Commissioners and staff on Monday 28th February witnessed a demonstrative presentation of Waymark Infotec on Biometric Voter Registration. The Waymark Infotec a privately owned South African company that operates from Pretoria, South Africa and is specialized in the development, production and marketing of elections materials worldwide. The Commission also witnessed presentations from other service providers from Ghana and Nigeria in a bid to assess the products and services of firms that will best suit the country’s electoral system as the NEC prepares to implement vital reforms in the electoral operations in Sierra Leone, as indicated in the NEC Strategic Plan 2010-2014 document. One of such reforms, is the possible use of biometric technology in the Voters Registration System for the 2012 Elections. Other Firms involved in similar operations have been slated to make presentations.

The National Electoral Commission during the Month of February embarked on a nation wide sensitization meetings with its stakeholders which climaxed with a meeting for the Western Urban Region on Monday 28th February 2011 at the British Council Auditorium, Tower Hill, Free-town. Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chair Person of NEC Dr. Christiana Thorpe in her statement, gave an overview of the Commission’s activities as it prepares for the 2012 General Elections in Sierra Leone. In their presentations, Electoral Commissioners gave succinct highlights on various topics. Commissioner Miatta French briefed the audience on the activities undertaken by NEC as presented in the NEC 2010 Annual Report. Commissioner Mohamed Nfa Conteh dilated on the status of Electoral Legal Reforms undertaken by the Commission. Commissioner Aiah Mattia in his presentation talked about the NEC’s intention of using the electronic voter registration systems and the benefits of the biometric system of registration on the electoral process. Commissioner Florence K. Kebbie in her statement outlined the activities of INEACE and how the educational venture is helping in the voters education drive nationwide, especially first time voters in the schools. The Electoral Commissioners similarly made presentations in the Regions and Districts during their tour. From February 17th 2011 in Kabala, Koinadugu District, to February 25th in Bonthe Island, Southern Province, Dr. Christiana Thorpe and Electoral Commissioners in their various regions, together with Regional Chiefs, DEOs, ADEOs and VETOs engaged the respective District Community Stakeholders in the sensitization drive.
Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS) Africa Programme Manager visits Sierra Leone

Grace Favre, ERIS Programme Manager for Africa and the Middle East, visited Sierra Leone on 28th February 2011 to assess the situation and to discuss possible areas of partnership with the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and civil society. According to Grace Favre, ERIS is specialized in Project Management and building of local initiatives, development of training manuals on Media relations, Elections Observation, Legal Reform and Conflict Resolution. She is scheduled to meet with NEC, PPRC, Civil Society and Youth Groups.

**Electoral Commissioners played host to a two man delegation from IFES. The visit of Mr. Almamy Sillah, former Electoral Commissioner of NEC and Mr. Muamar came as a result of the proposed resuscitation of the activities of IFES on elections and governance in Sierra Leone and the possible areas of partnership with NEC and other democratic institutions in the run up to the 2012 elections.**

**NEC Embarks on Elections Observations in Niger and Uganda**

Commissioner Miatta French and other dignitaries from around Africa formed part of the African Union Observer Mission that went to Kampala to observe the Ugandan Presidential and Parliamentary Elections on 19th February 2011. In a separate development, the Chief of Procurement and Logistics Wurie Turay and Chief of External Relations Albert Massaquoi, were part of the Sierra Leonean Delegation of the ECOWAS Elections Observer Mission that went to the Republic of Niger to observe the Presidential and Legislative Elections held on the 31st January 2011. The team observed the Presidential and Legislative Elections in voting communes in the Niamey Region, capital of Niger. Ten Presidential Candidates including three independents and a female candidate that aspired for the mantle of executive leadership of the Republic of Niger. According to the preliminary declaration of the ECOWAS Observer Mission Report, the elections were peaceful, free, fair and credible. H.E. Koffi Sammah, former Prime Minister of Togo served as Head of the ECOWAS Delegation of Elections Observers.
The National Electoral Commission on Tuesday March 29th—Thursday 31st March 2011 organised a 3-day workshop on Electoral Legal Reforms and Compilation of Electoral Laws. Participants were drawn from stakeholder organisations dealing with election laws. In attendance were the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Mr. Frank Kargbo, Hon Ajibola Manley-Spaine, Chairman Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Legislation, Justice Salaymatu Koroma, Chairperson of the Law Reform Commission. Also in attendance were Representatives of Political Parties, Democratic Institutions, Sierra Leone Bar Association, the UNDP, UNIPSIL, Civil Society and the Media.

On Thursday 17th March 2011, the Chief Electoral Commissioner Dr. Christiana Thorpe, Commissioners of NEC and Human Rights Commission (HRC), Construction Consultants and Contractors played host to H.E. President Ernest Bai Koroma, Vice President Samuel Sam Sumana and Presidential Entourage during a snap inspection site tour of on going construction work on the proposed national HQ of NEC and HRC-SL. Construction Consultant Mohamed Coomer guided the tour through the stairs up to the top floors and into various sections. In the process, Mr. Coomer gave an historic run down of the structural status of the former Elections Office to the state it is in, at the moment which is in near completion. President Koroma praised the work of the contractors and admonished them to do more in order to ensure a speedy conclusion of construction on the entire complex. The first, second third and fourth floors will be occupied by the National Electoral Commission, whilst the basement and ground floor will be occupied by the Human Rights Commission.
Members of Print and Electronic Media Houses were taken on a conducted tour of the NEC and HRC National HQ at Tower Hill on Thursday 3rd March 2011. Construction Consultant Mohammed Coomber guided the tour through the various sections of the facility. In the press conference that followed the guided tour, Mr. Coomber explained to journalists about the initial estimated cost of 5 Billion Leones in 2007, which with time had amounted to 8 Billion Leones as the estimated cost for its completion in 2011. He also spoke about among other issues, the quality of construction materials used, provision of adequate water supply and toilet facility and safety and disaster prevention measures in case of emergencies. He concluded by saying that construction work would be complete by the 31st March 2011.

In a bid to contribute to the 50th Anniversary Independence Celebration, the National Electoral Commission in collaboration with other Democratic Institutions on Monday 21st March 2011 organised a week long national quiz competition on issues of national identity. Participants were drawn from INEACE graduates in the regions who competed for financial prizes. The Western Area team emerged as victor, the team representing the Southern Region was runner up. Teams representing the Northern and Eastern Regions came 3rd and 4th respectively.