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EVALUATION REPORT

Final Evaluation of Support to Capacity Strengthening of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for Human Rights Protection and Promotion Project

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JANUARY 2023

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report are those of the consultants and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Irish Embassy or the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL).

Project/Outcome Information		
Project/Outcome Title	Support to Capacity Strengthening of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for Human Rights Protection and Promotion Project	
Atlas ID	Phase I: 00108282 Phase II: 00126481	
Corporate outcome and output	UNSDCF/CPD outcome 2: By 2023, people in Sierra Leone benefit from more gender- and youth-responsive institutions that are innovative, accountable, and transparent at all levels and can better advance respect for human rights and the rule of law, equity, peaceful coexistence, and protection of children, girls, and persons with disability CPD Output 2.1: Capacities of targeted oversight and accountability institutions (Parliament, HRC, NEC, ACC and IPCB) strengthened to perform their mandates CPD Output 2.2: Rule of law institutions (Judiciary, SLP, IPCB, HRC, MOJ, are strengthened to uphold human rights, access to justice and security	
Country	Sierra Leone	
Region	Africa	
Date project document signed	-	
Project dates	Start	Planned End
	1st August 2019	31 December 2022
Project budget	Phase I: €380,000 equivalent to US\$431,818	Phase II: €363,400 equivalent to US\$443,171
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Evaluation Type	Project Evaluation	
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I. ACRONYMS

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AUA	African Union Agenda
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DHRCS	District Human Rights Committees
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAHNRI	Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HRCSL	Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
HRWG	Human Rights Working Group
HRH	Human Rights Hour
HUCU	Human Rights and Compliance Unit
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
IPAM	Institute of Public Administration and Management
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MoFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

MSC	Most Significant Change
MT-NDP	Medium-Term National Development Plan
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NMRF	National Mechanism for Reporting and Following
NRM	National Road Map
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee's
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PwDs	People with Disabilities
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
RACER	Relevant, Acceptable, Credible, Easy and Robust
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) was established by an Act of Parliament (Act No. 9) of 2004, with the mandate of “promoting and protecting human rights in the country through investigations, public education, monitoring, advising the government, reviewing draft and existing legislation and producing an annual state of human rights report to the President, Parliament and the public”. However, due to financial and logistical challenges, the Commission became operational in 2007. Since commencing operations in 2007, the HRCSL has made significant achievements in its efforts to position itself as a credible national institution with support from its partners, in particular, UNDP, the Embassy of Ireland, the Irish Human Rights Commission,¹ and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), among others, with complementary support from national human rights organisations. Key among these have been the activation and operationalisation of its petition mechanism and quasi-judicial mandate and the development of tools to facilitate its work.

The HRCSL has received for the third time an A-status rating by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRIs) in 2011, 2016 and 2022 as an indication of the significant results achieved in delivering on its mandate in compliance with the Paris Principles. Maintaining its Grade A-status was extremely crucial for the Commission, a possibility which was largely contingent upon its ability to leverage support for its human rights promotion and protection agenda, amidst the gradual erosion of public confidence due to perceived government interference in its operations and capacity challenges. In June 2018, UNDP temporarily put on hold its work with the HRCSL following the government’s decision to suspend Commissioners and cease funding to the Commission. These developments had a serious impact on the capacity of the Commission to support its priority programmes as defined in its strategic plan (2016-2020). Subsequently, new commissioners were appointed, with the HRCSL continuing its work.

To address the persisting challenges of the Commission, UNDP and the Embassy of Ireland initiated and supported the joint project ‘Strengthening Capacity of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for Human rights Protection and Promotion’. The project was developed in two phases; Phase I covers the period August 2019 to December 2020 and phase II spans from July 2021 to December 2022. The latter phase sought to consolidate the gains made in the implementation of Phase I through

¹ Now Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (HREC).

support to project initiatives which aimed at strengthening capacity of the Commission, the decentralised District Human Rights Committees (DHRC) and civil society organisations (CSOs).

As the project comes to an end, an international and a national consultant were hired by UNDP to evaluate its implementation, and the gains it has made so far. An inception phase was conducted from 18 to 23 November 2022, with consultations between staff at UNDP and the consultants to ensure that the planning process was effectively done to minimise potential challenges in the field. The entire exercise was conducted from between November and December 2022, which was at the end of the period of implementing the project. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the results and approaches of the joint UNDP and Embassy of Ireland Support to Capacity Strengthening of the HRCSL Project. It assessed the results achieved through the project interventions, documented the lessons learned and best practices, as well as captured the challenges faced. While taking into consideration the support provided by other similar projects, the evaluation focussed on the project period 2019 - 2022, reflecting on the contribution made by the project towards an inclusive, peaceful and democratic Sierra Leone.

Methodology

The evaluation used a participatory and gender focused, and responsive evaluation approach which combined secondary analyses (project documents and reports), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), The Most Significant Change (MSC), and focus group discussions (FGD) to collect data from all the stakeholders involved in the project evaluated. The stakeholders included staff of the Embassy of Ireland, HRCSL, UNDP, relevant government institutions, District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs), international actors, civil society actors and beneficiaries at the community level. In addition to the above, a workshop was conducted on 15 December 2022, with the staff of the Commission and members of the DHRC in Freetown. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was done, with a thorough discussion held on the project and its implementation process. A total of 43 (29 males, 14 females) respondents were engaged in the evaluation.

Findings

As part of the findings a SWOT analysis was conducted, which presented some of the perceptions of the staff of the HRCSL and the DHRCs on the implementation of the project. The analysis was positive, with the project indicated to be relevant and timely. However, the weaknesses were largely related to the budget and the non-inclusion of the HRCSL in its development. Key opportunities pointed at include the enhanced capacity and credibility of the Commission and its work with partners. Threats noted included the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability.

Relevance

The project is highly relevant and addressed some of the challenges that the HRCSL has been contending with since it became operational in 2007. Through the project, a wide range of actors including staff of the HRCSL and their partners including members of DHRCs, CSOs, pupils in school and the public were targeted. The project as designed, directly responds to the needs of the beneficiaries including the HRCSL. Specific approaches were used to comprehensively engage and support the Commission and its partners to enable them efficiently and effectively deliver on their mandate. The project uses an integrated approach through which it seeks to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries by working directly with institutions such as the MOFAIC, the SLP, the ACC and other MDAs. This relationship underpins the relevance of the project to the Government of Sierra Leone, as it complements its goals to build the capacity of the HRCSL and their partners.

The project contributed to achieve output 2.1 and 2.2 of UNDP Country Programme and cluster 4.5 of Promoting inclusive and accountable justice institutions Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan 2019-2023. The project further was aligned to contribute to output 2.2.3 of UNDP Strategic Plan to strengthen the capacities, functions and financing of rule of law and national human rights institutions and systems strengthened to expand access to justice and combat discrimination, with a focus on women and other marginalised groups.

Intervention Logic, Monitoring and Learning

The respective partners all bring to the project several decades of experience working on similar interventions. The uniqueness of this project is that it draws from the individual experiences of the work of the partners, identifying challenges related to human rights in Sierra Leone, with two successful projects used to address them. The lessons from the first phase helped to further helped the success of the project. The logframe is well-designed and is of very good quality. It has two outputs that are well defined and clearly speak to the outcomes it seeks to contribute to, in pursuance of its strategic objectives. The intervention logic of the two components of the project has assumptions and risks that are clear and speak to the context. The project had systems in place that were embedded at the design stage to monitor it. The respective actors involved in its implementation have conducted two joint field monitoring, one in each phase of project implementation.

Coherence

It was concluded from the evaluation done that the project fits into the mandate and the activities of the HRCSL. Additionally, it was designed based on the activities of not just the HRCSL but also its partners, thereby helping to enhance coherence among the collaborating partners. The project aligns

with the Government of Sierra Leone and its development partners' national development plans, specifically on the strategic objectives of strengthening capacities of national human rights and the rule of law institutions in Sierra Leone. Thus, it is aligned with national laws and policies and international human rights and rule of law frameworks.

Efficiency

The project is well designed and has a good intervention logic that is straightforward and realistic as noted above. The implementation mechanisms put in place are good, with UNDP and HRCSL implementing the project. The financial resources provided for the project by UNDP and Irish Aid in two components was said by the respective partners to have been adequate based on the initial design of the project.

Effectiveness

Significant progress has been made already in producing the expected outputs under each of the outcome areas. For clarity, the gains made are divided into those made during the first and second phases of the project. It was concluded that the quality of the outputs produced is of very good quality, and they succeeded in helping the Commission and partners to carry out their duties professionally and effectively. Despite the initial delays that had to do with the COVID-19 pandemic and the bureaucracy of UNDP, the activities of the project were fully implemented and were effective in achieving its set goals and objectives.

Impact

The project as indicated above, succeeded in making tremendous progress, which contributed to the achievement of some of the goals of the project. Through interviews and the use of the MSC tool, it was concluded that the project contributed to the Commission's ability to function efficiently and effectively. Alongside this, the capacity of its partners to participate in the Universal Review Process (UPR), and in referral forums has increased. Alongside this, the District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs) and the Human Rights and Peace Clubs are producing the expected results through capacitation received through the project.

Sustainability

Since its inception, the project has demonstrated that most of its activities are sustainable. The capacity building initiatives for the Commissioners and staff of the HRCSL has gone a long way in enabling them to perform their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner. The Commissioners and senior staff of the Commission have even started conducting training for other

staff and members of the DHRCs, a form of train the trainers. Additionally, the Commission now has the capacity to organise Referral fora, which helps to bring together the different partners working with the Commission, with them being able to engage on cases that have been referred to them by the Commission. Despite this, there is the need for another component of the project, to build on the gains made so far.

Cross-Cutting Issues

In relation to cross-cutting issues, two areas are examined:

- i) **Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion and the Rights-Based Approach:** The project was Gen 2 (gender responsive in which gender equality as a significant objective) and had a gender equality-based approach, and the set objectives are all focused on protecting and promoting the rights, welfare, and dignity of vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone strongly grounded on the principle of leaving no one behind.
- ii) **Disability Inclusion:** While the project broadly targeted vulnerable groups, much more could have been done to integrate issues related to People with Disability (PwDs).

Lessons Learned

There are some lessons learned that could be of relevance in the designing of future interventions for the HRCSL or other related institutions. They include the fact that the continued lack of financial resources has implications for the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone. This should be looked into primarily by Government and secondly by International and Local partners of the Commission. Another lesson learned is the fact that the Human Rights and Peace Clubs are a grassroots children owned and area-based approach to promoting human rights awareness in schools and local communities. This should be sustained. It has a multiplier effect that is essential in building on the work of the Commission.

Conclusion

The project is highly relevant, and it targeted the HRCSL and its partners including MDAs, CSOs and the DHRCs. The aim was to build their capacity, thereby enabling them to carry out their mandates efficiently and effectively. An inter-webbed approach that integrated several actors including local community members was used. The intervention logic is good, and the indicators as set during the design stage of the project were unambiguous, RACER and can be easily used to measure the progress made by the project. It has only two result areas, which are largely interlinked and shaped the approach of the project. The choice of activities and outputs to be delivered by the project was good as they took into consideration the kind of support that was required by the HRCSL and its partners, in their bid to protect and promote human rights in Sierra Leone.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below build on the findings and some suggestions provided by the stakeholders consulted on what could be done to improve on future interventions and their programming.

Recommendations	
1.	Even though the project has ended, the partners should continue to monitor the sustainability of the interventions. Additionally, they could link the beneficiaries to related interventions that they or their partners are undertaking, to ensure that they continue to get external support.
2.	Future interventions should be tailored to fully integrate PwDs. The full inclusion of PwDs will help to create awareness on their rights and welfare.
3.	The Referral Partnership Forums are critical and should be continued.
4.	There is the need for more Human Rights and Peace Clubs to be established across the country, with the existing ones intermittently provided with refresher training.
5.	The HRCSL in collaboration with partners should facilitate the formation of a 'National Network of Schools Human rights and Peace Clubs in Sierra Leone'.
6.	The mobile complaints have been very crucial in bridging the gap between the Commission and communities in hard-to-reach areas. More support should be provided to the Commission to continue with this activity and to make it more sustainable.
7.	The media and private sector are crucial partners that should be central in the development and implementation of any project. They have their own agency and could bring in significant value addition that could help maximise the benefits of the project for the beneficiaries.
8.	The HRCSL should embark on resource mobilisation, to expand on its resource base to undertake activities. There are other donors in and outside of Sierra Leone that the Commission could engage to mobilise resources.

1. INTRODUCTION

From 1991 to 2002, Sierra Leone experienced a violent civil war that led to the death of over 60,000 people, with over a million becoming Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees. The factors that contributed to the emergence of the civil war include bad governance, violations of human rights, disregard for the rule of law, socio-economic and political marginalisation, and the existence of a contentious relationship between the state and its youth.² The limited avenues to seek redress after experiencing rights violation led citizens to a recourse to self-help and thus, take justice into their hands during the civil war. The need to avoid the recourse to self-help and violence, recognised in the Abidjan (1996) and Lomé (1999) peace agreements, justified the establishment of institutions that will promote and protect the rights and dignity of Sierra Leoneans. Consequently, at the end of the war, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) was established by an Act of Parliament (Act No. 9) of 2004. Its mandate is “promoting and protecting human rights in the country through investigations, public education, monitoring, advising the government, reviewing draft and existing legislation and producing an annual state of human rights report to the President, Parliament and the public”.³

Due to financial and logistical challenges, the Commission became operational in 2007. Since commencing operations in 2007, the HRCSL has made significant achievements in its efforts to position itself as a credible national institution with support from its partners, in particular, the Irish Aid, the Irish Human Rights Commission,⁴ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNDP, among others, with complementary support from national human rights organisations. Key among these have been the activation and operationalisation of its petition mechanism and quasi-judicial mandate and the development of tools to facilitate its work. The HRCSL has received for the second time an A-status rating by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRIs) as an indication of the significant results achieved in delivering on its mandate in compliance with the Paris Principles. Maintaining the existing Grade A-status is extremely crucial for the Commission, a possibility which is largely contingent upon its ability to leverage support for its human rights promotion and protection agenda, amidst the gradual erosion of public confidence due to perceived government interference in its operations and capacity challenges. In June 2018, UNDP temporarily put on hold its work with the HRCSL following the government’s decision to suspend Commissioners

² TRCSL. 2004. Reports of the TRCSL: Three Volumes. Freetown, Sierra Leone.

³ HRCSL Act 2004.

⁴ Now Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (HREC).

and cease funding to the Commission. These developments had a serious impact on the capacity of the Commission to support its priority programmes as defined in its strategic plan (2016-2020). Subsequently, new commissioners were appointed, with the HRCSL continuing its work.

Currently, the Commission has presence in Freetown, Waterloo, Port Loko, Kenema and Bo, with a paucity of personnel. It lacks the logistics facilitation to effectively monitor, receive, and conduct follow-ups to address complaints of human rights violations in rural areas where they are prevalent, but are either not serviced or grossly under-serviced. For instance, in 2017, a total of 102 complaints, accounting for 52% of the total complaints received nationwide, were received from all the regions of the country. The District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs), which are strategic partners of the Commission, complement human rights awareness at regional level. However, the Commission lacks the capacity to provide sustainable support to the DHRCs to carry out their work.

To address the existing challenges, UNDP and the Irish Embassy initiated and supported the joint project ‘Strengthening Capacity of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for Human rights Protection and Promotion’. The project was developed in two phases; Phase I covers the period August 2019 to December 2020 and phase II spans from July 2021 to December 2022. The latter phase sought to consolidate the gains made in the implementation of Phase I through support to project initiatives which aimed at strengthening capacity of the Commission, the decentralised District Human Rights Committees (DHRC) and civil society organisations (CSOs).

As the project comes to an end, an international and a national consultant were hired by UNDP to evaluate its implementation, and the gains it has made so far. An inception phase was conducted from 18 to 23 November, 2022, with consultations between staff at UNDP and the consultants to ensure that the planning process was effectively done to minimise potential challenges in the field. The entire exercise was conducted from between November and December 2022, which was at the end of the period of implementing the project.

This report is divided into six sections: the sub-sections of section one present the purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation, describes the project and its intervention logic and the methodological approach used by the consultants. Section two examines the context that necessitated the development of the project, and in which it was implemented. Section three presents and analyses the findings. Sections four and five presents the conclusions, which drew on lessons learned from the project, and also provides actionable recommendations for the respective actors involved in the

implementation of the project. The report also annexes include an Evaluation Matrix and a list of some of the documents reviewed.

1.1. PURPOSE, SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the results and approaches of the joint UNDP and Embassy of Ireland Support to Capacity Strengthening of the HRCSL Project. It assessed the results achieved through the project interventions, documented the lessons learned and best practices, as well as captured the challenges faced. While taking into consideration the support provided by other similar projects, the evaluation focussed on the project period 2019 - 2022, reflecting on the contribution made by the project towards an inclusive, peaceful and democratic Sierra Leone.

The evaluation primarily considered contributions made by the project in building the capacity of the HRCSL, at national and district levels through results supported by beneficiaries and identify recommendations and next steps to further strengthen these efforts. The evaluation findings covered UNDP's strength in human rights promotion and protection engagement designed to further refine the formulation and implementation of appropriate strategies, policies and project approaches to human rights promotion and protection, while also strengthening the UNDP's contribution to the UN's system-wide inclusive democratic governance architecture.

The evaluation assessed the impact of project interventions at regional and national levels within the wider context of the technical and financial assistance provided by UNDP and its partners, specifically the Irish Embassy in Sierra Leone. As well, the evaluation assessed the impact of UNDP's support towards strengthening the capacity of oversight institution, increasing access to remedy for the indigent, vulnerable people and victims of human rights violation, and support to institutional policy reforms.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Review the performance of the human right project in achieving the outputs stated in the programme document and their contributions to Country Programme Document (CPD) outcomes.
- Assess the factors that impact positively or otherwise on the project outputs and their sustainability. Assess the appropriateness of the project strategy, implementation approach, and programme institutional/management arrangements.
- Document best practices and lessons learned from the programme to feed into the next phase of the programme cycle.

- Proffer concrete recommendations that may be required for enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of a future programme.

1.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND ITS INTERVENTION LOGIC

The Support to Capacity Strengthening of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for Human Rights Protection and Promotion Project was implemented in two phases as indicated above. Phase I covers the period 2019-2020 and phase II spans from July 2021 to December 2022.

The project seeks to contribute to the following two outputs.

- Output 1: Staff and Institutional capacity of the HRCSL is strengthened to effectively deliver on its human rights promotion and protection mandate
- Output 2: Strengthened public awareness and empowerment of rights-holders to hold the government accountable to their human rights commitment.

The strategic focus of the project has been to contribute to the programme priorities of the UNDP Sierra Leone Country Programme Document (2020-2023), specifically on strengthening capacities of oversight institutions and fostering protection of fundamental human rights within the Inclusive Democratic Governance Cluster. The project complements the efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) to advance rule of law and promote justice and human rights. It therefore contributes to Cluster 4: Governance and Accountability for results of the Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan (MT-NDP 2019–2023), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 16, and the priorities of the African Union Agenda (AUA) Goals 11 and 17.

The project supported targeted short-term interventions geared towards addressing the immediate needs and priorities of the HRCSL with a strong focus on strengthening the staff and institutional capacities and to empower ordinary citizens, especially residents in rural communities who are the right-holders with the requisite knowledge on human rights and the laws of Sierra Leone. The implementation of the support to HRCSL Project utilises National Implementation Modality (NIM) and Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), a combination of modalities, with the former, allowing the HRCSL to be in absolute control of project implementation whilst the latter ensures UNDP delivers project outputs in partnership with the Commission. In 2020, the need to respond to the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation necessitated a refocusing of project priorities to complement the government's response to prevent the spread of the disease. Key interventions focused on meeting

the capacity needs of relevant institutions to respond to the COVID-19 situation, in particular, the human rights implications and concerns emanating from the enforcement of COVID-19 regulations.

The target groups were:

- The HRCSL to benefit from an enhanced capacity building framework that will support the effective carrying out of its mandate.
- Over 25 staff, including commissioners to receive immediate improvements in their technical skills in related human rights topics.
- Six staff of the Commission (5 Commissioners and executive Secretary) to be supported on a study tour for human rights learning and knowledge exchange.
- 80 participants including members of the Human Rights and Compliance Unit (HUCU) of the MFAIC and the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on the UPR to be provided with technical training on the coordination of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) of the UPR process and reporting on the SDGs and African Vision.
- About 22 members of the DHRCs from 12 districts are to be trained in relevant human rights areas.
- The Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) will be supported to enhance its coordination roles.
- Accordingly, 12 monthly coordination meetings will be supported.
- The HRCSL to be supported to enhance its coordination with other stakeholders, including the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), the Judiciary, various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of the Government of Sierra Leone and Local Councils at regional level to follow-up on actions taken on cases referred to them by the Commission. Accordingly, HRCSL will be supported to organise 4 quarterly referral partnership forum meetings.
- 100 participants to be supported to participate in a national consultative conference on the current UPR process.
- Over 190 right-holders to directly participate and benefit in awareness raising and human rights empowerment activities, whilst an estimated number population of 50,000 with access to television were to also benefit from such activities.
- An estimated population of 150,000 people including right-holders in Freetown and other parts of the country will be reached through the human rights hour radio programmes. A total of 20 bimonthly Human Rights Hour (HRH) radio programmes will be supported.

- An estimated population of 12,000 students from 12 senior secondary schools will benefit from human rights awareness outreach campaigns to school, which will also facilitate establishment of human rights and peace clubs in each participating school.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a participatory and gender focused, and responsive evaluation approach which combined document review (project documents and reports), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), The Most Significant Change (MSC), and focus group discussions (FGD) and field observation to collect data from all the stakeholders involved in the project evaluated. The stakeholders included staff of Irish Aid, HRCSL, UNDP, relevant government institutions, District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs), international actors, civil society actors and beneficiaries at the community level. In addition to the above, a workshop was conducted on 15 December 2022, with the staff of the Commission and members of the DHRC in Freetown. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was done, with a thorough discussion held on the project and its implementation process.

The approach used for the evaluation supported the generation of sufficient relevant data that provided findings that were significant in achieving the objectives of the evaluation. In all phases, a strong participatory approach was applied to ensure maximum engagement of all the relevant stakeholders. Purposive and snowball techniques were used to select informants. Key informants were selected for their specialised knowledge and unique perspectives on the issues examined in the evaluation. A total of 43 (29 males, 14 females) respondents were consulted in the evaluation.

Data was collected in Freetown, Waterloo, Port Loko, Kenema and Bo. The evaluation was conducted by an international and a national consultant, supported by two evaluation assistants. A one-day training was conducted for the assistants to familiarise them with the tools and prepare them for the data collection process.

The data collection tools were developed using the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria including: Relevance and Design of the Project, Efficiency, Coherence, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability and Cross-Cutting Issues. The Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Mining was used to analyse the data collected. The Most Significant Change (MSC) tool was separately coded, collated and used to triangulate data from the other tools. It helped to strengthen and further enrich the sections on context, findings and especially recommendations.

It is important to note that all COVID-19 regulations were fully adhered to during field consultations. Additionally, some of the interviews, especially with partners, were conducted virtually by the international consultant, while the national consultant and the assistants conducted field consultations in the targeted communities. In all, data collected by the International and national consultants through all the methods enumerated above contributed to the effective evaluation of the project.

2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The context for the joint project ‘Strengthening Capacity of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for Human rights Protection and Promotion’ was shaped by the desire on the part of UNDP and Irish Aid to build the capacity of the HRCSL to enable it deliver on its mandate efficiently and effectively. The establishment of the Commission as indicated in the introductory section resulted from the country’s chequered history, characterised by human rights violations and the disrespect for the rule of law. Those factors consequently contributed to an eleven-year civil war, which devastated the country. The post-war era presented its own human rights challenges, including the increase in Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), violent masculinity, violence related to gangs and cliques, the heavy handedness of the police in dealing with youth and women and child abuse.⁵

Since its commenced operations in 2007, the Commission has been grappling with financial and human resource challenges, which limited its ability to deliver on its mandate. Alongside this, over the years there has been the fear, as expressed by some respondents, of the Commission being instrumentalised by political elites, as a result of its dependence on government for financial support. Coupled with this, subsequent government have not provided the political will required for the Commission to function effectively. This affected the effectiveness of the Commission and undermined the confidence and trust of the public in it as indicated in two Public Perception Surveys on Service Delivery by Security and Justice Institutions conducted in 2017 and 2019.⁶ Inasmuch as UN missions and agencies have over the years contributed significantly in building the capacity of the Commission, the approaches were largely ad-hoc and not comprehensive and sustainable. The government which is the principal duty bearer has not been adequately investing in human rights protection and promotion in Sierra Leone.

⁵ Bangura, I. 2016. We Can’t Eat Peace: Youth, Sustainable Livelihood and the Peacebuilding Process in Sierra Leone. *Journal for Peacebuilding & Development*, 11:2, 37-50. Also see: Abdullah, Ibrahim. 2020. “Marginal Youths or Outlaws? Youth Street Gangs, Globalisation, and Violence in Contemporary Sierra Leone” *Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Africa Development*, Volume XLV, No. 3, 2020, pp. 33-52.

⁶ See the Public Perception Survey conducted in 2017 and 2019 through collaborations by UNDP and the Justice Sector Coordination Office (JSCO).

The challenges that the Commission contended with during the transition from the former to the current administration, pointed at the need for development partners to build the capacity of the Commission and also strengthen its mandate. As such, the project reviewed was designed to lay a solid foundation for protecting and promoting human rights and the rule of law in Sierra Leone. As indicated by an international development partner⁷ interviewed during the evaluation:

The project was developed to addressing the gaps in the HRCSL that have led to it not been able to adequately contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone. There is a high rate of human rights violations in Sierra Leone, and with a weak Commission, most of the abuses and violations will go unaddressed in both the urban and rural areas. We want to have the HRCSL to be in a position where they can expand their reach and services, through working with partners.

A key actor that also needed significant capacity building with a strong integration into the activities of the HRCSL was the DHRCs. While the establishment of the DHRCs predated the HRCSL, it is regarded as the decentralised structures of the Commission, and also its long arm in reaching remote and isolated communities. The DHRCs consist of CSOs and they play a leading role through the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), to address conflicts and human rights abuses in local communities. As indicated by staff of the Commission during the workshop conducted during the evaluation, before the project reviewed, the Commission was unable to effectively engage and work with the DHRCs, as it has limited capacity and resources to do so. Thus, there was the need for a comprehensive capacity building project that will target both of them, as the Commission depends on the DHRCs to succeed in delivering its mandate.

In addition to the above, there have been challenges with the ability of the HRCSL and its partners to effectively undertake the UPR process. The acceptance of 177 out of the 208 recommendations during the second UPR cycle in 2016 was commendable but implementation progress has been slow. Thus, there was the need to build their capacity to collectively collaborate on it.

The project was developed with the aim of ensuring that the HRCSL is capable of functioning and remaining effective irrespective of the contextual challenges that it has to contend with. The implementation of activities has come to an end and this report assessed whether the objectives were achieved or not and the extent of its achievement.

⁷ Interview conducted on 17 December, 2022.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents findings from data collected from 43 respondents, using a SWOT Analysis, FGDs, survey and KIs. The findings are presented under the evaluation criteria, relevance, efficiency, coherence, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and cross-cutting issues.

3.1. RELEVANCE

The project is highly relevant and addressed some of the challenges that the HRCSL has been contending with since it became operational in 2007. Through the project, a wide range of actors including staff of the HRCSL and their partners including members of DHRCs, CSOs, pupils in school and the public were targeted. Speaking on the relevance of the project, the Principal Human Rights Officer and the Head of the Southern Region stated:

The project has been a lifeline. It came at a time when the relevance of the Commission was being questioned, as a result of lack of activities and challenges related to undertaking outreach activities in communities. The project helped us to re-engage and also helped to enhance the visibility and relevance of the Commission in Bo.⁸

It was also noted by the Senior Human Rights Officer and the Head of Northwest region that:

Prior to the joint UNDP and Irish Embassy support, we went for long without activities, and community members were not pleased with us. We lacked the means to be of relevance to them, and they needed our attention and services, but we were very much constrained. The frustration was not limited to them, as we were also frustrated as we were deployed to provide services that we lacked the finances and logistics to provide. The project helped to save the face of the Commission and we have done a lot since its inception. There is renewed faith in the Commission on the part of community members in Port Loko.⁹

The project as designed, directly responds to the needs of the beneficiaries including the HRCSL. Specific approaches were used to comprehensively engage and support the Commission and its

⁸ Interview conducted on 20 December, 2022.

⁹ Interview conducted on 22 December, 2022.

partners to enable them efficiently and effectively deliver on their mandate. Some of the approaches included:

- Undertaking specific training on human rights, leadership etc. for Commissioners and staff of the HRCSL through training and study tours, to enable them efficiently and effectively deliver on their mandates.
- Building the capacity of the HRCSL to manage the Referral Forum that it established in 2016 to collaborate with various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and CSOs when carrying out its day-to-day activities with regards to complaints handling. This collaboration sometimes takes the form of referring matters to the relevant MDAs and CSOs that are best suited to address certain complaints brought to the Commission either because the Commission does not have the mandate to handle them directly or another institution is best suited to handle such matter. It was envisaged by the project partners that building the capacity of the Commission and its partners will help them better track the progress of cases referred to their respective institutions. This Forum comprises of all partners that the Commission collaborates with in handling referred cases.
- Enhancing the capacity of the Commission to enable the effectively advice government regarding ensuring that draft legislations are human rights friendly and further advice government to ensure they adhere to and implement recommendations emanating from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and other international and regional human rights frameworks.
- Providing the logistical and technical assistance required for the Commission to undertake Mobile Complaints Hearing Exercises in remote, isolated, and hard-to-reach communities. The aim was to ensure to bring the Commission closer to people living in those communities, increase its visibility and most importantly provide an opportunity for people in those areas to easily access and utilise the complaints handling mechanisms of the Commission.
- Reviewing the policies and strategies (Finance Policy, Communication Policy and Strategy, Resource Mobilization Strategy and Human Resource Manual) of the Commission and conduct training on their contents. The objectives were to strengthen the capacity of core staff in the administration of the Commission, enhance the communication strategy of the Commission, and build the capacity of Commissioners and core staff in the successful implementation of the policies.

- Establishing and maintaining Human Rights and Peace Clubs in Secondary Schools with the aim of promoting human rights and building the culture of human rights in schools and communities. The objective was to increase human rights awareness with a target of training secondary school teachers and students in order to nurture the culture of human rights at that level and as well remind them about their duties and responsibilities. The Directorate of Education, Communication and Training (DECT) leads the process of training the clubs. To facilitate the operations of the clubs, they were provided with a Guidelines Manual which was developed by the HRCSL.
- Holding quarterly human rights hour-radio programmes to raise awareness on different human rights concept, with the aim of increasing the knowledge base of the populace on human rights and the visibility of the Commission and increase the lodgement of complaints.
- Building the capacity of the District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs) to enable them to better contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone. It is worthy to mention that the DHRCs are a loose coalition of human rights and pro-democracy organisations/civil society groups in districts acting as a unit in partnership with the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) to protect and promote the human rights of all persons in Sierra Leone especially at district level. The rationale for bringing the DHRCs under the supervision of HRCSL in a Memoranda signed in February 2018 was for the purpose of complementarity; giving the latter's broad mandate and the scarcity of its human and material resources to adequately reach out to the length and breadth of the country. Additionally, to foster collaboration among them, induce joint programme planning and implementation, enhance solidarity, and maximise synergy to addressing issues of human rights across the country. Through the committees, HRCSL could also enhance the multiplier effect of training of trainers' programmes at the level of the committees where HRCSL has limited or non-presence. However, since their establishment, there have been issues related to their limited capacity, and gaps in their collaboration with the HRCSL. Thus, the joint project aimed at improving the collaboration between HRCSL and DHRCs, improve their knowledge on various human rights concept and international human rights instruments and reporting including the UPR process.

The project uses an integrated approach through which it seeks to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries by working directly with institutions such as the MFAIC, the SLP, the ACC and other MDAs. This relationship underpins the relevance of the project to the Government of Sierra Leone, as it complements its goals to build the capacity of the HRCSL and their partners aligning with cluster 4.5 of

Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan 2019-2023 to promoting inclusive and accountable justice institutions.

The project also engaged the members and leaders of local communities, women, and youth groups, and provided them with the awareness raising and sensitisation required to have them provide the social capital essential for the promotion and protection of human rights, but also to ensure that the project has a multiplier effect.

The methodology adopted by the project to work with partners in addressing issues that fall outside its mandate was very good and fostered a relationship that has been of benefit to the public. The referral helped to have the Commission understand and examine the steps taken by its partners such as the Judiciary and the ACC to address cases that it refers to them.

The design of the project is adapted to the institutional, human, and financial capacities of the partner government and other key stakeholders. The project was directly implemented by UNDP and the HRCSL.

The lead organisation responsible for the implementation of the project was UNDP, it was also responsible for the overall management, backstopping and monitoring of the project in line with its Programme and Operational Policies and Procedures. The project is based at the Secretariat of the HRCSL. Over the years, UNDP has built excellent partnerships with various institutions, organisations, and MDAs. The HRCSL is the lead implementing partner while MoJ, MFAIC, CSOs contribute to the implementation of specific areas of the project. The partners complemented each other and provided the project with the diversity it requires. The choice of implementing partners is appropriate and provides a good blend and diversity that is essential to achieve the goals of the project. The partners bring in different skills and have specific components that they are responsible to deliver.

The fund for the project was provided by UNDP and the Irish Embassy. The staff and facilities of the respective partners were available for use by the project and there appeared to be very high commitment on the part of all partners to support the implementation of the project. Engagements with the government partners provided evidence of the commitment of the respective government institutions involved in the project.

3.2. INTERVENTION LOGIC, MONITORING AND LEARNING

The respective partners all bring to the project several decades of experience working on similar interventions. The uniqueness of this project is that it draws from the individual experiences of the work of the partners, identifying challenges related to human rights in Sierra Leone, with two

successful projects used to address them. The lessons from the first phase helped to further build on the overall gains made by the project.

The logframe is well-designed and is of very good quality. It has two outcomes, each with outputs that are well defined and clearly speak to what the project aims to achieve. The intervention logic of the two components of the project has assumptions and risks that are clear and speak to the context and they include:

- i) The COVID-19 disease remains a key risk factor to project implementation, or more government restrictions due to increased COVID-19 cases
- ii) Perceived political interference may erode confidence in the HRCSL. This may discourage victims of human rights violations and abuses from making complaints to the Commission.
- iii) Management and leadership styles of the Commission regarding micromanagement of staff and processes may affect effective delivery of activities.
- iv) Poor financial management with the effect of impacting on delivery of planned results.
- v) Some project activities especially awareness raising on human rights affected by FGM and the operations on private businesses may be perceived to be against certain interest and therefore create tension between beneficiaries and affected persons.

A risk matrix was developed at the project design stage with impact and probability, countermeasures and management responses included and the parties responsible for assessing and managing each risk factor included. The risk factors were monitored and assessed by the project's implementation team. Importantly, the second component of the project which was designed and implemented within the COVID-19 pandemic took into consideration measures to implement the project within that context.

The indicators set during the design stage of the project were unambiguous, Relevant, Acceptable, Credible, Easy and Robust (RACER) and can be easily used to measure the progress made by the project. It has only two result areas, which are largely interlinked and shaped the approach of the project. The two result areas are Output 1: Staff and Institutional capacity of the HRCSL is strengthened to effectively deliver on its human rights promotion and protection mandate. Output 2: Strengthened public awareness and empowerment of rights-holders to hold the government accountable to their human rights commitment.

Target values are set for every indicator, and they are realistic and achievable and were regularly updated. For instance, indicator 1.1.2. reads "The Existence of fourth HRC strategic plan (2021-2024)". Indicator 2.1.1. reads "# of advocacy programmes conducted; # of right-holders who participated in awareness raising and advocacy programmes."

The targets set are not sex-disaggregated and do not provide a clear indication of the number of males and females targeted by the project. The design of the project was informed by a Capacity Needs Assessment of the HRCSL that was conducted by a consultant hired by UNDP. The assessment helped to provide baselines that were essential in setting the targets of the project.

3.2.1. MONITORING SYSTEMS

The project had systems in place that were embedded at the design stage to monitor it. The respective actors involved in its implementation have been monitoring it. For instance, regular monitoring of the project was done by UNDP staff, especially those in the Rule of Law and Social Cohesion Cluster that oversee the project. Alongside this, the Irish Embassy also monitors the project, and engages independently and together with UNDP and the HRCSL on the implementation of the respective components of the project. The Board met bi-annually to provide quality assurance through rigorous quality control and review of progress reports. All project activities were closely monitored and supervised by the UNDP quality assurance unit and Senior Management.

Alongside the steps taken above, there were joint field monitoring visits conducted by the Irish Embassy, UNDP and the HRCSL. One of such visits was undertaken from 20 to 24 June, 2022 with Kenema, Moyamba and Bombali visited. The field visits provided the partners with informed perspectives of the views of the beneficiaries of the project, and whether the project was on the right track or not. Reports were produced at the end of each of such visits, with the reports providing recommendations on areas that should be improved.

The leadership of the HRCSL also conducts field visits to assess the implementation of the project, and to also provide direct supervisory support during the implementation of activities. The Executive Secretary and Programme Manager are regularly in the field. In fact, at the time of conducting this exercise, they were in the field travelling in locations with HRCSL facilities and participating in workshops on the development of a policy on Business and Human Rights. That provided a good indication of them being proactive and not waiting to get reports from the field.

3.3. COHERENCE

It was concluded from the evaluation done that the project fits into the mandate and the activities of the HRCSL. Additionally, it was designed based on the activities of not just the HRCSL but also its partners, thereby helping to enhance coherence in the collaborations among them. For instance, the project supports the work of institutions such as the Judiciary and the ACC, as it enhances the capacity of the HRCSL to refer to them cases that fall within their mandate. The HRCSL also organises referral

forums during which their partners provide feedback on how they have addressed cases that are referred to them. As stated by a staff of the Commission:¹⁰

The project has gone a long way in helping to synchronise the work of the Commission and its partners. It was previously a bit chaotic and there was limited harmonisation and synergy in the work of the respective institutions. Through the forums organised, the lines are drawn as to the cases that each of them should handle, and how they can better coordinate referral of cases. There is significant improvement and this should continue.

The project also fits into other activities that are undertaken by the project, and in fact was designed to complement the work of the Commission. Thus, while the budgetary allocations of the Commission provide the barest minimum for it to exist as an institution, the project has provided the means for it to effectively deliver on its mandate.

The project is also aligned to the broad approach of the Government of Sierra Leone and its development partners, to human rights and the rule of law in Sierra Leone. Thus, it is aligned with national laws and policies such as the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, it also contributes to cluster four (Governance and Accountability for Results) of the Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan (MT-NDP 2019–2023), specifically to the broad result area 4.5 '*promoting inclusive and accountable justice institutions*'. The project is also aligned with international and regional treaties and protocols such as SDGs 16 & 5, the Convention to the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Human Rights, the Maputo Protocol and the priorities of the African Union Agenda (AUA) Goals 11 and 17.¹¹

It should be noted that the implementation of the project was in conformity with the UNCDF/CPD outcome 2 which states that: By 2023, people in Sierra Leone benefit from more gender- and youth-responsive institutions that are innovative, accountable, and transparent at all levels and can better advance respect for human rights and the rule of law, equity, peaceful coexistence, and protection of children, girls, and persons with disability. The project is aligned with UNDP's Sierra Leone Country Programme Document (2020-2023), specifically on strengthening capacities of oversight institutions and fostering protection of fundamental human rights within the Inclusive Democratic Governance Cluster.¹² It is also aligned with Ireland's objective of strengthening national institutions to guarantee

¹⁰ Interview conducted on 23 December, 2022.

¹¹ SDG 5: Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, priorities of AUA Goal 11: Human rights, justice and rule of law and AUA Goal 17: Women and girls' empowerment.

¹² Sierra Leone UNDP Country Programme Document (2020-2023), p. 5-6.

human rights. Alongside this, the project falls within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

3.4. EFFICIENCY

The project is well designed and has a good intervention logic that is straightforward and realistic as noted above. The implementation mechanisms put in place are good, with UNDP and HRCSL implementing the project. The project as indicated earlier is based in the secretariat of the HRCSL, with the secretariat undertaking the activities set in the logframe. The ability of the HRCSL to directly implement activities provides them with a sense of ownership and leadership of the project. It mitigates any potential for micromanagement by international partners. Decisions related to activities are said by the partners to be jointly taken. Thus, it was concluded that the implementation mechanisms that were put in place were good, and they enhanced the potential for the project to achieve its expected result.

The UNDP and the Irish Embassy have been complementing the activities of the Government of Sierra Leone, as credible development partners for decades. The two institutions also have a good working relationship, with similar interest areas including on human rights and gender. They have been working closely during the implementation of the respective components of the project evaluated.

The implementation of the project on the side of UNDP is led by the Rule of Law Project Manager in UNDP, and the Project Implementation Focal Person, who is the Senior Rule of Law and Human Rights Officer of UNDP. The overall management of the project is led by the Project Steering Committee which consists of staff of UNDP, the Irish Embassy and the HRCSL. The approach adopted had the two funders of the project working with state and non-state actors to ensure that an integrated and collaborative approach is used in delivering the benefits of the project. They met regularly and it was observed that all the actors were familiar with the project and its objectives and are contributing to the success of the project.

Closely tied to the above, is the fact that there were several other state and non-state actors that supported the implementation of the different components of the project, some of these actors include the Judiciary, the SLP and the ACC. Such institutions supported the project's capacity building exercises through the facilitation of quarterly referral partnership forum meetings. While these partners were not integrated into the project's implementation team, they were engaged during monitoring exercises, as their perspectives were critical to the success of the project. Additionally, their participation and commitment to the project provided it with significant political capital that a project like the one reviewed requires. Thus, there was a good understanding on the part of the state actors

that the project is complementing their actions and that it is in their interest to best support the implementation of the project.

Two actors that should have been mainstreamed into this project but were not, are the media and the private sector. The media, especially community radio stations, could have played a critical role in enhancing awareness raising and sensitisation activities in relation to human rights. While the project has components that have to do with awareness raising and sensitisation, and used radio and TV stations for such exercises, media actors were not integrated into the project, with them playing a leading role in it. Fully mainstreaming media actors in the project, would have not only reduced the cost of paying for airtime but would have also helped in enhancing sustainability and continuity, in terms of the airing of project related materials, after the end of the project. Some of the media houses are privately owned and this is where the private sector could also have been instrumental in helping to enhance the sustainability of the project. If constructively engaged and mainstreamed into a project, private sector actors could play a leading role in funding them. However, they are usually left out, and that mitigates the level of support a project could get, beyond the funds provided by the donors.

The establishment and provision of support for outreach to be conducted by Human Rights and Peace Clubs is going a long way in having children and community members be aware of their rights and how they can be protected and promoted. As indicated by a pupil engaged in Makeni:¹³

“The human rights and peace clubs are a good example of how children can be empowered to begin to show leadership on issues related to human rights and peacebuilding in their households and communities. The ability to engage our peers, family and community members, helps to make them understand that we can all do better in our society, if we choose to. Prior to the project, we did not know that, as children we can get involved in such conversations or could even come to the point of understanding that we could be able to defend our rights and also the rights of others.”

Alongside the Human Rights and Peace Clubs, the project involved community stakeholders including community and religious leaders, CSOs, teachers and others. These actors have the platform they require to directly engage the HRCSL and actively participate in activities implemented by the project, including radio programmes. It was observed during consultations that the project has local buy-in and ownerships which is critical for its success.

¹³ Interview conducted on 14 December, 2022.

3.4.1 ADEQUACY IN RELATION TO THE INPUTS/RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE VARIOUS PARTNERS

The financial resources provided for the project by UNDP and Irish Aid in two components was said by the respective partners to have been adequate based on the initial design of the project. The funds for the two components of the project amounted to USD 874, 989. The cost of Phase I of the project amounted to (€380,000 which is equivalent to US\$431,818), while Phase II cost was (€363,400 which is equivalent to US\$443,171). They were disbursed in tranches, often per year, to cover the various aspects of the project within each output.

The decision to have a second component was based on the need to further expand on the activities undertaken during the first component. Thus, at the end, all the intended activities were undertaken. It was concluded by the consultants based on the review of the financial reports and the budgets provided by the project's team that the finances of the project were well managed and used, and value for money was ensured with activities undertaken. In examining the budget, the assessments were done of the costs in the market of the items procured and services provided during the project, to allow the consultants to reach their conclusions on the budget.

The facilities and the human resources of the partner organisations were made available to the project. All the partners provided the required human resources that the project required. Furthermore, the government, schools and CSOs provided human resource and other forms of support to the project. For instance, teachers are supporting the Human Rights and Peace Clubs; CSOs are participating in radio and TV programmes; community structures and members are active in the implementation of the project; the DHRCs consisting of CSOs and CBOs are also a critical component of the project. These actors provide additional longer term human resource and social capital that will promote the ideals and objectives of the project.

3.4.2. DELAYS ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The implementation of the project encountered some delays which had implications for its implementation. This section discusses the key challenges and how they were addressed. The principal challenge that the project contended with was the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic affected Sierra Leone in early 2020 and had implications for the implementation of the project, as it led to delays in implementation of the project especially as the pandemic brought its own security challenges, which included having the public to respect the regulations set by the government, including lockdowns and curfews.

It took a while for the project to adapt to the context of the pandemic. In fact, a consultant Nana Busia that was brought in to support the implementation of the project, got trapped in the country because of the closure of the land, air and sea borders. He remained in the country for a couple of months.

It was also reported by partners that UNDP's internal process and bureaucratic bottlenecks also led to delays in the implementation of the project. This has to do with procurement processes, and the review of applications that has to do with the recruitment of consultants. These delays affected the smooth implementation of some activities but overall, value for money was achieved.

3.5. EFFECTIVENESS

Significant progress has been made already in producing the expected outputs under each of the outcome areas. For clarity, the gains made are divided into those made during the first and second phases of the project.

Phase I: August 2019 - December 2020

Expected Output	Planned Activities	Targets	Achievements
Outcome 1: <i>By 2020, HRCSL is enabled to effectively promote, protect and advocate for the full respect, and fulfilment of human rights in Sierra Leone.</i>			
1.1 Support to technical and institutional capacity of the Commission			
Output 1: Staff and Institutional capacity of the HRC is strengthened to effectively deliver on its human rights promotion and protection mandate	1.1.1 Conduct a comprehensive capacity assessment and the development of a capacity building plan of the HRC	1 Institutional capacity assessment conducted	One Comprehensive HRC capacity assessment done, and capacity building plan developed
	1.1.2 Develop the HRC fourth strategic plan (2021-2024)	-1 HRC Strategic Plan (2021-2024) developed and adopted -400 copies of the Strategic Plan printed and disseminated	-HRC Strategic plan (2021-2025) developed. -300 copies of the strategic plan produced.

	1.1.3 Revise the HRCSL Act 2004 to meet modern demands of NHRIs and enact the same	-HRCSL Act, 2004 reviewed and enacted -300 copies of the new Act printed and disseminated	HRCSL Act 2004 reviewed
	1.1.4 Support relevant capacity building training for newly appointed Commissioners and staff on general human rights framework, universal and regional human rights mechanism, complaint handling and investigation, resource mobilisation.	1 training targeting 25 participants conducted.	28 (12% increase) HRC staff (M21, F7) including five (5) new Commissioners and 23 staff trained on international and national human rights frameworks and mechanisms, complaint handling, gender issues and resource mobilisation.
	1.1.5 Conduct training for the DHRCs on complaint handling and investigation, monitoring and research and reporting, resource mobilisation, human rights advocacy and ADR mechanism, etc.	1 training of trainers (TOT) on complaint handling, human rights monitoring, and advocacy, etc. targeting 22 participants (m/f) conducted.	1 training conducted for 42 (M33, F9) members of the DHRC benefitted from a two-day training of trainers' programme which covered topics on treaty body reporting and international mechanisms, complaints handling and investigation; monitoring, research and reporting; gender, advocacy and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
	1.1.6 Support study-tour of newly appointed Commissioners and staff to the Uganda and South	1 study-tour to NHRI in Uganda involving 6 staff undertaken	1 study-tour involving 7 (M5, F2) persons to Ugandan Human Rights Commission conducted

	Africa HRC on the operations of the NHRIs		
	1.1.7: Monitor implementation of SOPs on management of quarantine homes, treatment centres, checkpoints, etc.	36 (9 per region) monitoring visits conducted and a comprehensive report on the findings and actions taken prepared and submitted.	Monitoring visits conducted to 40 quarantine facilities including 14 government and 26 private facilities, and 12 checkpoints across six districts.
	1.1.8.1 Conduct 3 regional trainings targeting 90 security personnel on the SOPs on managing quarantine homes and checkpoints in collaboration with the EOC.	3 trainings conducted at regional level with 90 security personnel benefitting.	2 regional trainings in Port Loko (Northwest region) and Bo (Southeast region) conducted for 90 (M65, F25) law enforcement officers (LEOs) on human rights-based approach to enforcing COVID-19 regulations and on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
	1.2 Capacity of HRC to engage MDAs, CSOs and other stakeholders in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, and reporting the SDGs 2030 and African Vision 2063		
	1.2.1 Provide advisory services and technical training for HRCU and NSC on the coordination of the NMRF of the UPR process and reporting on the SDGs and African Vision	1 training targeting 70 participants (m/f) conducted	HRCSL conducted training for 70 (M50, F20) representatives from MDAs and CSO on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and reporting on the SDGs and African Vision 2063.
	1.2.2 Organise a national consultative conference of key stakeholders on the treaty reporting	One 2-day national consultative conference on UPR process involving 80 participants (m/f) held	-3 regional consultations on the UPR in Freetown, Makeni and Bo, involving 80 stakeholders (M64, F16) organised.

	obligation and the UPR process.		
	1.2.3 Develop, launch and publish State of Human Right Reports (SOHR 2018) report	-1 SOHR 2018 developed, launched and published. -300 copies of SOHR printed and disseminated	-2018 SOHR produced -400 copies printed and distributed
	1.3 Capacity of DCILS to investigate, monitor and handle complaints within reasonable time frame		
	1.3.1. Support four (4) quarterly Referral Partnership Forum Meetings	4 quarterly Referral partnership fora held	1 referral meeting held
	1.3.2 Support regional offices and HQ on outreach to investigate complaints of violations received from the public via social media/telephone/email during the State of Emergency for appropriate response and/or referral to relevant authorities for prompt remedial action.	- Five (5) dedicated regional office phones procured to receive complaints. -At least 25 (5 per region) complaints received, investigated/referred and handled conclusively.	-5 phones procured for regional offices to receive complaints and reduce physical contacts with the HRCSL staff. -49 (96% increase) (HQ 18, Western Area 4, Eastern Region 9, Northern Region 7 and Southern Region 11) complaints received from M32 and F17.
	2: Support to public awareness and empowerment of rights-holders		
Output 2: Strengthened public awareness and empowerment of rights-holders to hold government accountable to their human rights commitment	2.1 Organise advocacy programmes on human rights related issues of public interest as part of celebration of the International Human Rights Day	Four (4) advocacy activities conducted as part of celebration of international Human Rights Day 10 December 2019 with an estimated 190 direct right-holders' beneficiaries	4 (target achieved) activities conducted. These include advocacy session with stakeholders on sexual violence, townhall meeting to advocate for moratorium on the death penalty, a debating

			and quiz competitions on human rights themes.
	2.2 Organise bimonthly radio-based (human rights hour) awareness programmes on human rights issues e.g., human rights in the administration of justice, rights of persons with disabilities	20 bi-monthly radio-based human rights hour programmes conducted	26 (Exceeds target by 30%) monthly radio discussion (human rights hour) programme conducted.
	2.3 Develop and air jingles at district-level in four local languages (Limba, Mende, Themne and Krio) on COVID-19 disease, preventive measures, addressing stigmatisation and discrimination.	-Three (3) jingles in Krio, Mende and Limba developed. -Twelve 12 Radio airings of jingles at regional level.	-4 (Exceeds target by 33%) jingles in Limba, Mende, Themne and Krio developed -876 jingle slots aired in four local languages in 14 community radios on COVID-19 and Human Rights.

Phase II: July 2021-December 2022

Expected Output	Planned Activities	Targets	Achievements
Outcome 1: By 2022, HRCSL is enabled to effectively promote, protect and advocate for the full respect, and fulfilment of human rights in Sierra Leone.			
Output 1: Staff and Institutional capacity of the HRC is strengthened to effectively deliver on its human rights promotion and protection mandate	Activity Result 1.1: Technical and institutional capacity of the Commission, DHRCs and Parliamentarians improved.		
	Action 1.1.1: Support short courses for 20 Senior Management staff including Commissioners on leadership, procurement, project management and Monitoring and Evaluation from the Institute of Public Administration and Management	20 HRC staff and Commissioners benefitted from 2 sets of training	20 (M11, F9) HRCSL Staff and Commissioners benefitted from 2 sets of training on leadership, procurement, project management, and Monitoring and Evaluation at the Institute of Public Administration and Management.
	Action 1.1.2: Training of 50 parliamentarians in human rights-	50 trained	50 (43 (M37, F6) Members of Parliaments and 7 (M3, F4) Clerks) trained on the application

	based approach on legislative review and other relevant areas		of human rights-based approach to legislative reviews.
	1.1.3 Procure 15 laptops to improve ICT capacity of the Commission	15 laptops procured and ICT capacity improved	HRCSL procured 20 laptops, 10 i5 Desktop computers, 5 Bluetooth speakers (Jpex), 4 Projectors Equipment Projects, and 10 HP Lasser jet pro M402N to enhance its ICT capacity.
	1.1.4 Procure one (1) Toyota Land Cruiser Vehicle to facilitate HRC movement across country	1 Toyota Land Cruiser vehicle procured	HRCSL procured one (1) Hard Top Toyota Land Cruiser to aid in outreach activities.
	Activity Result 1.2 Strengthened HRCSL legal and policy frameworks		
	Action 1.2.1: Support drafting of the reviewed HRCSL Act, the pre-legislative (Lobbying) process and popularisation of the HRCSL Act	An amended and updated HRCSL Act	The Ministry of Justice has carried out drafting instruction of the new Act, cabinet paper prepared and submitted to the cabinet for approval and for onward submission to parliament. HRCSL has engaged parliament in anticipation of the sending of the bill to parliament.
	Action 1.2.2: Support the HRC to review and train 25 staff on its Finance policy, Asset and Equipment Maintenance Policy, Communication Policy and Strategy, resource mobilisation strategy and Human Resource Manual	3 Policies and human resource manual and resource mobilisation strategy updated	(5) HRCSL policies reviewed, (1) new Fixed Asset Policy developed, and training conducted on the same for 118 (M82, F36) Commissioners and Staff of the HRCSL.
	Activity Result 1.3: Improved Capacity of DCILS to investigate, monitor and handle complaints within reasonable time frame		
	Action: 1.3.1 Organise 10 community outreach mobile complaints clinics for 500 community people.	400 people (200 (2021), 200 (2022) from 8 mobile complaint clinic.	HRCSL conducted 10 mobile complaints hearing in 10 locations. 574 participants (M411, F163) were in attendance and 49 (M33, F16) complaints were received.
	Action 1.3.2: Support an innovative real time human rights reporting through development and training of 21 persons (16 DHRC, 5 Regional Officers and 2 staff in situation room) on the Human Rights App to support real time reporting	An innovative human rights reporting App (HRR App) developed, and 23 (m/f) people benefitted from	44 (M33 F11) HRCSL staff and DHRC members trained on innovative real-time human rights reporting on the Human Rights App.

		training on the HRR App	
Action: 1.3.3 Organise 8 quarterly referral partnership meetings	8 quarterly referral meetings	HRCSL conducted seven (7) referral partnership meetings involving the participation of 106 (86M, 20F) representatives from MDAs. A total of 114 complaints were referred.	
Activity Result 1.4 Improved engagement with stakeholders on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, reporting on the SDGs and African Vision 2063			
Action 1.4.1 Support HRCSL to organise 5 stakeholders' engagements for 250 persons and to popularise the 2021 UPR recommendations in collaboration with the DHRCs.	5 stakeholders' engagements for 250 persons 5 radio programmes	9 (4 regional stakeholders' consultations on the 274 Third Cycle UPR recommendations and 5 stakeholders' engagements held at regional level to popularise the Third Cycle UPR Recommendations.	
Action: 1.4.2 Organise 3 advocacy meetings at regional level for 120 key stakeholders on the UPR recommendations focusing on total abolition of the death penalty, resumption of the Constitutional review process and passage of the HR Defenders Bill	3 Advocacy meetings held on the abolition of the death penalty, resumption of the Constitutional review process and passage of the HR Defenders Bill	HRCSL conducted 3 stakeholders' engagement in 3 locations (Bo, Makeni, and Waterloo). 139 (105M, 34F) relevant stakeholders engaged, and awareness raised on the UPR process and recommendations, the constitutional review process and the government white paper, and the Human Rights Defenders Bill.	
Activity Result 1.5 Strengthened capacity of DHRC to support and complement the work of the HRCSL at regional level			
Action 1.5.1 Build the capacity of 32 members of the DHRC to monitor and publish a report on the implementation of gender justice international frameworks (CEDAW, Maputo, UN Resolution 1325 and 1820) and procure 5 desktop computers to support ICT capacity of DHRCs and case data management.	32 trained	HRCSL conducted capacity training for 32 (M18, F14) members of the District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs) on CEDAW, Maputo Protocol, UN Resolution 1325, and 1820.	
Activity Result 1.6: Policy environment for Business and Human Rights (B+HR)			
Action: 1.6.1 Conduct a comprehensive baseline study of 50 private businesses impacting on human rights in Sierra Leone and validation of the same	1 updated study on the impact of 50 private businesses on human rights conducted	Baseline study report validated. 25 (17M, 8F) participants of HRCSL staff participated. Survey document validated and finalised	

	Action: 1.6.2 Organise 3 stakeholders' engagements of 75 people on developing and validating a national policy on B+HR.	1 National policy on B+HR 3 Stakeholders' fora	Three (3) engagements held in Bo, Makeni, and Waterloo. 64 (54M, 10F) participants were engaged and made inputs in the draft a national policy on Business and Human Rights done by the consultants One National Policy on Business and Human Rights Policy developed.
Output 2: Strengthened public awareness and empowerment of rights-holders(women/girls and men/boys)to hold government accountable to their human rights commitment.	Activity Result 2.1: Support to gender-focused public awareness and empowerment of rights-holders		
	Action: 2.1.1 Support 25 (5 per region) monthly Human Rights Hour (HRH) radio programme on COVID-19 and human rights, SGBV and Sexual Offences (Amended) Act 2019, women's rights in the administration of justice etc.	20 HRH	26 radio programmes held in Freetown and in the provinces on complaint handling procedures, basic Human Rights concepts, gender laws, human rights and elections, functions and mandate, and the re-accreditation process of the Commission.
	Action: 2.1.2 Conduct 8 human rights community awareness outreach campaigns to schools and facilitate the establishment of human rights and peace clubs (HRPC), develop MOU, Byelaws and establish 5 regional networks (Executive bodies) to coordinate the activities of the Peace Clubs	10 human rights outreaches to school and 10 HRPC established	The Commission conducted training for pupils and teachers in Freetown, Port Loko, Kabala, Kono, Moyamba, Kailahun, Kambia, and Magburaka Districts in human rights and established 38 human rights and peace clubs.
	Monitoring & Evaluation		End of project evaluation conducted

In conclusion, the outputs produced are of very good quality, and they are succeeding in helping the Commission and partners to carry out their duties professionally and effectively. Despite the initial delays that had to do with the COVID-19 pandemic which ultimately necessitated a reprogramming of some of the project interventions, and the bureaucracy of UNDP, the activities of the project were fully implemented and were effective in achieving its set goals and objectives.

3.6. IMPACT

The project as indicated above, succeeded in making tremendous progress, which contributed to the achievement of some of the goals of the project. Below are reasons provided under each result area for the conclusions arrived at:

- i. According to staff of the HRCSL, the capacity building exercise has helped to better position them to deliver on their mandate. Critical examples provided were the training of staff, the revision of the policies of the Commission, the revision of the HRCSL Act, the acquisition of computers and a vehicle, and the travel tour to Uganda. Alongside this, the development of the Business and Human Rights policy is of significance to the Commission. The capacity gained by the Commission is enabling it to be proactive, work with multiple partners in achieving its mandate. Additionally, the capacity gained has enabled the Commission to conduct training for its staff and DHRCs on human rights, complaints handling and other related activities.
- ii. The referral forums undertaken are helping to provide a clear line, as to what the mandates and limits are of the respective institutions working on human rights and the rule of law. The forums provide a platform to not only refer cases but also to get feedback from the respective institutions on how they have succeeded or not in addressing the cases referred to them. Such a platform enhances a coordinated and synergised approach to the provision of justice and the rule of law related services in Sierra Leone.
- iii. As reported by the Commission “As a result of the rigorous engagements and awareness raising on radio programmes during mobile complaints handling across the country, regular complaints coming to the Commission has increased by 30 percent considering previous records”.¹⁴ For instance, as illustrated in the table below, 195 complaints were received by the Commission. Out of the 195 reported cases, 103 of the complainants were women and 92 men. The increase in reported cases points at the growing awareness in terms of the visibility and activities of the Commission, resulting from the project.

Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone Complaints Matrix¹⁵

Outcomes	male	female	Total
Resolved	24	37	61
Referred	25	39	64
Pending before police for investigation	5	3	8
Pending before court for adjudication	3	4	7
Pending for further action	11	6	17
Concluded investigations	1		1
Advised	11	5	16
monitoring in progress	7	2	9
Respondent does not reach	5	7	12
Grand total	92	103	195

¹⁴ See the UNDP – Sierra Leone – Quarterly Project Progress Report on the Support to the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) – January – November 2022.

¹⁵ Ibid.

- iv. The establishment of Human Rights and Peace Clubs in schools is tied to an initiative of the African Union. The project has succeeded in establishing 50 of such clubs in schools and the process of establishing them is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the schools and their operations are guided by byelaws. The establishment of the school clubs is a good initiative, as the clubs are succeeding in creating awareness among pupils and in communities on human rights and related issues. The ownership and participation of pupils in the school clubs are going a long way in promoting peer-to-peer education and giving pupils the confidence, they need to understand their agency and how they can at their age begin to contribute to the changes they want to see in society. As noted by Adama Kamara, the Vice President of Harford Secondary School for Girls Human Rights and Peace Club in Moyamba District:

“The Human Rights and Peace Club in my school is also serving as a platform to voice out other pupils’ concerns who now feel more confident to bring some of their issues to the membership of the club. I am also more confident now to speak on peace and human rights issues compared to before the establishment of the Human Rights and Peace Clubs.”¹⁶

Similar to the stories of Adama, John Kamara interviewed in Bombali states that:

“The clubs are a very good initiative. They are helpful to not just us, but also our families, as we teach our parents what human rights are, and how they should also support the work that we do. The club has helped me to know that I have rights that should be protected and that I can engage my peers and elders on it. I feel good about this, and my friends do too.”¹⁷

The clubs are making a rightful impact in the communities in which the schools targeted are located. Members of the communities visited also indicated their knowledge of and support for the clubs, as they deem them to be instrumental in promoting human rights. However, some respondents were critical of the fact that the training for clubs lasted for only a day in each district. They indicated that given the number of issues and modules to cover, it would be good for the training to last for at least three days. This will help to enrich the discussions and exchanges between the facilitators and the participants.

¹⁶ From the collection of stories titled “Young Voices in Sierra Leone are Leading Human Rights and Peace Clubs in Schools, Supported by UNDP & Irish Aid”. The short report was produced in 2022.

¹⁷ Interview conducted on 13 December, 2022.

- v. The existence and activities of the DHRCs are making a positive difference in the lives of those that they provide services to in the districts. The existence of the DHRCs provide a platform for people to seek advice and take their complaints to. The DHRCs also understand the context and actors in communities and know what to do to ensure that victims of abuses and rights violations get the redress that they deserve. They are playing a critical role in advocating for and championing the quest for justice. The knowledge of their existence and the roles that they have been playing in communities appears to be giving confidence to victims of human rights violations to bring to the fore their experiences and seek redress.
- vi. The DHRCs provide a platform for CSOs and CBOs to work together in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights in their communities. This capacity building support goes a long way in providing the DHRCs with the skills and knowledge that they require to effectively carry out their roles. As noted by a member of the DHRC in Makeni:

“The Committee in our district consists of organisations that are keen on promoting human rights. Our relationship with the HRCSL and the support that they have been providing to us over time has enabled us to be much more efficient and, in a position, to be of relevance to our people. Defending human rights is key to us and all we do every day is to ensure that we do just what we have committed to do, which is to enhance the dignity and rights of our people.”¹⁸

- vii. The HRCSL appears to be in a better position to contribute to the UPR process. They better understand it and work with multiple stakeholders to support the process of drafting the UPR and responding to the questions raised by member states of the UN when the UPR is presented. This is helping to enhance the relevance of the Commission and its ability to respond to critical questions that have to do with human rights in Sierra Leone.

¹⁸ Interview conducted on 13 December, 2022.

3.6.1. THE MSC TOOL

Using the MSC tool, respondents were questioned on the most significant changes that they identified with the implementation of the project and the key changes/reforms that they would have loved to see in the design and implementation of the project. The responses provided are recorded in the tables below.

Most Significant Changes attributed to the project
The ability of the Commission to carry out its activities efficiently and effectively
Better understanding of the policies and strategies of the Commission by the staff
The Commission having the capacity to organise referral forums with partners
The capacity of the DHRCs built with them supporting the work of the Commission in their districts
The Commission playing a leading role in the UPR Process
The Commission being able to undertake mobile complaints hearing sessions in districts
The Commission working with stakeholders on having a policy on Business and Human Rights and increased awareness on Business and Human Rights Issues among selected officials of relevant government MDAs and companies
The Commission working on reviewing its Act
The Commission having revised policies that are used by Commissioners and staff
The establishment of more Human Rights and Peace Clubs in schools
Increased visibility of the Commission

It could be seen from the table above that there are several factors that are considered good by respondents, with the conclusion that the activities undertaken have helped to build the capacity of the Commission. However, as could be seen in the table below, some respondents would have loved to see more integration of PwDs and women and youth groups. This is coupled with the need for more investment in the DHRCs, especially in facilitating their movements in their districts, and also the

provision of raincoats and boats for them during the rainy season. This point is made by a respondent in Bo:¹⁹

The training we have received is good and we feel better connected to the HRCSL now that before. However, we need more support, for example motorbikes, fuel, raincoats and boots to do our work in the field. Most terrains are difficult to reach, so in the future, we should be considered for such support.

Key changes/reforms related to the project that respondents would have loved to see in the design and implementation of the project
The integration of PwDs in the project
More involvement of Women and Youth Groups apart from those in the DHRCs in the project
More investments in the DHRCs, for instance with motorbikes and logistics to travel to remote communities
Having a new facility for the HRCSLs office in Waterloo. The one there is in a poor state
Investments by the government to build on the funds provided by the development partners
The rolling-out of the Human Rights and Peace Clubs in Karene District and other major towns in the Northwest region e.g., Lungi, Lunsar, Masiaka, Gbinty, Rokupr, Madina, Mambolo and Mange.

3.7. SUSTAINABILITY

Since its inception, the project has demonstrated that most of its activities are sustainable. The capacity building initiatives for the Commissioners and staff of the HRCSL has already gone a long way in enabling them to perform their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner. The Commissioners and senior staff of the Commission have even started conducting training for other staff and members of the DHRCs. Additionally, the Commission now has the capacity to organise Referral fora, which helps to bring together the different partners working with the Commission, with them being able to engage on cases that have been referred to them by the Commission. This is a clear demonstration of the capacity they have gained and how that capacity is now being transferred. The knowledge and skills gained by the HRCSL is sustainable and will remain with those trained forever.

The provision of computers and a vehicle to the HRCSL has increased their capacity to deliver on their mandate. Prior to the project most of the facilities of the Commission outside of Freetown lacked

¹⁹ Interview conducted on 19 December, 2022.

computers which are critical in recording and managing sensitive data collected. The computers have helped the facilities to move from a paper-based approach to an approach that is electronic and sustainable.

The capacity building exercises targeting members of the DHRCs is also sustainable, as it is focused on enabling them to better provide the services that they provide in their districts. As stated by a member of the DHRC in Kenema:²⁰

“We have been in existence for several years but there have been very limited and well organised capacity building exercises that focused on us, with the aim of enhancing continuity in the work that we do. The training provided by the HRCSL with the support of UNDP and the Irish Embassy has helped to provide us with the knowledge and skills we need to mobilise our members, work as a team and improve on the services to our people. This was previously a challenge, but we have overcome it and remain very focused in carrying out our duties.”

Like the point made above, a member of the DHRC in Bo²¹ had this to say:

“As a committee what we needed was training that will help our members understand the nature of their work and the practical and theoretical perspectives that are essential in dealing with cases brought to them. Most of what we were using was common sense, as we lacked the required training to provide advice or try to address cases brought to us. We also lacked the confidence to engage government institutions such as the Judiciary. The training we received and the continued support in terms of how the HRCSL helps us to engage other actors, for instance during the Referral Fora has helped to build our confidence and we are now much more confident to engage them than previously.”

The DHRCs are very critical to the work of the Commission, and they serve as its long hand, as they access and work in areas that the limited staff of the Commission cannot reach. Thus, the capacity that they have acquired through the project is of immense significance to enhancing sustainability and continuity with their work, and by extension the work of the Commission.

The capacity built in relation to the work of the Commission and other MDAs on the UPR process is said to be sustainable, as these institutions are in a better position to lead the process and respond to comments and questions that are normally provided by states responding to reports provided by the Government of Sierra Leone on the state of human rights in Sierra Leone. Coupled with this, the

²⁰ Interview conducted on 11 December 2022.

²¹ Interview conducted on 13 December 2022.

establishment of an integrated network to support the UPR process is also a good approach that enhances sustainability as the institutions will continue building on the gains made in the long run.

The radio and TV programmes that are geared towards sensitising the public on human rights issues are very effective and are succeeding in building a strong sense of awareness in local communities. Messages aired focuses specifically on issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, the rights of the child, and other topical issues that the HRCSL would like to tackle in communities. As indicated by a member of a religious leader in Makeni:²²

“We learn a lot from the radio programmes aired and we use those lessons when we preach. There are even issues we as religious leaders have not previously understood and may not have rightfully presented to those who worship with us. Thus, the knowledge we now have is vital in helping us change perspectives and address abuses we once regarded as normal. We are going to stick with what we now know, and we will continue passing on the knowledge we have now. All we do as religious leaders, is to pass on knowledge and try to make society better for those in it.”

This knowledge, for instance, that society is gaining as a result of the project will remain with them, and it is helping to change perspectives. As such, there is a good element of sustainability in relation that could be built on by future initiatives.

The Human Rights and Peace Clubs are established in schools and there are very limited resources required to keep them active. They have been integrated into the activities of the school, with the administrations and teachers taking responsibility for their success. This is a strong element of sustainability. The children and their teachers are using the knowledge they have gained from the capacity building exercises to expand on the knowledge of human rights in their schools and communities. Respondents engaged in this evaluation indicated that the clubs would continue their activities after the end of the life span of the project.

While there is a high potential for sustainability, working on the protection and promotion of human rights in a country that is still grappling with the legacies of an eleven-year violent civil war is very challenging. Thus, there is the need for continuous support in building the capacity of institutions and civil society and in providing them with the tools and the resources they require to adequately function. There is the need for investment in capacity building for CSOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), beyond those that are in the DHRCs. Same for community and traditional leaders. At the heart of these engagements should be women, youth and children owned and led

²² Interview conducted on 9 December, 2022.

organisations. In addition to the above, the lack of continuity of mobile complaint hearings processes because of financial challenges will undermine the gains already made.

3.8. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

In relation to cross-cutting issues, two areas are examined, i) Gender Equality and the Rights Based Approach, and ii) Disability Inclusion.

i) Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion and the Rights-Based Approach: The project was Gen 2 with the significant objective to achieve gender equality. The project has gender equality-based approach, and the set objectives are all focused on protecting and promoting the rights, welfare, and dignity of vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone. The sex-disaggregated data was captured and presented in the annual report. Further, women, girls, men, and boys were all targeted in the project and there were no reports of exclusion or marginalisation in relation to the project. Indeed, issues involving gender-based abuses and violence were particularly targeted and treated. The training provided to the DHRCs and the awareness campaigns and sensitisation activities were all focused on creating positive changes in relation to the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone. The school clubs established have a fair representation of male and female members. The project sought to mitigate SGBV and enhance the inclusion of women in the project.

The project adhered to the working principles of the rights-based approach. The training activities undertaken and the awareness-raising, and sensitisation activities are all hinged on the rights-based approach. The project sought to shape the mindset of community members on the need to address human rights challenges that they have been contending with for years and that have to do with their rights, dignity, and welfare.

The HRCSL presence covers all districts of Sierra Leone. The outreach conducted by the HRCSL covers rural areas and indigenous communities and has improved the capacity of right-holders to claim their rights through the support of CSOs and DHRCs. Therefore, the project was guided by the principle of Leaving No One Behind.

Disability Inclusion: While the project broadly targeted vulnerable groups, much more could have been done to integrate issues related to People with Disability (PwDs). It was observed that the awareness-raising progress did not specifically target them, and in addition, they were not included in radio and TV programmes. The DHRCs also have very limited organisations that are PwDs owned and led, which limits their ability to focus on PwDs. There is a need to ensure that every DHRC has at least one organisation that is working on PwD-related issues.

4. CONCLUSION

The project is highly relevant, and it targeted the HRCSL and its partners including MDAs, CSOs and the DHRCs. The aim was to build their capacity, thereby enabling them to carry out their mandates efficiently and effectively. An inter-webbed approach that integrated several actors including local community members was used. The intervention logic is good, and the indicators as set during the design stage of the project were unambiguous, RACER and can be easily used to measure the progress made by the project. It has only two result areas, which are largely interlinked and shaped the approach of the project. The choice of activities and outputs to be delivered by the project was good as they took into consideration the kind of support that was required by the HRCSL and its partners, in their bid to protect and promote human rights in Sierra Leone.

The HRCSL which is the lead beneficiary and is directly involved in the implementation of the project, which promotes local ownership and leadership. Other MDAs are also playing a leading role in some of the components of the project, for instance the MFAIC and the MoJ.

In relation to efficiency, the project has a good implementation mechanism with the Steering Committee consisting of the three lead partners managing the project. The three partners also do individual and joint monitoring of the project. The DHRC and community leaders are integrated into the project, and community leaders also helped to provide longer term support to the beneficiaries.

The different partners demonstrated commitment to the project and their human resource and facilities were made available to the project. Additionally, the rich blend of the partners and their commitment to the project, provided it with the socio-political capital it required to achieve the set objectives. It was further concluded that the finances of the project were well managed and used, and value for money was ensured with activities undertaken.

With effectiveness, it was concluded that the project made significant progress in undertaking the set activities and that it succeeded in achieving most of its set objectives. The outputs delivered were of high quality and were delivered by consultants that are highly skilled and that are also familiar with the context within which the project was implemented. However, the implementation process of the Phase I of the project, was to some extent affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby having some activities delayed. The project was adapted to the context, with the implementation team adhering to COVID-19 regulations as they implemented the project. The project eventually had a second phase, which is at the completion stage. However, it was indicated by staff of UNDP that there were regular delays by UNDP with the disbursement of funds required for the project. Nevertheless,

there were significant gains made by the project, with changes experienced on the side of both the HRCSL and its partners and local communities, as indicated under the impact section.

The approach adopted by the project fosters sustainability, as the knowledge and skills acquired by the respective beneficiaries, will remain with them and the HRCSL is in a better position to carry out its mandate efficiently and effectively. In addition to this the partners of the Commission that were targeted are also in a better position to carry out their mandates and train others. Furthermore, there is growing awareness of human rights in local communities. However, the integration of the private sector could have added value in relation to both the implementation and sustainability of the project as they could have provided extra support to the beneficiaries. To further build on the gains made so far, it will be good to have another phase of the project.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations listed below build on the findings and some suggestions provided by the stakeholders consulted on what could be done by specific actors to improve on future interventions and their programming.

Recommendations

1. Even though the project has ended, the partners should continue to monitor the sustainability of the interventions. Additionally, they could link the beneficiaries to related interventions that they or their partners are undertaking, to ensure that they continue to get external support. It will be unhelpful to the beneficiaries for them to be abandoned by the partners because the project ended. Post-project monitoring visits and capacity building would boost the morale of the beneficiaries and it will encourage them to continue building on the progress they have made so far.
2. Future interventions should be tailored to fully integrate PwDs. The full inclusion of PwDs will help to create awareness on their rights and welfare. It will also help to reduce stereotypes and stigmatisation that they suffer from in their homes and communities. There is a significant gap in Sierra Leone in relation to the rights of PwDs and this gap needs to be addressed. A critical partner that the Commission could work with is the Commission of People with Disability.
3. The Referral Partnership Forums continues to remain very crucial in handling complaints falling out of the Commission's mandate, partners have also seen the practice as very instrumental to their work as the meetings helped institutions to resolve their various issues, collaborate and share experiences and subsequently building capacity of participants in complaints handling. Therefore, it is important that the Commission continues on

this trend so as to be able to effectively and efficiently address referral complaints, and also consider increasing its budget allocation for the referral partnership meetings.

4. There is the need for more Human Rights and Peace Clubs to be established across the country, with the existing ones intermittently provided with refresher training. In addition to this, in the future, the number of days allocated for training the clubs should be increased to at least three days to ensure that the participants are adequately trained, with enough time provided for exchanges and cross-learning.
5. The HRCSL in collaboration with partners should facilitate the formation of a 'National Network of Schools Human rights and Peace Clubs in Sierra Leone'. This network will enhance the management and activities of the school clubs in collaboration with the DHRCs and other CSOs working in the field of human rights and peace building. This will help to maximise the number of people that will benefit from the activities of the project.
6. The media and private sector are crucial partners that should be central in the development and implementation of any project. They have their own agency and could bring in significant value addition that could help maximise the benefits of the project for the beneficiaries. Thus, it is essential that an actor mapping exercise is undertaken at the inception stage of future interventions, with the skills and areas of competence of relevant actors identified, with them engaged, mobilised and encouraged to support the implementation of the intervention. The failure to effectively do so in the project under review, limited the potentials of the project and the contributions that the said actors could have made to it, if they were included.
7. The HRCSL should embark on resource mobilisation, to expand on its resource base to undertake activities. There are other donors in and outside of Sierra Leone that the Commission could engage to mobilise resources. For instance, the US Embassy, the EU and the World Bank could be institutions that could be able to provide resources to the Commission if engaged. In addition to this, the Commission should engage the government to increase its annual budgetary support.

6. LESSONS LEARNED

There were several lessons learnt during the evaluation of the project and they include:

- i. The Commission contends with significant challenges related to resources and logistics, which have over the years affected its ability to function efficiently and effectively. The project reviewed provided it with the ability to carry out its mandate in local communities and also to work with its partners. The lesson from this, is that the continued lack of resources has implications for the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone.

- ii. The Human Rights and Peace Clubs are a grassroots children owned and based approach to promoting human rights awareness in schools and local communities. It has a multiplier effect that is essential in building on the work of the Commission. It is helping to also have other community stakeholders gain interest in and support human rights activities in their communities.
- iii. The DHRCs are an integral part of the human rights chain in the districts. The failure on the part of the Commission to effectively engage and work with them over the years, undermined both their efficacy and that of the Commission's. The lesson here is that the DHRCs need significant support and targeting them for support goes a long way in promoting human rights awareness, and also the addressing of minor cases in communities.
- iv. The Commission relies on the support of UNDP and Irish Aid to carry out its activities. The failure on the part of those donors to continue supporting the project, will undermine some of the gains made as indicated in the sustainability section. There needs to be another phase of the project, to ensure that that the Commission continues to deliver on its mandate. While it has capacity at the moment, it lacks the required resources to carry out its activities.
- v. The growing awareness of human rights and the enhanced visibility of the Commission, is leading to the increase in the complaints reported to the HRCSL, and inasmuch as the Commission as a result of the project is having the capacity to deal with them, this may not be the case without the project. There is the risk of the demand for services surpassing the ability of the Commission to respond. Thus, there is the need for this challenge to be taken into consideration by the HRCSL and its partners.
- vi. It appears that there is very limited effort made by the Commission to expand its resource mobilisation effort. There is immense reliance on UNDP and the Irish Embassy when there are several other funders including the European Union and the American Embassy that would be willing to fund the Commission if approached.
- vii. The use of a multistakeholder and integrated approach to programming helps to yield the required results. the design of the programme brought together a wide range of actors which provided it with the socio-political capital it requires. This approach is useful and should be adapted to future projects and programmes.

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8. ANNEXES

The annex section presents the evaluation matrix and the documents reviewed.

8.1. EVALUATION MATRIX

This matrix provides the broad set of questions that guided the evaluation process. The questions were developed using the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee's (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria including: Relevance and Design of the Project, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability and Cross-Cutting Issues.

Criteria	Guiding Questions	Collection Methods and Sources
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ How relevant is the Support to Capacity Strengthening of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for Human Rights Protection and Promotion Project?✓ What were the key factors that necessitated the development of the project?✓ To what extent is the project aligned with relevant human rights and rule of law policies in Sierra Leone?✓ To what extent has the plan been responding to the human rights needs of the people of Sierra Leone, including women, disabled, children and minority groups?✓ To what extent is the intervention aligned with relevant normative frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment?"✓ To what extent is the project aligned with national development, peacebuilding and other priorities?	The methods that will be used to collect the data will include Key Informant Interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGDs), Most Significant Change (MSC) tool.
Design of the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Did the design of the project take into consideration contextual issues, actors and potential challenges?✓ What are the thematic areas that the project sought to address?✓ Were the target groups involved in the design of the project? If yes, to what level were they involved?✓ Is there a logframe designed for the project?✓ Is the logframe used as a management tool?✓ Were the indicators in the logframe assessed and revised to keep them relevant and updated?✓ Were partners involved in the design of the project? If yes, which partners?	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is the design realistic when compared to the resources available for the implementation of the project? ✓ Are potential risks that may undermine the project identified, with mitigation factors established at the design stage? ✓ To what extent was gender addressed in the design of the project? ✓ Was the private sector involved in the design of the project? 	
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How well does this project fit into the activities of the HRCSL? ✓ How well does it fit with other interventions undertaken by the Commission? ✓ How well does it fit into other funding mechanisms of the Commission? ✓ Is it aligned to the broad approach to human rights in Sierra Leone? 	
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are the approaches and resources available for the implementation of the project best suited to achieve the planned outcomes? ✓ What are the implementation modalities that were included during the design of the project? ✓ Is there a specific team responsible for the implementation of the project? ✓ Which institutions are part of the implementation team? ✓ Are there coordination mechanisms in place? ✓ What mechanisms are in place? ✓ What mechanisms are in place to promote collaboration and complementarity of efforts? ✓ Do the partners have the capacity to deliver the project? ✓ Do the implementing partners have the technical and logistical capacity to implement the project? ✓ Are funds provided on time for the implementation of activities related to the plan? ✓ What institutions provide the resources? ✓ Is value for money ensured in the procurement of goods and services related to the implementation of the project? ✓ Are activities undertaken within specified timelines? ✓ Are reports provided on time by implementing partners? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What are the impacts of COVID-19 on the implementation and achievements of the project? ✓ Have there been delays in the implementation of activities? If yes, why, and were the challenges identified and addressed? ✓ Were different resources allocated in ways that considered gender equality, and inclusion of person with disability and youth? ✓ If so, how were they allocated? Was differential resource allocation appropriate? 	
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ Were the outputs delivered of sufficient quality? ✓ Are there challenges in the delivery of outputs? If yes, what are they? ✓ Is the implementation of the project gender responsive? ✓ Are beneficiaries and partners satisfied with the quality of the outputs delivered? ✓ Are the outputs contributing to the development of the capacity of the target groups? ✓ Are the outputs delivered contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the project? ✓ To what extent are results inclusive i.e., ensuring the fair distribution of effects across different groups of women, youth and People with Disabilities? ✓ Does the intervention have any unintended positive or negative effects? Were the negative effects considered for possible (risk) mitigation? 	
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are there visible positive changes in the performance of the HRCSL? ✓ Could the changes be attributed to the project? ✓ Do the target groups now have the capacity to function as expected by the project? ✓ Are there signs that the project may not achieve its set objectives due to lack of progress in the implementation of activities? ✓ What are the perceptions of the target groups in relation to the impact created or not by the project? ✓ Were there specific components of the project that needed revision to enhance the impact that it has created? ✓ If yes, what are they and what adjustments were made? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are there documented evidence of changes/transformation in the activities and performance of the HRCSL? ✓ To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality? ✓ Were there any unintended social and environmental effects of the project intervention? 	
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are there indications of sustainability already visible with the implementation of the project? ✓ What are the mechanisms in place to support the HRCSL to sustain improvements created by the project? ✓ To what extent is a sustainability strategy embedded in the project? ✓ To what extent have partners committed to providing continuing support? ✓ What is the likelihood of a lasting positive impact of the project to the HRCSL? ✓ Which factors have the tendency of, or are undermining the achievements of the project? ✓ Are the targets demonstrating that they have the financial and technical capacity to further build on the gains with the implementation of the project? ✓ To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women and human rights including rights of indigenous people? 	
Cross-Cutting Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How is the project promoting issues related to human rights and the rule of law for the final end users, the people of Sierra Leone? ✓ How does the project promote issues related to good governance and democracy? ✓ How does the project promote issues related to the protection and inclusion of vulnerable and Specific Needs Groups? ✓ How is the Rights-Based Approach integrated into the implementation of the project? ✓ How did the project promote the visibility of Irish Aid, the donor? 	

8.2. SWOT ANALYSIS

The section presents the SWOT analysis that was done with staff of the Commission and members of the DHRC. It was deduced from the analysis that the project was designed and implemented based on the actual needs of the Commission, which was crucial for the project's effectiveness. Additionally, the designed outputs of the project focused on addressing key challenges including the Commission's ability to receive and address cases. Furthermore, the focus on business and human rights was also said by respondents to be strategic. The approaches used has significantly contributed to the visibility and effectiveness of the Commission. In terms of the weaknesses of the project, the late release and disbursement of funds, budget inflexibility, and other unbudgeted expenses were considered to have limited the gains of the project. In relation to opportunities, the focus on Business and Human Rights, the enhanced capacity and presence of the Commission in the regions etc. present opportunities that could help to expand on its work and reach. Threats include financial autonomy and funding challenges, insecurity, COVID-19 pandemic as well as changing priorities of government and development partners. The SWOT analysis table is presented below:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designed based on the actual needs of the Commission. Was based on a Capacity Needs Assessment• Of immense significance to the implementation of the strategic plan of the Commission• Component are inter-linked and aimed at addressing challenges faced by both the Commission and its partners• Use of static and mobile approaches to address complaints. This has increased the number of complaints that are recorded by the Commission• Increased visibility of the Commission• Has a component that focuses on Business and Human Rights, which is an	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Late disbursement of funds• Certain budget lines not accurate and underbudgeted for instance DSAs and hall rentals• Budgets not flexible and with miscellaneous• HRCSL not included in the development of budgets

<p>integral part of the strategic plan of the Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced the collaboration between the Commission and partners • Uses multiple means to create awareness on human rights including the radio/TV and social media 	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus on Business and Human Rights • Willingness on the part of the Commissioners and staff to deliver on their mandate • The enhanced capacity of the Commission • Credible and supportive local and international partners • Enhanced credibility of the Commission • Availability of offices across the regions • Increased visibility and presence • Collaboration with the DHRCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COVID-19 pandemic • Financial challenges • Political insecurity • Changes in the priorities of the government and its development partners

8.3. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Two sets of documents have been provided in the table below: (i) Documents that are directly related to the design and implementation of the project under review, and (ii) policies and other documents that are produced by the Government of Sierra Leone and other actors. The documents provide a good contextual and programmatic background, which were essential for the development of the tools and the context section of the main report.

Project Documents Reviewed

Project documents reviewed include:

- ✓ Project Proposal
- ✓ Budget
- ✓ HRCSL's Project Reports
- ✓ Support to Capacity Strengthening of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Phase II
- ✓ Mission Plan Irish Aid
- ✓ UNDP Draft Country Programme Document for Sierra Leone (2020 -2023)
- ✓ UNDP Progress Reports

Policies and other relevant documents reviewed

Relevant policies and other documents that were reviewed and will be further reviewed during the assignment include:

- ✓ The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone
- ✓ The HRCSL Act of 2004
- ✓ Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023)
- ✓ Academic Literature

8.4. ANNEX 2: LIST OF SOME OF THE ACTORS ENGAGED DURING THE EVALUATION

The table below provides details of some of the actors that were engaged during the evaluation.

Position	Institution
Commissioners	HRCSL
Executive Secretary	HRCSL
Deputy Executive Secretary	HRCSL
Director of Programmes, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation	HRCSL
Director of Communication, Education and Training	HRCSL

Deputy Director Communication, Education and Training	HRCSL
Deputy Director Business and Human Rights	HRCSL
Human Rights Officers	HRCSL
Human Resources Manager	HRCSL
Senior Human Rights Officers	HRCSL
Director of Gender and Children's Affairs	HRCSL
Assistant Human Rights Officers	HRCSL
Principal Human Rights Officers and Head of Regional Offices in Bo, Makeni, Waterloo and Port Loko	HRCSL
Members	District Human Rights Committees in Bo, Kenema and Makeni
Members	Human Rights and Peace Clubs
Local community members	Bo, Makeni, Waterloo, Port Loko and Kenema
Senior Human Rights and Rule of Law Officer	UNDP
Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	UNDP
The Coordinator	Justice Sector Coordination Office
Partners	ACC, MoFAIC and the Judiciary