

Press Release on the Mid-Term Census by the National Elections Watch (NEW)
“debongolises” a great Meeting between NEW and Stats SL



My attention has been drawn to a recent press release by the National Elections Watch (NEW) headed by the outspoken and admirable Mrs Marcella Samba-Sesay.

Marcella would confirm that I invited them to a meeting at Stats SL when I first heard one of NEW’s officials talking about the Mid-Term Census on 98.1 with little knowledge then about our purpose and strategy. The invitation was for us to meet so that my team could provide details of the census and seek NEW’s collaboration.

We were thrilled when a large high-powered NEW’s delegation came to Stats SL.

Please see below lovely and bongolised photos taken in my office! No one will misjudge the positive outcome of our meeting — an assurance of NEW’s participation in the census and a decision to have an MOU between us.

NEW informed us of their enhanced capabilities in the districts and that their human network could be made available to Stats SL for effective education on the census and monitoring of the process.

The Census Secretariat at Stats SL therefore felt that NEW would play a key role in the sensitization and educational activities, hence NEW has been invited to serve on that committee which will meet for the first time on the 28 October at Stats SL (An invitation letter sent to NEW).



You will recall that we just published a press release on the new date and until we could confirm the new date, activities were low key. We just had today the second Technical Committee Meeting, tomorrow will be the Publicity Committee and next week the Advisory Committee.

Indisputably therefore: NEW has not been left out and will not be.

I think that Marcella and NEW have earned credibility over the years and NEW people enjoy my admiration and respect. It's unfortunate that they came up with a Press Release about our activity that has the potential to attract frown even against them.

With me as head at Stats SL; a strong and capable Management co-led by my Deputy Mr. Andrew Johnny; and a dynamic, competent Stats Council headed by Mr Moses Williams, I can assure all of transparent and accountable practices in all we do. This census will be!

I don't intend to respond to NEW's Press Release because as partners they can talk with us directly and get the correct information, starting even tomorrow when they will hopefully attend the Publicity Committee Meeting.

I will only state that the genesis of what is becoming a household term in Sierra Leone —the Mid-Term Census — can be traced to this writer Mallam O., who became the new SG of Stats SL in April 2018.

We wanted to share data from the 2015 census widely but couldn't because of my/our inability to specify 59% of population data on localities, scattered across the country. Analysis was possible only at the level of Enumeration Areas, one-level above. That was good if you didn't want to know about the population of individual settlements.

So, with my team we convinced the World Bank to contribute to fund the project. We started with \$2m, it went to \$4m and eventually to \$6m!



The struggle started in early 2018 —well before COVID-19. So, no one can say we should have asked for the funds to be spent on COVID-19! It was not alive then.

Besides there are MDAs that ask to be supported for hospitals, roads, schools, water wells, power stations, etc. We are Stats SL, we ask to

be supported to collect data on our people.

It's a total of \$30m we have received to strengthen the National Statistical System, as described in the Medium Term National Development Plan, which the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MOPED) has rolled out to the people of Sierra Leone.

Is it not laudable that we now have a Stats SL that is capable of developing a proposal with the World Bank that has earned us \$30m? The census funds are part of that amount.

Government pledged Le14bn to the project. Until now, contributions are from: Chinese Embassy (two Motorcycles), MRU (large plotter), UNFPA (\$100,000) and UNICEF (\$150,000).

Our invitation to NEW continues to hold and we still look forward to working with its dynamic leadership. This is The People's Census. No individual or institution will allow us not to include them.

Let's work together!

Mallam O.

SG, Stats SL