



# Operational Guideline for Inter-Party Dialogue Committee of Sierra Leone



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## Executive Summary

Together with the Terms of Reference (ToR), the Operational Guideline serves as the operating tools that guide the implementation of the Inter-Party Dialogue Committee (IPDC). The Committee and the operating tools constitute the Inter-Party Dialogue Framework as instituted by the Agreement for National Unity, which was signed in October 2023.

IPDC is a platform for dialogue between political parties, with the Political Party Regulation Commission (PPRC) serving as the Secretariat. The Secretariat is also responsible for the engagement with external stakeholders/partners whose assistance and collaboration could be leveraged upon to support the implementation of the IPDC. In all diverse respects, the IPDC should endeavor to achieve a win-win outcome for the political parties.

The Operational Guideline outlines the concepts and rationale; internal procedures for holding meetings; modalities for participation and decision-making; as well as the organisational structure of the IPDC. It also contains SWOT analysis and stakeholder engagement strategies for the guidance of the IPDC.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

APC	All People's Congress
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations CSOs
ECSL	Elections Commission for Sierra Leone
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
ICPNC	Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion
IPDC	Inter-Party Dialogue Committee
KAIPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
OG	Operational Guideline
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PPRC	Political Parties Regulation Commission
PR	Proportional Representation
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunities and Threats
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## Acknowledgments

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Special appreciation is also extended to the UNDP Sierra Leone for the longstanding engagement with the KAIPTC. In particular, this partnership has led to the successful completion of the inter-party dialogue assessment mission, and the advanced thematic training on dialogue and mediation which took place in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The operational guidelines will serve as a framework to guide the implementation of the IPDC in conformity with its ToR. The support to the PPRC in the establishment of the IPDC was made possible with the financial support provided by the UN Peace Building Funding.



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### Background to Interparty Dialogue Committee

Sierra Leone's political landscape has long been characterised by its vibrant but often contentious political nature, shaped by historical challenges, socio-political complexities, and the struggle to consolidate democracy. However, after the 11 years of civil conflict, the country has remained relatively stable and conducted five successive elections (2002, 2007, 2012, 2018, and most recently in June 2023). In spite of a multiparty constitutional democracy, Sierra Leone political history and electoral system have tended to favour a duopoly, having a two-party dominance and a winner-takes-all politics.

Coupled with the introduction of the Proportional Representation (PR) system, which sets the minimum threshold for parliamentary seat at 11.9 percent of valid votes, many political parties have argued that the PR system has further diminished their chances of gaining parliamentary seats. Similar outcomes also emerged relative to the other key elected offices such as city mayor or district council chairpersons, as well as local councillors. These issues remain a major concern even beyond the June 2023 elections where dispute over the election results led to a facilitated mediation between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and the All Peoples Congress (APC). The mediation process culminated in the signing of an 'Agreement for National Unity' on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

Among the key recommendations of the Agreement for National Unity was the institutionalisation of Inter Party Dialogue Framework, which is spearheaded by the Political Party Regulation Commission (PPRC). The interparty dialogue framework involves the formation of the Inter Party Dialogue Committee (IPDC), which is guided by a Terms of Reference (ToR) and an Operational Guideline. The operational guideline articulates the values, concepts and principles underpinning the IPDC. It also provides further steps for the implementation of the ToR.

### Rationale of the Operational Guideline

The Operational Guideline (OG) document provides the framework to operationalise the ToR of the IPDC. It seeks to elaborate on specific principles and steps in a multiparty dialogue process. The operational guideline is the outcome of the capacity needs assessment, and the thematic dialogue training conducted under the PBF-UNDP-Sierra Leone project titled: "Operationalisation of the Inter-Party Dialogue Committee (IPDC) in Sierra Leone", which was supported by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Ghana from November 2024-December 2024.

The guideline document is primarily focused on political parties and with facilitation by the PPRC under the IPDC architecture, where other key stakeholders such as development partners and moral guarantors participate as observers. In this capacity, moral guarantors and technical partners are involved in the process as observers that seek to promote due processes of dialogue and capacity building in the administration and operations of the IPDC.

By this practice, the operational guideline provides guide to help foster dialogue on political issues and support national political processes through the core values and principles of tolerance,

inclusion, participation, trust and mutual respect amongst political parties. The document also provides guidance on the practice of facilitation, negotiation and mediation, which are useful tools to be deployed in a dialogue process. It has additional inputs on institutional assessment and strengthening, programming and stakeholder engagements beyond the IPDC architecture. The document also seeks to ensure greater coherence in building consensus and dialogue among political parties in their quest to support good governance, peacebuilding and electoral processes in the country.

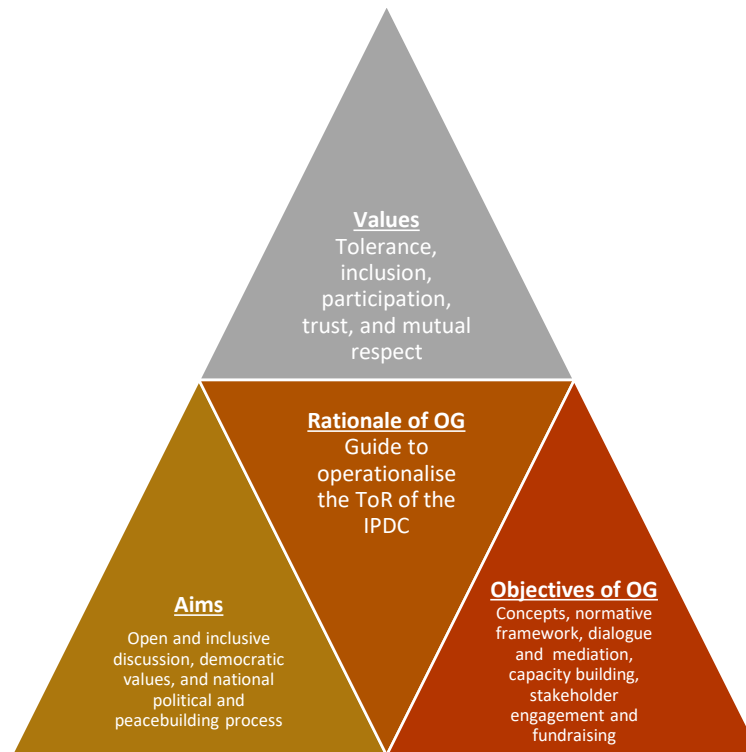
### Values

The operational guideline seeks to promote the core values of the IPDC as enshrined in the ToR:

1. **Tolerance:** embracing and accommodating diversity, and acceptance of political views from all political parties.
2. **Inclusion:** opening the political discourse to allow participation of gender and youth groups in the political governance of the country.
3. **Participation:** encouraging and deepening multi-party democratic system by providing fair and equitable political representation in national governance processes.
4. **Trust:** enhancing transparency and accountability, and opening dialogue processes among political parties and other key stakeholders.
5. **Mutual respect:** creating an atmosphere of political responsiveness, responsibility and leadership where government and opposition parties co-operate as partners in national development.

Figure 1 illustrates the interface between the rationale, values, aims and objectives of the operational guideline.

Figure 1: Operational Principles



## Objectives

The specific objectives of the operational guideline are to:

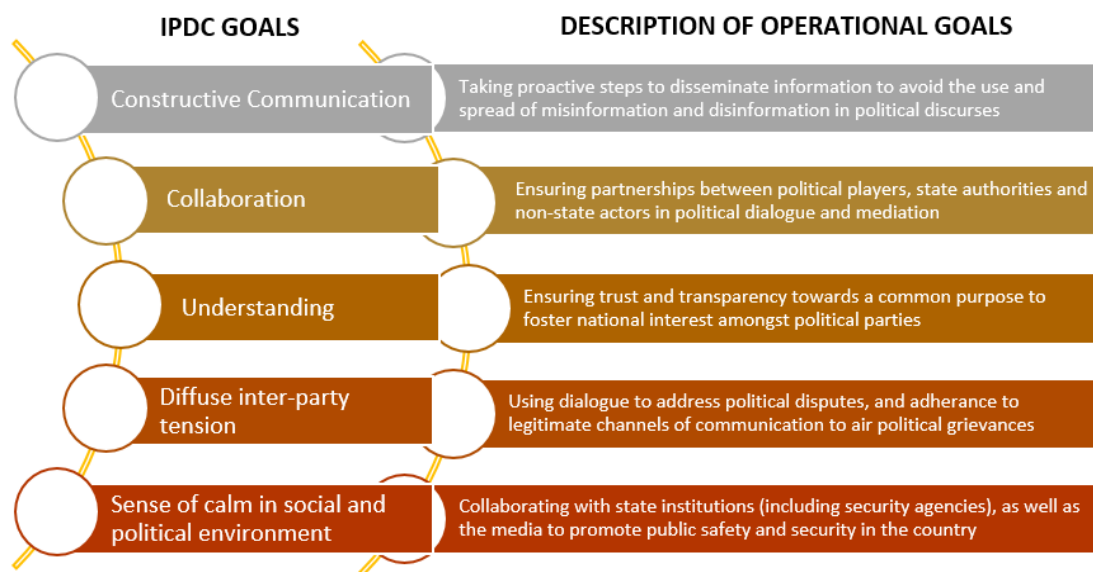
1. Explain the rationale, concepts and principles undergirding the interparty dialogue framework and processes;
2. Identify the legal and normative frameworks which support dialogue as a legitimate approach to political engagements;
3. Provide steps in political dialogue and mediation processes using principles from best practices; and
4. Outline administrative and operational processes for decision-making, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement.

## IPDC Goals

Based on the ToR, the IPDC goals are stated as: constructive communication; collaboration; understanding; diffusion of interparty tensions; and sense of calm in social and political environment. These operational goals have been explained in Fig. 2.

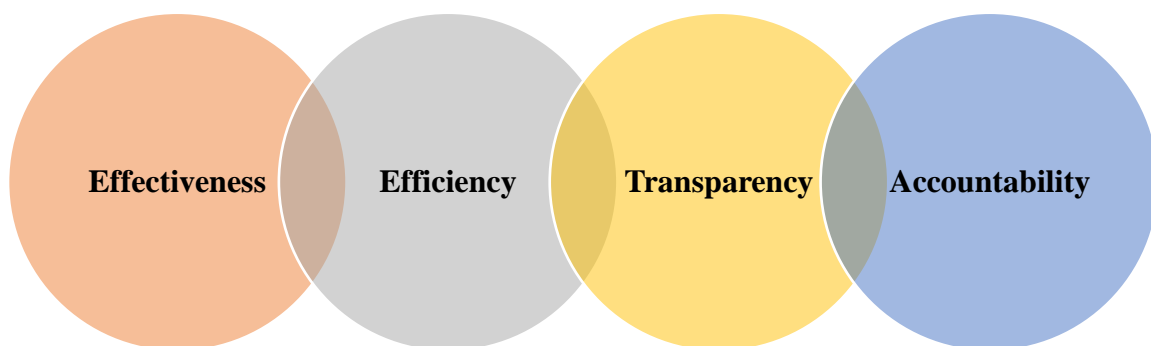


Figure 2: Operational Goals of IPDC



### Administrative Goals

There are four (4) interrelated goals to be achieved in public administration and management. These goals are effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability. Since the IPDC is a public body (with both state and non-state actors as its constituent members), its day-to-day administration and management must be guided and measured by these four goals. Figure 2 illustrates the inter-connected nature of these goals.



- **Effectiveness:** effectiveness requires IPDC to remain fit for purpose or being more result oriented. Thus, the ultimate goal of any dialogue process is to achieve a win-win outcome

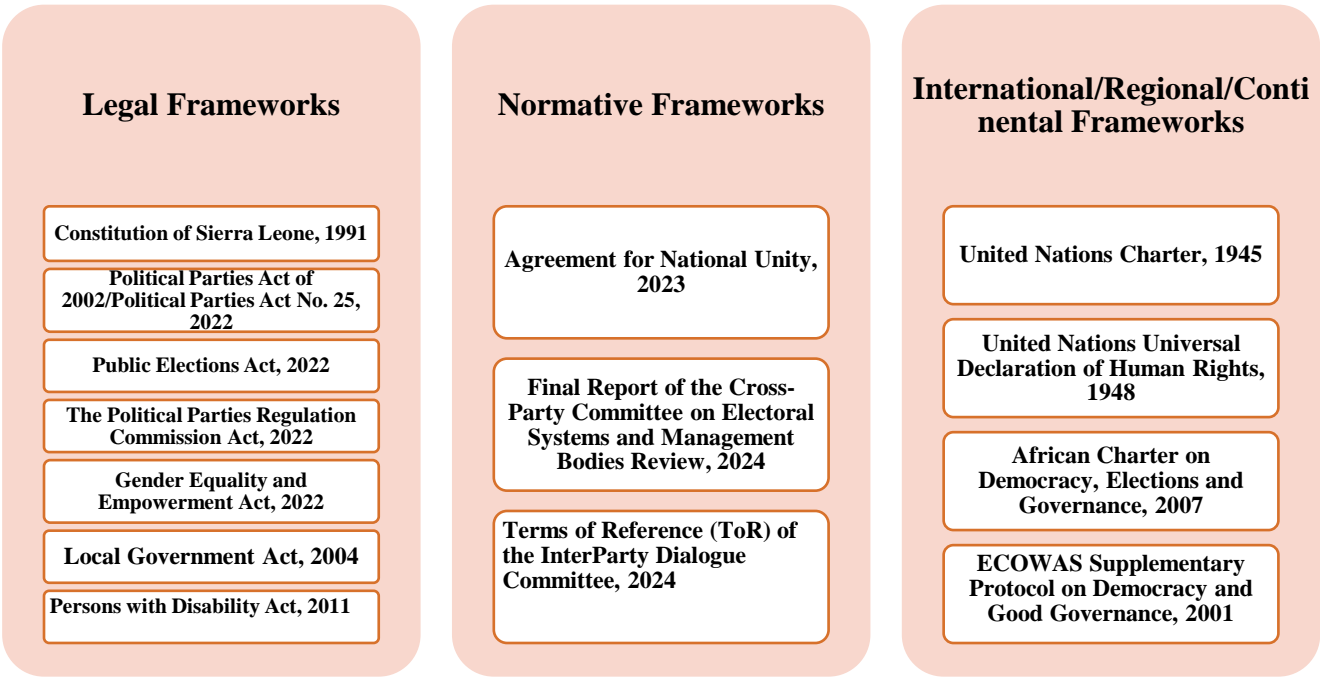
for all political parties. The effectiveness of the IPDC will be measured by the extent to which disputes are resolved in a win-win outcome.

- **Efficiency:** Optimum use of organisational resources (human, technical and financial resources) by cutting cost and/or minimising waste. Issues of value for money, especially in PPRC procurements will help PPRC/IPDC save cost. Similarly, staying within budget can help reduce the risk of incurring financial liability. It is noteworthy that dialogue is often less costly than the option of arbitration or violence.
- **Transparency:** Open, fair and firm application of administrative, reporting and communication procedures. Mediators (i.e. chairperson and/or the PPRC) must be fair, firm and impartial in dealing with political disputes. Procedures and outcomes must be communicated to parties and other key stakeholders.
- **Accountability:** under accountability, IPDC processes are to be guided by the legal and normative frameworks. PPRC and party executives should operate with mutual respect, and adhere to ground rules, regulations and procedures. Accountability also includes application of sanctions under the political party regulations.

### Legal and Normative Instruments

The activities of the IPDC will be guided by the following legal and normative frameworks. These legal and normative instruments provide the framework for the adoption of best practices in peace architecture at the national level.

Figure 2: Legal and Normative Framework



Definition of Key Concepts in Dialogue and Mediation

Clarification of concepts is important in giving precise meaning and preventing any potential ambiguities. Given that the IPDC framework seeks to help in building consensus among political parties, who sometimes take difficult positions, it is essential to define key concepts that will give clarity and guide conflict resolution processes. The following terms—negotiation, dialogue, facilitation, and mediation—are central to the functioning of the IPDC. A shared understanding of these concepts is critical to ensure effective conflict resolution.

Table 1: Key Concepts in Dialogue and Mediation

	Terms/Concepts	Clarification
1.	Negotiation	<p>Negotiation refers to the process by which two or more parties with differing interests, views, or positions engage in discussions with the goal of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement or compromise.</p> <p>In the context of the IPDC, negotiation is the formal or informal process where political parties and other stakeholders attempt to reconcile their differences on specific issues of national concern. This is typically a give-and-take process that may involve proposing alternatives, offering concessions, and finding common ground. The key objective of</p>

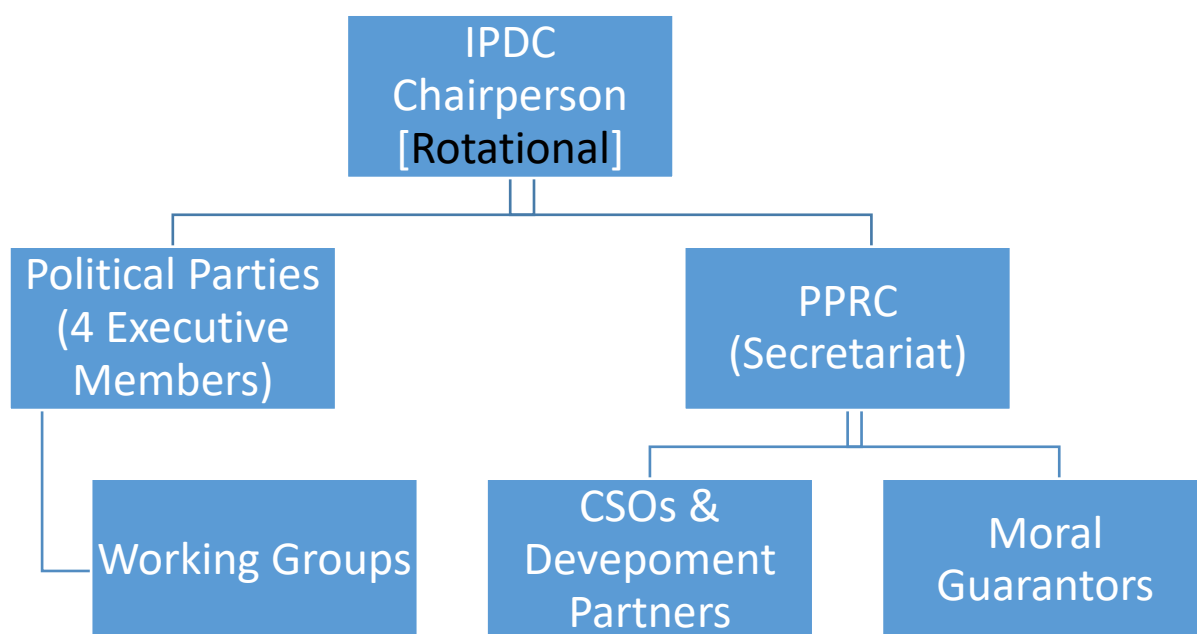
		negotiation is to achieve practical solutions that are acceptable to all involved parties, often through compromise.
2.	<b>Dialogue</b>	<p>Dialogue refers to an ongoing process of communication in which participants engage in a constructive exchange of ideas, perspectives, and information with the aim of understanding each other's positions, building mutual respect, and promoting cooperation.</p> <p>In the IPDC framework, dialogue is an open and inclusive conversation designed to foster mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration among political parties and other stakeholders. Unlike negotiation, which often focuses on reaching an agreement, dialogue focuses on maintaining open lines of communication, resolving misunderstandings, and preventing conflicts before they escalate. It is a fundamental tool for building relationships, promoting transparency, and setting the stage for cooperative problem-solving.</p>
3.	<b>Facilitation</b>	<p>Facilitation is the process of guiding and managing a group's discussion or decision-making process in a way that ensures that all voices are heard, the conversation stays on track, and the goals of the meeting are achieved efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>In the IPDC, facilitation involves the active role of a neutral party (typically the chairperson or an external facilitator (PPRC or external conflict resolution expert) who ensures that meetings run smoothly, keeping discussions focused on the agenda, managing time, and ensuring balanced participation. Facilitators are responsible for guiding the group through the process, ensuring that each party has an opportunity to contribute, and maintaining a respectful and productive atmosphere.</p>
4.	<b>Mediation</b>	<p>Mediation is a process in which a neutral third party (the mediator) assists two or more parties in conflict to reach a voluntary, mutually acceptable resolution to their dispute. The mediator does not make decisions for the parties but helps them communicate, explore solutions, and find common ground.</p> <p>In the context of the IPDC, mediation becomes necessary when direct negotiation or dialogue does not lead to resolution, particularly in more entrenched or high-stakes conflicts. Mediators bring an external perspective and guide the conflicting parties toward finding a solution. Mediation is particularly valuable in situations where the</p>

	<p>parties involved have deep-rooted disagreements or where emotions run high.</p> <p>Mediation may be invoked when the political parties cannot reach an agreement despite negotiations and dialogue. A neutral mediator, possibly from a recognized institution (e.g., the PPRC, or an independent figure), will step in to facilitate the resolution process. The mediator will help clarify the issues, propose potential solutions, and encourage compromise in a non-confrontational environment.</p>
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### Organisational Structure of IPDC

The constituent bodies of the IPDC organisational structure are the IPDC Chairperson (appointed from amongst the political parties as enshrined in the ToR), the PPRC as the Secretariat, the Political Parties (including their ad hoc and standing working groups), Observers such as Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) and development partners, as well as the Moral Guarantors.

Figure 3: Organisational Chart of IPDC



The membership and participation structure of the IPDC, as outlined in the Terms of Reference<sup>1</sup> (ToR), is designed to ensure inclusivity, transparency, and effectiveness in fostering national cohesion. In addition to the primary stakeholders—political parties and the PPRC—women and youth groups are also crucial players in the dialogue process, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR). The primary objective of this section is to outline the roles, activities, and collaborative approaches of the four stakeholders to ensure that the IPDC achieves its goals of fostering democratic dialogue, political inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence. The section, therefore, aims to provide a clear framework for each stakeholder group to contribute to the success of the IPDC operations. Ultimately, the specific activities (are framed as proposals) that each stakeholder is expected to undertake. They are intended to:

- Strengthen adherence to the rule of law and constitutional integrity.
- Foster constructive dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders.
- Promote mutual understanding and trust building.
- Facilitate joint actions to address national issues and promote public welfare.
- Support the promotion of political pluralism, equality, and democratic values.

The activities mentioned for each stakeholder group should be viewed as proposals or broad guidelines to stimulate discussion and cooperation within the IPDC.

Table 2: Membership and Participation

Srl.	IPDC Stakeholders	What Activities to Undertake and the Approaches
1.	Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote Adherence to the Rule of Law and Constitutional Integrity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Proposal:</b> Political parties should take proactive steps in publicly reaffirming their commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law, with a focus on creating public statements and manifestos that highlight these values.</li> <li>○ <b>How:</b> Through public forums, media campaigns, and internal party discussions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Foster Constructive Dialogue and Cooperation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Proposal:</b> Establish cross-party dialogue initiatives to encourage peaceful, cooperative political engagement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>The To R mentions political parties, PPRC, women and youth groups as key stakeholders. Development partners, regional organizations, CSOs, and other moral guarantors or good offices may participate as observers in the IPDC, without voting rights. Their role is to enhance the credibility, transparency, and success of the process by providing technical and moral support. These observers act as impartial witnesses, fostering confidence among stakeholders, with their participation facilitated by the PPRC.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>How:</b> Promote bipartisan meetings, conflict-resolution workshops, and informal communication channels.</li> <li>• <b>Promote Joint Action for National Welfare:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Proposal:</b> Develop joint political action plans addressing national issues such as drivers of conflict.</li> <li>○ <b>How:</b> Establish joint committees to work on collaborative policy proposals.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Support Political Pluralism and Democratic Values:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Proposal:</b> Ensure that all political parties have a platform for participation, with particular attention to underrepresented groups.</li> <li>○ <b>How:</b> Encourage inclusive dialogue and facilitate engagement across party lines.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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2.	PPRC	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Ensure Compliance with Legal Frameworks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Actively monitor political parties' adherence to Sierra Leone's electoral laws and democratic practices.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Provide periodic reports, audits, and legal guidance to political parties.</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Facilitate Dialogue and Cooperation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Serve as a facilitator for conflict resolution between political parties.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Organize dialogue forums and conflict-resolution training.</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Promote Mutual Understanding Among Political Parties:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Use mediation strategies to ease tensions and foster collaboration.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Organize informal spaces for party leaders to meet and discuss contentious issues.</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Promote Political Inclusivity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Ensure equal treatment and protection of all political parties, including minorities and opposition groups.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Oversee fair and inclusive electoral processes, supporting the full participation of all political entities.</li> </ul>
3.	Women Group	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Promote Gender Equality and Legal Integrity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Advocate for the integration of gender equality and women's rights within political and legislative processes.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Work with political parties to incorporate gender-sensitive policies and push for legislative reform.</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Encourage Constructive Dialogue Around Women's Issues:</b></p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Foster open, inclusive dialogues that prioritize women’s voices in national discourse.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Organize women-centered political discussions and advocacy campaigns, sourcing funds from partners.</li> </ul> <p>☐ <b>Build Trust Between Political Parties Through Gender Inclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Facilitate joint initiatives that prioritize the needs of marginalized groups, especially women and persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Coordinate cross-party efforts focused on inclusive policy-making and support for vulnerable populations.</li> </ul> <p>☐ <b>Promote Women's Participation in Political Leadership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Support the increased involvement of women in politics through mentorship programs and capacity-building efforts.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Organize campaigns and leadership training for women candidates.</li> </ul>
4.	Youth Group	<p>☐ <b>Promote Legal Awareness and Political Participation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Encourage the youth to engage in peaceful, informed political participation and respect the legal frameworks.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Organize youth-led political education campaigns and discussions on constitutional rights.</li> </ul> <p>☐ <b>Encourage Cross-Party Youth Dialogue:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Create platforms where youth from different political backgrounds can engage in dialogue and collaborative activities.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Organize youth debates, conferences, and roundtable discussions focused on national issues.</li> </ul> <p>☐ <b>Facilitate Joint Action on Youth Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Foster collaboration between political parties and youth groups to address youth-centric issues such as employment, education, and healthcare.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Develop joint policy initiatives with a focus on youth development.</li> </ul>

		<p>□ <b>Support Youth Political Engagement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proposal:</b> Empower youth to actively participate in political processes, ensuring diverse political perspectives are represented.</li> <li>• <b>How:</b> Organize mentoring and leadership development programs for young political leaders.</li> </ul>
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## Membership Roles and Responsibilities

### 10.1 Role of IPDC Chairperson

The position of the IPDC Chairperson rotates quarterly among political parties through a ballot system, as stipulated in the ToR. Given the Chairperson's pivotal role in ensuring productive, inclusive, and consensus-building for monthly meetings, it is essential to provide clear guidance on how to effectively lead these sessions. The Chairperson should prioritize creating a neutral and respectful environment, where all political parties feel heard and valued. Key strategies for holding successful meetings include:

#### (A) Consultative Process for Monthly Agenda Setting

The process of setting the agenda should be inclusive and transparent to ensure that all political parties have a say in the discussions. A clear and consultative approach to the agenda-setting process is critical for promoting a sense of ownership among stakeholders.

#### Steps for Agenda Setting

- **Early Consultation:**
  - At least one week before the start of each new month, the Chairperson or the IPDC Secretary should initiate consultations with political party representatives and PPRC members to gather input on the issues they would like to be discussed during the upcoming monthly meeting. This process ensures that the agenda is shaped by the concerns and priorities of all stakeholders and allows sufficient time for approval before the meeting takes place. These consultations can be conducted through individual meetings or through a shared online platform where parties can submit agenda suggestions.
- **Identify Key Issues:**
  - Based on the consultations, the Chairperson should identify key national concerns that require urgent attention, reflecting on the objectives as articulated in the ToR.

- The Chairperson should also ensure that ongoing issues from previous meetings are included as agenda items for review and follow-up.
- **Draft the Agenda:**
  - The Chairperson or a person s/he may nominate should prepare a draft agenda that reflects the collective concerns raised by political parties and stakeholders. The agenda should include:
    - A clear description of each issue to be discussed.
    - Any materials or reports related to the agenda item for review.
    - A proposed timeframe for each agenda item to ensure efficient use of meeting time.
- **Distribute the Agenda:**
  - The Chairperson or a person appointed should send the final agenda, along with any supporting materials, to all participants at least three days before the meeting. This allows the parties to come prepared for the discussions.
  - Any amendments or additions to the agenda should be communicated promptly and addressed in a timely manner.
- **Final Review:**
  - Upon opening the meeting, the Chairperson should briefly review the agenda to ensure that all parties agree with the proposed agenda items and allow for any last-minute adjustments.

## **(B) Facilitation of Monthly Meetings**

In accordance with the ToR, the Chairperson, as the facilitator of the IPDC, is responsible for guiding meetings in a structured and impartial manner. The Chairperson must ensure that discussions remain focused and productive, manage any tensions or conflicts that arise, and facilitate an inclusive environment where all parties have the opportunity to contribute.

### **Presentation of Agenda Items**

For each item on the agenda, the following process should be followed:

- **Introduction of the Agenda Item:**

The chairperson or the relevant political party representative introduces the topic, providing context and outlining key points for discussion.
- **Initial Statements:**

Each political party is given a specific time to present their position or remarks on the issue at hand.

- **Discussion:**
  - The floor is then opened for discussion. All parties are encouraged to participate, sharing their views, concerns, and proposed solutions.
  - The facilitator ensures that all participants have an opportunity to speak, while the timekeeper ensures that discussions stay within allotted time limits.
- **Time Management:**
  - Ensure that all agenda items are covered within the allotted time. If necessary, adjust the time for each agenda item in real-time to accommodate any items that require more detailed discussion.
  - If necessary, the Chairperson can propose to postpone certain agenda items to future meetings if time does not permit sufficient discussion.

### **(C) Follow-Up on Decisions from Previous Meetings**

It is essential to track the decisions made in previous meetings to ensure that commitments are fulfilled and progress is made on the issues discussed. The Chairperson has the responsibility to ensure accountability and to follow up on decisions.

#### **Steps for Effective Follow-Up:**

- **Review of Previous Decisions:**
  - At the start of each meeting, the Chairperson should facilitate discussions to review the outcomes and decisions from the previous meeting. This could include:
    - **Action items** assigned to specific political parties or stakeholders.
    - **Deadlines** for implementing decisions.
    - **Progress reports** on any outstanding issues.
  - This review ensures that all parties are held accountable for their commitments.
- **Track Implementation:**
  - The rapporteur or assigned note-taker should maintain a record of all decisions and follow-up actions.
  - The Chairperson should periodically check in with the responsible parties to ensure that action items are completed on time. This could involve direct communication between meetings to assess progress.
- **Report on Progress:**

During meetings, the Chairperson should allow for a brief update from the parties responsible for implementing decisions. This provides an opportunity to identify obstacles or delays early and adjust strategies accordingly.

- **Identify Unresolved Issues:**

If any issues from previous meetings remain unresolved, the Chairperson should prioritize them and allocate time to address them in the current meeting. Where necessary, the Chairperson should encourage voting, negotiation or mediation to overcome persistent challenges.

#### **(D) Voting as a Conflict Resolution Mechanism**

When consensus cannot be reached through discussions on a matter of interest or importance, voting becomes the next mechanism for resolving disagreements. The voting process must be transparent, fair, and in accordance with the agreed-upon rules of the IPDC.

#### **Steps for Voting**

##### **Preparation for Voting:**

- **Clarification of the Issue:**

Prior to voting, the Chairperson or facilitator should ensure that all participants fully understand the issue at hand, the proposals being considered, and the implications of each option.

- **Rules of Voting:**

As outlined in paragraph (d) of meetings and procedures section of the ToR, voting will be conducted based on a two-thirds majority of the political parties present. It is important to ensure that all participants are aware of this rule prior to voting, so they are clear on how the vote will proceed.

##### **Conducting the Vote:**

- **Method of Voting:**

Voting can be conducted via a show of hands, or other pre-agreed methods, depending on the formality of the meeting.

- **Majority of vote:**

If no consensus reached, decision will be taken by a two-thirds of majority of votes present

##### **Tallying the Votes:**

- The rapporteur from the PPRC, should tally the votes, to ensure accuracy and fairness.
- Final results should be announced to all participants immediately and displayed on the projector screen for participants records.

### **Outcome of Voting:**

- **If a Decision is Reached:**

If the proposal passes by the required majority, it is formally recorded, and the agreed-upon action will be taken.

- **If a Deadlock Persists:**

If voting results in a tie or insufficient majority (e.g., less than the required threshold), the issue is considered deadlocked, and further mechanisms for conflict resolution must be employed.

### **(E) Managing Tensions and Disagreements:**

#### **Walkouts or Disruptive Behavior:**

- If a participant walks out or becomes disruptive during meetings, the Chairperson should attempt to calmly address the situation. This could involve a private conversation with the concerned participant(s) to understand the underlying reasons for their actions.
- If the walkout or disruption threatens the meeting's success, the Chairperson may temporarily suspend the meeting to allow for a resolution to be found.
- In the case of an ongoing deadlock or lack of cooperation, the Chairperson should consider external mediation (e.g., the PPRC or an independent mediator) to help resolve the dispute.

## **10.2 Role of the PPRC in managing tensions and disagreements**

The PPRC can play a pivotal role in facilitating dialogue and resolution among political actors. The PPRC may contribute in the following ways:

- **Facilitation:**

- The PPRC can step in as a neutral facilitator to guide the political parties through the deadlock resolution process. By managing the discussions, the PPRC can help parties explore possible compromises and seek a collaborative solution.

- **Mediation by an Independent Mediator:**

- If the deadlock persists, the PPRC may suggest engaging an **independent mediator** to assist in resolving the conflict. This mediator could be a respected national/international figure with expertise in conflict resolution.

- **Mediation Process:**

- The mediator should meet separately with each party to understand their positions, concerns, and interests.
- After gathering sufficient information, the mediator would facilitate discussions between the parties, guiding them towards a mutually acceptable compromise.

- The mediator should also propose possible solutions that address the core concerns of all parties involved.

### 10.3 Political Party Working Groups

The composition, leadership, convening authority and structures are already well articulated in this guideline document, as well as in the IPDC's ToR. The IPDC will adopt a bottom-up approach with both standing and ad hoc working groups, especially on, for instance, ethics and discipline, planning and projects, campaign finance, communication, peace (dispute resolution), legal, among others. The PPRC's Communication Strategy, adopted in 2024, along with the dispute resolution manual, will guide the communication and dispute resolution processes of the committee. These frameworks will be decentralized across the districts to ensure a bottom-up approach to the political dialogue process. The working groups focused on these specific themes will take the lead in implementing these strategies.

#### Dispute Management Strategy

The IPDC is committed to fostering peaceful and constructive dialogue among political parties. However, in situations where disagreements persist or an impasse arises, the committee has established a multi-tiered dispute management strategy involving key stakeholders. This approach ensures that disputes are resolved swiftly and amicably, preserving national peace and cohesion.

- **Primary Role of PPRC in Dispute Management**

As the foremost body in managing disputes within the IPDC, the PPRC will lead initial efforts to mediate and resolve disputes. Leveraging its regulatory authority and expertise, the PPRC will employ impartial negotiation and dispute resolution techniques to guide parties toward consensus.

- **Engagement with Other Key Players**

In the performance of their role as a facilitator, the PPRC in consultation with the political parties may invite the following stakeholders as observers:

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): CSOs will contribute their experience in grassroots mediation, advocacy, and dispute resolution to assist in bridging divides.
- State Institutions: The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) will offer institutional expertise in addressing broader national cohesion, as well as fostering national reconciliation.
- Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone: Drawing on its moral authority and respected position within society, the council is able to provide support/advise in mediation from a value-based perspective, emphasizing forgiveness and inter-faith dialogue and unity.

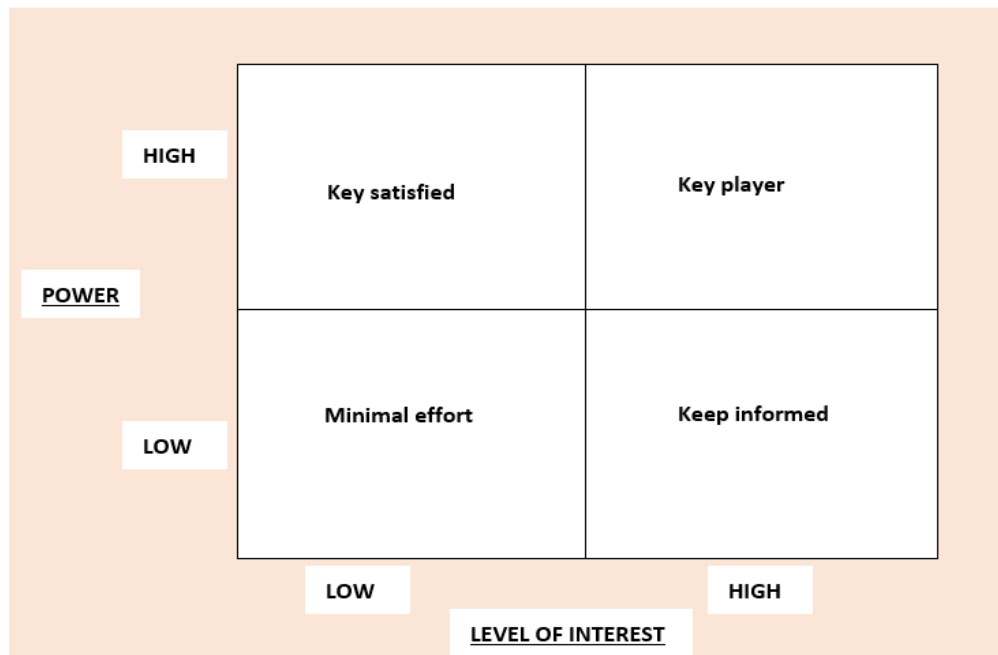
- Traditional Authorities: As custodians of tradition and customs in the country, traditional rulers/authorities can influence mediation efforts, particularly where traditional customs and norms play a vital role in the dispute.

The working group on peace (dispute resolution) will serve as the technical organ to facilitate dispute resolution. The peace working group will provide quarterly reports on the management of disputes among political parties to the IPDC.

### Stakeholder Engagement

In a multi-party democratic system, stakeholders are actors or players who have interests and power to influence political/dialogue processes and outcomes. In effect, a win-win outcome may not be achieved if such interests and power/influence are not managed properly. These actors have different expectations, which must be managed in a political dialogue process. Although political parties exist to capture political power, they however seek to achieve this purpose by precisely seeking to stretch the frontiers of the interest/power dynamics in order to gain added advantage. Figure captures four (4) main stakeholder positions and the strategies to engage them to achieve institutional effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Figure 4: Stakeholder engagement matrix

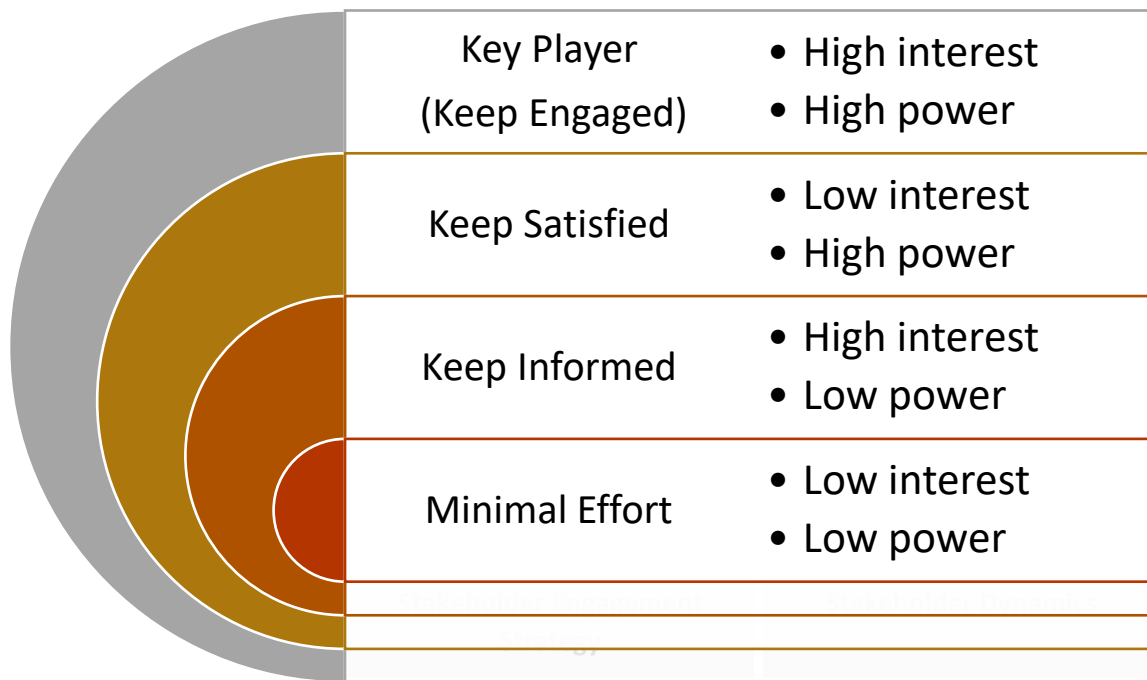


The power/interest matrix is a useful guide to stakeholder engagement strategy. It helps to prioritise the stakeholders based on their level of interest and influence in the dialogue process.



Prioritisation is key in achieving organisational goals of efficient resource allocation, and keeping stakeholders informed or satisfied about organisational performance and outcomes. Importantly, political changes in a multi-party system can lead to significant changes in the power/interest dynamics. An example of tools and strategies for engaging stakeholders is outlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Strategy of Stakeholder Engagement



**Step 1:** The strategy is that minimal effort is given to actors with low interest and low power. These actors such as the media and civil society organisation (CSOs) should be regularly monitored as changes in the political and social power dynamics in the country may affect their current status and position.

**Step 2:** Keep actors/participants with low power but high interest informed about the activities of the IPDC through accurate and timely dissemination of information to sustain their high interest in dialogue processes. Development partners and regional organisations for instance, may keep and increase their support to the IPDC's work due to their high interest in peacebuilding and political dialogue.

**Step 3:** Keep stakeholders with high power and low interest satisfied. Political elites and government officials will always seek the opportunity to engage the public on policy issues. Similarly, getting political buy-in and commitment can guarantee desired outcomes in political dialogue.

**Step 4:** The key stakeholders are the political parties who form the IPDC. Since they have high interest and high power in political dialogue, they are usually to be kept informed and satisfied at the same time. Thus, they should be engaged, collaboratively, in the planning, decision-making, leadership, resource mobilisation and communication on matters relating to the IPDC.

### SWOT Analysis

SWOT represents Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat. From Fig. 6, internal advantages are known as Strengths while external advantages are referred to as Opportunities. Similarly, internal disadvantages are known as Weaknesses whereas external disadvantages are referred to as Threats.

**Figure 6: SWOT Analysis**

SWOT analysis should be conducted periodically by IPDC/PPRC in order to assess the changing political and electoral situation in the country. This will help identify the potential risk factors that could undermine the effort of the IPDC. The

SWOT	Advantages	Disadvantages
Internal	Strength	Weakness
External	Opportunity	Threat

SWOT analysis will also help to determine which strategy to be used to engage the various stakeholders. The assessment exercise conducted with the IPDC members in November, 2024, yielded the following SWOT as captured in Figure 7.

Figure 7: SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom to form political parties and to contest for national elections</li> <li>• Ability and history of resolving political disputes through dialogue</li> <li>• Independence of PPRC</li> <li>• Strong inter-party association (All Political Parties Association, APPA)</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional and legislative reforms (especially allowing more participation and representation of women and youth in elected positions)</li> <li>• Political will and commitment by government</li> <li>• Engagements and collaboration with other state institutions such as the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC), Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL, among others.</li> <li>• Goodwill and partnership with moral guarantors and development partners</li> <li>• Participation in international election observation, capacity building, mentoring, and coaching</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive partisanship (risk of placing party interest first)</li> <li>• Inadequate political party mobilisation and organisation</li> <li>• Inadequate funding of political parties</li> <li>• Misinformation and disinformation in national politics</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winner-takes-all politics</li> <li>• Entrenchment of two-party system as opposed to multi-party system</li> <li>• Identity-based politics (i.e. ethnic, religious and regional political influences)</li> <li>• Regional instability within ECOWAS</li> </ul>

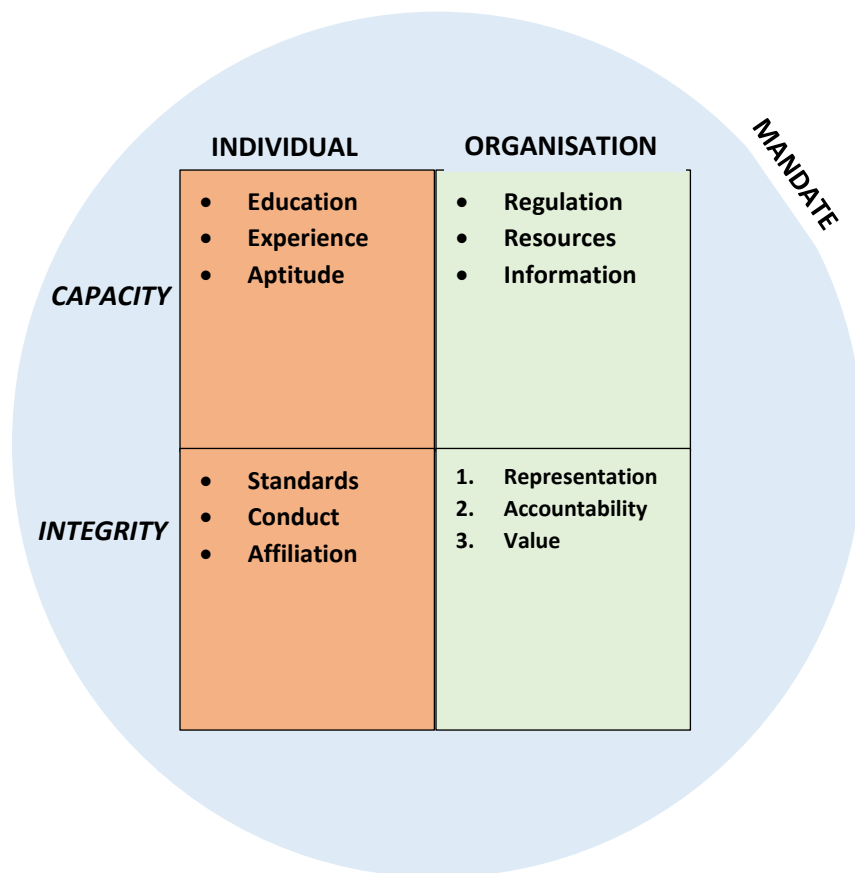
As a key stakeholder, it is often important to enter into any dialogue, negotiation or mediation processes from a position of strength as opposed to a position of weakness. The IPDC should be able to maximise its advantages by increasing capacity for dialogue, while minimising (reducing) the disadvantages by forging more partnerships and collaboration, especially with state agencies, CSOs, development partners and Good Offices.

### Capacity and Integrity

To achieve the mandate of the IPDC, institutional capacity in dialogue and mediation should be built and developed across the political parties, PPRC and the IPDC. Based on the assessment exercise, two levels of capacity should be addressed.

Capacity, in this case, refers to the resources that enable the institution to implement its mandate. Capacity is critical to ensuring the sustainability of the IPDC effort. Integrity, on the other hand, relates to the means employed and the ends pursued in the use of the institution's resources. Integrity will enable the IPDC to fulfil its mandate in accordance with the avowed values and principles enshrined in the ToR of the IPDC. In this regard, the PPRC's budget should have additional allocation for capacity and integrity building of the IPDC. Figure 8 provides the framework for building individual and institutional capacities.

Figure 8: Capacity and Integrity Framework

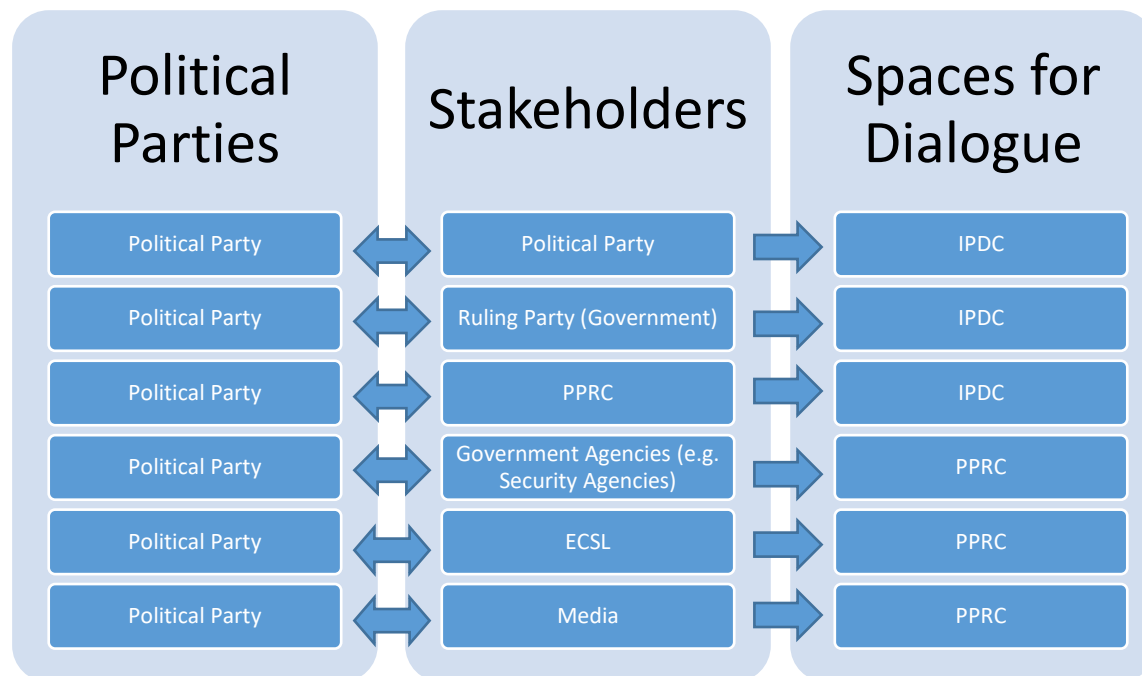


- **Individual capacity:** This has to do with member's education and professional training, professional experience and competence, as well as their physical and mental aptitude. In the area of recruitments and appointments, special considerations should be given to women and youth.
- **Individual integrity:** This refers to member's adherence to standard operating procedures, professional conducts, tolerance, democratic tenets, dialogue and mediation, as well as person's financial propriety.
- **Organisational capacity:** This relates to institutional qualities such as the number of staff, the organisational structure, resources, infrastructure and information systems.
- **Organisational integrity:** This refers to procedures employed to establish the principles and values of an institution, including disciplinary and complaint procedures, oversight mechanisms, ethical guidelines, codes of conduct and representation (gender, ethnicity, regional and religion).

### Stakeholders and Spaces for Political Dialogue

The IPDC is strictly a platform for political dialogue between political parties. However, since the IPDC's work may also interface with other critical stakeholders such as state/government agencies, ECSL, media and among others, the mandate/role differentiation between the IPDC and PPRC is to be identified as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Dialogue Spaces between IPDC and PPRC



In figure 9, the lead dialogue spaces is split between IPDC and PPRC. PPRC takes the lead role in dialoguing with external stakeholders.

### Conclusion

The Inter-Party Dialogue Committee (IPDC) represents a transformative platform for fostering inclusive, peaceful, and democratic engagement among political parties in Sierra Leone. Grounded in robust legal and normative frameworks, the IPDC offers a structured space for negotiation, dialogue, facilitation, and mediation. These are tools essential for addressing political disagreements and advancing national cohesion. The institutional design of the IPDC, including its rotating leadership, the central role of the PPRC, and the participation of civil society, women, and youth, ensures that the committee remains inclusive, transparent, and representative of the broader democratic landscape. Through structured agenda-setting, impartial facilitation, effective follow-up mechanisms, and strategic use of voting, the IPDC is equipped with the relevant tools and approaches to navigate complex political challenges.

A key strength of the IPDC lies in its dispute management strategy, which employs a multi-tiered approach involving the PPRC, political actors, and other national stakeholders, such as the ICPNC, traditional authorities, and religious leaders. This inclusive approach not only increases legitimacy but also anchors conflict resolution efforts within culturally, socially and legally accepted frameworks. Equally critical is the IPDC's stakeholder engagement strategy, which ensures that various actors are engaged according to their influence and interest, fostering cooperation, trust, and shared ownership of national dialogue processes. The application of tools like the power-interest matrix and SWOT analysis further enables the IPDC to remain adaptive, strategic, and forward-looking.

Finally, the sustainability and effectiveness of the IPDC hinge on its continued investment in capacity and integrity—both at individual and institutional levels. Strengthening competence, ethical standards, and operational systems will not only enhance performance but also deepen public trust in the process. In sum, the IPDC provides a crucial mechanism for democratic governance, peaceful coexistence, and national unity. Its success depends on the collective commitment of all stakeholders to uphold the principles of dialogue, inclusivity, accountability, and respect for democratic norms.