



Human Rights Council
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Thirty-eighth session
3–14 May 2021

Summary of Stakeholders' submissions on Sierra Leone*

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I. Background

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21, taking into consideration the periodicity of the universal periodic review. It is a summary of 18 stakeholders' submissions¹ to the universal periodic review, presented in a summarized manner owing to word-limit constraints. A separate section is provided for the contribution by the national human rights institution that is accredited in full compliance with the Paris Principles.

II. Information provided by the national human rights institution accredited in full compliance with the Paris Principles

2. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) urged Sierra Leone to ratify outstanding human rights treaties and improve its reporting records.²

3. HRCSL noted tensions that exist in communities over the operations of business, as a result of inadequate improper handling of wastes, hazardous chemicals, and explosives by companies, in addition to a lack of sustainable divestment plans by companies and insufficient application of the Free Prior Informed Consent Principles. It recommended to develop a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.³

4. HRCSL regretted that the longstanding recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to abolish death penalty, had not been implemented yet. It recommended that Sierra Leone ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at abolishing the death penalty, and complete the Constitutional Review process.⁴

5. HRCSL was concerned at serious violations of human rights committed by the security forces between 2016 and 2020, including killings of students during a demonstration. HRCSL recommended bringing the perpetrators to justice, and regularly training the law enforcement officers on the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force.⁵

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



6. HRCSL was concerned at the poor sanitary conditions and lack of access to education in detention centres, and regretted cases of corruption, extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention by the Police. HRCSL recommended improving the efficiency, accountability and professionalism by the police; improving detention conditions, and adequately funding the Sierra Leone Correctional Services to enable it to deliver its mandate.⁶

7. HRCSL recommended developing a National Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender Based Violence, and enacting a specific law to prohibit Female Genital Mutilation.⁷

8. HRCSL noted persistent delays in trials, particularly at the High Courts, as a result of late processing of indictments. It recommended recruiting more legal personnel for the Judiciary and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.⁸

9. HRCSL stated that despite decriminalization of libel, Public Order Act, 1965 continued to give the possibility to the police for refusing the exercise of the right to demonstrate. HRCSL recommended to amend section 17 of the Act.⁹

10. HRCSL regretted that the implementation of the Free Health Care scheme is weak and it was concerned at the unavailability of certain free health care drugs in some hospitals and the late arrival of supplies in hard-to-reach areas. It recommended developing a National Health Policy that would strengthen the health sector, and increasing its annual budget allocation to 15% as required by the Abuja Declaration of 2001.¹⁰ It also recommended ensuring a human rights based approach in the health emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹

11. HRCSL noted that communities across the country continued to face challenges for accessing water. It recommended allocating funds to ensure access to safe and clean drinking water for the population.¹²

12. HRCSL welcomed the Free Quality School Education Programme (FQSEP) and that budget allocation was increased for the education sector. However, it stressed the persistence of poor sanitary conditions in most public schools. HRCSL was also concerned at the poor performance of pupils in public examinations and recommended fully implementing the FQSEP programme and investigating the poor performance in public examination.¹³

13. HRCSL was concerned at persistent challenges in the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act and recommended ensuring inclusion of persons with disabilities in all educational systems, and recruiting specialized instructors for inclusive education.¹⁴

III. Information provided by other stakeholders

A. Scope of international obligations¹⁵ and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and bodies¹⁶

14. Several organizations noted that the ratification of various human rights instruments is still pending. The National Centre for Human Rights and Development (NaCFoHRD), Center for Global Nonkilling (CfGNK) and JS3 recommended that Sierra Leone ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol;¹⁷ the International Convention for the Protection on all Persons from Enforced Disappearance;¹⁸ and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.¹⁹ Sierra Leone was further recommended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights aiming at the abolition of death penalty;²⁰ the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;²¹ and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.²²

15. Parliament for Global Action (PGA) recommended ratifying the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and to take steps towards the implementation of the Rome Statute.²³

16. CSO-UPR Monitoring Group-Sierra Leone (CUMG-SL) recommended establishing a special directorate at the Office of the President in order to ensure speedy ratification of all pending international human rights instruments.²⁴

17. NaCFoHRD recommended that the Government improve its reporting to treaty bodies, particularly to the UN Human Rights Committee.²⁵

18. In order to align the national legislation and policies with regional and international human rights obligations, CUMG-SL recommended that Sierra Leone allocate more resources to the constitutional review process.²⁶

19. CUMG-SL recommended that Sierra Leone follow-up on the workshop on UPR organized by OHCHR in Sierra Leone in 2018.²⁷

20. NaCFoHRD recommended extending a standing invitation to the UN Special Procedures mandate holders, and accepting the requests for visits.²⁸

B. National human rights framework²⁹

21. JS1, NaCFoHRD, and CUMG-SL noted with concern that in 2018, the Government dissolved the Human Rights Commission without following the due legal process, and in 2019, the three former members were replaced by five new members.³⁰ NaCFoHRD and CUMG-SL recommended to ensure full independence of the Commission to carry out its mandate in accordance with the Paris Principles.³¹

22. NaCFoHRD indicated that the Constitution was reviewed by the former Government and has not been passed into law yet.³² CUMG-SL recommended to provide a timeline for completing the constitutional review process.³³

C. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

1. Cross-cutting issues

Equality and non-discrimination³⁴

23. CUMG-SL noted with satisfaction that the Citizens Act of 1973 was repealed in 2017 in order to recognize the right of women to transfer citizenship. It recommended to raise awareness on the act as amended.³⁵

24. JS3 regretted the lack of legislative reforms to guarantee the right of women to transmit citizenship to their foreign spouses on an equal basis with men.³⁶

25. JS5 was concerned at stigma and discrimination suffered by persons affected by leprosy in Sierra Leone, and at barriers to which they are confronted to enjoy their rights, including the rights to movement, work and health. JS5 recommended that Sierra Leone repeal any discriminatory laws or policies and criminalize discrimination including against persons affected by leprosy.³⁷

Development, the environment, and business and human rights³⁸

26. JS9 indicated that environmental and land rights defenders are still victims of intimidation and detention in Sierra Leone.³⁹ JS9 recommended adopting legislation and measures to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and fully guarantee the protection of defenders working on issues related to land and environmental rights.⁴⁰ JS9 also recommended limiting undue corporate influence over public processes and actors, including via effective legislative, policy and through enforcing mechanisms that enable the State to safeguard the human rights of its population regardless of any business interests at stake. It further recommended ensuring the full and effective implementation of the National Land Policy of 2015 to protect legitimate land rights from infringement.⁴¹

2. Civil and political rights

*Right to life, liberty and security of person*⁴²

27. Several organizations were concerned that, at its second UPR, Sierra Leone accepted recommendations to abolish the death penalty. However, it has neither done so, nor instituted a moratorium on capital punishment.⁴³ CfGNK and JS8 recommended to abolish the death penalty in all cases and commute all death sentence.⁴⁴ JS1 recommended imposing an immediate, official moratorium on the issuance of new death sentences, and conducting related comprehensive awareness-raising campaigns on the implications of the death penalty.⁴⁵

28. JS9, NaCFoHRD and CUMG-SL were concerned at serious human rights violations committed by the security forces, including killings and arbitrary arrest.⁴⁶ Referring to specific cases, JS9 indicated that in March 2017, the police allegedly opened fired on students of Njala University who were demonstrating; killed an adolescent and seriously injured around 16 other students.⁴⁷ JS9 and International Human Rights Commission (IHRC) were also concerned at the incidents that took place in July 2020 in Makeni City, which resulted in the killings of several young demonstrators, and many others injured and arrested.⁴⁸ While IHRC welcomed the presidential committee set up to investigate the events, it regretted that no other actions had been taken to date. IHRC also noted the delay in conducting the autopsies of the civilians who were killed during the incident.⁴⁹ NaCFoHRD recommended to ensure that human rights violations, particularly killings and torture and ill-treatment, are adequately investigated by the Police Independent Complaint Board and perpetrators brought to justice.⁵⁰ CUMG-SL recommended setting up a special body to monitor police operations and providing human rights training to the security forces.⁵¹ NaCFoHRD recommended ceasing unlawful arrest and detention of members of opposition parties, media and civil society activist.⁵²

29. JS1 and JS8 noted with concerned the persistence of overcrowding, and deplorable detention conditions that remain widespread in Sierra Leone, including inadequate food, water shortages, outbreaks and insufficient medical care.⁵³ JS8 indicated that pre-trial detention continued to be excessively used and is a major cause of overcrowding.⁵⁴ JS1 noted that the COVID-19 crisis had exacerbated overcrowding due to the fact that people was transferred back to detention facilities from reintegration centres.⁵⁵ JS8 added that the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for preventing the transmission of the virus in detention centres.⁵⁶ It noted that women in prison had poorer health than the general population, and the substandard hygiene conditions and infrastructures on most correctional centers put the health of detainees at great risk.⁵⁷ JS8 stressed that gender specific health needs, such as gynaecological care, are not sufficiently taken into account in the penitentiary system.⁵⁸

30. JS3 recommended that Sierra Leone, in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules), develop gender-specific alternatives to custodial measures.⁵⁹ JS1, JS4 and JS8 recommended increasing efforts to improve detention conditions, including by allocating adequate resources to ensure compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules; and reducing overcrowding in prisons by releasing pregnant women, women with children, elderly prisoners and those led in pre-trial detention for minor offences.⁶⁰ The organizations also recommended providing for women's specific physical and mental health needs, including gynaecological care; ensuring that women in prison can work and actively participate in their reintegration, and providing them with appropriate educational and training programmes to improve their employment prospects.⁶¹

31. NaCFoHRD recommended ensuring that independent human rights monitoring bodies have access to detention centres through the county.⁶² CUMG-SL recommended providing adequate funding to the Sierra Leone Correction Service to carry out its new mandate.⁶³

32. European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) was alarmed that, despite efforts deployed by the Government, Sierra Leone still had one of the highest rates of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the world, with an estimated 90% of women and girls having

suffered mutilation.⁶⁴ Plan International (PI) regretted the lack of legislation criminalizing FGM.⁶⁵ According to JS2, CUMG-SL and ECLJ, Sierra Leone continued to face challenges in combating FGM because it is rooted in cultural and traditional practices.⁶⁶ ECLJ emphasized the negative role of the Bondo society who encouraged and carried out FGM ceremonies, and noted that, while initiations are illegal, there was still not a law against the pervasive practice of FGM itself in force.⁶⁷

33. Several organizations recommended that Sierra Leone adopt a holistic approach to eliminate violence against women, including the economic development perspective; explicitly prohibiting all harmful practices against women and take effective measures to enforce the prohibition. The organizations further recommended that Sierra Leone enact legislation which criminalizes all forms of FGM; amend the Child Rights Act of 2007 to unequivocally prohibit FGM; establish related monitoring mechanisms; and carry out awareness raising campaigns on the negative effects and implications of FGM.⁶⁸ The organization also recommended to establish a forensic laboratory to respond to SGBV matters.⁶⁹ Several organizations also recommended ensuring that the law banning FGM initiation into the Bondo society is enforced rigorously, and utilize legal structures and impose penalties to combat the influence of the Bondo society and those who encourage or finance FGM ceremonies.⁷⁰

34. JS2 and JS3 welcomed that the Sexual Offences Act was amended in 2019 to include additional sexual crimes and increased penalties for perpetrators of sexual violence against children.⁷¹ JS2 also welcomed the establishment of the Family Support Unit of the Police; the free toll line, the One-Stop-Centres, and related awareness raising campaigns.⁷² However, the organisations highlighted that significant issues should still to be addressed, such as rape, commercial child sexual exploitation.⁷³ SJ2 recommended implementing the Sexual Offences Act 2019, as amended, ensuring that perpetrators of sexual violence are brought to justice; strengthening safeguard measures to protect children at schools; and working with partners to intensify awareness raising campaigns at community level.⁷⁴ CUMG-SL recommended providing rehabilitation and psychological support to victims and ensuring full implementation of the National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence National Action Plan⁷⁵

35. CUMG-SL stated that, while policies have been developed to combat sexual abuse against girls in school, those policies were challenged by inadequate support to ensure effective implementation. It recommended to set up a robust mechanism to protect girls at school.⁷⁶

Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law⁷⁷

36. SJ1 regretted that despite Sierra Leone accepted recommendations to reform its justice system, obstacles to access to justice, corruption and undue outside influences persist.⁷⁸ JS1 emphasized that the lack of attorneys and magistrates, the expensive courts fees, and the lack of interpretation, had resulted in long delays in legal proceedings.⁷⁹ JS5 urged Sierra Leone to reform the judicial system and ensure that legal proceedings occur in a timely matter, without excessive delay.⁸⁰ NaCFoHRD recommended putting in place measures to ensure the independence of the Judiciary in line with the UN Basic Principles on the independence of the Judiciary. In particular, it recommended separating the Ministry of Justice from that of the Office of the Attorney-General.⁸¹

37. JS8 regretted that women detained are not offered legal advice, and due to strong patriarchal cultures, they may lack the skills necessary to bring a complaint and enforces their rights.⁸² It recommended eliminating barriers for women to enjoy effective access to justice; including by promoting knowledge of their rights and providing legal assistance and interpretation to them, particularly for the most vulnerable ones.⁸³

38. JS5 noted that despite the Government efforts in this regard, free legal aid the majority of persons in need of representation do not receive it. JS5 recommending ensuring that each person who is faced with a significant prison sentence is represented by competent counsel at all stages of the judicial proceedings, regardless of the person's ability to pay for legal representation.⁸⁴

39. JS8 was concerned that petty offences, including “loitering” are enforced under outdated and vague laws that are incorrectly applied, which give the police wide discretion for enforcement.⁸⁵ It regretted that women are disproportionately affected,⁸⁶ and noted that petty offences have been increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. In JS8’s view, enforcement of petty offences creates opportunity for corruption and bribery.⁸⁷ JS8 recommended decriminalizing and declassifying petty offences; encouraging alternative dispute resolution to resolve minor crimes, and developing community-based noncustodial measures.⁸⁸

40. CUMG-SL was concerned at interference of the Executive in the independence of institutions, as some institutions dealing with human rights have been dissolved through executive orders. It recommended to review the 1991 Constitution regarding the power of the Executive.⁸⁹

41. CUMG-SL noted efforts undertaken by Sierra Leone to fight against corruption.⁹⁰ SJ4 regretted however the persistence of this practice and that the population does not report enough cases of corruption for fear of the risk of retaliation. It recommended that Sierra Leone continue its efforts to address corruption.⁹¹

*Fundamental freedoms and the right to participate in public and political life*⁹²

42. International Service for Human Rights (JS9) stated that journalists, Human Rights Defenders, Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual, Transsexuals and Intersex activists have been subjected to attacks, arbitrary detention and other forms of intimidation. It regretted that the police had deployed excessive use of force during demonstrations, including use of tear gas, and firearms.⁹³ NaCFoHRD recommended ensuring that Human Rights Defenders, journalists, and members of opposition parties can freely exercise their freedom to expression, assembly and association without fear of reprisals.⁹⁴

43. While JS6 and NaCFoHRD noted with satisfaction the repeal, in 2020, of libel and defamation provisions of the Public Order Act, the organizations regretted that some parts of the Act continued to be used to prevent peaceful protest.⁹⁵ In addition, JS6 noted that the Independent Media Commission Act 2020 raised new concerns around censorship, as it empowered the Independent Media Commission to shut down media houses on the ambiguous grounds of “public interest.”⁹⁶ JS9 recommended repealing legislation and policies that restrict the rights of journalists and Human Rights Defenders, and adopting and implementing a national law on the protection of Human Rights Defenders in conformity with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.⁹⁷ The-Carter Center, recommended to foster a climate in which criticism of authority is tolerated and strengthening the independence of the Independent Media Commission.⁹⁸ JS6 recommended amending the Independent Media Commission Act 2020 to provide for oversight and redress mechanisms for the decisions of the Commission.⁹⁹

44. According to JS6, in March 2018, an internet shutdown was instituted, on the day of elections allegedly aimed at stopping the National Electoral Commission and other bodies from sharing results on the elections with party affiliates.¹⁰⁰ JS6 recommended that Sierra Leone ensure access to information in accordance with international human rights obligations; ensuring that all its organs and entities comply with rights and obligations under the Access to Information Law; in accordance with international human rights obligations.¹⁰¹ JS6 also recommended that it enact the Data Protection and Cyber-Security legislation through participatory and consultative processes.¹⁰²

45. The-Carter Center recommended ensuring that eligible voters for future elections are informed of their electoral rights.¹⁰³ It also recommended developing a comprehensive framework on campaign finance that ensured the highest level of transparency, including prior to election day; and establishing penalties for breach of campaign finance rules.¹⁰⁴ It further recommended ensuring that the National Electoral Commission has an adequate framework to conduct elections in line with international standards; providing clear guidelines and ensuring effective remedies for electoral offences.¹⁰⁵

*Prohibition of all forms of slavery*¹⁰⁶

46. JS2 was concerned that Sierra Leone remained among the Sub Saharan African countries with the highest rates of child labour, including as street vendors and caregivers, as well as hazardous work, including fishing on the high seas and mining. Despite the Free Quality Education Programme (2019) which significantly increased school enrolment, many children, particularly girls, continue to be out of school and victims of economic exploitation.¹⁰⁷ JS2 recommended complying with international law and implementing labour laws in the best interest of children;¹⁰⁸ monitoring and addressing child labour across hot spot areas in the country; and scaling up access to school programmes in districts such as Koinadugu, Pujehun and Kambia with the highest rates of child labour.¹⁰⁹ CUMG-SL recommended setting up a database on child labour across the country; decentralizing child labour desks at regional or district levels, and developing and popularizing a child labour policy.¹¹⁰

47. While welcoming the National Plan of Action on Human Trafficking adopted in 2020, JS2 regretted that the rate of internal child trafficking remained high in Sierra Leone. JS3 quoted the Global Report Human Trafficking, according to which only ten cases were prosecuted during the period 2014-2017 without a single conviction being secured.¹¹¹ JS2 recommended conducting awareness raising on child trafficking at border communities, setting up community based surveillance mechanisms at porous areas and providing regular training to the security forces at border areas. It also recommended expediting the adoption of the revised Trafficking in Persons Bill; providing adequate assistance to victims and further identifying trafficking in person cases and prosecuting the perpetrators.¹¹²

3. Economic, social and cultural rights

*Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work*¹¹³

48. CUMG-SL was alarmed at the increase rate of unemployment and at complaints from workers who had not been paid the minimum wage or extra hours worked. It regretted the lack of accurate data to track the rate of national unemployment. CUMG-SL recommended setting up a robust mechanism for monitoring implementation of the Minimum Wage and Local Content Act 2015 and the Minimum Wage Appropriation Policy of 2019, and setting data on employment.¹¹⁴

*Right to an adequate standard of living*¹¹⁵

49. JS7 noted with concern that, according to the Human Development Report 2019, about 70% of the population lives below the poverty line.¹¹⁶ JS3 referred to the negative impact of poverty on the health of women and indicated that poverty has been identified as one of the primary causes of Obstetric Fistula and early pregnancies. It recommended working across multiple sectors to improve the conditions of living of women in Sierra Leone.¹¹⁷

50. NaCFoHRD was concerned that a very high number of people in Sierra Leone lack basic safe drinking water and food, and faced poor housing facilities, particularly women and children in rural areas.¹¹⁸ JS10 stated that housing remained a major issue in Sierra Leone and noted challenges in infrastructural design of public housing in the country. It also regretted that during the period under review, there were not enough laws, policies and programmes to provide public housing in the country. It recommended that Sierra Leone develop policies and implement legal frameworks to guarantee equality and non-discrimination in the real-estate industry and ensure construction of low income housing particularly for persons with disabilities.¹¹⁹

*Right to health*¹²⁰

51. NaCFoHRD noted efforts undertaken by Sierra Leone to improve the health sector, including by recruiting more health personnel. However, it stressed that further measures should be taken to address the poor health service delivered in the country, particularly in rural areas.¹²¹ It recommended that Sierra Leone develop a National Health Policy.¹²² JS10

recommended providing more incentives to retain doctors, nurses and other health care personnel in the public health services, especially in remote areas.¹²³

52. JS4 was concerned at unequal access to health care for women, and that women's specific health needs had not sufficiently been taken into account in the health sector. JS4 particularly noted that many women suffered from obstetric fistula, caused by prolonged, obstructed childbirth and lack of access to maternity care; maternal death and disability, sexual transmitted infections, including HIV, and cervical cancer.¹²⁴ JS4 recommended providing health centres in all remote rural areas of the country with qualified midwives and well as equipment so as to provide the best possible pre-natal care.¹²⁵ It further recommended to expand awareness prevention programmes on the fistula disease and putting in place an effective mechanism to monitor implementation of the National Strategy for the Elimination of Obstetric Fistula with a human rights based approach.¹²⁶

53. JS2 recommended that Sierra Leone allocate more resources to the full implementation of the National Strategy on Teenage Pregnancy (2018-2022).¹²⁷

54. JS2 recommended improving the health infrastructure and put effective public health management systems in place to address COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring free health care services for children up to the age of 12 years,¹²⁸ and creating fair access to health facilities in remote areas to ensure that vulnerable children and their families have equal access to quality health care.¹²⁹

55. JS5 recommended including leprosy training in the medical training curriculum, and enforce a nation-wide free medical service, including for persons affected by leprosy.¹³⁰

*Right to education*¹³¹

56. NaCFoHRD welcomed the Free Quality Education policy and the fact that the budgetary allocation for education was increased in 2019. However, it regretted the persistent challenges, such as deficient infrastructure, poor water and sanitation in schools, insufficient number of teachers, and school fees.¹³² NaCFoHRD recommended improving the school infrastructure including by building more classrooms; providing more learning and teaching materials, and strengthening the monitoring of all schools across the country by improving on the Inspectorate Division of the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Schools.¹³³ CUMG-SL recommended to work with local councils to implement the Free Quality Education policy in compliance with the Education Act 2004.¹³⁴ PI recommended the Sierra Leone mobilize enough resources to finance the Free Quality Education policy and fully implement the Disability Act.¹³⁵

57. PI was concerned that the right to education of many children, especially those in rural areas is hindered by several challenges, including unavailability of internet facilities and the lack of knowledge on the effective use of digital solutions, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.¹³⁶ PI recommend identifying the characteristics and number of children who had not been able to benefit from these remote learning and design policies ensuring inclusion of vulnerable children in education.¹³⁷ JS7 recommended that Sierra Leone strengthen policies that bolster basic education, including education for girls and education for children with disabilities.¹³⁸

58. JS4 noted that according to a report of UNICEF, three out of every ten school girls are excluded from education as result of teenage pregnancy.¹³⁹ CUMG-SL recommended to create special incentives for increasing girls' enrolment at school.¹⁴⁰ JS2 recommended that Sierra Leone implement the Education Act 2005 that makes Primary/Basic education compulsory,¹⁴¹ and strengthen all policies to bolster basic education, including education for girls, adult literacy and education for persons with disabilities.¹⁴²

59. CUMG-SL noted that payment of tuition fees was a major hindrance to school completion rate in the country, especially for girls and persons with disabilities. It recommended to provide technical and learning material to disadvantaged children, develop a policy to improve school infrastructure and ensure that education is free.¹⁴³

4. Rights of specific persons or groups

*Women*¹⁴⁴

60. PIacknowledged progress in tackling sexual violence.¹⁴⁵ JS8 noted that despite the adoption of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act in 2019, sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls remained pervasive in the country, including rape, and sexual abuses in marriage. Many women do not feel safe reporting their abuser to the police, and when they do report, they are not taken seriously.¹⁴⁶ It recommended that Sierra Leone implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual and gender-based violence; ensure the prosecution of perpetrators; provide rehabilitation and support for victims; provide gender-responsive training for judicial and law enforcements officers; and strengthen police accountability mechanisms.¹⁴⁷

61. JS3 indicated that, as a response to the ban on 2015 on pregnant girls attending school, in a decision of December 2019, the ECOWAS Court of Justice found that the policy barring girls from attending school, amounted to discrimination and human rights violations. JS2 and JS3 noted, however that deep seated challenges still remain, including policy measures to reverse the societal attitudes that support discrimination against pregnant girls.¹⁴⁸ JS2 recommended to fully comply with the recommendations of the ECOWAS ruling; providing services and supportive interventions for pregnant girls in school; and implementing comprehensive sexuality education by fully integrating it in the school curriculum.¹⁴⁹

62. PIrecommended that Sierra Leone eliminate discrimination against women and girls in law and in practice, including by accelerating the constitutional amendments in the area of gender equality.¹⁵⁰ JS4 recommended to carry out awareness raising campaigns for both men and women, on the rights of women.¹⁵¹

63. The-Carter Center (CC) regretted that women candidates have limited opportunities to participate in political processes, and that only two of 17 presidential candidates were female, and represented only 12.5% of all parliamentarian candidates. According toCC, the low number of female nominees reflected a lack of political will to improve gender equality in public institutions. It further noted that a Gender Equality Bill had been in the drafting process since 2013, and has not yet been made into law. CC recommended the adoption of the Gender Equality Bill and reducing the candidate registration fees to support greater gender equality in politics. It also encouraged political parties to strengthen internal processes to nominate women for office.¹⁵² CUMG-SL recommended to scale up the 30% quota implementation of women inclusion in decision making.¹⁵³

*Children*¹⁵⁴

64. JS2 noted with concerned that children are among the most vulnerable groups affected by COVID-19 in Sierra Leone: they have faced and witnessed domestic abuses in quarantine homes, and care centers; children affected by the pandemic have experienced separation from their parents, and a number are now orphans a result of losing their parents. JS2 further indicated that most children had not received adequate welfare and psychological support, and had been exposed to neglect, emotional abuse and psychological harm associated to the pandemic.¹⁵⁵

65. JS2 recommended that Sierra Leone improve the health infrastructure and put effective public health management in place to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the welfare of vulnerable children.¹⁵⁶ JS2 also recommended putting in place an emergency child protection response plan on COVID-19 and any future disease; and increasing budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affaires.¹⁵⁷

66. CUMG-SL noted efforts made by Sierra Leone to eliminate corporal punishment.¹⁵⁸ NaCFoHRD regretted, however, that corporal punishment persists at school.¹⁵⁹ CUMG-SL recommended to raise awareness on this issue.¹⁶⁰

67. JS3 and PIwere concerned at the high prevalence of child marriage in Sierra Leone.¹⁶¹ JS3 noted the low rate of birth registration, which poses a threat to the protection

of children regarding early marriage and harmful practices.¹⁶² PI recommended to enact a law prohibiting early marriage for anyone under the age of 18, and engage in massive outreach and sensitization initiatives on the protection of girls from early marriage and other forms of violence.¹⁶³ PI also recommended to monitor the implementation of laws protecting the rights of children.¹⁶⁴ JS4 recommended to implement the recommendations from the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa in 2016.¹⁶⁵

*Persons with disabilities*¹⁶⁶

68. JS10 welcomed positive steps taken by Sierra Leone addressing the elimination of stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities, including in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was concerned at persistent discrimination in access to public transportation, employment, housing, health, education and justice, as well as the lack of related statistical data.¹⁶⁷ JS5 recommended that Sierra Leone prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal wage, and safe and healthy working conditions.¹⁶⁸ JS10 recommended that Sierra Leone formulate a policy to ensure that persons with disabilities can equally exercise their freedom of expression, opinion and access to information.¹⁶⁹ JS10 further recommended ensuring affirmative action for persons with disability; raising awareness on elimination of the stigma and discrimination against those persons; and ensuring that the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities are adequately funded to effectively carry out their mandates.¹⁷⁰

69. CUMG-SL recommended to support the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities.¹⁷¹ CUMG-SL and JS10 recommended adopting and implementing the Disability-Inclusive Education Policy.¹⁷²

70. CC recommended taking measures and allocating public funding to enhance the political participation of persons with disabilities in future elections, including with respect to accessibility at all polling stations; and providing voting education materials for persons living with visual and hearing impairments.¹⁷³

Notes

¹ The stakeholders listed below have contributed information for this summary; the full texts of all original submissions are available at: www.ohchr.org.

Civil society

Individual submissions:

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| CfGNK | Center for Global Nonkilling, Grand Saconnex, Switzerland; |
| CUMG-SL | CUMG-SL CSO UPR Monitoring Group-Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone; |
| ECLJ | European Centre for Law and Justice, Strasbourg, France; |
| IHRC | International Human Rights Commission, New York, USA; |
| NaCFoHRD | National Centre For Human Rights and Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone; |
| PGA | Parliamentarians for Global Action, NY, USA; |
| PI | Plan International, Geneva, Switzerland; |
| CC | The Carter Center, Atlanta, USA. |

Joint submissions:

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| JS1 | Joint submission 1 submitted by: The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty The Society for Human Rights and Development Organisation, Mineapolis, USA; |
| JS2 | Joint submission 2 submitted by: Child Rights Coalition: Children's Forum Network, Grassroots Community Development Advocates –Sierra Leone, Advocacy Movement Network, Defence for Children International, Youth and Child Advocacy Network, Youth and Children's Advocacy Panel, Network Movement for Youth and Children's Welfare, Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation, Youth Arise for Rural Development, Empowerment and Peace Building, |

- Plan International Sierra Leone, Youth Welfare and Development Organization, Centre For Social Economic Empowerment And Development Sierra Leone, Ngopee Foundation, SOS Children’s Villages Sierra Leone, and Campaign for Good Governance; Freetown, Sierra Leone;
- JS3 **Joint submission 3 submitted by:** Equality Now, Defence for Children International - Sierra Leone and Women Against Violence and Exploitation in Society (WAVES) Nairobi, Kenya;
- JS4 **Joint submission 4 submitted:** Edmund Rice International, and the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Geneva, Switzerland;
- JS5 **Joint submission 5 submitted by:** National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy – Sierra Leone German Leprosy and Tuberculosis Relief Association; Chatelaine, Switzerland;
- JS6 **Joint submission 6 submitted by:** The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) The Institute for Governance Reform (IGR) Citizens Advocacy Network (CAN) Campaign for Human Rights and Development International (CHRDI) Sierra Leone Reporters Union; London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
- JS7 **Joint submission 7 submitted by:** Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone (CRC-SL), participated in the preparation of the report: Children’s Forum Network, Grassroots Community Development Advocates –Sierra Leone, Advocacy Movement Network, Defence for Children International, Youth and Child Advocacy Network, Youth and Children’s Advocacy Panel, Network Movement for Youth and Children’s Welfare, Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation, Youth Arise for Rural Development, Empowerment and Peace Building, Plan International Sierra Leone, Youth Welfare and Development Organization, Centre For Social Economic Empowerment And Development Sierra Leone, Ngopee Foundation, SOS Children’s Villages Sierra Leone, and Campaign for Good Governance;
- JS8 **Joint submission 8 submitted by:** AdvocAid and the Vance Center NGO Coalition for UPR-Sierra Leone, NY, USA;
- JS9 **Joint submission 9 submitted by:** International Service for Human Rights and Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone; Geneva, Switzerland;
- JS10 **Joint submission 10 submitted by:** Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues, Disability Awareness Action Group, Kono Cheshire Services, Polio Persons Development Association, Welfare Society for the disabled and Freetown Cheshire Home; freetown, Sierra Leone.

National human rights institution:

HRCSL

Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

- ² HRCSL, page 1.
³ HRCSL, page 5.
⁴ HRCSL, page 3.
⁵ HRCSL, page 3.
⁶ HRCSL, page 4.
⁷ HRCSL, page 4.
⁸ HRCSL, page 4.
⁹ HRCSL, page 3.
¹⁰ HRCSL, page 2.
¹¹ HRCSL, page 2.
¹² HRCSL, page 2.
¹³ HRCSL, page 3.
¹⁴ HRCSL, page 5.

¹⁵ The following abbreviations are used in UPR documents:

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|------------|--|
| ICERD | International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; |
| ICESCR | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, |
| OP-ICESCR | Optional Protocol to ICESCR; |
| ICCPR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; |
| ICCPR-OP 1 | Optional Protocol to ICCPR; |
| ICCPR-OP 2 | Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty; |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; |
| OP-CEDAW | Optional Protocol to CEDAW; |
| CAT | Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, |
| OP-CAT | Optional Protocol to CAT; |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child; |
| OP-CRC-AC | Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict; |
| OP-CRC-SC | Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; |
| OP-CRC-IC | Optional Protocol to CRC on a communications procedure, |
| ICRMW | International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; |
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; |
| OP-CRPD | Optional Protocol to CRPD; |
| ICPPED | International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. |

¹⁶ For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras. 111.37, 111.38, 111.206, 111.33, 111.4, 111.8, 111.9, 111.14, 111.31, and 111.32.

¹⁷ NaCFoHRD, page 5; J3, para 32.

¹⁸ NaCFoHRD and JS3, CGNK, p. 8, Nonkilling, page 7 and 8, CGNK, p. 8.

¹⁹ NaCFoHRD page 5 and JS3.

²⁰ CUMG-SL, Page 5.

²¹ JS3, para. 32; CGNK p.7, NaCFoHRD, page 4, JS8, para.32, Nonkilling, page 7.

²² ECLJ, JS3, para. 32.

²³ PGA, paras. 10 and 11, see also CGNK, p. 7.

²⁴ CUMG-SL, para. 6.

²⁵ NaCFoHRD, page 5.

²⁶ CUMG-SL, para. 8.

²⁷ CUMG-SL, para.22.

²⁸ NaCFoHRD, page 5.

²⁹ For relevant recommendations see see A/HRC/32/16, paras. 111.39, 111.40, 111.41, 111.43, 111.49, 111.81, 111.50, 111.80, 111.83, 111.95, 111.96, 111.99, 111.100, 111.102, 111.103, 111.164, 111.144, 111.156, 111.55, 111.42, 111.62, 111.63, 111.126, 111.48, 111.106, 111.108, 111.112, 111.116, 111.190, and 111.161.

³⁰ JS1 para.12, and CUMG-SL para. 10, NaCFoHRD page 10.

³¹ NaCFoHRD, page 5 and CUMG-SL, para.10.

³² NaCFoHRD, page 9.

³³ CUMG-SL, para.9.

³⁴ For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras 111.82–111.86.

³⁵ CUMG-SL, para.5.

³⁶ JS3, para.18.

³⁷ JS5 pages 2 and 4.

³⁸ A/HRC/39/48/Add.1, para.41, 52 and 56, UNCT, para.39.

³⁹ JS9 page 2 and 3.

⁴⁰ JS9, page 3.

⁴¹ JS9, page 3.

⁴² For relevant recommendations see see A/HRC/32/16, paras. 111.1–111.3, 111.5–111.7, 111.10–111.13, 111.16–111.18, 111.24–111.26, 111.34, 111.59, 111.91–111.94, 111.97–111.98, 111.101, 111.130–111.131, 111.137, 111.144–111.146, 111.167.

⁴³ NaCFoHRD, page 4, JS8, para.32, Nonkilling, page 7.

- 44 JS8, para.32, Nonkilling, page 7.
45 JS1. Para.25.
46 CUMG-SL, para. 14 and NaCFoHRD page 12, JS9 page 2.
47 JS9, page 3.
48 JS9, page 3, IHRC, page 2.
49 IHRC, page 2.
50 NaCFoHRD, page 4 and 5.
51 CUMG-SL, para. 14.
52 NaCFoHRD, page 4.
53 JS1 page 2 and JS8 para. 3.
54 JS8, para. 3.
55 JS1, para.18.
56 JS8, para.5.
57 JS8para.5.
58 JS8, para.8.
59 JS 3, p.2, para. 4.
60 JS1, para. 25, JS4, para.25, JS4, par.25.
61 JS3, p. 5, para. 12, JS8, para.12.
62 NaCFoHRD, page 4.
63 CUMG-SL, para. 16.
64 ECLJ, para.2.
65 Plan-International, page 4.
66 JS2, para. 7, CUMG-SL, para.13, ECLJ, para.4.
67 ECLJ, para.11.
68 ECLJ, para.25, CUMG-SL, para. 13, JS7, page 13-14.
69 Plan-International, page 4.
70 ECLJ, p.7.
71 JS3, para.4.
72 JS2 page 7 and 8.
73 JS3, para.4.
74 JS2, paras. 7- 9.
75 CUMG-SL, para.12.
76 CUMG-SL, para.27.
77 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras. 111.45, 111.72, 111.136, 111.138–111.143.
78 JS1, para.6.
79 JS1, para.21.
80 JS5, p.2, para. 7.
81 NaCFoHRD.
82 JS8, para.14.
83 JS8, para.15.
84 JS5, p.4, para. 21.
85 JS8, para. 17.
86 JS8, para.18.
87 JS8, para.19.
88 JS8, para.22.
89 CUMG-SL, para. 16.
90 CUMG-SL, para.28.
91 SJ4, para.26.
92 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras.111.168–111.169.
93 JS9 page 2.
94 Js6, para.23. See also NaCFoHRD, page 4.
95 JS6, paras. 8-11, NaCFoHRD, page 11.
96 JS6, para. 14.
97 JS9 page 3.
98 The-Carter-Center, page 7.
99 Js6, para.23.
100 JS6, para. .6.
101 JS6, para. 23 a).
102 JS6, para.23.
103 The-Carter-Center page 3.
104 The-Carter-Center page 4.
105 The-Carter-Center, page 6.

- 106 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras.111–131.
107 JS2 page 10.
108 JS2 page 10.
109 JS2 page 10 and 11, see also CUMG-SL, para.2.
110 CUMG-SL, para.2.
111 JS3, para.15.
112 JS2 page 12.
113 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras.111.35–111.36.
114 CUMG-SL, page 2.
115 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16 paras.111.170–111.176.
116 JS7 p.1.
117 JS3, paras. 10 and 11.
118 NaCFoHRD, page 8.
119 JS10 page 4.
120 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras.111.177–111.187, 111.189.
121 NaCFoHRD, page 14.
122 NaCFoHRD, page 5.
123 JS10, page 3.
124 JS4 para.4.
125 JS4 paras. 17 and 20.
126 JS4, paras. 17-24.
127 JS2, page 4.
128 JS2 page 5.
129 JS2, page 4.
130 JS5, page 4.
131 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras. 111.69, 111.73–111.74, 111.76, 111.128–
.111.129, 111.193–111.204, 111.188.
132 NaCFoHRD, page 14 and 15.
133 NaCFoHRD, page 5.
134 UMG-SL, para. 23.
135 Plan-International, page 3.
136 Plan-International, page 2.
137 Plan-International, page 2.
138 CRC-SL, p.6-7.
139 JS4, para.14.
140 CUMG-SL, para. 25.
141 JS2 page 11.
142 JS2 page 7.
143 CUMG-SL, para.24.
144 For relevant recommendations see see A/HRC/32/16, paras.111.15, 111.20–111.23, 111.47, 111.57,
111.64–111.68, 111.70–111.71, 111.78, 111.107, 111.109–111.111, 111.114, 111.117–111.125,
111.127, 111.155.
145 Plan-International, page 3.
146 JS8, paras. 23-25.
147 JS8, para. 27.
148 JS2 page 6, JS3, para. 7.
149 JS2, page 6.
150 JS8, para. 27.
151 JS4, para.23.
152 The-Carter-Center, page 2.
153 UMG-SL, para.3.
154 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, paras.111.19, 111.46, 111.51, 111.75, 111.77,
111.134–111.135.
155 JS2, page 3.
156 JS, page 4.
157 JS2, page 4.
158 CUMG-SL, para.20.
159 NaCFoHRD page 15.
160 CUMG-SL, para.20.
161 JS3, para.9, Plan-International page 5.
162 JS3, para.9 and 10.
163 Plan-International, page 5.

- ¹⁶⁴ Plan-International, page 6.
¹⁶⁵ JS4, p.4.
¹⁶⁶ For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/32/16, para.111.89.
¹⁶⁷ JS10, page 2.
¹⁶⁸ JS5 page 4.
¹⁶⁹ JS10 page 5.
¹⁷⁰ JS10, page 2.
¹⁷¹ CUMG-SL, para. 4.
¹⁷² JS10, page 4 and CUMG-SL, para. 27.
¹⁷³ The-Carter-Center, page 2.
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