



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Richard Moigbe  
Interviewer: Nealin Parker  
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PARKER: This is Nealin Parker at the Sierra Leonean Police head offices, and I'm speaking to Mr. Richard Moigbe. Just to begin, if you could tell us what your position is at the police station?

MOIGBE: *My name is Richard Moigbe. I am the assistant inspector general [AIG] of police, responsible for security and police operations nationwide. Sierra Leone is divided into four regions. Where we are at the moment is the Western Area. There is a police commander. There is the East, the South, Northern Regions, also with police commanders. I sit here at the strategic level, what we call "the gold center"; my core functions as the AIG of operations are to coordinate the work of all the police commanders nationwide, to give them that strategic umbrella, leadership and direction, come up with operational policies and give them that strategic direction.*

*Like the last elections, that was a national operation. So, in that, it is my responsibility to come up with a strategy and roll it down to the other commanders, which will guide them in providing security and policing service. So basically, this is my core function.*

PARKER: Perfect, and I'm moving directly to the elections violence and the strategy section of the interview. Was there an assessment of threats against the process in advance of the election, and who conducted the assessment?

MOIGBE: *Yes, to answer your questions straight up, there was an assessment, and that assessment was conducted by the Sierra Leonean Police taking the lead supported by other security agencies. But maybe if I can give you a brief outline of how we went about providing the security and policing the elections, it might address some of your concerns.*

*In Sierra Leone by constitution and legislation, the National Electoral Commission, NEC, is responsible for the conduct of all public elections and referenda. By the same constitution again, the Sierra Leone Police is responsible for the security and the policing of all public elections in this country, so we work in support of NEC. And again, we, the Sierra Leone Police, are responsible for the internal security of this country. We take primacy, though there is the military, or other security agencies, but we have the police primacy for internal security.*

*So security for public elections and policing of them falls under our domain. Now what did we do? Months to the election, in fact, from last year, we knew there were going to be local government elections, which is a national one. So what we did as a forward-planning organization, that is the Sierra Leone Police, we set up what we called Elections Security Policing Planning Coordinating Secretariat at the national operations center here: the Sierra Leone Police Elections Security and Policing Coordinating Secretariat. And we scanned the organization, identified very brilliant officers and staffed the Secretariat with them. Then we identified what we call permanent NEC liaison officers. These are police officers who are in permanent touch with the NEC, because we have to know NEC activity, their own timeline activity, their strategy, because we have to provide security to support their strategies. So we need to know what they are doing, so we have that permanent liaison.*

*And then we went from that to identify various stakeholders and partners. Although we have primacy for security, we think there are some other*

*departments, institutions, which can give us support for us to be able to provide that adequate security for the elections. So we did stakeholders, partners analysis, and identified them and established a day-to-day functional relationship with them.*

*And, from that, we then drew-up—using the Secretariat staff now with me supervising, we came up with—we developed the elections policing strategy. And that strategy was discussed at our management level, at National Security Council Coordinating Group [NSCCG] level here, where various agencies, institutions that have something to do with elections, made their own input and then we produced the final product, the final strategy. And in that strategy, you may want to know some of the sub-strategies, one of which is like coordination, command and control. We know we have identified partners. They are coming to work with us, UN, Office of National Security, the NEC, civil society and other institutions. We have to know—define roles and responsibilities and how we are manning them, the command and control of that, was one of the sub-strategies.*

*Also we know, in providing security for elections that we need to do special trainings—specific elections, specific training. So there was a training component looking at various areas that really would bring people up to speed. To be able to provide the security and to also work in support of the police.*

*We also looked at what we called the “Community Engagement Strategy.” How we relate work to the wider public to support us, and also a media strategy going with that, because we need to be talking with members of the “fourth estate,” engaging them and disseminating, informing the wider public, and the international community what we are doing. And also we look at resourcing issues. That was another strategy, looking at the budget, because when we drew up the strategy—we costed the strategy, transformed it into the Costed Strategic Document. So we’re looking at resourcing issues in terms of personnel, the manpower deployment, because there are polling stations nationwide; we have to deploy in all of those too, determining the manpower requirements, looking at vehicles, looking at fuel and other equipment, communication equipment. So, on that budget, we’re looking at resources, logistics, finance to support the entire operation.*

*We’re also looking at investigations. We know that when there are elections, there are bound to be a few public elections-related disorders here and there. So we had a sub-strategy of establishing what we call “election-specific investigations service” nationwide. Every police command unit, we established a unit there staffed with very experienced CID [Criminal Investigation Department] officers who are given specific training to investigate swiftly all electoral offenses or elections-related matters.*

*And also—coming to your first question about threat—we also know resources are never enough. Our operations have to be intelligence-led, which really can manage the bigger resources. So we established also nationwide what we call “election-specific intelligence service,” working with the communities, looking at issues and assessing them: which they think would impact or hamper the smooth process of the elections. They are processed there and sent to the center here, where we have an integrated staff from the police special crime—the police criminal intelligence unit, the central intelligence and all the intelligence departments. They also contributed staff there, at the central intelligence service,*

*so that intelligence comes in, and information from all over the country. They process them and analyze them and use that to view what we call "threat register" on the entire elections nationwide.*

*This threat register we keep updating, and it is this threat register which really helped us when we came to the actual election day itself, in terms of manpower deployment, assessing locations where the threat is high. You have unemployed youth. They have planned this sort of public disorder, so that really helped us to deploy enough resources in those regions so that they can contain and make sure there is sanity.*

*For example, a few days to the election, the threat register informs us that the threat in Kono district went very high—that is the diamond and ferrous area. Because of this one, two men, they were not allowed to mine diamonds. They were denied certain rights, and they were planning—they had prepared petrol bombs, planning to attack chiefs, even to bomb police stations. So we were informed through the threat register, and we flew in enough personnel, public order unit personnel, well equipped. And they were there until a point, in fact, when they started going out to the street, and they were almost about to overwhelm the local resource, the police there. We also had to bring on board the military police, whom we had given some training under specific instructions, how to work with the police. So they were also brought on board under what we call "Military Aid to Civil Power" [MACP], and we used that to contain the situation.*

*And we also—based on the threat again—we identified certain areas, which we refer to as the "flashpoint," the hotspots. So, in those areas, we deployed what we called "strategic rapid response teams." These are a group of well-trained, well-equipped advance public-order unit of the police. So they were there on standby with vehicles to move. And also, as part of our strategy, I discussed with the United Nations, the ERSD [Economic Research and Statistics Division], and they were kind enough to provide two helicopters at my disposal. They were based there—standby—so in the event that there is a problem in a very remote part of the country where we want to move this strategic rapid response to support the local police to contain the situation, and the vehicle will not really help because of the response time, we can then use the helicopters to go and airlift the personnel into those locations.*

*So, in brief, these were the strategies. This was the forward-planning and the strategy, and we did not do it alone. We identified various key partners and stakeholders, and we maintained that coordination, collaboration, working together.*

PARKER: *Who were the partners? You mentioned the military, and you mentioned—*

MOIGBE: *The military. When it came to manpower deployment to polling stations, we also drew personnel from the prisons, from the traffic warden, from the Chieftdom police, and we trained them on the elections policing just for that moment, and they were working with us. And also the media, they were partner members of the fourth estate. We kept engaging them and also the public as—go on radio phone-in programs, tell them our strategy, what we have planned and the support we want from the public. And mostly, when it comes to polling day itself, what we require of the public, to be peaceful, law-abiding, and if they see any*

*strange movements and anything that would disrupt the smooth process, that they also, as civilians, have the right to arrest and hand over to the police or call over to the police. So these were our partners. Even UNAMSIL [United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone] here, UN, UNDP [United Nations Development Program], they were our partners. They helped us in the funding process, the budgeting. You know, they helped us. UNAMSIL staff were working with us, IMATT [International Military Advisory and Training Team]. So we had a wide range of partners and stakeholders, but we managed them well.*

PARKER: You mentioned that in Kono, because of the diamond area, there had been a higher threat assessment for that area. What other things were thought to be potential issues or things that would cause the threat assessment to go up during this election?

MOIGBE: *Well, in certain areas where we had, say, some bush dispute going on, some chiefs having problem with their subjects, where their subjects think that the chief is partisan and not really being neutral and maybe wanting his subject to go down his own road, and then refusing that. So there is that disrespect or recognition. So these all build some tension. And then—so we identified all of that, and we were able to engage the people, talk to them, have in mind orientation in addition to—we really deployed our public order officers there. And also, some areas, people had some old disputes about cotton theft, and also all of that. When elections are coming, they tend to say, “OK, you did not support us. We are not going to—” and then you see tensions start building-up.*

*And above it all, the elections were partisan, people belonging to different political parties. You see, when the people—one political party is given say today that is their own turn to do campaigning, some of their members would go out making inflammatory comments and it might antagonize the other opponent and they start arguments. And then they go into fists and confront. But all of that we managed.*

PARKER: If you were giving advice to yourself, but before these elections, was there any information that you know now that you wished you'd known before? To do your job, or someone else in a similar position?

MOIGBE: *Yes, I have really come to realize the usefulness, the power of really working with other stakeholders. You know, some years back, when it comes to elections, it comes to policing issues. We thought it was a purely police affair, nobody else. But of late, and in our reform, I've come to realize that quite a lot of institutions have a role to play and, in fact, the public, the people. And that is why, in fact, we have changed our policing style and philosophy from the reactionary, public aloof to what we call “community policing” or “local needs policing.” That is, really sitting with the locals, discussing policing issues and policing with them or policing by concerns. So this really has come to help us because, if you look at the police, try and see about 9,500 and the population of the country, five million, so the policing ratio is very high. I'd say it's about one police officer, say, to 700 people, you know? It's very difficult. So the only way we can police the nation is by working with the people, because they are everywhere.*

PARKER: At the highest point, how many staff were you working with when you include the traffic controllers and the military that you brought in to work on the elections? So

I guess, on election day, how many police were out there deployed or acting as police?

MOIGBE: *Well, the police, we had, 8,500-8,500 out there, and I cannot quite remember the other supporting sister agencies, but they were also numbering—they were numbering over 1,500.*

PARKER: And would you say that was sufficient?

MOIGBE: *It was sufficient, because there was high police visibility everywhere and all of that. Every polling station—we had over 6,000 polling stations—everywhere you had police officers, and some of these personnel were also involved in roaming patrols, in Land Rovers and foot patrols moving around. You know, so it was adequate.*

PARKER: Was there a cooling-off, a campaign cooling-off period, where campaigning had to stop before the elections?

MOIGBE: *That's right, there was a cooling-off period. They had one day. The elections—this last elections—local government elections, it was on the 5<sup>th</sup>, on the 5<sup>th</sup>. There was campaign on to the 3<sup>d</sup>, so the 4<sup>th</sup> was a cooling day, no activity, and we're out there to ensure that nobody came out. Those few people who wanted to make attempts to campaign, but we were able to stop them.*

PARKER: Well, sir, you said you would give me 20 minutes, and you have given me 20 minutes, so thank you so much. If you have any more questions—

MOIGBE: *Except if you have one or two more things to ask?*

PARKER: OK, perfect, I very much appreciate it. I don't want to lean on your time too much. In terms of election dispute resolution, after the election, what did you do, either on election day or after the election, to deal with complaints that people had? How were the police involved in that?

MOIGBE: *Well, like I told you, we envisioned that, and that was part of our wider strategy, establishing election-specific investigations service. So all complaints that we have received or police had about misbehaviors, they were recorded and those where there was sufficient evidence, they were charged to court. Mind you, some of the acts amount to criminal though [...] it's election-related but it's criminal.*

*Take, for example, where somebody walked up and slapped somebody. It's assault, so we take that person—or destroy something, somebody's poster—and charged to court for malicious damage though it was during the electoral period. So we have quite a lot of that, and very highly sensitive ones will be investigated and then refer to the law offices department for more legal advice, which the ones that are really very sensitive because all of that is preparing police records in the event that, after elections—though we've not had one yet—where people were aggrieved and they make petitions against certain results, and if police are called upon to testify, then we will do that prepared with our records.*

*So that is what we did, and in fact, we are yet to meet what we call “the briefing” for lessons learned by some other commanders, and in that the director of crime management has been instructed to come up with national statistics of all*

*matters, complaints made and with their outcomes, those that had no substance, who are dismissed, those that charged to court and the court outcomes, those that are still under investigation. So he's yet to produce the national statistics.*

PARKER: What are the types of complaints that regularly came up?

MOIGBE: *Some people would complain that their posters have been torn, some would say the campaigning group passed by their own party locations and started throwing insults on them, and the people stone throwing, these sort of thing.*

PARKER: And what would be standard penalties for those kinds of things?

MOIGBE: *It depends really on the nature of the offense. If somebody is, let's say, stone-throwing, which—if that is done deliberately and the impact is so—well, you can be charged to court for wounding with intent, which carries a very stringent imprisonment penalty. So it really depends.*

PARKER: And do you have any recommendations for someone who is establishing a dispute resolution system in another country?

MOIGBE: *One of the recommendations here is—like I said, after the police reform, our investigative capacity has increased, and that means quite a large volume of investigated matters are sent to court, which has overwhelmed the capacity of the court. So, in fact, there was one time the then-chief justice appealing to us that some minor offenses—if we can set up a resolution mechanism at police station, but to do it very professionally—and that is going on now for very minor things, and where the complainant too is giving some redress, so we are doing that to help the courts.*

PARKER: Perfect, thank you—

MOIGBE: *You're welcome.*

PARKER: —very much, and again, if you have any other questions, you now have my contact information and that of the organization, so please, please do.