPRC, for instance, largely depends on legal provisions and lacks the necessary specific tools.

The network may face challenges and constraints, including legal or policy limitations, the unique and uniform nature of laws across countries, governance cultures, and limited financial resources.

PROSPECTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AFRICA ASSOCIATION OF POLITICAL PARTY REGULATORY AUTHORITIES (AAPPRA) (OBJECTIVE D).

The stakeholders agreed that AAPPRA is necessary. The main value of regional collaboration lies in outcomes such as peer review, learning, capacity building, compliance monitoring, and data sharing. Various stakeholders reiterated these points during key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDS), noting that peer review will make the national ORPPs "know that they are being watched from outside." Consequently, they will act in their respective nations' best interests. AAPPRA then becomes the platform and meeting point for the analysis, evaluation, and promotion of best practices in the regulation of political parties across Africa. A current gap in Sierra Leone, which necessitates a regional platform like the AAPPRA, could help address issues, including the absence of shared standards, particularly in regulatory tools, templates, and manuals, as well as capacity gaps. Beyond constitutional and statutory frameworks, the Commission needs to develop a range of policies, templates, and manuals to improve its work. AAPPRA will address institutional capacity building for regulatory offices, gender and youth, political party registration and compliance monitoring, political party financing and transparency, internal democracy and leadership renewal within parties, data and research exchange. Lessons here are drawn from the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions embedded within the ECOWAS Commission's Electoral Assistance Division, which falls under the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), thereby facilitating the implementation of protocols on democracy and good governance.

POLICY AND LEGAL REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Recommendation	Lead Actor(s)	Timeline	Measurable Indicators
Comply fully with the laws guaranteeing the inclusion of women in politics.	PPRC, ECSL, Political Parties Gender Ministry, CSOs/Women groups	From 2026-2028	The 30% met by all political parties.
Adopt a National Youth Development Act to allocate at least ten per cent of the members in elective and appointive bodies to youth.	PPRC, Ministry of Youth/ Youth Commission, Tripartite Committee, AG and MoJ	Before the end of 2026	The 10% of the members in elective and appointive bodies to youth met.
Implement the PPRC's reforms and internal reviews in areas of the PPA Act that require improvement.	PPRC, Tripartite Committee, AG and MoJ	2026	Revised/amended PPRC Act
Introduce State funding of political parties and include provisions.	PPRC, AG and MoJ	2026	Revised/amended PPRC Act
Ensure that political parties review their constitutions and have guidelines in that comply with the PPA and PEA	PPRC	2026	Revised/amended political parties constitution

Summary Table: Policy and Legal Reform Recommendations

INSTITUTIONAL AND CAPACITY-BUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Recommendation	Lead Actor(s)	Timeline	Measurable Indicators
Develop specific tools and procedures manuals for ORPPS to implement their mandate.	AAPPRA and Donors	1- 2 years	Number of tools developed and shared with ORPPs.
Organise joint training, exchange visits, peer-learning programmes, joint research, regional advocacy, and policy dialogues	AAPPRA and Donors	1- 3 years	Number of visits and programmes with ORPPs and their outcomes.

Summary Table: Institutional and Capacity-Building Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION AND AAPPR

Key Recommendation	Lead Actor(s)	Timeline	Measurable Indicators
Get the buy-in of governments on AAPPR.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	1-6 months	Number of meetings and outcomes.
Develop and sign MoUs with the various countries.	Kenya, Malawi and Sierra Leone	6-12 months	MoU signed and implemented.
Develop and agree on the governing statutes for AAPPR.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	6-12 months	statutes for AAPPR.
Establish AAPPR as an ad hoc working group, which will ultimately lead to the creation of a formal association.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	12-18 months	AAPPR established as an ad hoc working group, holding meetings etc.
Develop an innovative annual membership subscription.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	12-18 months	Subscription collected from member organisations.
Establish thematic working groups.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	12-18 months	At least 3 working groups established and operationalised.
Create digital platforms for the visibility of AAPPR.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	12-18 months	At least 3 working groups established and operationalised.
Establish a Secretariat in an experienced ORPP country or at the African Union AU level.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	12-18 months	AAPPR Secretariat established
Develop and implement an operating framework, strategic and sustainability plan.	— Kenya, Malawi & Sierra Leone — Donors	12-24 months	AAPPR operating framework, strategic and sustainability plan and popularized.
Hold regular review meetings, including online sessions.	Kenya, Malawi and Sierra Leone	Ongoing	Number of meetings organised.

Summary Table: Recommendations for Regional Cooperation and AAPPR

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ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

- Olushogo Abraham David, Executive Secretary, PPRC
- Elizabeth Yeabu Kamara, Former Manager, Gender, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, PPRC
- Ibrahim Morray, Senior Youth Officer, PPRC
- Alimatu Deen, Deputy Leader, UDM
- Augusta James Teima, Chairperson, National Democratic Alliance
- Dr Mahmoud Tarawallie-IDEA -Head of Mission, Sierra Leone Country Programme, International IDEA
- Hon Abdul Conteh-Conteh, Chairman, Legislative Committee, Parliament.
- Lansana Dumbuya Esq, Secretary General, All Peoples Congress Party
- Umar Paran Tarawallie, Secretary General, Ruling SLPP
- Sahr Kendema, Senior Programmes Manager, Campaign for Good Governance
- Valnora Edwin, Vice President, 50/50 Group of Sierra Leone

ANNEX 1: LIST OF FGDS CONDUCTED

- Focus group discussion with the All Political Parties Women Association, October 11, 2025
- Focus group discussion with the All Political Parties Youth Association, October 11, 2025
- Focus group discussion with Youth Organisations, personal communication, October 31, 2025.

