



**Government of Sierra Leone**



**United Nations Development Programme**

**Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Republic of Sierra Leone**

**Strengthening of Public Information Management**

Public information dissemination is crucial to democracy, and instrumental in sustaining peace in Sierra Leone. Under the project “Strengthening the management of public information and communications in Sierra Leone,” UNDP will provide customized programs of capacity building, for advocacy and implementation of the GoSL communications strategy aimed at strengthening public information management. The project aims at improving citizen’s knowledge and contribution to development, facilitate public debate and dialogue on policies and strategies and enhance transparency, accountability and wider participation in governance.

## **Part I. Situation Analysis**

### **▪ Issues to be addressed**

Sierra Leone is a country in post-conflict transition, having emerged from a 10 year civil war. Civil Order was restored in 2001 and with the assistance of the UN, efforts to rebuild the governance structure has progressed fairly well. One of the outcomes of the crisis is the destruction of basic infrastructures including those of the public information systems. In addition, most of the trained and experienced communication practitioners left the country for safety and greener pastures, depleting the human resources capacity of government to communicate effectively, its development programmes and reach out to its numerous constituencies. Arguably, a strong communications and public information capacity offers much-needed clarity and coherence for the implementation of national programs and projects.

The GoSL public information machinery has not been effective in communicating government policies, strategies and programmes to improve awareness, acceptability, transparency and accountability at all levels. The situation has result of misinformation, misunderstanding of government intentions and actions and a disconnection on the population.

A free flow of communication is critical to building confidence and consolidation of the peace dividends of the post conflict interventions. Absence of effective and clear communication could alienate a great majority of the population and reverse the positive gains of the reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. In addition, this could undermine the fragile security situation.

This project “Strengthening Public information systems” aims to strengthen national capacity for long-term effective dissemination of public information for sustainable human development. The project will assist in building a sustainable system for public information management, which will contribute to improving citizens’ access to information and flow of information; both are vital for open democratic society.

### **▪ Lessons Learned**

The current landscape of communications in Sierra Leone poses several challenges to public information dissemination. Such problems include an illiteracy rate of 70%, lack of communications infrastructure, lack of a button up communications approach, lack of capacity among public information offices and a lack of capacity among national media corps.

There are two aspects of the public information dissemination problem: internal (national constituency), which is crucial, and external (interested foreign audiences), which often hinges on how well the former is handled.

- **Beneficiaries**

The primary beneficiaries will be the Public Information Officers of the Ministry of Information and Communication, the Office of the Presidential Spokesman, the Office of the Vice Presidential Spokesman, the Line Ministries and Local Councils. They will benefit from the building of an information infrastructure in the country, as well as increased capacity to manage and sustain a public information sector.

The secondary beneficiaries will be Sierra Leone's citizens who will be able to more effectively and efficiently receive public information, allowing them to actively participate in open democratic processes and to make better informed decisions as citizens to shape the future of the nation.

Additional beneficiaries will be the national media corps, who will benefit from training programs leading to greater capacity, independence and more ethical journalistic standards in the news industry.

The international community will also benefit from this program, which will result in a greater level of information coming from the country, thus attracting institutions and investors who are interested in the lucrative developing market Sierra Leone has to offer.

## **Part II Strategy**

- **Country Strategy**

The strategy argues for a newly resourced, strategic and business-focused communication approach for public information in Sierra Leone. Its effect will be to foster open channels of communication between the GoSL and the citizens, the media and other stakeholders leading to strengthened development communication and transparent governance. This will externally help to re-establish trust in the political and economic stability of the country and improve investment, trade and aid flows necessary for meeting the MDGs and building a strong and virile nation. It will also help to improve communications with the wider public and strengthen trust and confidence in the GoSL with all constituencies, nationally and internationally.

The major thrust of the interventions will be to build institutional and human capacities in the public information section for development. Training programs will be designed and implemented for both government public relations officer, journalist and key government officials as well. Public Information/Relations Officers (PROs) will be trained on how to gather, analyze and disseminate and effectively manage public information systematically

in a coordinated and sustainable manner. On the other hand, the journalist will be trained on how to gather news, check facts and practice ethical journalism; and key government officials will be trained on how to properly and effectively interact with the media both nationally and abroad.

The risk of failure is enormous if the strategy and action plan is not implemented faithfully. The absence of a virile mechanism for managing public information could lead to the GoSL mismanaging expectations of their constituencies, overstating ambitions and under-delivering on them, and severely damaging its goodwill in the process.

The strategic management objectives of the project are namely, information coordination, and information management and dissemination. The project aims to contribute to the Government's development efforts by enhancing its capacity to coordinate information at the line ministries, to manage information and disseminate it to constituencies regularly, effectively and efficiently. This will be achieved through the provision of strategic assistance in (a). Capacity Building (training, technical assistance and exchange of experiences to strengthen national communication offices and functions), complemented by (b). Support to Execution (specific, tailored support in areas such as media relations opinion polling, capacity building as required by the Government) and (c) Advocacy (facilitation of dialogue between GoSL and journalist, consensus building and policy advisory as required for project implementation).

The Government of Sierra Leone Communications Strategy Project will be responsible for advising and assisting government:

- Advising and assisting in the implementation of the Communications Strategy Project standard on public information;
- Planning and coordinating capacity building in the field of public information;
- Developing and recommending training programs for the Public Relations Officers;
- Developing and recommending media training programs for the key government officials;
- Developing and recommending training programs for the national media corps;
- Raising awareness about the implementation of the rights to freedom of expression and the rights to information as prerequisite for an open democratic society.
- Advising in the development of media relations campaigns for key government offices, which include vision and limestone prestige campaign.

To ensure long term sustainability in the fulfillment of the above functions, this project is aimed at improving the capacity of the government, in particular the staff of the departments who are involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of public information. This will be achieved through an extensive training program in areas including: media relations, media monitoring, journalism ethics and professionalism and public information management.

At the same time, relevant Government stakeholders are supported in building rapid communications campaigns for key government officers, which can bring immediate results. Those key government offices identified specifically for the period of 2006 are: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Mineral Resources. Capacity will be built in those key offices for several positions, ministers, permanent secretaries and heads of departments, in addition to the PROs.

Typically, the short-term approach will focus on rapid and effective communications campaigns that warrant particular attention due to the importance or prominence of the messages in the eyes of the public. The longer-term approach will be widespread development of an information infrastructure that will be built with sustainability as the focus.

The capacity building and knowledge transfer to government counterpart institutions and project staff will occur through both on-the-job training as well as through formal training sessions. In the former situation, UNDP will provide project support through a tailored support structure as well as through experts and Country Office staff as required. Through a “coaching” approach, project staff will, at different levels, constantly interact with highly experienced UNDP advisors. In addition, formal training will be provided at the government’s request. The Government and UNDP will agree on a training program for project staff that will include international best practices and build upon identified needs during the ongoing on-the-job training as described above.

In 2006, implementation will focus mainly in the Western Area. However, three pilot areas will undergo implementation in collaboration with the district councils. These areas are Makeni, Bo and Kenema.

- Capacity building for counterparts – Training of counterpart is an important part of the Communications Strategy if it is to work to achieve improved national capacity and thus long term sustainability of public information programs.
- Increased Client Orientation – Both national communications officers and the national media corps will become more responsive, trusted partners for their clients – citizens of Sierra Leone, potential investors, etc by providing timely, quality services with integrity and professionalism.
- Capacity Building for government in Media Relations and Information Sharing – The communication Strategy Project can be an important vehicle for government to learn effective and appropriate methods of interacting with media so as to build and strengthen the image and messages of government, thus leading to a properly informed public. Through workshop, Permanent Secretaries and Department Heads will be trained in information sharing and dissemination, helping them

understand what information is appropriate to share and how best to disseminate that to the public at large. They will also learn how to better utilize the PROs assigned to their respective offices to facilitate consistent and useful information flow.

- **Increased Coordination between Line Ministries and Key government Offices:** The project will also focus on building sustainable information flow between line ministries and key government offices. Training programs will be developed and workshops held for key GoSL officials and PROs in order to build proper capacity for internal communications.
- **Increased visibility –** due to the essential nature of international media in development and foreign direct investment efforts, the Communications Office will build efficient, effective and sustainable systems of media relations activities that will systematically give attention and visibility to Sierra Leone.

The project will also enable the Government to respond promptly to media and public information opportunities to achieve visibility and credit for its development priorities in reducing poverty, increasing growth, maintaining peace and accelerating the achievement of the MDGs. The strategic visions stated by UNDP and endorsed by the GoSL will likewise be implemented, with particular emphasis on the provision of advisory services and capacity building to the Government as well as the national media corps.

Realizing national programs and projects in Sierra Leone is largely conditioned by the guarantee of sustainable peace and security in the country. To assist the national actors in their efforts to consolidate peace and provide the UN Country team (UNCT) with a unified agenda and resources for this purpose, the UN Security Council, through its resolution 1620 of August 2005, established the UN Integrated office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) to succeed UNAMSIL. This integrated presence will be led by the UN Resident Coordinator, in an expanded capacity as the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General (ERSG), while continuing to serve as the Resident Representative of the UNDP.

Resolution 1620 calls for “promoting a culture of peace, dialogue and participation in critical national issues through a strategic approach to public information and communication.” In order for this integrated UN presence to fulfill its mandate, the consultations among major stakeholders, including national actors, have been held. These consultations led to the development of the national communications strategy were the lack of public information dissemination from the government, and a lack of capacity among the public information sector. It was also acknowledged that capacity is lacking among the national media corps. It was agreed that a functioning information infrastructure was necessary to assist public institutions in their communication efforts to the public at large. It was also agreed that training and capacity building programs be developed and administered for the national media corps. Such trainings would include programs of media ethics, news-gathering and news-reporting.

### **Part III. Management Arrangements**

The project will be executed under the National Execution Modality (NEX). The key principles of national execution are:

- a) Use of government rules and procedures where they are consistent with internationally recognized practices, to ensure integration of and relevance to national programs and structures;
- b) Government accountability for the effective use of UNDP resources through adequate financial reporting and the achievement of program/project objectives;
- c) Adherence to UNDP regulations and rules, when the UNDP country office provides support services.

The CTA will liaison between UNDP and the Ministry of Information to ensure timely and effective implementation of the project.

A consultant will be appointed by a panel consisting of Government and UNDP to serve as the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) for the implementation of this project. The role of the CTA will be mostly advisory. A Project Manager will also re-appointed to implement and manage the project. The Project Manager will be a senior level servant who has the necessary skills in implementing and sustaining the programs. The CTA will assist in an advisory capacity while the Project Manager will ultimately own and answer for the accountability of the project. The CTA and Project Manager will collaborate to identify needs and fill gaps accordingly in the areas of human resources, operational needs, and equipment and training programs. An office within the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting will serve as the head office of the project.

The team will contribute to the implementation and management of the project through:

- **Responsibilities of the parties involved**

Below are defined roles for each of the institutions and organizations involved in the project:

UNDP will allocate an initial amount of USD 536,000 of its resources to this project to start this initiative. The final amount of the budget will be determined according to the needs of the assistance and the final content of the communication strategy project. The required additional funding for the implementation of the project will be mobilized through the donor community.

The Ministry of Information will implement the project, in partnership with the Chief Technical Advisor, who will provide expertise, systems development, training and capacity building.

## **Non-financial resources**

The UNDP Country Office will collaborate with the GoSL to provide support services for the recruitment and administration of personnel, purchasing, arrangements for in-country and international training activities, arrangements for official travel, and processing payments, accounting, and financial reporting.

## **Part IV. Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **▪ Audit of Program**

This Government of Sierra Leone Communications Strategy Project is subject to at least one internal audit by UNDP during the life of the project.

## **Part V. Legal Context**

This program support document shall be the instrument referred to as the project document in Article 1 of the SBAA between the Government of Sierra Leone and UNDP signed on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1977.