

The Effect of Asset Declaration on Voter Trust in Sierra Leone Election

Introduction

This policy brief presents research findings of a survey conducted in Freetown in November 2017 to gauge the effect of public declaration of assets of presidential candidates on voters attitudes and perceptions of them. Five hundred (500) interviews were randomly conducted in 50 voter registration centers across the East and West end of Freetown. We analyzed the questionnaires of 497 valid respondents (223 females and 274 males).



Around the world, citizen trust in political institutions has declined to an abysmally low level (CIVICUS Report 2017). Decline in public trust in institutions is resulting in growing calls, and in some cases, violent protests in many countries as citizens clamor for greater accountability of the institutions that govern their lives. A recent study¹ of electoral behaviors in Sierra Leone indicates that 79.4 per cent of voters want presidential candidates vying

in the 2018 election to publish their assets before they are voted into office. Asset declaration by candidates could have a decisive influence in Sierra Leone's 2018 elections as it featured strongly as one of the seven demands of the Citizens' Manifesto produced by 720 local organizations eight months ahead of the polls. Popular music artists have also made a strong case that open publication of assets can engender public confidence in institutions and help foster badly needed trust between citizens and their leaders.

Various political parties are responding to this growing call for asset publication. A presidential aspirant for the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) Mr. Mohamed Kamarainba Mansaray held a press conference on 25th October 2017 where he published his assets. Other presidential aspirants from other parties including SLPP, NGC, RUPF and Unity Party have all made verbal commitments to publish their assets before the March 2018 elections.

The findings are tabulated in the following pages.

¹ A study of Citizen's Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices towards Politics and Elections. Conducted by the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium- March 2017

Citizen's Perception on Importance of Asset Declaration by Presidential Aspirants

The vast majority of voters, 93 per cent, say it is important for persons running for the presidency in the 2018 elections to publicly declare their assets. Almost as many men as women share this belief. This suggests that voters in Freetown place a very high premium on their leaders demonstrating a greater degree of transparency and accountability before and while holding political offices.

Table 1 Is it important for someone running for the presidency to publish their assets before elections?

IMPORTANCE OF ASSET DECLARATION					
<i>Respondents view on importance of aspirants declaring their asset</i>					
Gender	Age	Don't Know	No	Yes	Grand Total
Female	18-24	5.6%	11.1%	83.3%	100.0%
	25-35	0.0%	9.2%	90.8%	100.0%
	36-55	2.7%	2.7%	94.5%	100.0%
	Above 55	5.0%	0.0%	95.0%	100.0%
	Female Summary	2.7%	6.7%	90.6%	100.0%
Male	18-24	0.0%	7.5%	92.5%	100.0%
	25-35	0.0%	2.8%	97.2%	100.0%
	36-55	0.0%	2.4%	97.6%	100.0%
	Above 55	3.4%	6.9%	89.7%	100.0%
	Male Summary	0.4%	4.0%	95.6%	100.0%
Grand Total		1.4%	5.2%	93.4%	100.0%

Citizens' Level of Awareness on Kamarainba's Recent Asset Declaration

When asked if they knew that the leader of the Alliance Democratic Party, Mohamed Kamarainba recently declared his assets publicly, about eighty-two per cent of all respondents said they were aware. A good number of respondents said they learnt about Kamarainba's declaration on the media – mainstream, as well as social media. However, more men than women knew about his asset declaration (86.9% men compared to, 75.8% per cent women). Also noteworthy is the fact that only about 63% of female respondents aged between 18 and 24 years had any knowledge about Kamarainba's declaration. This population is likely to include many first time voters. The level of awareness among female citizens who are fifty-five and above is also relatively low. On the other hand, on average, 85% of males across the different age categories say they know about Kamarainba's recent asset declaration.

Table 2 Do you know that one politician Mohamed Kamarainba Mansaray recently published his asset?

KNOWLEDGE OF KAMARAINBA'S DECLARATION					
Level of citizen's awareness of Kamarainba's asset declaration by age and gender					
Gender	Age	Don't Know	No	Yes	Grand Total
Female	18-24	1.9%	35.2%	63.0%	100.0%
	25-35	1.3%	18.4%	80.3%	100.0%
	36-55	0.0%	17.8%	82.2%	100.0%
	Above 55	5.0%	25.0%	70.0%	100.0%
Female Summary		1.3%	22.9%	75.8%	100.0%
Male	18-24	1.9%	13.2%	84.9%	100.0%
	25-35	0.9%	15.0%	84.1%	100.0%
	36-55	1.2%	7.1%	91.8%	100.0%
	Above 55	3.4%	10.3%	86.2%	100.0%
Male Summary		1.5%	11.7%	86.9%	100.0%
Grand Total		1.4%	16.7%	81.9%	100.0%

How Kamarainba's Declaration Affected Citizens' Perception

Table 3 What Kamarainba's public declaration of his assets means to citizens

EFFECT OF KAMARAINBA'S DECLARATION						
Effect of Kamarainba's declaration on citizens						
Gender	All politicians are the same	I already have my candidate	It changed my views	It means nothing to me because declaration is fake	Not Applicable	Grand Total
Female	13.5%	8.5%	37.2%	13.0%	27.8%	100.0%
Male	16.1%	12.4%	40.9%	13.9%	16.8%	100.0%
Grand Total	14.9%	10.7%	39.2%	13.5%	21.7%	100.0%

The research tried to understand the effect of Kamarainba's action on voters who heard about his asset declaration. About fifty per cent said it changed their views/perceptions about him, while 17.2% said it was insignificant because they thought the declaration was false. Another 19% of respondents said Kamarainba's

declaration meant nothing to them because ‘politicians are all the same,’ a perception that reveals a generalized lack of trust in political leaders, while around, 14% of respondents said they had already made up their minds about their preferred presidential candidate and so the declaration meant nothing. This range of responses reveal that the presidential race is still quite open suggesting that candidate actions and ideas may be instrumental in winning votes. A good number of respondents to this question commended the practice, with the majority stating that they would like their candidates to do the same

Citizen’s Level of Trust For Kamarainba Before and After His Declaration

KAMARAINBA'S TRUST LEVEL BEFORE & AFTER HIS DECLARATIONS

Gender	<i>Did you trust Kamarainba before he published his asset?</i>			<i>Do you trust Kamarainba now?</i>		
	Don't Know	No	Yes	Don't Know	No	Yes
Female	8.2%	60.6%	31.2%	9.9%	49.3%	40.8%
Male	4.2%	65.0%	30.8%	8.4%	44.5%	47.1%
Grand Total	5.9%	63.1%	31.0%	9.1%	46.7%	44.3%

Table 4 Citizen’s trust level for Kamarainba before and after his asset publication

A related question asked respondents about their level of trust of Kamarainba before and after his declaration. In keeping with the responses to the earlier question, participants indicated that his declaration resulted in an overall positive shift in perception about him. The table above compares respondents’ levels of trust for Kamarainba before and after his declaration. Before he published his assets, only thirty-one per cent of respondents said they trusted Mohamed Kamrainba Mansaray. Following the declaration, this increased to 45 per cent respondents who said they trusted him, nearly 15 per cent more than before. Another 9.1% said they did not know whether they trusted Kamarainba or not.

Citizens’ Level of Awareness about The Manifesto

Table 5 Respondents awareness of the Citizen's Manifesto

KNOWLEDGE OF CITIZEN'S MANIFESTO				
Citizen's Knowledge of Manifesto by Gender				
Gender	Don't Know	No	Yes	Grand Total
Female	0.4%	13.5%	86.1%	100.0%
Male	1.1%	9.1%	89.8%	100.0%
Grand Total	0.8%	11.1%	88.1%	100.0%

The table indicates that about eighty-eight per cent of all respondents in Freetown have heard about the Citizen’s Manifesto. Males are apparently more knowledgeable about the manifesto than their female counterparts. The category with the lowest awareness about the manifesto is females between the ages 18 to 24 years.

Increasing Demands By Citizens for Presidential Aspirants to Publish Asset

This research provides strong support for the asset declaration request in the Citizens' Manifesto. Nearly ninety per cent of respondents said they would like the candidates they support to publish their assets, with more men (91%) than women (84%) calling for this. In the KAP survey conducted earlier this year, 79.3% of respondents believed that politicians should declare their assets so this shows that the idea of asset declaration is growing in popularity. It also shows that citizens are aware of the Citizen Manifesto (CM) as the table below shows.

Table 6 Citizens' Demand for Candidates to Publish Assets

CITIZEN'S DEMAND FOR THEIR CANDIDATES TO DECLARE THEIR ASSET					
Would you like the candidate you support to declare their asset?					
Gender	Age	Don't Know	No	Yes	Grand Total
Female	18-24	5.6%	13.0%	81.5%	100.0%
	25-35	2.6%	14.5%	82.9%	100.0%
	36-55	4.1%	6.8%	89.0%	100.0%
	Above 55	5.0%	10.0%	85.0%	100.0%
Female Summary		4.0%	11.2%	84.8%	100.0%
Male	18-24	1.9%	13.2%	84.9%	100.0%
	25-35	1.9%	4.7%	93.5%	100.0%
	36-55	1.2%	3.5%	95.3%	100.0%
	Above 55	3.4%	10.3%	86.2%	100.0%
Female Summary		1.8%	6.6%	91.6%	100.0%
Grand Total		2.8%	8.7%	88.5%	100.0%

Your vote can change your situation...



'My Vote, My Life'

SIERRA LEONE 2018

3 x 3 x 18 Campaign

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