



Right to Access Information Commission - Sierra Leone

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION



**Chairman / Information Commissioner:
Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw**



**Ahmed G Kallon
Commissioner, East**



**Abu Bakar Kargbo,
Commissioner North**



**Bai Yormah Idriss
Commissioner, South**



**Mohammed Sesay
Commissioner, Western Area**



**Hon Mustapha Braima
Executive Secretary: Secretary to the Commission**



CHAIRMAN AND INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

It is with profound pleasure that I humbly present the 4th Edition of the Annual Report of the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) covering 1st January to 31st December, 2022. This edition gives an insight into the work and commitment of members and staff of the RAIC and the integration of access to information (ATI) in Sierra Leone and the international realm at large. The way the RAIC conducted its engagements with public authorities and citizens, and its efforts to instil the culture of openness has brought a chain of commitment among good governance and democratic institutions in ensuring a transparent and accountable environment. Indeed, this was driven by our relentless effort to expand our workforce at both national and regional level with a dynamic and congenial working environment.

The RAI Act itself provides a democratic space for monitoring of government affairs at all levels and widen the opportunities to claim access to crucial information for active participation in the democratic process consistent with Target 16.10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and international instruments, including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

The considerable increase in Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests on the part of citizens as well as state and non-state actors, and the steady proactive disclosure of information among MDAs within four years of my stewardship demonstrate our commitment to ensure that when the laws are established, the duty bearers are put on their toes to be at the forefront of compliance. Credit should be given to the Commission for the membership of Sierra Leone in the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) and African Network of Information Commissioners (ANIC) where diverse voices to address current issues that impact ATI are heard. Credit should be extended to the contribution of Sierra Leone to the declaration of the International Day of Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) by the United Nations since it was among six countries that co-sponsored its adoption at the UN General Assembly on 15th October 2019.

Sierra Leone cannot be more elated than when it scored an astronomical mark of 98% in Freedom of Information in the 2022 Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Global Scorecard, in the year under review for that matter, outperforming Ghana in 88% and Nigeria in 38%. This feat gives an idea of the progress Sierra Leone has made in ATI and once more reaffirm the country's aspiration to be a knowledge-based information society. Again, this demonstrates the fact that when laws are established for the advancement of society and given the political will to thrive, recognitions bearing the likeness of MMC will continue to unfold overtime. It is also in this vein that we value our collaboration with UNESCO, the UN Agency mandated to monitor and report progress on SDG 10:10:2 which relates to Public Access to Information and the Protection of Fundamental Freedoms, and above all our participation in the annual UNESCO survey on this SDG since 2019.

The year 2022 was a mixed bag of challenges and successes. Challenges in getting the support of development partners to implement the host of ATI programmes scheduled for 2022, and successes evident in the increasing rate of compliance with the RAI law by public authorities and owing to the major shifts in society driven by technological advances in the collection, analysis and use of large datasets which have in fact necessitated the call for effective access to the internet and other digital technologies to foster an effective framework for improving service delivery and also for ensuring fundamental human rights.

We are on the trajectory of strengthening our enforcement and intervention procedures to enable a flexible and proactive approach to tackle systemic compliance issues in public authorities and reinforcing the foundation for a comprehensive open data initiative following our development of our first ever strategic plan, the RAI Regulations and Records Management Code of Practice when the funding windows of all these efforts ended in the fourth quarter of 2021. The succession of remarkable achievements made by the RAIC over the years came from funding from the World Bank, UNESCO and Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) now Open Society Foundation (OSF) Africa. The solid foundation laid in the previous years while working with these development partners helped considerably in our oversight function. We broadened our consultative meetings with MDAs at regional and national level; we reinvigorated our proactive disclosure of Information (PDI) Wednesdays, Annual Compliance Report (ACR) and deepened our public engagement and outreach on the RAI Act.

For the first time the Key Policy Actions (KPAs) of the RAIC, including its national targets and indicators were included in Cluster Four (4) of the Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019 – 2023. For the first

time since the enactment of the RAI Act in 2013 and the establishment of the RAIC in 2014 we experienced Freedom of Information (FOI) requests across MDAs we could not imagine. In all, 13,117 FOI requests were made to Public Authorities nation-wide of which 10,237 were provided to the requesters.

Moreover, we have seen considerable progress in the Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) Compliance by MDAs. Whereas the Commission received PDI Proactive Publication Schemes from 29 MDAs in the 2021 PDI assessment period, it received such schemes from 47 MDAs in the 2022 assessment period. As indicated in TABLE 1 in the Compliance section of this report, in the Commission's assessment of the 47 PDI PPSs received for the 2022-2023 assessment cycle, 34 were given approval with observation because they complied with between 15 and 19 out of the 22 minimum classes of PDI obligations and therefore demonstrated to be on the verge of being fully approved; 8 (eight) were given conditional approval because they provided at least half of the 22 minimum classes of PDI obligations; whereas 5 were rejected as they complied with less than 10 PDI obligations.

Fundamentally, we acknowledge the measurable steps Sierra Leone has taken towards e-governance following the establishment of the e-governance coordination office at the Ministry of Information and Communications and the Directorate of Science, Technology, and Innovation (DSTI) in the Office of the President to strengthen technical collaboration on e-governance for public service delivery and administration.

As we currently orientate our focus on national institutional coordination on open data and e-governance on the perspective that these strands can play an important role to improve access to information in our digital world and help bridge the digital divide by giving citizens access to tailor-made and accessible information, we will do our best to ensure that the public have the opportunity to understand their information rights and how to hold MDAs to account. We will continue to help the public to understand what to expect from organizations responsible for data and public information. We will also ensure that those responsible for public information have all the support and guidance they need to understand what it means to be transparent and how to embed these practices into their organizations. With this, we will maintain and strengthen our interest within the global information rights community and muster the interest of development partners to support the Sierra Leone ATI environment. We are also in keeping with our strategic plan in the process of upgrading our web site to enable digital freedom of information requests and the filing of complaints for non-compliance. Above all, we will amend the RAI Act 2013 to include, among other things, the North-West Region and the appointment of its Commissioner to ensure fairer representation and efficiency in the commission's devolution programmes, as well as the appointment of two additional Commissioners with special responsibility for data protection and records management, respectively.

We acknowledge the tremendous role of the MDAs in providing access to public information and the role of the media in complementing the effort of the RAIC in ensuring public knowledge in ATI. The totality of this effort are a cornerstone to the credence we bear today as a free and vocal society.

To conclude, I would like to register my deepest appreciation to colleague Regional Commissioners, the Executive Secretary and other staff of RAIC; the Ministers and officials of the Ministry of Information and Communications, and to our local and development partners, for their invaluable role in the year under review.

Over and above, let me heartily extend special indebtedness to the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for His commitment in engendering an enabling environment of free speech and smooth access to information in the country.

I thank you all and I remain confident that you would find this annual report, which includes a financial statement covering the period under review, motivating and valuable.

Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw



Chairman and Information Commissioner, RAIC

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

ACHPR -	African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights
CSOs –	Civil Society Organizations
CIC -	Chairman and Information Commissioner
ES	Executive Secretary
FOI –	Freedom of Information
ICCPR -	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR-	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICIC –	International Conference of Information Commissioners
MDAs-	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MIC –	Ministry of Information and Communications
MoF –	Ministry of Finance
NCD-	National Commission for Democracy
NGO –	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSA -	Non-State Actors
OGP-	Open Government Partnerships
OSIWA -	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
PIO-	Public Information Officer
PFMU -	Public Fiduciary Management Unit
PMSD -	Performance Management Service Delivery
PFMICP-	Public Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project
PSRU -	Public Sector Reform Unit
RAIC –	Right to Access Information Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UDHR -	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Part I

The Report

The background of the page features a series of overlapping, wavy blue shapes that create a sense of depth and movement. The colors range from a light, almost white blue at the top to a deeper, more saturated blue at the bottom. The waves are smooth and fluid, giving the overall design a modern and professional appearance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By provision of the Right to Access Information Commission Act 2013, this fourth edition of the annual report encapsulates the work of the Commission from 1st January to 31st December 2022. Accordingly, the Commission shall submit to the Minister of Information and Communications the Commission's activities, operations and undertakings and finances including the Audit report. Consistent with Section 39 of the RAI Act, the Commission kept proper books of account and proper records in relation to its accounts for the 2022 Financial Year. These books and accounts, which are part of this annual report, were audited by the Office of Auditor-General. This report also includes an overview of the performance of staff and members of the RAIC, public authorities, role of the CSOs, Media, and the citizens in implementing the RAI Act.

The Commission in the year under review expanded its human and corporate resources to enhance the efficient running of its day to day management and implementation of its programmes. It also reviewed its scope of work to ensure alignment between its institutional mandate and the higher-level objectives of freedom of information (FOI) and accountability for good governance. It gave premium in the content and quality of the information to be proactively disclosed and the extent to which that information would help the people appreciate what they need to do and how best they can do amid the complex dynamics and evolving landscape surrounding access to information in the digital era.

The report is divided into five expansive parts:

Part One gives a synopsis of the historical background of the Commission. It expands on the Commission's statutory mandate and composition, roles and responsibilities, which provide for the overall leadership of the Commission and professional staff to deliver the core mandate of the RAI Act and key projects and programmes geared towards the realization of the core objectives of the Commission. It also includes the Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Objectives. These guiding principles constitute the broad philosophy that encompasses the beliefs and values of the Commission and the core ethics or principles which members and staff will abide by.

Part Two covers in general, the activities of the Commission and its accompanying achievements; its institutional and infrastructural developments; programmes and projects; compliance and investigation mechanisms; its public awareness and sensitization efforts and the integration of ATI in the regions owing to an expanded workforce. It also unfolds the growing collaboration between the RAIC and government at policy level and that of the CSOs and Media, and recognition of Sierra Leone in the international ATI arena

Part Three involves the accounts and financial statement, and the audit on the accounts in line with Section 39 of the RAI Act. Accordingly, the Commission gave the office of the Auditor General access to all books of accounts, vouchers and other financial records of the Commission and provided the necessary explanation as the Office of the Auditor General thought it fit.

Part Four dilates on the challenges faced and lessons learnt in the course of implementing the RAI Act notwithstanding the notable progress that the Commission made in the year under review.

Part Five suggests the areas the Commission should concentrate on in the implementation of the RAIC Act, and the direction it should take to achieve its Mission and Vision, as well as recommendations for the future.

1. BACKGROUND

Consistent with the provisions of the RAI Act 2013, the Right to Access Information Commission is mandated to ensure the effective implementation of the RAI Act; promote access to information held by a body or organization that receives monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone; ensure compliance to disclose information to the general public if that information is required for the protection or enforcement of any right; promote proactive disclosure of information; promote maintenance of records; undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information; promote the demand and supply of information among the general public. The RAIC commenced full operations in July, 2014 with the appointment of its first Commission headed by a Chairman who doubled as Information Commissioner, and four Regional Commissioners. The Commission has a national Secretariat based in Freetown and four regional offices in Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Freetown. The second and current Chairman of the Commission was appointed in October 2018 and obtained parliamentary approval in November 2018. The Northern and Southern Regional Commissioners were among the first set of four Commissioners appointed in November and approved in December 2018. The Western and Eastern Regional Commissioners left and were later replaced in October 2020 and 2022 respectively.

Right of access to information held by public authorities is a fundamental human right consistent with Target **16.10** of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which calls for ensuring public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international regimes including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

The RAI Act was derived from section 25 of the Sierra Leone Constitution which guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press. It serves as an institutional check to every aspect of government. It was developed for the purpose of widening the opportunities to claim access to crucial information and to require public authorities to proactively publish information; mainstreaming transparency and accountability in public institutions; giving citizens the right to be informed about policy decisions, actions of government and the conduct of state functionaries; protecting fundamentals of freedom; providing a democratic space for monitoring of government affairs; opening up space for political participation; graduating from a culture of secrecy to a culture of openness in public management; curbing corruption; building citizens' trust; guarantying a vertical and horizontal flow of information; joining the global information rights society.

The principal focus of the reconstituted Commission on commencement of operations includes:

- reviewing the existing management and organizational structure, administrative processes and procedures;
- ensuring transparency, openness and accountability;
- broadening the investigation and compliance mechanisms;
- strengthening the legal and regulatory environment;
- improving coordination and strengthen collaboration with MDAs and development partners
- strengthening the administrative wing of the Commission to ensure that it effectively complements the Secretariat in the day to day administration and management;
- creating a dynamic and congenial working environment, strong bond and teamwork among staff; and
- fostering a cohesive and productive human capital network to ensure that the strategic drive of the Commission matches with the employees' aspirations..

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

Chairman / Information Commissioner

The Chairman / Information Commissioner is entrusted with the following roles and responsibilities:

1. Provide overall leadership for the Commission and professional staff to deliver the core mandate of the RAI Act.
2. Initiate and lead on designing the Commission's overall strategic plan and key projects and programmes geared towards the realization of the core objectives of the Commission.
3. Initiate and lead on proposal for funding from donors and other development partners to support the Commission's strategic annual work plans.
4. Provide leadership over the designing of the commission's strategic plan
5. Prepare the Annual Report of the Commission to be presented to the Hon Minister of Information and Communication for onward presentation to Parliament
6. Monitor and report on the compliance by public authorities with obligations under the Right to Access Information Act 2013.
7. Make recommendations for reform of policies, rules and regulations, both of a general and specific nature of the Commission.
8. Cooperate with or undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information and the effective implementation of the Act.
9. Refer to the appropriate public authority, cases which reasonably disclose evidence of lack of compliance under the Act.
10. Publicize and implement the requirements of the RAI Act 2013 and the rights of the individuals and institutions under it.

Regional Commissioners

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Regional Commissioners are as follows:

1. Provide oversight function of the commission in their regions of station
2. Monitor and report on the compliance by public authorities with obligation under the Right to Access Information Act 2013
3. Make recommendation for reform both of a general nature and specific authorities
4. Cooperate with or undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information and the effective implementation of the act
5. Refer to appropriate public authority cases which reasonably disclose evidence of criminal offences under the Act
6. Publicize the requirements of the act and the rights of individuals under it, especially in their region of station.

In addition to their regional roles and responsibilities, the Commissioners shall, based on their expertise and experience support the work of the Chairman and Information Commissioner on national programmes / activities of the Commission whenever called upon.

Executive Secretary:

As the head of the day-to-day administration of the Commission, the Executive Secretary performs the following:

1. Support the formulation of the strategic plan for implementation by the Commission.
2. Work closely with the Chairman as his Principal Adviser.
3. Collaborate with governance institutions and Civil Society Organizations to ensure compliance with the provision of the RAI Act.
4. Source funding from donor partners and government for the smooth operations of the Commission
5. Identify staffing needs of the Commission and facilitate recruitment of the requisite staff
6. Facilitate the implementation of the Commission's activities for presentation to the Chairman / Information Commissioner and Regional Commissioners.
7. Undertake any other duties assigned by the Commission

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MISSION

To ensure an open space in information accessibility through effective collaboration for sustainable development

VISION

To be a part of the Global Information Rights Society

VALUES

Openness, Transparency, Accountability, Fairness, Swiftness, and Integrity

OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the Commission is to promote the demand and supply of information among the general public, public authorities, and the private sector in accordance with the Act enacted by the Sierra Leone Parliament on 29th October, 2013.

VALUES

- Openness (information accessibility)
- Fairness (Justice)
- Swiftness (Quick response)
- Transparency (openness)
- Accountability (Answerable to the people)
- Integrity (honest and reliable)

RAIC National & Regional Offices and Data Centres

Locations:

National Secretariat:

58 Kroo Town Road,

Freetown,

Tel: +23279131744/79101314 / 030359669

Email: accessinfo@raic.gov.sl

Regional Offices

Eastern Region:

22 Turay Street,

Kenema City,

Kenema District

Tel: 076607070

Email: ahmedgkallon@gmail.com

Northern Region:

31, Mabanta Road,

Makeni City,

Bombali District

Tel: +232-77204558

Email: akargbo548@gmail.com

Southern Region:

188 New Gerihun Road,

Bo City,

Bo District

Mobile Tel: +023280109750

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Western Region:

58 Kroo Town Road,

Freetown,

Western Area Urban

Tel: +23277580436

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PART II – ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

4. INSTITUTIONAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

4.1. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Commission realized significant growth in its corporate resource management in the year under review. The year 2022 brought to the fore an RAIC with an expanded workforce following the recruitment of six additional staff to reinforce the day to day administration and operations of the Commission both at the secretariat and regional offices. In its effort to ensure an efficient and proficient workforce, the Commission in January 2022 organized an induction training to familiarize new staff with their roles and responsibilities and functional relationships.

With the RAIC Staff Manual in operation, the year under review saw effective processes, methods and procedures in addressing administrative issues. There was increase in staff output and performance in the preparation of freedom of information (FOI) requests, the writing of business / institutional and back to office reports and press releases motivated by capacity building. The Commission in the year under review experienced a dynamic and congenial working environment, staff bonding and teamwork among staff.

With the inauguration of the first programme management division, support was provided to Senior Management of the Commission in the formulation and implementation of governance policies. Research into activities and regimes related to Access to Information (ATI) was strengthened through the new office. There was a measurable support to the Chairman and the Executive Secretary in the development of proposals and collaboration with the development partners and relevant MDAs for funding opportunities. The recruitment of public information officers as core staff for the regional offices, charged with diverse responsibilities, ranging from administrative to programmatic, largely relieved the Commission of the challenges it was facing over the years as there were rapid improvements in public engagement and education about the RAI Act, obligations of the MDAs to proactively disclose information and rights of citizens to access information from these MDAs.

The Commission in the year under review made improvement in response to statutory obligations on the part of MDAs resulting from effective consultative and interactive meetings. It reinforced its existing consultations and broadened its scope of engagement with institutions receiving moneys on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone as provided for in the RAI Act. The holding of the Proactive disclosure of Information (PDI) Wednesdays every fortnight enhanced greater knowledge in the application of the Proactive Disclosure of Information and Annual Compliance schemes. There was an increase in the FOI requests from individuals and organizations, including the media, civil society and academia, and growing citizens' knowledge about their rights to be informed about government policy decisions, actions of government and the conduct of state functionaries, owing to intensive media engagement and public education of the RAI Act.

The Commission was cognizant of the fact that the 2013 RAI Act would be ten years by 2023 and that there is need to review some provisions therein that are deemed obsolete, it took necessary steps to ensure that the Act is abreast with the demands of Access to Information (ATI) evolution. In view of this, Commission in September 2022 set up a committee involving stakeholders that looked into some of the key provisions of the RAI Act, brought new ideas, and made recommendations and presented them to the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) for amendment. The objective of this endeavour was to strengthen the work of the RAIC and expand its scope. Again in September 2022, the Commission presented the report and recommendations of a World Bank-funded consultancy on the review and validation of the 2017 Archives

and Records Management Bill to the Ministry of Information and Communication through the office of the Permanent Secretary. The RAI Regulations finally received parliamentary approval in October 2022 following its validation in October 2019. The RAI Regulations are developed to give effect to the RAI Act.

The lack of donor funding was a major binding constraint to the full implementation of the programmes captured in the 2022 Annual Work plan. Since the reconstitution of this current Commission, there has been a steady support through development partners such as the World Bank on Open Data, PDI and Capacity Building; the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) now, Open Society Foundation (OSF) Africa on transparency, accountability, and popularization; and UNESCO on Records Management.

4.1.1. ADMINISTRATIVE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Administrative and Human Resource Management department generally provides expertise, services, and support on human resources management and administrative matters to the Commission as directed. This department coordinates the implementation of the Commission's management policy and other activities pertaining to administration and management of public bodies. It provides general custodian services, including maintenance of office equipment; facilitates human resources training and development (career, professional, skills enhancement) for the Commission; coordinates the provision of employees benefits and entitlements, complaints and grievances handling and provides quality support service for the proper functioning of the Commission.

OPERATIONAL MATTERS

In the year under review, the Commission's key priorities to strengthen the administrative and professional wings was realized with the recruitment of six new technical staff: two (2) for the National Secretariat and four (4) for the Regional offices. This development put the Commission in a better stead to have well defined structures with properly articulated roles, responsibilities and functional relationships to enhance its performance. Even though the number required by the Commission was not fully provided by the government, this development lessened the number of volunteers brought onboard over the years to help the Commission to effectively implement its administrative and programmatic activities.

The employment of a Programme Manager created predictability in the coordination and implementation of all programmes of the Commission. The three Public Information Officers (PIOs) employed to cover three regional offices performed diverse role ranging administrative, programmatic and compliance by relieving the Regional Commissioners of the workload they were carrying therein having been fairly supported over the years by volunteers who were hired on a stipend basis. This is a step in the right direction to address the gamut of programmes initiated by the Commission on a yearly basis. For the first time a Procurement Officer was assigned to the Commission to provide backstopping to the existing procurement systems.

The Commission in the year under review had been able to address a host of issues with the invigoration of the Senior Management Meetings and the introduction of the Technical Level Meetings. The Senior Management wing of the Commission met every first working day of the week to set the agenda of the whole week. Decisions reached at senior management meetings were presented during the Technical Level Meetings for implementation. Equally, issues raised at technical level meetings were escalated at the Senior Management level. The totality of issues addressed at senior management are further escalated to the Board of Commissioners for redress and approval. The Commission also held general meetings on a quarterly basis to bring onboard all staff to discuss the key actions undertaken during the previous quarter and the progress that took place. This expanded mode of operation improved staff performance as they were largely entrusted with tasks they should accomplish before the coming week.

The Commission in the year under review introduced to the staff a weekly reporting of activities undertaken in the course of the week. The leadership of the Commission in a general staff meeting told staff to prioritize their work schedules to bring out commendable results. The Leadership further related to staff that they (the staff) have a responsibility to do further research into disciplines related to their job to bring out contemporary development that would not only be critical to their work but also to the progress of the Commission. The

weekly reporting which was later shifted to biweekly reporting broadened the staff's reporting and research skills which in turn bolstered a cohesive and productive human resource capital for the Commission.

STAFF WELFARE AND BENEFITS

With the official rollout of the Staff Manual, the Commission functioned in the year under review through an instrument that provides proper guidance in every steps to be undertaken at all levels. The staff manual was circulated both electronically and in hard copies at all structures of the Commission. The critical issues inherent in staff welfare were discussed during general meetings for the better understanding of the lower cadre of the Commission, i.e, drivers and office assistants. With the staff manual, the staff were in a better position to understand their rights and obligations, and which sections of the manual that guarantee their rights consistent with best practice.

The Commission in 2022 pursued pragmatic actions to tackle the critical challenges that are adversely affecting its effective functioning, performance and management. It ensured that staff are not only entitled to their leave but also proceeded on leave with their leave allowances available to them. Improvement was given to retirement benefits, bereavement, among others. This fostered staff bonding and a congenial working environment. The Admin and Human Resource Department facilitated the constant provision of sundries items for the entire workforce. The existing financial management systems were strengthened to ensure improved management (disbursement, utilization and accountability) of the funds of the RAIC.

4.2. INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

More improvement in the general upkeep of the office environment obtained in the year under review. The Conference Room of the Secretariat was decorated with new furniture that eventually established the Commission Conference Room as a breath-taking environment to hold meetings that could accommodate a sizable number of guests. New printers were brought in to speed up operations, while laptops were bought for new staff in an effort to fully integrate them into their roles and responsibilities.

5. PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

The Commission in January 2022 inaugurated the Programme Management Division spearheaded by the newly appointed Programme Manager who was entrusted with a considerable number of responsibilities ranging from the coordination of programmes and projects across the Commission; the execution of programmatic activities and delivery of desirable outcomes in line with programmatic goals; the conduction of research into the Commission's activities with a view to enhancing its oversight responsibilities; the provision of technical support to the Senior Management in the formulation and implementation of governance policies and procedures, to the development and management of existing / new relationships with MDAs and Development Partners.

The Commission in the year under review was able to address largely the challenges faced over the years in formulating and designing programmes, proactively monitoring progress, and initiating appropriate corrective actions. With this, the Commission developed a whole agenda on programmes and policy actions and brought forth a well-defined annual work plan (AWP) that clearly stipulated its 2022 performance targets. It set targets and ensured alignment of programme priorities, strategies and plans. Programme staff have their skills improved in concept development and business and situational reporting.

The Commission accelerated its response to demands coming from Parliament, Office of the President and Chief Minister, Ministry of Information and Communication (line ministry), Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) in respect of its status and progress, and contribution to the government agenda for good governance and social accountability. For the first time, the Key Policy Actions (KPAs) of the RAIC including its national targets and indicators were included in Cluster Four (4) of the Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019 – 2023. This set the basis for the Commission to develop its KPAs as per the policy clusters of the MTNDP.

Notwithstanding the progress that had been made on the realization that the Commission can perform better and deliver the expected results more effectively and efficiently through a more streamlined and focused planning process, 2022 is on record as the first year this current Commission is operating without funding from development partners. This puts the Commission in a very constrained position to effectively implement its flagship programmes for 2022. The Commission was however able to judiciously manage the allocations received from the Government to carry out its operations and programmes.

The year 2022 followed a succession of landmark achievements made by the Commission in the course of implementing projects funded by the World Bank through the Public Financial Management Improvement Coordination Project (PFMICP), UNESCO and Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) now Open Society Foundation (OSF) Africa. The two funding windows from the World Bank and UNESCO ended in the third quarter of 2021. Another project funded by the OSF Africa was successfully concluded in the first quarter of 2021.

Suffice it to say that, the solid foundation laid in the previous years necessitated a considerable growth in ATI in Sierra Leone. This laid the roadmap to the steady implementation of the work of the Commission towards the realization of its Vision. In spite of the little financial resources available in the year under review, the Commission instituted an effective mechanism that monitored and evaluated the degree to which state and non-state actors are complying with the proactive publication provisions of the RAI Act; the sharing of data by MDAs in an open and standardized format to foster collaboration and enable greater and timely access to vital information; the guidance the Records Management Code of Practice is providing to public authorities in the keeping, management and destruction of records, as well as the review and transfer of such records to public archives. Largely, it made tremendous effort in search of funding opportunities and developed a number of proposals. Programmatic activities to be later adduced in the body of this section of the report will present a clear picture of the considerable effort made by the Commission in the discharge of its mandate.

5.1. PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE

Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) is a scheme established to ensure the release of information by MDAs in anticipation of the needs and interests of the public in line with section 8 of the RAI Act. In ensuring a transparent and accountable environment, it compels institutions receiving monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone to proactively disclose the prescribed information through their websites and other handles instead of only reactively disclosing the information on request.

The Commission in January 2022 called on the MDAs to comply with their proactive disclosure of information publication schemes. Against this background, the Commission wrote letters to MDAs obliging them to submit their schemes for assessment. The RAIC embarked on a public sensitization using various platforms to make the MDAs in the country have knowledge of their statutory obligations and comply with the PDI. As early as a February 2022, the Commission reinforced its PDI Wednesday and commenced the engagement of MDAs in groups. The objective of the initiative was to present the Commission's assessment of the PDI Scheme submitted by the MDAs as per the 22 classes of information in section 8 of the RAI Act. MDAs were selected at random and briefed about the respective thresholds they met.

Those that were approved were given special recognition while those approved with observation and conditional approval were told about the areas they did not fulfill. Those whose PDI submissions were rejected were asked to do it all over again. The PDI Wednesday is also a platform to broaden the horizon of MDAs about the scheme and to remind them about the information they are to obligatorily disclose and those that have exempt provisions. The outcome of the 2022 PDI assessment and certification is delineated in the compliance section of this report.

5.2. OPEN DATA

The Commission has over the years coordinated the Open Data and Data Compact processes in Sierra Leone and carried out programmes in the Open Data Readiness Assessment in collaboration with national, bilateral and multilateral agencies. It has adopted a multi-sectoral approach in establishing an Open Data Council in a bid to strengthen national institutional coordination around open data. It has also coordinated the activities of the sixty (60) multi-sectorial and multi-disciplinary members in the Open Data Council comprising the Ministry of Information and Communication, Open Data Professionals, Academics, CSOs, Private sector and MDAs. It had been collaborating with the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC), to efficiently and effectively operationalize the Open Data Portal for Sierra Leone (www.opendatasl.gov.sl), and ensured data literacy trainings that boosted the demand for and capacity to use data and leverage information and communication technology (ICT) for improved development results.

The Commission further made commitment to providing overall management of the Open Data Portal and the MIC providing technical guidance and support. The Commission made effort for the resuscitation of the open data portal. It is but important to state that there had been a couple of challenges at policy level to make headways in this regard.

To broaden public awareness of the mandate of the Commission and to help members of the public in the regional parts of the country access information that has been proactively disclosed by public authorities, the Commission established Open Data Resource Centers in its four regional offices with support from the World Bank. These resource centers were later re-launched after they became little dormant owing to the Covid-19 outbreak. In 2021, the Commission embarked on establishing an inventory of high-priority sustainable development Goals (SDGs) aligned datasets in Sierra Leone.

This initiative involved working with MDAs and examining their data production / collection capacity, methods and gaps, and agreed on available quality priority datasets aligned with the SDGs. The Commission was on course to expand this drive from the five MDAs it initially piloted but was constrained with funding after the closure of the World Bank funded project, Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation (PFMICP) which supported the open data agenda in Sierra Leone. The Commission contacted two institutions in the year

under review to carry on with its open data initiative. These include the Universal Access Development Fund (UADF) and the Accountable Governance for Basic Service Delivery Project (AGBSD) Project. A proposal was sent to the AGBSD Project while engagement with UADF was on going.

5.3. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Records Management is a very important part of the Commission's document management policies. It helps the Commission to systematically manage records throughout its lifecycle, from creation to distribution and to disposition. This strand of ATI is important because it ensures that important records are preserved and controlled throughout their lifecycle including compliance with set retention procedures. The current Commission do not only consider records management as one of the three major strands of access to information, it also prioritizes it as a key element to transparency and public accountability.

It was conscious of the fact that not many organizations manage and administer records in their custody largely because of lack of awareness and knowledge of its reliability and easy retrieval of information when requested. This explains why since its reconstitution in 2018 the Commission instituted programmes that provide capacity building in records management. It has been engaging MDAs to ensure that important records such as financial information, financial statements, vital documents such as legal contracts are well preserved and unnecessary records are disposed of in a timely manner in accordance with established guidelines as those provided in the Records Management Code of Practice Manual produced by the Commission.

The Commission established the Archives Unit to instil a culture of timely access and retrieval of information within and outside the Commission at every given moment. The filing of all documents in a folder system and electronic format by MDAs to preserve and secure all documents for long-term access is in the purview of the Archives Unit. The Commission through the Archives Unit engaged records managers in MDAs and provided insight in the receipt, management and classification of records. The key message in those engagements was that MDAs should ensure all documents received from the reception are signed for in the register and are further processed as internal documents, while correspondences received from the public i.e. MDAs, NGOs, CSOs, etc, are kept as external documents. The classification of this into different subjects and titles was also core in those engagements. This is to ensure insight, visibility and control over records. The roll out of a tailored training in records management, including management of digital records for relevant officials of the RAIC and MDAs was part of the Commission's 2022 implementation agenda.

Working Visit by Records and Information Management Students

The Commission has been providing practical guidance and support to students pursuing courses related to records and information management and archive administration. The Commission on 6th September, 2022 hosted over thirty (30) students from the Department of Information Studies and Knowledge Management in the Faculty of Communication, Media and Information Studies, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. The main objective of their visit was to gain practical experience in information handling from the Commission.



Students and some RAIC technical staff after the working visit.

Welcoming the students, the Chairman and Information Commissioner of RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw said the initiative to bring students to the institution with the objective of having practical experience about information management and access to information at large is a laudable venture owing to the fact that these students are the future Public Information Officers, (PIOs), Archivists and Administrators who would be serving Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Dr. Shaw later expounded on the importance of records management in access to information.

The students also received in audience, the Legal and Compliance Manger, Alan Benjamin Esq., who took them through relevant sections of the Act.

RAIC Archivist, Fanta Morgan (Mrs) delivered a PowerPoint presentation and took the students through the RAIC data process handling. The presentation covered areas such as filing and referencing. This development instilled confidence in the minds of the students as it lays a brighter direction for future archivists and record officers. The event was climaxed with a question and answer session. Students asked questions ranging from the challenges faced by the Commission, to its collaborative efforts and future plans.

VALIDATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Commission validated its five year Strategic Plan in December 2022, at the Family Kingdom Resort. The validation was launched by the Minister of Information and Communication, Hon. Mohamed Rahman Swaray, who also delivered the keynote speech. Stakeholders from MDAs, the civil society and media were present. The exercise was moderated by the Governance Advisor in the Office of the President, Dr. Emanuel Gaima. The plan itself was presented by the Consultant, Osman Larry Fofanah. The objectives of the exercise were:

- To get feedbacks from the participants, analyze those feedbacks for incorporation into the validated Strategic Plan
- To guarantee inclusivity and quality assurance
- To commence the resource mobilization for the implantation of the Strategic Plan

The plan was later validated following its presentation of the plan by the Consultant and feedbacks made by stakeholders present.

The development of the Strategic Plan of the RAIC was funded by the World Bank through PFMICP. The plan lays the roadmap for the Commission for the next five years. The plan is as a result of the critical synthesis and integration of the mandate of RAIC as envisaged in the RAI Act 2013, and the Medium-term National Development Plan which clearly establishes the Government's agenda. The plan has a clear vision for the Commission and a number of strategic objectives underpinned by core values. It sets out the Commission's mission to increase the trust that the public has in government, public bodies and the private sector. It has seven pillars with each pillar tied to strategic objectives, prioritized actions and expected outputs. It is in conformity with the Government's commitment to provide efficient service delivery to the public through the Result Based Management (RBM) tool which all MDAs are expected to implement.

CONSULTATIVE ENGAGEMENTS 2022

The Commission had a number of consultative meetings with MDAs in the year under review in a bid to continue to broaden their knowledge of the RAI law, encourage them to comply with their obligations as provided for in the Act and to dispense with the culture of secrecy. The MDAs engaged were: Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Social Welfare, Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO). The Commission presented across the board specific provisions bordering on: the timely response to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, Proactively Disclosure, consistent with the 22 Classes of information as provided for in Section 8 (2) of the Act; Records Management, in line with Section 27 of the Act and the expected role of PIOs and Records Managers / Officers in MDAs.



RAIC and Ministry of Energy staff just after the consultative engagement

During these sessions, the RAIC CIC Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw kept emphasizing the significance of Section 27 in respect of proper management of records; the PIOs as principal contact persons of Public Authorities, who would facilitate the process of information requests; Records Managers/ Officers for the keeping of proper records of all information; the levying of fines and penalties against defaulting Public Authorities. He stressed the importance of having knowledge about the demand and the supply side of the equation, and above all the need for MDAs to not only proactively disclose the 22 minimum classes of information required by the RAI Act but to also provide access to information on request as long as such information does not fall among the exempt information provided for in the RAI Act. The RAIC CIC also urged MDAs to respond to calls by the Commission for them to send reports of their status of compliance with PDI and FOI of the previous year as provided for in Section 41 of the RAI Act as this data is very important for inputting in the annual UNESCO survey the Commission participates in on SDG 16.10.2 which relates to public access to information and the protection of fundamental freedoms and also in their annual reports.

The Executive Secretary of the RAIC Hon Mustapha M. Braima reiterated the significance of ATI and its support to openness and accountability in modern democracy.

The Commission's Legal Counsel and Compliance Manager, Alan Benjamin Esq. was taking the MDAs through critical areas of the Act, including the time limits of fifteen working days (15) period for a request to be responded to, and the forty-eight hours deadline(48) where it involves life and liberty. What also came out clearly in those engagements was the MDAs obligation to transfer requests that are wrongfully sent to them to the right MDA that holds the information and to inform the requesters about the transfer of their requests to other MDAs instead of ignoring them; the exemption provisions, the relevant offences and penalties; the powers of the Commission of the High Court when adjudicating matters.



RAIC CIC Dr Shaw speaking during the Consultative Engagement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in July 2022.

The critical issues that unfolded in those engagements were:

- the conflict between the code of secrecy and openness
- the time limit in the response to FOI requests
- the challenges the MDAs may face in responding to an information that may concern the life or liberty of a person since some of them have very limited staff capacity

The Commission thoughtfully responded to these questions. The Commission had been making it very clear that the 2013 RAI Act supersedes the Secrecy Code and that it is working with the Public Service Commission and the Human Resource Management Office (HRMO) to review some provisions of the Civil Service Code that conflict with the RAI law. What also came out very clearly was that an extension of not more than fifteen more working days can be granted to a public authority if that body faces time constraints to responding to the FOI request and that failure on the part of a public authority to conform to the timelines set out in the Act shall be deemed a refusal of the request, for purposes of complaints and appeals.

The RAIC held consultative engagements with the following MDAs in 2022:

- 1) Ministry of Lands and Country Planning
- 2) Ministry of Energy
- 3) Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
- 4) Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
- 5) Ministry of Internal Affairs
- 6) Sierra Leone Water Company

5.4. PUBLIC SENSITIZATION, EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Public sensitization, education and awareness of the RAI Act is one of the flagship programmes of the Commission. At the beginning of every year, the Commission mounts a robust public engagement on the RAI law using various media platforms across the country. The Public Information Units of the Commission run by Public Information Officers were very critical in the coordination of media and public sensitization activities. These individuals are entrusted with the responsibilities of preparing press releases, organized radio sensitization programmes and facilitated media interviews for members and staff of the RAIC. The media programmes they often organized were accompanied with public feedbacks. The outcome of these programmes were documented for uploading on the RAIC website and its other social media handles. In a bid to ensure the MDAs submit their Proactive Publication Schemes for assessment, the Commission in the first quarter of the year under review embarked on a nationwide public sensitization using various platforms to make the MDAs in the country have knowledge of their statutory obligations and comply with obligation as provided by law. The Commission further intensified the popularization of the RAI Act 2013 at district, chiefdoms and community level. As an institution that came into existence as a result of the effort of media for the establishment of the Freedom of Information law, the Commission Prioritized media coverage of all its activities.

5.4.1. RAIC AND THE MEDIA 2022

The role of the media in the popularization of the RAIC cannot be over emphasized in contemporary development narrative. From the traditional or mainstream media, (Radio, Television and Newspaper) to the new media (Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter Instagram etc.), the media has been an integral part in the dissemination of the RAIC.s information to the intended audience. There was a large presence of the media on the commemoration of the International Day of Union Access to Information by the RAIC at both national and regional level on the 28th September, 2022. Invariably, the Chairman and Information Commissioner, a media practitioner, was invited to a number of functions organized by SLAJ of which he was required to give inputs. One of them was an assessment, vis-à-vis the inherent gaps of the Cyber Security and Crime Act following its enactment in 2021, possible contributions from stakeholder to carry out a nationwide awareness raising and advocacy on the Cyber Security and Crime Act.



David Patrick Kamara, PIO National Secretariat

THE ELECTRONICS/BROADCAST MEDIA

The electronic / broadcast media such as Radio Democracy, Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), Africa Young Voices (AYV) Radio/TV, Universal Radio, Skyy Sports, Afri Radio to name but a few hosted most of the programmes implemented by the RAIC in the year under review. With the huge media presence in the regions, these programmes were replicated across the length and breadth of the country. The Southern Regional Office spearheaded by Public Information Officer, Millicent Braima, for instance held eighteen (18) radio talk shows across six (6) radio stations in the South. All Out Radio, Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), Kiss 104.2 and Radio New Song Bo among others put the RAIC on the spotlight. The Northern Regional Office on the other hand held twenty-Two (22) appearances on both Radio and TV stations in a bid to ensure public knowledge of the RAI law and the programmes organized by the RAIC in the year under review. Radio Mankneh, Hope FM, Radio Maria, Radio Banka Soka, SLBC Makeni, Port Loko, and Radio Bintumani, were among the radio stations that hosted and covered the work of the RAIC in the northern region. In the Eastern Region, Star Line, Radio, SLBC Kenema, Eastern Radio, Nyapui Radio and Top Radio hosted and covered programmes organized by the RAIC.

PRINT MEDIA

The partnership between newspapers/magazines and the RAIC has also been very productive in the year under review. The Chairman and Information Commissioner, Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, is himself a publisher and journalist. The print media practitioners do not only carry stories from press conferences and programmes organized by the RAIC, but were also given the latitudes to walk into all RAIC offices across the country to request for interviews, seek clarifications about its activities and clients. Articles and press releases issued out by the Commission are also normally carried in many newspapers, especially the Expo Times, Global Times, Independent Observer and Comment Newspaper in Freetown, and many newspapers in the regions.

5.4.2. SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES

With the new media taking the lead as the fastest means of reaching out to people, especially the younger folks, the RAIC through its social media handles hosted a considerable number of individuals, especially those who have keen interest in access to information to reach out to its publics. The Commission runs a WhatsApps Group and a PIOs Forum, where all Public Information Officers from various public authorities and records officers interact and share updates of their activities through press releases, videos, audios and text files for the attention of members of the forum on behalf of the different institutions. The RAIC also uses this forum to inform members of the obligations of their MDAs to the RAI Act including the prompt response to queries.

The RAIC also runs a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Right-to-Access-Information-Commission-RAIC->. This page has served as one of the main sources of information to the public in respect

of the RAIC activities and notices. The page with almost a little over three years of existence can boast of over three thousand followers (3000) across the world. The other good thing about these platforms is the instant feedback users/followers get in the event that they need answers regarding the work of the Commission.

The Commission is also proud to state that as an advocate of openness and transparency, it runs a standard and regularly updated website (www.raic.gov.sl) that hosts public notices and press releases of the RAIC, and all classes of information to be proactively disclosed. The Website has been referred to by many experts as a model for MDAs disclosure of information.

WAY FORWARD

The popularity of the RAI Act in the ears of Sierra Leoneans is a testament to the fact that significant gains have been made by the Commission under the leadership of Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw and his team of regional Commissioners. However, the various Communications Units of the RAIC will not sit by and bank on the gains made thus far. It will remain ambitious and willing to explore opportunities to reach out to its publics. The RAIC will continue to make its website remain a fundamental source of information whilst the cordial partnership with the print, electronic and social media will be improved for qualitative outcomes. In addition to its firm presence on WhatsApp and Facebook, the RAIC will include Twitter, Tik Tok and Instagram to its social media handles to ensure the visibility of its services to all and sundry. All the dreams of improving the presence of the RAIC in the media in the coming years is contingent on funding. The RAIC needs to advocate for increased resources to support the operations of its public information for multiplier outputs.

5.5. REPORT ON REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

The roles and responsibilities of the regional offices are to among other things provide oversight function for the Commission in their respective regions. They are the face of the Commission in the regions. They interface with regional offices of MDAs, local councils, learning institutions and non-state actors through consultations and public engagement and ensure that the relevant bodies comply with the provisions of the RAI law, not least the proactive disclosure of information provided in Section 8 and the Annual Compliance Report consistent Section 41 of the RAI Act. The Regional Offices receive complaints coming from Freedom of Information Requesters (FOI Requesters) and respond where necessary. They provide regional guidance in the application of PDI and ACR schemes. They report exceptional issues to the RAIC headquarters for redress. The Regional Offices also play a crucial role in the popularization of the RAI Act through the holding of awareness raising activities in the community radios of the district headquarter towns of Sierra Leone.

5.5.1. SOUTHERN REGION

The Southern Region embarked on a series of activities in the year under review. The regional office held consultative meetings with MDAs resident in the Southern Province on the RAI law. The key issues in those engagements border around their PDI and ACR obligations.

The office also interfaced with the public using various media houses to increase awareness of the work of the Commission, the RAI Law and its importance in open governance to enhance transparency and accountability. The work of the regional office is however not unconnected with challenges to be mentioned later. Below includes the activities of the Southern Regional Office in the year under review.

Radio Popularization of the Right to Access Information Law

The Southern Regional office embarked on a rigorous sensitization and awareness drive of the RAI law in the year under review. Community radios being the medium of reaching out to citizen effectively, the Regional Office prioritizes its public engagement drives using such platforms.

The Southern Regional office through the effort of the Regional Commissioner, Yorma Idriss Biya and Southern Regional Public Information Officer Millicent Briama frequented among others the following Southern radios:

- Classic radio Bo
- All Out Radio
- Sierra Leone Broadcasting Co-operation (SLBC)
- Kiss 104
- Moon light radio
- Radio New Song Bo



PIO South, Millicent Brima At SLBC, Bo

The outcome of those engagements was critical in the increase of the Freedom Information Requests from citizens, knowledge of public authorities of their statutory obligations in the submission of the PDI and ACR.

Engagement with MDAs in Bo District



Commissioner Biah Y. Idriss of South and PIO, Millicent Brima with EDSA Officials

In the year under review, the Southern Regional Office engaged 10 MDA's in the south to ensure that they are familiar with the RAI law. The Regional Office reminded them of the Commission's mandate to promote access to information held by or under the control of public authorities and their obligations under the RAI law to proactively disclose information consistent with the 22 classes of information provided in section 8 of the RAI Act. The Commission encouraged the Southern Regional MDAs to have websites where they would publish these classes of information.

The MDA's engaged were as follows:

- Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning
- Electricity Distribution Supply authority
- National Commission for Social Action
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Bo City Council

- Bo District Council
- District Medical Office
- Bo Government Hospital
- Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
- Ministry of Basic and Senior Education

Stake Holders Engagement on the RIA Act on PDI and ACR



RAIC staff and MDA representatives at the symposium

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) held a stakeholder engagement on the RAI Act 2013 and the processes involved in completing the Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) and the Annual Compliance Report (ACR) Templates.

The ceremony was held on Thursday 7th of April 2022 at the RAIC Southern Regional Office in Bo. The event brought together, MDAs, CSOs and the Media in the Southern Province to dialogue on ways to comply with the relevant provisions of the RAI Act. The Chairman and Information Commissioner (CIC) of the RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw; Regional Commissioner South, Biah Yormah Idriss and the Executive Secretary, Hon. Mustapha Braima were present.

Welcoming participants, Biah Yormah Idriss said it was an opportunity for participants to interact and have fruitful deliberations to ensure all parties know their obligations and responsibilities under the RAI Act of 2013.

Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw said the mandate of the RAIC is to promote access to information held by public authorities and that the RAIC is there to come in when there are refusals to disclose information. He said the Act clearly states in Part Two that everyone has the right to access information from any public authority and the public authority is mandated to disclose information as long as it does not fall under the category of exemption listed from section 12 to 26 of the RAI Act. .

Hon. Mustapha Braima who gave a background of how the RAIC came into existence following the passing into law of the RAI law, admonished the Heads and Information Officers present to be proactively disclosing information and providing Annual Compliance Reports to promote transparency and accountability.

Some participants expressed their dissatisfaction over the non-compliance of FOI requests by the Sierra Leone Police, Bo branch. The CIC advised them to make a formal complaint to the RAIC. They pleaded for ATI trainings be done for CSOs in the South so that they would be accustomed to the RAI law. They requested that the RAI Act be distributed to some Public Authorities. The participants applauded the efforts made by the Commission to promote transparency and good governance in Sierra Leone.

RIAC South Observed the International Day for The Universal Access To Information 2022

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) South on 28th September joined UNESCO, the RAIC National Secretariat and other countries and international bodies to commemorate the International Day of Universal Access to information at a well-attended ceremony in the Bo regional office, on the theme Artificial Intelligence, E-governance and open data. Commissioner Biah Y Idriss spoke on the importance of the day to prompt an opportunity for stakeholders to throw insights and perspectives on access to information; where to strengthen the E-governance and open data management to enhance transparency, accountability and sustainable socio-economic development. He further called on all to visit the Bo regional office where procedures would be explained on how to access information. The programme was complemented with radio talk shows on different radio stations in Bo.

Visitation of Schools and Higher Learning Institutions

The RAIC Southern region office intensified its popularization drives of the Right to Access Information (RAI) law in the Southern Region in the year under review. A number of institutions were engaged among which were, staff and pupils of Namiya Islamic Secondary School Bo, staff

and students of Every Nation Polytechnic and staff and students of Bo Community College. The Public Information Officer South, Millicent Braima gave a background of how the Commission came into existence following the passing of the RAI law in 2013 and the primary mandate of the RAIC to promote access to information held by public authorities. She was emphatic on the provisions of the act that clearly stated in section two that everyone has the right to request for information from any public authority and the public authority is obliged to disclose information as long as it does not fall under the category of exempt listed from section 12 to 26 of the RAI act.



Public information Officer South and Staff of Namiya Islamic Secondary School Bo

She reemphasized the importance of the RAI law in the fight against corruption, and the promotion of transparency, accountability and good governance in the country.

The Open Data Center in Bo

The data center which was re-launched on the 10th November 2021 after a halt as a result of the COVID has been very well functioning since its re-launch. People who have been accessing the resource center are satisfied with the services given to them.

Challenges

- Mobility for staff to visit other districts
- Lack of adequate personnel in some capacities to handle the work load of the office
- Insufficient funding to embark on massive activities

Recommendation

- Transportation needs be addressed in the regions
- Employment of technical personnel such as the IT specialist
- More stake-holders engagement support for compliance of FOI, ACR and PDI
- Addition of funds allocated to the regions for more activities

5.5.2. NORTHERN REGION

The Northern Region Office of the Right to Access Information Commission was officially opened on the 8th of September, 2017 and has been fully operational since then. The Office which is situated at the Central Business District of Makeni is well placed to ease the demand and supply of Information to the general public.

This section captures all the activities carried out by the Northern Regional Office as well as the outcomes and recommendations proposed by key stakeholders to smoothen the work of the Commission and improve service delivery.

Training of Journalists on Freedom of Information (FOI)

Conscious of the fact that for the citizens to have a breadth of knowledge of the RAI Act, the role of the journalists has to be key in that direction. In view of this, the Northern Regional Office led by its Commissioner Abu Bakar Kargbo thought it necessary to enlighten the journalists about specific provisions of the RAI Law. Staff of SLBC were recipient of this drive. The Northern Regional Office on the 2nd February, 2022 held a 3 hour engagement with SLBC staff about freedom of information. The topical issues presented in that engagement are the methods and procedures to follow upon requesting for information held by public authorities in accordance with Section 3 of the RAI Act.

Staff of SLBC Makeni asked a considerable number of questions bordering on FOI and the role of MDAs to provide access to information to the public. The Commissioner was able to respond to them while citing the relevant provisions of the RAI Act. The SLBC Makeni staff expressed appreciation to the RAI for broadening their knowledge about the RAI law and rights involved.



A Cross-section of SLBC Makeni Staff

RADIO SENSITIZATION

The Northern Regional Office in the year under review embarked on a massive public sensitization on the RAI Act 2013 using the media since it is one of the major platforms of the Northern Regional Office used to propagate the work of the Commission. The office adopted its usual monthly public engagement programme to inform and educate the citizens. Commissioner Kargbo alongside the Northern Regional PIO, John Kaloko

held programmes such as Talk to the MDAs / CSOs/ Media live on various radio stations in respect of relevant provisions of the RAI including PDI, FOI Request and transparency and accountability in line with the RAI Act.

Below includes the radio stations engaged by the RAIC Northern Regional Office in the year under review:

TABLE 1

MONTH	REPRESENTATIVE	HOPE RADIO	SLBC	AMZAS RADIO	RADIO GB AFTH	VOICE OF WUSUM	VOICE OF GBONKO-LENKEN
January	Commissioner Kargbo		2	1		2	-
March	PIO John Kalokoh		1	3	2	3	2-
May	Admin Ass Salamatu Bangura			1		1	-
June	Volunteer Jalloh	1		-			
July	Commissioner Mary			-			-
October	Commissioner Mary			2			



PIO North, John Kaloko on Radio



Community Engagements

Community engagement was a major programme of the Northern Regional Office in the year under review. The RAIC staff engaged different communities in the Northern Region. The focus of those engagements was to educate the heads of communities and members on the mandate of the Commission and to widen their knowledge to claim access to information held by public authorities. It came out clearly during these engagements that people have a fair or no knowledge about the RAI Act. Again, those who have knowledge about the Act were not educated about the methods involved to request for information. The Communities engaged in the year under review were as follows:

BUMBUNA COMMUNITY



Diang Chiefdom, Koinadugu District



Public Engagement on the RAI Law

The Northern Regional Office held a one-day engagement with a gamut of MDAs, CSOs and media houses on Friday 6th May, 2022 at the RAIC Northern Region Office in Makeni. This event was witnessed by the Chairman and Information Commissioner, Dr, Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Western Regional Commissioner, Pastor Mohamed Sesay and the Executive Secretary, Hon. Mustapha Braima. The main objective of that meeting was to broaden the knowledge of these interest groups about the RAI Act, the role of the RAIC and their obligations as provided for in the RAI Act. Issues of proactive disclosure of information by MDAs and the timely submission of their PDI and ACR schemes were also discussed on that day. MDAs were encouraged to create websites and also endeavour to proactively disclose information therein consistent with the 22 classes of information captured in section 8 (2) of the RAI Act.

Update on PDI Compliance Report

The National Secretariat distributed letters and template to the regional office in Makeni for onward distribution to the various MDAs within the two regions, North-East and Northwest respectively. The letters and ACR templates were distributed to the MDAs. The mode of submission required both hard and soft copies. Follow ups were continuously done through the Northern Regional PIO.

Engagement with Schools

The Northern Regional Office held a number of engagements with secondary schools in the region. These, among other, were Saint Francis Secondary School Makeni, Benevolent Secondary School Makeni, Government Boys Secondary School (GBSS) Magburaka and Government Girls Secondary School (GGSS) Mathora. The objective of these engagements was to take the RAI Act to these academic institutions, enlighten them about its provisions and the obligations of these institutions to update their Proactive Publication Schemes and respond to FOI requests in a timely manner



PIO North amid Students of St. Francis Secondary School

5.5.3. EASTERN REGION

This report captures all the activities carried out by the Commission, including recommendations made by key stakeholders engaged in the year under review. Amid the numerous challenges faced by the Eastern Regional Office, it was able to accomplish most of the proposed activities in the year under review. The Office in the year under review embarked on a host of activities using various fronts including radio talk shows, stakeholder engagements, school visitations and press conferences. It is however worth noting that there was a transition in the office. Commissioner Mary Karimu left in the early part of 2022 to contest for a seat in Parliament. The office was under the supervision of the Southern Regional Commissioner, Biya Yorma Idriss until the appointment of Armed G. Kallon as the Eastern Regional Commissioner.

Engagements with MDAs in the Eastern Region

The Eastern Regional Office engaged eighteen (18) MDAs in the Eastern Region in 2022. The Commission held a considerable number of meetings with them. Heads of MDAs and their staff members were taken through the relevant provisions of the RAI. The crux of those engagements was the responsibility of the MDAs to comply and submit their Proactive Publication Schemes. During this process, MDAs that were not previously educated on the preparation of publication schemes were guided.

Engagements with NGOs and CSOs in Kenema

In a bid to ensure a wider public knowledge about the RAI Act and the work of the RAIC in the Eastern Region, the Eastern Regional Office engaged NGOs and CSOs in the municipality of Kenema. The objective was to enlighten them on the provisions of the RAI Act. These interest groups were taught about their rights as citizens to be informed about policy decisions, actions of government and the conduct of state functionaries, and the process of developing publication schemes. The following bodies were engaged:

NGOs	CSOs
Social Enterprise Development	Humanist Watch
Network Movement for Justice and Developmen	Network Movement for Rural Development

Radio Sensitization

The Commission carried out eighteen (18) radio discussion programs on different radio stations in the year under review. The outgoing commissioner had one radio engagement in February 2022 at both the Nongowa radio and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) in Kenema. In March, 2022, the Eastern Regional PIO, James Fortune had a radio discussion program at the SLBC Kenema. In June, 2022, the office held two radio programs. The office was represented in those by James Fortune and Regional Admin Assistant, Jonathan Palmer, on Star-line radio. The discussion was meant to educate the public about their rights as provided for in the RAI Act.

The Eastern Regional PIO was in July 2022 hosted at the SLBC Kenema radio about citizen's right to access information and the need to make FOI request if they need the information from a public authority. In November, 2022 the new Commissioner Ahmed G. Kallon visited Kailahun and Kono districts and held radio discussion programmes in both districts at the SLBC-Kailahun and the Eastern Radio-Kono. He thereafter held two similar radio programs at Nyapui Radio and Top Radio in Kenema. The purpose was to raise awareness about the RAI and its relevant provisions and the work of the Commission following a symposium held by the Commission. In December, 2022, Commissioner Kallon had three (3) media engagements with SLBC, Top Radio and Nyapui Radio in Kenema

Radio Stations Engaged in the Eastern Region in 2022

TABLE 2

MONTH	REPRESENTATIVE	SLBC	NONGOWA	STARLINE	TOP RADIO	NYAPUI RADIO	EASTERN RADIO
February	Commissioner Mary	1 (Kenema)	1	-			
March	PIO James Fortune	1 (Kenema)	1	-			
June	PIO James Fortune	1 (Kono)	-	-			
June	PIO James Fortune & Jonathan	-	-	2			
July	PIO James Fortune	1	-	-			
November	Commissioner Ahmed G. Kallon	2 (Ken. & Kono)			2	2	1 (Kono)
December	Commissioner Kallon & PIO Fortune	1			1	1	

Engagements with Schools

The Eastern Regional Office led by Commissioner Kallon visited 10 schools, including four major secondary schools in Kenema city. These were, among others, Government Secondary School Kenema (GSSK), Holy Rosary Secondary School (HRSS), Islamic Secondary School Kenema (ISSK) Holy Trinity Secondary School Kenema (HTSSK) to popularize the work of the Commission as well as urge them to update their Proactive Publication Schemes.

Change of Guard at the Eastern Regional Office

28th October 2022 saw the handing over of the Eastern Regional Office in Kenema to the newly appointed Regional Commissioner, Ahmed G. Kallon at a ceremony witnessed by RAIC CIC Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, the outgoing Commissioner, Mary Wuyata Karimu, and the Executive Secretary Hon. Muspapha Braima. The event was a result of the resignation of former Eastern Regional Commissioner, Mary Wuyatta Karimu in April 2022. Commissioner, Ahmed G. Kallon was appointed by His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio on 18th. October 2022.

Dr. Shaw congratulated the new Commissioner and assured him of the support of the Commission to discharge his regional duties effectively. He expounded on key provisions of the RAI Act, vis-à-vis the powers of the Commission and its role at the regional level. He encouraged the people in the region to work with the Commission while exercising their rights to access information. The Chairman and Information Commissioner reemphasized the need to channel all complaints coming from the public to the regional office. He maintained that complaints that required the attention of the headquarters would be escalated there for redress.

RAIC's Executive Secretary, Honorable Mustapha Brima, who chaired the ceremony encouraged Commissioner Kallon to refer to his predecessor if he faced doubt in the preliminary assumption of his duties.

Outgoing Eastern Regional Commissioner, Mary Wuyatta Karimu assured the new Commissioner of her unwavering guidance and support in every step of the way. She implored her successor to continue with the good work of the Commission. She underscored her openness to respond to Commissioner Kallon as and when she is needed.

In response, the new Commissioner assured members of the RAIC of his commitment to project the image of the Commission in the Eastern Region. He acknowledged the work of his predecessor during her stewardship and assured her of building on the already solid foundation she had laid for the RAIC in the Eastern Region.

Another speakers at the ceremony was the Regional Chairperson of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists who expressed hope that the Regional Office under the aegis of Commissioner Kallon will protect the rights of journalists in accessing information. The event was climaxed with the handing over of the official files of the regional office.



Commissioner Kallon and a cross-section of those that witnessed the Handing over Ceremony.

Successes

The following are the encouraging achievements of the RAIC Eastern Regional Office in the year under review:

- Received 17 cases from the public as a result of the awareness raising campaigns and 14 have been resolved with the intervention of the Commission
- Increase in awareness on the part of MDAs in the Eastern Region.
- Through the intervention of the Commission, the Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority (ADSA) responded to a part of the request for information made by journalists
- Stakeholder and community engagements were well attended
- Stakeholders and public authorities recognize the Commission's work and treat its staff with respect
- Kono district requests for more concentration of the Commission's work in Kono
- In-house training has been equipping for the staff

Challenges

- Insufficient number of personnel to handle the huge workload of the office
- Staff mobility into the rural communities
- Lack of trained Information Technology specialist to support the Open Data Centre
- Deliberate refusal of the Kenema District council to submit their publication scheme and to respond to the request
- Repair of faulty office equipment (computers, printers, etc)

General Recommendations

- Improve healthy working relationships with both local and international partners
- Address transportation needs in the commission
- Employ more technical staff to maintain excellence in work
- Undertake more capacity building training for staff
- Empower the regional offices to be able to handle cases and set precedence without compromise.

5.5.4. WESTERN REGION

Consultative Meetings at OGP

The government of Sierra Leone conscious of the fact that the Right to Access Information Commission is a key player to the Open Government Partnership (OGP) where it promotes freedom of information. The FOI is an indispensable part of democratic societies in which citizens are given the right to be informed about policy decisions, actions of government and the conduct of state functionaries. This is why the enactment of the freedom of information law in 2013 was very important steps towards democratic governance, transparency, accountability.

The RAIC creates more space for openness by given Right to Citizens to request information from Public Authorities which allows the public to follow government decision-making, participates in ensuring better decisions, and holds the government accountable.



In 2022, the Admin Assistant for the western Region represented the commission at Steering Committee Meetings and attended five such meetings in 2022.

The meeting which was hosted by Westminster Foundation at Parliament was to review the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) report on National Action Plan four (NAP 4) implementation progress and Sierra Leone's good governance strides on the completion of (NAP) 4 implementation, and the development of a robust of NAP 5 with commitments that will trigger institutional change. These are early days of NAP 5 development, but preparation is necessary for a productive outcome.

However, the presence of two institutions observing the Open Government Partnership (OGP) steering committee meeting for the first time, Sierra Leone Maritime Administration and BudGIT. These two institutions respectively are interested in having commitments towards an integrated Maritime policy for Sierra Leone as well as Health Sector Accountability in the NAP 5.

In 2022, the OGP SC members organized a symposium at the City Hall to ensure key players identify key challenges in the implementation of the open government National Action Plan commitments, understand and encourage participation, collective responsibility and create ownership of all open government reforms in the open government partnership country process. The National Council for Civic Education and Development (NaCCED), with support from its development partners, held a day national symposium on the 25th August, 2022 at the Freetown City Auditorium with representatives from MDAs including the Right to Access Information Commission, Civil Society Organizations, media and from Development Partners. The keynote address was given by the Chief Minister, Jacob Jusu Saffa with several dignitaries in attendance who made statements on behalf of their institutions.

6. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

The RAIC's core mandate is to implement the RAI Act 2013 and in doing so facilitate access to information as a vehicle to promote transparency, accountability and good governance. Achieving the successful implementation of the RAI law is by no means an easy job, especially given the rate of mass illiteracy in the country and the culture of secrecy which had been the status quo before the enactment of the RAI Law. One way of measuring progress in the implementation of the RAI law is by monitoring and reporting on the extent to which public authorities are complying with their obligations as provided for in the Act. Part 2 section 2 of the Act provides that everybody, no matter your status, tribe, social standing, colour, race, etc. has the right to access information held by public authorities. However, this right can only be enjoyed if the public authorities who hold the information requested comply.

The RAIC's interventions to ensure compliance have been two-fold; the first is the baby-sitting, or use of the carrot, approach where the Commission provides capacity building and other forms of support to the public authorities to help them understand their obligations under the Act from the supply side and to members of the public, especially civil society to understand their rights to access information on the demand side; the second is the use of the stick such as issuing orders and fines to compel the public authorities to comply with their obligations.

Two things have helped the Commission to monitor and report on compliance by public authorities with public access to information in Sierra Leone. First, it set itself the target of producing an annual report of its activities covering 2019 in accordance with Section 41 of the RAI Act for the first time since it was set up in 2014, and Sub Section 3 of that Section provides that such annual report should include reports of the status of compliance by all public authorities. Section 41 subsection 3 states: ***“The annual report shall also include an overview of the performance of all public authorities in implementing this Act.”*** Subsection 4 states: ***“To enable the Commission to comply with subsection (3), every public authority shall report annually to the Commission on the steps it has taken to implement this Act, including a report on the requests for information it has received and how these have been dealt with.”***

Second, it has since 2019 been participating in an annual UNESCO Survey. UNESCO is the UN agency mandated to monitor and report on compliance by member states of the United Nations with SDG 16.10.2 which speaks directly to Public Access to Information. This Survey focuses on central information about adoption and implementation of the right to information (RTI) and was designed to help Member States provide the core data that UNESCO and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics are seeking at that moment to fulfil UNESCO's mandate.

6.1. Proactive Disclosure of Information and Freedom of Information Request

The Commission has in line with its mandate identified two broad areas of compliance: first, proactive disclosure of information (PDI) as provided for in Section 8 Sub Section 2 of the RAI Law which states that all public authorities are obliged by law to proactively publish the minimum of 22 classes of essential information about their institution, including on a web site platform, and that they should complete and/or update a Proactive Publication Scheme to be submitted to the Commission for assessment within the period of six years since the enactment of the RAI Law, or its coming into operation. Second, freedom of information (FOI) request as provided for in Part 2 Section 2 of the RAI Law which states that everyone has the right to access information held by a public authority on request with a deadline of 15 working days, 48 hours if the request relates to saving life, or securing the liberty of someone. This section will now proceed to provide the state of compliance with PDI and FOI, as well as other obligations under the Act, by public authorities in Sierra Leone in 2022.

6.1.1 Proactive Disclosure of Information Compliance

In adopting a publication scheme, a public authority shall, as per Section 8 (3), have regard to the public interest—in allowing access to the information it holds; and in making information available proactively so as to minimize the need for individuals to make requests for information.

Section 8(5) states that every public authority shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme. Section 8(6) states that every publication scheme shall, within six years of the adoption of the first publication scheme by a public authority, cover all of the core proactive publication obligations set out in subsection (1).

At the beginning of every year, the Commission calls on MDAs to submit their PDI Schemes for its approval in accordance with Section 41 of the RAI Act. By a memorandum dated 12th January 2022, the Commission accordingly requested MDAs to submit their PDI Schemes to the Commission before 1st February 2022. The deadline was extended to March 25. In the Commission's assessment of PDI in 2021/2022, it noted that out of 29 public authorities that submitted their Proactive Publication Schemes (PPS), 3 were fully approved, 16 were given approval with observation because they were on the verge of being fully approved owing to the fact that they complied with 15 and above obligations, 6 were given conditional approval as they complied with between 10 and 14 obligations, and 4 were rejected as they complied with less than 10 PDI obligations.

Following is the list of the 29 MDAs that submitted their Publication schemes and how they were assessed:

The three MDAs whose PPSs were fully approved were: Statistics SL, Ministry of Social Welfare, and Right to Access Information Commission.

The 16 that were given approval with observation were:

1. Independent Police Complaint Board;
2. Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice;
3. National Commission for Social Action;
4. Ministry of Development and Economic Planning;
5. Environmental Protection Agency;
6. Standards Bureau;
7. Guma Valley Water Company;
8. Independent Media Commission;
9. Public Service Commission;
10. Sierra Leone Maritime Administration;
11. Pharmacy Board Sierra Leone;
12. Bo City Council;
13. Kenema District Council;
14. Pujehun District Council;
15. Makeni City Council;
16. and Political Parties Registration Commission.

The 6 that were given conditional approval were:

1. Local Government Service Commission;
2. Bo District Council;
3. Office of the Administrator and Registrar-General;
4. Ministry of Labour and Social Security;
5. Anti-Corruption Commission;
6. and National Fire Force.

The 4 that were rejected were:

1. Sierra Leone Local Content Agency;
2. National Commission for Democracy;
3. Sierra Leone Commercial Bank;
4. and Parliament of Sierra Leone.

For the 2022-2023 PDI assessment cycle, the RAIC issued a memorandum to all MDAs nation-wide that have never submitted PDIs to the commission and those that submitted in the 2021-2022 assessment cycle presented above but were either given conditional approval, or rejected, to submit their PDI PPSs on, or before, the 20th of February 2023 for assessment.

After several engagements and trainings with public authorities, the Commission received PDI PPSs schemes from 47 Public Authorities which were assessed. These 47 MDAs are listed by region and district and according to their PDI Compliance Status in TABLE 1 below:

TABLE 3: 2022 -2023 PDI NATION-WIDE COMPLIANCE STATUS

NO	MDA	REGION	DISTRICT	COMPLIANCE STATUS
1	Min of Env and Climate Change	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
2	National Authorising Office	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
3	Human Resource Management Office	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
4	Min of Youth Affairs	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
5	Civil Service Training College	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
6	Cabinet Secretariat	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
7	Local Govt Service Com	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
8	Public Service Commission	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
9	National Commission For Democracy	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
10	Electricity Distribution and Supply Agency	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
11	Ministry of Technical and Higher Education	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
12	Office of the Administrator and Registrar-General	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
13	Public Sector Reform Unit	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
14	S Leone Water Company	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
15	National Tourist Board	Western Area	Western Urban	Approved
16	Makeni City Council	Northern Reg.	Bombali	Approved
17	University of Makeni	Northern Reg.	Bombali	Approved
18	Port Loko City Council	Northwest Reg.	Port Loko	Approved

19	Kambia District Council	Northwest Reg.	Kambia	Approved
20	Bo District Council	Southern Reg.	Bo	Approved
21	Bo City Council	Southern Reg.	Bo	Approved
22	Kenema District Council	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
23	Kenema City Council	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
24	Kenema Govt. Hospital	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
25	Ministry of Social Welfare	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
26	Min. of Lands & C.Planning	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
27	Min of Basic and Sec. Edu	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
28	Ministry of Employment & Soc Security	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
29	Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
30	National Revenue Authority	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
31	National Youth Commission	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
32	Kailahun District Council	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
33	Teaching Service Commission	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Approved
34	Sierra Leone Water Company		Kenema	Approved
35	National Civil Registration Authority	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Conditional Approval
36	National Social Security Insurance Trust	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Conditional Approval
37	North East Provincial Office	Northern Reg	Bombali	Conditional Approval
38	Karene District Council	Northwest Reg.	Karene	Conditional Approval
39	Tonkolili District Council	Northern Reg.	Tonkolili	Conditional Approval
40	Falaba District Council	Northern Reg.	Falaba	Conditional Approval
41	Koinadugu District Council	Northern Reg.	Koinadugu	Conditional Approval
42	Ernest Bai Koroma Uni	Northern Reg.	Tonkolili	Conditional Approval

43	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency	Western Area	Western Urban	Rejected
44	Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency	Western Area	Western Urban	Rejected
45	National Mining Agency	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Rejected
46	Environmental Protection Agency	Eastern Reg.	Kenema	Rejected
47	Electricity Distribution and Supply Agency	Eastern Region	Kenema	Rejected

As indicated in TABLE 3 above, in the Commission's assessment of the 47 PDI PPSs received for the 2022-2023 assessment cycle, 34 were given approval with observation because they complied with between 15 and 19 out of the 22 minimum classes of PDI obligations and therefore demonstrated to be on the verge of being fully approved; 8 (eight) were given conditional approval because they provided at least half of the 22 minimum classes of PDI obligations; whereas 5 were rejected as they complied with less than 10 PDI obligations.

The 20 whose PPSs were approved with observation were: Road Maintenance Fund Administration; Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change; National Authorising Office; Human Resource Management Office; Ministry of Youth Affairs; Civil Service Training College; Cabinet Secretariat; Local Government Service Commission; Public Service Commission; National Commission for Democracy; Electricity Distribution and Supply Agency; Ministry of Technical and Higher Education; Office of the Administrator and Registrar-General; Public Sector Reform Unit; Sierra Leone Water Company; National Tourist Board; Makeni City Council; University of Makeni; Port Loko City Council, and Kambia District Council.

The 7 (seven) which were given conditional approval were Bombali, Tonkolili, Karene, Falaba, and Koinadugu District Councils, EBK University, and Bombali Provincial Office.

The 2 (two) that were rejected were: National Drug Law Enforcement Agency; and the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency.

The five Public Authorities that the RAIC Compliance team held engagements with and took through the process of completing the PDI but did not submit by the deadline due to various reasons, including delay in sign off by the head of the institution are as follows: Legal Aid Board; Ministry of Transport and Aviation; Parliament of Sierra Leone; Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation; and National Telecommunications Authority.

It is worth noting that submission of PDIs to RAIC for assessment is only annual for those MDAs that have not submitted in the past, or submitted but were either given conditional approval, or rejected. Therefore, those MDAs whose PDI schemes were fully approved, or approved with observation in the 2021-2022 PDI assessment cycle were separately contacted by the Commission to update their schemes for the 2022-2023 assessment cycle. However, those that were either given conditional approval, or rejected, in the last 2021-2022 PDI assessment cycle were served with a memo and asked to re-submit together with those who submitted for the first time. It is encouraging to note that the National Commission for Democracy that had its PDI scheme rejected and the Office of the Administrator and Registrar-General that had its PDI scheme given conditional approval in the last 2021-2022 assessment cycle, respectively, had their schemes given approval with observation in the 2022-2023 assessment cycle, which shows that these two institutions have made progress with their PDI obligations apparently because of their perseverance, hard work, and political will.

6.1.2 Freedom of Information and Annual Compliance Report Compliance

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) in 2020 commenced the compilation of the Annual Compliance Report (ACR) which entails details of how public authorities have ensured they promote information access and set up units and departments that may help this. Section 41 (3 & 4) of the RAI Act of 2013 mandated the RAIC to keep a record of efforts made by public authorities and publish in their annual report in accordance with their obligations in the RAI Act.

A draft template designed to aid MDAs respond to their 2022 ACR was done and circulated to all MDAs. The template is intended to ensure that the MDAs have in place a means of assessing themselves in line with statutory obligations such as FOI, PDI, Records Management, Public Information, and ICT.

Below includes the content of the ACR Template:

- Name of Requester
- Date of Request Received
- Nature of Information Requested
- Response by Public Authority the Request (YES/NO)
- Was the Information Provided (YES/NO)
- Date of response (If any)
- Reason(s) for not responding to the request and/or providing the information

ADDITIONAL ACR TEMPLATE INFORMATION

- Total Number of Requests Received
- Total Number of Requests wherein the Information was Provided
- Total Number of Pending Cases
- Total Number of Requests Denied.....
- Total Number of FOI Complaints
- Total Number of FOI Complaints Resolved.....

The RAIC issued out Annual Compliance Reports Template in a memo dated 31st January 2023 to over 150 Public authorities to complete and subsequently submit to the RAIC. This ACR template was revised to capture the data of female requesters and Number of Female Public Information Officers (PIOs). The idea was to also have a gender disaggregated data in the monitoring and reporting on compliance with the RAI law in Sierra Leone.

Number of MDAs (NO MDAS)

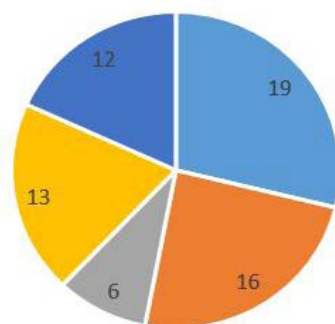
MDAs with Public Information Officers (PIOs)

MDAs with Female Public Information Officers(FPIOs)

MDAs with Records Management Units (RMUs)

MDAs with Information, Communication, and Technology Units (ICTUs)

MDAs ACR PIE CHART



■ NO MDAs ■ With PIOs ■ With FPIOs ■ With RMUs ■ With ICTUs

The RAIC received a total of 19 Annual Compliance Reports (ACR) from various Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of which 16 have Public Information Officers, Six (6) of whom are females. Thirteen (13) MDAs reported that they have a records management department or unit whilst twelve (12) have Information Communication Technology (ICT) departments or units. It is important to note that the 18 MDAs that submitted their PDI publication schemes for the 2022-2023 period discussed earlier in this paper were among these 19 that submitted their ACRs. The 19th one was Statistics Sierra Leone which did not submit a PDI publication scheme for the 2022-2023 period because the publication scheme they submitted in the 2021-2022 cycle was fully approved.

FOI Requests	Number of FOI Requests
FOI Requests Received	13,016
FOI Requests Provided	10,147
FOI Requests Pending	6
FOI Requests Denied	1
FOI Female Requesters	3500

TABLE 4

From the 19 MDAs that submitted ACR templates, 13,016 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were made across Public Authorities, of which 10,147 were provided to the requesters, (3500) of whom were identified as females. There are six pending FOI requests that are to be addressed and there was a single case of denial because the information requested falls under exempt information.

FOI Complaints	Number of FOI Complaints
FOI Complaints Received	12,932
FOI Complaints Resolved	9,119
FOI Complaints Pending	3,658
FOI Complaints Unresolved	3
FOI Female Complainants	1500

TABLE 5

Out of the 13,016 FOI requests received by MDAs, a total of 12,932 Complaints were made. 9119 of which were resolved whilst 3658 were pending at the time of the reporting. It should be noted that the resolved complaints were resolved through the internal complaint resolution mechanisms of the 19 MDAs under review. 3 complaints remained unresolved.

6.2 FOI Requests/Complaints with RAIC Involvement and/or Intervention

It should however be noted that in addition to these 13,016 FOI requests reported by these 19 MDAs in their ACRs for 2022, there were 101 others made nation-wide in which the RAIC was copied and, or, had its intervention sought. In the 2022 year under review, there were a total of 42 requests received in the Northern Region and 41 of them were successful with one (1) pending in the Karene District. A total of 25 requests were received in the Southern Region and 24 of them were successful with 1 pending. A total of 17 requests were received in the Eastern Region and 15 of them were successful with 2 pending. The Western Area received a total of seventeen (17) requests, ten (10) of which the Commission was copied. Out of the seventeen received by the Commission, seven (7) were escalated from request to complaint and there was one (1) information request made directly to the Commission by Ethnic Youth Development Organization. This latter request was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture by the Commission as they are the public authority that holds the requested information as provided for in the RAI Act. With these 101 total information FOI requests processed nation-wide with the direct, or indirect, involvement of the Commission plus the 13,016 FOI requests processed by the 19 MDAs that submitted their Annual Compliance Report to the Commission make the total FOI requests recorded for 2022 to stand at 13,117.

FOI Requests and Complaints by Regions and Districts with RAIC Interventions

Northern Region

Requests	42
successful	41
pending	1
Complaints	0

FOI Requests in the Northern region are as follows by district:

4 in Port Loko
 12 in Bombali
 15 in Tonkolili
 5 in Kambia
 2 in Falaba
 3 in Karene
 1 in Koinadugu

TOTAL 42

Southern Region

Requests	25
successful	24
pending	1
Complaints	0

FOI Requests in the Southern region are as follows by district:

15 in Bo
 3 in Pujehun
 5 in Moyamba
 2 in Bonthe.

TOTAL 25

Eastern Region

Requests	17
Successful	15
Pending	2

FOI Requests in the Eastern region are as follows by district:

9 in Kenema
5 in Kailahun
3 in Kono
TOTAL 17

Western Area

Requests	17
Complaints	7
Requests Successful	10
Complaints Successful	5
Complaints Pending	2
Request to Commission	1
Transfer	1

FOI Requests and Complaints in the Western Area are as follows by district:

14 in Western Urban
3 in Western Rural

TOTAL, excluding request to Commission and Transfer, 17

Summary Breakdown of FOIs by Regions and as Reported in the ACRs

Requests without RAIC Intervention	13016
Requests with RAIC Intervention	101
Total Number of Requests and Complaints	13,117
Total Successful FOI Requests with and without RAIC intervention	10,237
Complaints made with and without RAIC intervention	12,939
Complaints resolved with and without RAIC intervention	9124
Complaints Pending	3664

Some Key FOI Requests/Complaints nation-wide in 2022 in which the Commission was copied/intervened**WESTERN AREA REGION**

- Black Johnson Land Owners' Organization Request to Environmental Protection Agency –(EPA)**
 - Information request to find out if an Environmental Impact Assessment Study has been done as per the EPA Act of 2008. And if yes, a copy of the reports and the license including the term and conditions in a letter dated 14th February 2022.
The Commission was copied.
- Ethnic Youth Development Organization – SL Request to Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC)**
 - On the 9th March 2022, Ethnic Youth Development Organization made a request for information

- On the 9th March 2022, Ethnic Youth Development Organization made a request for information pertaining to the budget allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Youth Affairs (Youth in Agriculture), from 2018 Budget, 2019,2020, and 2021 and how it was used.
- The outcome and impact level from the benefit of the citizens of this country.

Action Taken By RAIC:

- The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) transferred the request to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry, and Ministry of Youth Affairs by a letter dated 20th of March, 2022.
- Reminder letter from Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Ministry of Youth Affairs was sent on the 5th of May, 2022.
- Application for review from Ethnic Youth Development Organization (SL) was sent to the RAIC by a letter dated 6th June, 2022.

Case Status:

- There was neither an acknowledgement of the request nor provision of the requested information from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
- And on the other hand, the Ministry of Youth Affairs provided the requested information to them (EYDO).
-

3. Fritong Post Information Request to National Telecommunications Commission

- By a letter dated 4th April 2022, the Fritong post requested access to the documents listed below from the Director General of the National Telecommunications Commission:
 - Document on whether Orange SL has fully paid the fine of SSL 2,688,000,000 levied as two-years spectrum fee for 280MHz bandwidth
 - Whether Orange SL has also fully paid the fine of SSL 10,752,000,000 levied as penalty for illegal use of eight (8) carriers of the upper 6GHZ band for the past two years
 - Whether Orange SL has relinquished the frequencies at the Kabia-Blama link
 - Details of payments made in respect of all of the above

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) was copied.

4. People’s Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) Request to Statistics Sierra Leone -

(Stats SL)

1. Statistics Sierra Leone was asked on the 3rd of June, 2022, to provide the Mid-
2. And to also disclose the total expenditure involved in the whole exercise.

- **Case Status:** The Commission was copied.

5. Oluwafunmilayo Chambers Freedom of information Request to the Director of Lands and Surveys

- The request for information was made on the 31st August, 2022, to the Director requesting him to refrain from his wrongful interference with survey report and property situate lying and being at Tokeh, Peninsular Road, Freetown in the Western Area of the Republic of Sierra Leone.
- Demanded in view of the provision of the Right to Access Information Acts 2013 (RAI) to provide them with the said report within 48 hours of receipt of this letter.
- The RAIC was copied.

6. Marian Amaria Bangura-Journalist AYV Media Empire requested for Information from the Sierra Leone Police.

Case Description:

By a letter dated 12th September, 2022 a request for information under article 25(1) of the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone and Part 2 of section 2(1) of the Sierra Leone Right to Access information Act 2013, was made regarding a copy of the standard operating procedures (SOP) that covers the general operations of the police.

Case Status

The Sierra Leone Police replied on the 27th September 2022 stating Marian failed to state the purpose for which she requested to access the particular document and information requested falls under the exempt clause of the RAI Act of 2013 (Section 12(2)).

- The RAIC was only copied on the matter.

7. Epic Radio Requests for Information to the Maritime Administration-SL

By a letter dated Monday 25th July, 2022 a journalist and station Manager of Epic Radio 99.3fm requested for information to the Maritime Administration regarding a copy of the 2019 report that led to the suspension of the MV Freetown's captain.

On the 2nd of September, 2022, a letter of complaint was sent to the RAIC regarding the refusal of The Maritime Administration in providing the above information request.

Action Taken by RAIC

Upon receipt of the complaint from Epic Radio, The Commission instructed the Maritime Administration to provide the said information to the requester in line with the provisions of the RAI Act of 2013

Case Status

The information was provided to the requester.

8. Alieu "Al" Badara Mansaray of TV 24 in Washington, US, requested for Information from the Sierra Leone Police (SLP)

Case Description:

Mr. Mansaray on 10 May, 2022 requested for a copy of all examination papers showing the questions and answers therein that prospective police recruits took on Saturday 12th of March, 2022 across Sierra Leone.

A complaint was made to the RAIC by Mr. Mansaray on the 14th day of July regarding the failure of the SLP in Providing the above information requested.

Action Taken by RAIC

By a letter dated 2nd of August 2022, the Commission asked the SLP to provide the requested information

On the 5th of August, The SLP acknowledged receipt of the letter dated 2nd of August, 2022 stating that it has received the attention of the inspector General of the Sierra Leone Police and to further inform the Commission that the Sierra Leone Police was in transition of its leadership and therefore asked that sometime be given to them to officially respond to the complaint.

In lieu of this, a letter dated 10th August, 2022 the RAIC granted the SLP request for an extension of 14 days in providing the information requested.

Case Status

The SLP responded by providing some of the information requested but noted that that they would only provide the information requested regarding the outcome of the exams after the publication of the results of

the exam the applicants took on Saturday 12th March, 2022. They also promised that the results are expected to be published between September and October of 2022.

- The requester filed papers in Court against both the RAIC and SLP
- Papers had been filed on behalf of the RAIC but the matter has not yet been heard

EASTERN REGION

1. A request was made by FALLAH A. BOCKARIE of Foundation for Development Democracy and Human Rights (**FDDHR**) on the 7/02/22 to the MBSSE regarding the 2022 Subsidy List for all beneficiary schools in Kenema

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, MBSSE responded on 10th February 2022

2. VICTOR IBRAHIM made an FOI request to MOHS-Kenema on the 15/03/22 regarding the quantity of food and supplements supplied to the Kenema Government hospital.

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, MOHS MDA A released the requested information on, March 18, 2022

3. Sidie Kaikai made a request to the Basic Education Min on 28/03/22 regarding the Number of Pin coded teachers in Kenema

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, MBSSE released the information on the 30th March, 2022. Request by Francis Kormoh ETU Student

to NACSA on 12/09/22 for a comprehensive report on the 2020 NaCSA-funded School rehabilitation project at National Islamic Sec. Sch at Burma Sec. Sch section

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, the information requested was provided in hard copy on September 19, 2022

5. Request by MOMOH SHEKU to the Marie Stopes

to the Marie Stopes was made on the 12th of March 2022 on the number of drugs that were supplied to the health facility in Kailahun town

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, the Information was granted to the requester on 14th March, 2022

6. A Request by AMINATA KALLON on the 8th April 2022 to Kailahun District Council regarding Information on the approved loan schemes for traders

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, the information sought was given to the requester on the 11th of April 2022

7. JOHN LAMIN made a request on the 17th May, 2022 to the Kailahun City Council on information on the Kailahun-Koidu road project from the local council.

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was given to the requester on the 19th May, 2022.

8. SIA FANDAY made a request to the Kono district Council on the 14th April 2022 on the cash aid that was given to local business owners

Action and Conclusion

Following the Commission's intervention, the information sought was accessed on the 15th of April, 2022.

NORTHERN REGION

1. Mr Mohamed Tejan Kamara made a request in a letter dated 14th February, 2022 to the Engineer Water Resources Tonkolili district on his sacked status without receiving any formal letter insisting that he would want to see his letter before leaving the institution.

Action and Conclusion: Following the intervention of the Commission through a letter dated 17th February, 2022, the requested information was released to the requester

2. The Chairman old student association commercial Magburaka made a request on the 15th August, 2022 to the Board chairman of the National Commercial Sec. School, Magburaka asking for information on how the school funds was utilized by the outgoing principal and who is to take over the school after the exit of the principal.

Action and Conclusion

Following the intervention of the Commission, the requested information was released

3. Mr Mohamed Kamara on 1st March, 2022 requested information from Nurse Salamatu Sesay on the quantity of drugs supplied by the ministry of health and Sanitation to the Warama hospital, while the hospital stands with no drugs, just after receiving drugs from the ministry.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention through a letter dated 18th March, the requested information was released.

4. Madam Jelikatu Koroma on 12th April made a request to the Desk Officer NaCSA Masingbi for information on a swamp project which started and it was incomplete and why?

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 31st May, 2022

5. The Principal, Mike Konko Secondary School, Mike Konko, on 16th February, 2022 made a request for information to the Deputy Director Teaching Service Commission Tonkolili, about (six) 6 teachers approved to his school without teaching at the said school for the period of (four) 4 years.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 30th March, 2022.

6. Mr. Augustine Kargbo Youth leader on 7th July, 2022 requested information to the school Head Teacher of UMC primary school Yonibana on how the school fee subsidy and PBF funds were used and the rehabilitation of the school project funded by the old student's association.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 10th August, 2022.

7. On the 8th June 2022, a group of farmers on 8th June made a request to the M & E Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture for information about the missing fertilizers sent by the Ministry of Agriculture for farmers in Tonkolili district.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 17th June, 2022.

8. The District Youth Leader on the 21st February, 2022 made a request for information to the Chief Administrator of the Tonkolili District Council on the misuse of government waste management vehicles; the youth leader sent a follow up letter dated the 28th February 2022.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 23rd March, 2022.

9. The Women's Network Forum (WNF) in a letter dated 16th June, 2022 made a request for information to the Water Well Contractor hired by the Bombali District Council on the funds received for the water well project yet to be completed in Mapakie Chiefdom.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released.

10. MR UMARO CONTEH C.T.A. chairman on the 28th July, 2022 requested information from the Head Teacher of the RC Primary School Kamaky, Bombali District on how the school subsidy and PBF funds were used for the year 2021-2022 academic year.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released.

11. The Elders council of Tane Chiefdom on 27th January, 2022 made a request for information to PC Bai Kafari on the use of the tax money received from the Chiefdom Administrative Clerk.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 8th March, 2022

12. Maligie Mansaray on 7th July, 2022 made a request for information to the school principal of Alhadi Islamic Junior Sec. School, Makeni, asking for information on how funds received were used.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 17th August, 2022

13. Mohamed Abdul Kamara on 11th May, 2022 made a request for information to Nurse in charge of Community Health Centre Bamoi Lumma Kambia District to release information on the bed nets received for malaria campaign.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 31st May, 2022

14. Shembu koroma made a request for information on 5th April, 2022 to the head teacher of the SLMB, Buya, Karene District to release information about funds received and PBF for the school.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 27th April, 2022

15. The Conference OF PRINCIPALS on the 7th June, 2022 made a request to the Deputy Director Basic Education Ministry Koinadugu district requesting for information about a number of school learning materials received for 2021-2022 Academic year.

Action and Conclusion: Following the Commission's intervention, the requested information was released on the 30th June, 2022.

SOUTHERN REGION

1. The Ark of Hope Academy in Bo, in a letter dated 5th December, requested for information from the Bo City Council on the functions of the councils as they wanted this information to enable their learners to gain insight on local governance.

Action and Conclusion: Following the intervention of the Commission, the requested information was released on the 15th December, 2022

2. A group of students from the Central University, Mile 91 requested for information from the Bo City Council on how communication strategy and plan operates in a cooperate institution for a research purpose.

Action and Conclusion: Following the intervention of the Commission, the requested information was released on the 7th April, 2022

3. Students of Business Administration Department Njala University in a letter dated 5th April, 2022 requested for information from Bo City Council for research on the filing system in the Human Resource office.

Action and Conclusion: Following the intervention of the Commission, the requested information was released on the 20th April, 2022

4. Mr. James Tamba of the Eastern Technical University in Kenema on 1st July 2022 requested for information from Bo city council on how its finance system operates in the council and how the local revenue is used.

Action and Conclusion: Following the intervention of the Commission, the requested information was released on the 22nd July, 2022

5. Mr. Mohamed Musa from Moyamba on the 10th September, 2022 requested for information from Right to Access Information Commission South in Bo via mobile phone. The requester wanted to know the classes of information that are exempt. He did not state the reasons for such request.

Action and Conclusion: Following the intervention of the Commission, the requested information was released on the 22nd September, 2022

6. Hannah Blake from Pujehun on the 5th December, 2022 requested information about the duties and responsibilities of the Right to Access Information Commission for research purpose and also wanted to know if there were penalties for defaulters.

7. **Action and Conclusion:** Following the intervention of the Commission, the requested information was released on the 16th December, 2022

To conclude, it is safe to say that Sierra Leone has made a steady progress in the implementation of its Access to Information Law despite challenges such as the culture of secrecy in the public and civil service which is often used as an alibi to deny access to information. In fact, in many cases, it is within this context of culture of secrecy that some public authorities sometimes invoke the exempt provisions of the RAI law as reason, albeit sometimes wrongly, to justify their denial of access to information. The other challenge is of course lack of sufficient funding that would enable the Commission to undertake more popularization and capacity building activities that would help boost compliance.

7. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Freedom of Information law became a reality in Sierra Leone through efforts of national and international collaboration, and the accession to the open government partnership in 2014. Since its reconstitution in 2018, the Commission has been prioritizing national and international partnerships to improve standards of information rights practice; stay relevant, provide excellent public service, keep abreast with evolving technologies; enforce the laws and ensure compliance, and set guidelines, codes of practice and regulations that will give it a clear positioning even from an institutional standpoint.

The role of interest groups like the Civil Society, the media and academia in advocating and subsequent enactment of the RAI Act was glaring. Sierra Leone's signatory to international instruments including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights creates the room for international partnership. Against that background, the Commission had held series of meetings with MDAs, World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) now Open Society Foundation (OSF) Africa, Independent Media Commission (IMC), National Commission for Democracy (NCD), Freedom of Information (FOI) Coalition, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Interest groups promoting human and workers' rights, among others. CSOs, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC). The partnership collaborations made by the Commission in the year under review are as follows:

7.1. NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

In providing a more systematic, comprehensive approach to strengthening RAI initiatives and improving the perceptions held about ATI regulation, the RAIC has been engaging different groups at local level while implementing its programmes. It has trained media practitioners about the RAI law and its protection of fundamental freedoms and provision of a democratic space for monitoring of government affairs. The RAIC has also engaged the CSOs about their duty to demand accountability and transparency from government institutions in order to deliver their statutory mandate in line with the RAI Act. The Commission is also a platform for hands-on knowledge of individuals acquiring higher educational knowledge in information and records management. The Commission considers the Civil Society Groups, Media Practitioners and Lecturers of Information management as opinion leaders to seeking public opinion about the status of ATI and the level of compliance thereof. These groups equally regard the RAIC as critical component in promoting a transparent and accountable society.

Stakeholder Meeting on the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021

The Commission in the year under review participated in a one day stakeholder meeting organized by SLAJ held on 8th February, 2022 with the objective of looking into the possible gaps in the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021 and gathering possible contributions from stakeholder to carry out a nationwide awareness raising and advocacy on the Act. The RAIC was able to identify the political outlook of the Composition of the National Cyber Security Advisory Council and the need to incorporate state and non-state actors promoting good and open governance such as the RAIC, IMC and SLAJ in the council to give it a dispassionate face.

SLAJ Triennial General Meeting

The Chairman and Information Commissioner was represented at the SLAJ Triennial Meeting held at the University of Makeni Auditorium on 16th June, 2022 by the Western Regional Commissioner, Pastor Mohamed Sesay, who threw light on the institutional checks the freedom of information law provides in every aspect of government and importance of section 25 of the Sierra Leone Constitution which guarantees freedom of expression.

OGP Steering Committee Meeting

Being a key player in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) specifically freedom of information rights, the RAIC was in the year under review represented in an OGP Steering Committee Meeting hosted in the precincts of the House

of Parliament by the Westminster Foundation. The objective of that meeting was to review the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) report on the OGP National Action Plan Four (NAP 4) Implementation Progress and Sierra Leone's good governance strides in the completion of NAP 4 implementation, and the development of the early days of NAP 5 development.

NMJD

In its drive to raise awareness of the RAI law around the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone on a broader perspective, the Eastern Regional Office of the RAIC interfaced yet again with the Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD-Kono) to promote the Freedom of Information Law. This is a continuation of the engagement the two institutions already had on proactive disclosure and access to mining related information to accelerated public knowledge of the activities of the sector and expansive research therein for national development.

7.2. INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Being a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convention on ATI, International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC), and African Network of Information Commissioners (ANIC), the RAIC prioritizes international partnership to pursue access to information reforms and implementation, and present the Sierra Leone ATI progress, the general and common challenges and the support needed.

The signatory of Sierra Leone to international instruments such as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights since the RAI Act was enacted has strengthened its international partnership. It has further reinforced its participation in the UNESCO convention on ATI and its mandate to monitoring progress in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goal **16.10.2** which calls for ensuring public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

7.2.1 DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Commission since its reconstitution in 2018 has been in a steady working relationship with three key development partners until the third quarter of 2021. These include: the World Bank, UNESCO and OSIWA. Notwithstanding the progress that had been made on the realization that the Commission can perform better and deliver the expected results more effectively and efficiently through a more streamlined and focused planning process, the years 2022 is on record as the year this current Commission is operating without funding from development partners. It is worth noting that prior to 2022, the succession of landmark achievements made by the Commission came from funding from the World Bank through the Public Financial Management Improvement Consolidation Project (PFMICP) UNESCO and Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) now Open Society Foundation (OSF) Africa.

The Commission in the first quarter of 2022 had a number of engagements with the Task Team and Project Coordination Unit of the World Bank funded Accountable Governance for Basic Service Delivery Project (AG4BSD) and sent a proposal for the incorporation of its transparency and accountability programmes into the project. Engagement with the Project and Ministry of Finance is ongoing while awaiting the Project's Mid Term Review for possible incorporation to continue its transparency and accountability drive through the open and big data, access to information, and enhanced oversight by NSAs programme. Efforts have also been made to engage UNESCO and OSF Africa for possible funding. The requests for proposals (RFPs) sent by these two international agencies at the time were not related to the mandate of the Commission. There was assurance from these bodies to keep the Commission abreast with future RFPs.

7.3. INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION (IDUAI) 2022

Theme: E-governance and Open Data: Pathway to Access Information

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) joined UNESCO, alongside other countries the world

over to celebrate the 2022 International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) also known as Right to Know Day. IDUAI is observed on September 28 of every year following a resolution proclaimed on 17th November, 2015 at the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference. The RAIC observed this day in its usual national standpoint. It brought MDAs, CSOs, media practitioners, ATI researchers, and local and development partners together on a roundtable, to chart the way forward. The day was marked with a symposium at the Family Kingdom Resort, Aberdeen. The global focus of the 2022 celebration was: ‘**Artificial Intelligence, e-Governance and Access to Information.**’

While commemorating IDUAI, the RAIC is cognizant of the important role artificial intelligence and e-governance can play to improve access to information in the digital world. These strands can help bridge the digital divide by giving citizens access to suitable and accessible information. They can assure services that are more efficient. To strengthen national institutional coordination on open data, the RAIC made significant strides towards establishing a foundation for a comprehensive open data initiative. Due to the major shifts in society driven by technological advances in the collection, analysis and use of large datasets that have become commonplace, the Commission will trigger the conversation on open data to see how the nation can keep pace with global developments, so as to relate as well as mediate between increasingly complex social groups and sectors in a digitalized future. In view of this, the RAIC deems it necessary to broaden and localize the scope. This necessitates the theme for for 2022, “**E-governance and Open Data: Pathway to Access Information.**”

Chairman and Information Commissioner of the RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw pointed out that “the celebration of the International Day for Universal Access to Information is part of the RAIC calendar. Invariably, it is a moment of reflection to where we are as a nation. The day prompts an opportunity for stakeholders to throw insights and perspectives on access to information; where we need to strengthen our e-governance and open data management to enhance transparency, accountability and a sustainable socio-economic development,”

7.4. MEMBERSHIP IN ATI ORGANIZATIONS

International Conference of Information Commissioners

The ICIC is an international membership body established to foster the protection and the promotion of access to public information as a fundamental pillar to social, economic and democratic governance. It also provides a platform for diverse voices to address current issues that impact on access to information, including transparency and accountability, competing interests, the rights of vulnerable societies and the diverse roles on technology. It offers an opportunity to local, regional and international Information Commissioners, Non-Governmental Organizations and promoters of access to information to share experiences and insights on how to strengthen public access to information through international cooperation. The RAIC has contributed in different actions of the ICIC. These include:

- the amendment of the ICIC Charter
- ICIC Communication Plan and Objectives
- ICIC Conflict Resolution Process
- ICIC Executive Committee Election Process
- ICIC Observer Application Process

Between March 10 and 14 2019, the RAIC Chairman/Information Commissioner and his Executive Secretary attended and spoke at the 11th International Conference of Information Commissioners(ICIC) held in Johannesburg. UNESCO and the World Bank funded the Chairman’s participation while that of the Executive Secretary was funded locally. The overall theme of the Johannesburg Conference was: ‘Building international co-operation to strengthen public access to information globally.’ In March 2019, the RAIC CIC Dr Shaw was elected member of the Executive Committee of the ICIC representing Africa. The RAIC finally became an accredited member of the ICIC on September 24 2019 following a rigorous evaluation process.

The ICIC was cognizant of the impact the COVID-19 and the unprecedented challenges it continued to cause both nationally and globally and the challenges governments around the world are facing in responding to the pandemic to protect public health, civil liberties and individual prosperity. Against this backdrop, the

ICIC issued two calls to order. The one statement was on proactive publication of information relating to the Covid-19, the importance of transparency and the right to access information, and the other was a statement calling on all public authorities to document their decisions and transactions related to the COVID 19 pandemic. It recognized the role that access to information has in building trust in the global community during times of crisis and beyond, and reemphasized the significance of proactive disclosure of information held by government or public institutions and how it increases citizen participation in government processes and promotes better informed decision making through increased scrutiny, discussion, comment and review of government decisions.

The RAIC domesticated the ICIC two calls to order decision by issuing two statements calling on all public authorities, including businesses and research institutions in the country to proactively disclose and document their COVID 19-related decisions and transactions to ensure experiential learning on how to prevent and contain future public health emergencies.

Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic and its negative global impact, the traditional ICIC annual conference did not hold in 2020 and 2022, but was held in 2022 in Mexico. The RAIC CIC participated in this conference by presenting a comprehensive overview on the status of ATI in Sierra Leone to a special panel hosted by ANIC. CIC Dr Shaw was elected member of the Executive Committee of ANIC representing West Africa at that conference, a position which he still holds.

African Network of Information Commissioners (ANIC)

The African Network of Information Commissions (ANIC) was created with the aim of creating a platform for access to information in the African continent. At an International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) held in Johannesburg in March 2019, a group of African countries, including Sierra Leone, recognised the need for a network focusing on access to information on the African continent

ANIC is a Network of African Information Commissioners, Ombudsmen, and other Regulatory Authorities, including Transparency Councils or Boards that are responsible for protecting, promoting and ensuring the respect of the right of access to information within their respective jurisdictions. The purpose of the Network is to establish a formal forum for dialogue, cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experience among its members. The Information Regulator (Regulator) of South Africa was elected as the interim chair and secretariat of ANIC.

Conference of the African Network of Information Commissioners

The Second ANIC annual conference took place in Nairobi, Kenya on 07 and 08 April 2022. The objective of the conference was to get the perspectives and insights of Information Commissioners and access to Information Regulatory Authorities in Africa and the world at large in respect of the forming of a regional structure of regulatory authority on access to information issues in Africa. The Conference was chaired by Adv. Pansy Tlakula, Chairman of the Interim Executive Committee of ANIC and the Information Regulator in South Africa.

The Chairman and information Commissioner of RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, was invited by ANIC to contribute to the conference's objective.

However, due to funding constraints, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw was unable to attend the conference in person but did a virtual presentation on the advancement of ATI in Sierra Leone from political and economic, socio-cultural and human rights standpoints.

PART III

FINANCIAL STATEMENT



PART III – FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Right to Access Information Commission Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

GENERAL INFORMATION

Address	General Information 58 Krootown Road, Freetown, Sierra Leone.
Members of the Commission	Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw - Chairman & Information Commissioner Abu Bakarr Kargbo - Commissioner North Ahmed G. Kallon - Commissioner East Bai Y. Idriss - Commissioner South Mohamed Sesay - Commissioner West
Bankers	Bank of Sierra Leone, Siaka Stevens Street, Freetown.
Auditors	ARVS Partners, Chartered Accountants, 18B Gooding Drive, Off Regent Road, Lumley, Freetown.

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Commission Responsibility Statement

The Vote Controller confirms that the Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Public Financial Management Act of 2016 and in compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standard: Financial Reporting.

Sections 86 of the Public Financial Management Act, 2016, requires that within three months after the accounts of the financial year are closed, the Vote Controller of every entity of sub-vented agency, and every other entity in the central government shall submit to the Auditor General annual financial statements of the entity for the financial year.

The Vote Controller is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the public sector entity's financial statements, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the entity for and as at the end of each financial year. This responsibility is stipulated in Sections 13 and 15 of the Public Financial Management Act, 2016, includes:

- (i) maintaining efficient and effective systems of financial management and internal controls;
- (ii) safeguard and manage assets and public money of the entity in the best interest of the entity with the due care and diligence;
- (iii) keep full and proper records of the financial affairs of the entity; and
- (iv) submit in a timely manner financial reports, accounts and statements of the entity.

The Vote Controller is of the opinion that the public sector entity's financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the public sector entity's transactions during the financial year-end. The vote controller confirms that the public sector entity has complied fully with applicable Government Regulations, and that the funds received during the year under review were used for the eligible purposes for which they were intended and were properly accounted for. The vote controller also confirms the adequacy of the system of internal controls. Further, the vote controller confirms that in preparing the Financial Statements, the most appropriate accounting policies have been consistently applied and supported by reasonable and prudent judgment and estimates. The vote controller further confirms to the best of his/her knowledge and belief the completeness of the accounting records maintained and that the Financial Statements agree with the books of accounts, which have been properly kept.

The Vote Controller accepts responsibility for the integrity of the financial statements, the financial information they contain and their compliance with the provisions of Section 15 (4) of the Public Financial Management (PFM) Act of 2016.

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Principal Activity

The principal activity of the Commission is to provide for the disclosure of information held by Public Authorities or by persons providing services for them and provides for other related matters.

Reporting Entity

The Commission was established under the Sierra Leone Government Right to Access Information Commission Act 2013 with the key aim to provide for the disclosure of information held by Public Authorities or by persons providing services for them and provides for other related matters. The address of the Commission's registered office is 58 Krootown Road, Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Financial Statement of the Commission as at the end of the year ended 31st December 2022 comprise those of the Commission alone.

Results

The annexed Financial Statements disclose the financial activity of the Commission for the period ended 31st December, 2022.

Standardized Statement of Accounting Policies

The Standardised Accounting Policies given below have been developed using the cash basis of accounting that prescribed how financial transactions are treated and reported in the general-purpose financial statements. These are developed based on the fundamental principles underlying the preparation of financial statements, including going-concern assumption, consistency of presentation and classification, cash basis of accounting, and aggregation and materiality. They prescribed consistency in the definition, recognition, measurement and treatment of similar accounting items or financial transactions.

The Accounting Policies section of the notes to the financial statements should describe each specific accounting policy that is necessary for a proper understanding of the financial statements.

The Accounting Policies will be subject to periodic review and update when it is deemed necessary by the government.

The standardised accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the general-purpose financial statements are set out below:

a. Statement of compliance and basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Public Financial Management (PFM) Act, 2019 and comply with the International Public Sector Accounting Standard - Financial Reporting under the Cash Basis of Accounting (Cash Basis IPSAS). The measurement basis applied is the historical cost basis, except where otherwise stated in the accounting policies below.

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

The financial statements have been prepared on the cash basis using the Government's standard chart of accounts.

The accounting policies adopted have been consistently applied to all the years presented.

b. Reporting Currency

The financial statements are presented in Leones, which is the functional and reporting currency of the Government of Sierra Leone.

c. Reporting Period

The reporting period for these financial statements is a period of twelve months starting on 1st January 2022 to 31 December 2022, as specified in Section 1 of the PFM Act, 2019.

(Note - The general-purpose financial statements should be presented at least annually. When, in exceptional circumstances, an entity's reporting date changes and the annual financial statements are presented for a period longer or shorter than one year, an entity should disclose in addition to the period covered by the financial statements:

- (a) The reason(s) for a period other than one year being used; and*
- (b) the fact that comparative amounts may not be comparable.)*

d. Receipts

Receipts are cash inflows within the Financial Year, comprising of receipts from Statutory/Authorised Allocations, Taxes, External Assistance (Bilateral and Multilateral Agencies), Other Aid and Grants, other borrowings, Capital receipts (Sale of Assets etc.), Receipts from Trading activities, fines, levies, and other receipts.

These items shall be disclosed in summary on the face of the Statement of Cash Receipts and Payments for the year in accordance with the standardised GPFS. Notes shall be provided with detailed Statement of Revenues collected during the year by source of revenue and by line-item accounts code. Also, a Statement of Arrears of Revenues as at end of the financial year shall be provided by source of revenue and by line-item accounts code.

Disposal proceeds from the sale of assets are recognized as receipts at the time of disposal.

e. Interest Received

Interest actually received during the financial year shall be treated as a receipt under item 'other receipts'.

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

f. Government Business activities

Cash receipts from trading activities shall be recorded net in the GPFS (after deducting direct expenses) unless otherwise provided for by law or policy in force. Total net receipts from all trading activities shall be disclosed in the Statement of cash receipts and payments under 'trading activities' item

Wherein gross revenue is recorded, corresponding payments shall be charged under a corresponding payment item head 'Government Business activities' in the Statement of Cash Receipts and Payments.

g. Payments

Payments are recurrent and capital cash outflows made during the financial year and shall be categorised either by major economic categories/programme (activities) and/or by function in the statement of cash receipts and payment. Payments for purchase of items of capital nature shall be expensed in the year in which the item has been purchased. It shall be disclosed under capital payments. Investments shall also be treated in the same way as capital purchases. At the end of the financial year, a schedule of fixed (physical) assets purchased shall be provided as part of the Additional Disclosures to the GPFS.

Prepaid expenses are amounts paid in advance of receipt of goods/services or work done (under contractual arrangements) and are charged directly to the respective expenditure item in the period of payment.

h. Interest on Loans

Actual Interest on loans and other bank commissions charged on Bank Accounts during the year shall be treated as payments and disclosed under interest payment in the Statement of Cash Receipts and Payments.

i. In-kind contributions/third party payments

In-kind contributions are donations that are made to the *entity* in the form of actual goods and/or services rather than in money or cash terms. These donations may include vehicles, equipment or personnel services. Where the financial value received for in-kind contributions can be reliably determined, the *entity* includes such value in the statement of receipts and payments (in a separate column) both as revenue and as an expense in equal and opposite amounts; otherwise, the contribution is not recorded.

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

j. Foreign Currency Translation

Cash flows arising from foreign currency transactions are translated into Leones using the spot exchange rates prevailing at the date of payment/receipt.

Foreign currency balances, as at the year end, shall be translated at the exchange rates prevailing on that date (closing spot rate or year-end exchange rate).

Foreign exchange gains and losses resulting from the settlement of foreign transactions and from the translation at year-end exchange rates of monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are recognised in the Statement of Cash Receipts and Payments accordingly either as receipts/payments.

k. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and cash at bank, short-term deposits on call and highly liquid investments with an original maturity of three months or less, which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and are subject to insignificant risk of changes in value. These comprise mainly Bank account balances, include amounts held at the Bank of Sierra Leone, cash imprests and other short term highly liquid investments held at the end of the financial year.

l. Imprests and Advances

The Government policy specifically states that all imprests and advances shall be retired before the end of the financial year. However, should circumstances occur (including an Emergency) where either an imprest/advance is given out close to the financial year end or an imprest/advance already given could not be accounted for, such an imprest/advance (or balance outstanding) shall be treated as cash equivalent since there shall be no proof that such funds have been utilised.

m. Budget

The budget is developed on the same accounting basis (cash basis), the same accounts classification basis, and for the same period as the financial statements. The Budget Figures are the amounts approved by the Legislature in accordance with the Appropriation Act (annual budget and supplementary budget) and as detailed in the Government of Sierra Leone Budget Printed Estimates.

An assessment of the actual budgetary performance, at the level of legislative approval, against the comparable budget for the financial year under review has been included as Statement B of these Financial Statements.

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

n. Contingencies

Contingent liabilities (including Guarantees) are recorded in the Statement of Contingent Liabilities (on memorandum basis) when the contingency becomes evident and under the cash accounting method they are recognized only when the contingent event occurs and payment is made. Contingent assets are not recognized and where not probable neither disclosed.

o. Unpaid (Outstanding) Commitments

Unpaid (Outstanding) Commitments including operating and capital commitments arising from non-cancellable contractual or statutory obligations are in the Statement of Unpaid (Outstanding) Commitments (shown on memorandum basis – as additional disclosure).

p. Comparative Information

The GPFS shall disclose all numerical information relating to previous period (at least one year).

Where necessary comparative figures for the previous financial year have been amended or reconfigured to conform to the required changes in presentation.

q. Subsequent events

Events subsequent to submission of the financial year-end financial statements to the Accountant General Department and other stakeholders with a significant impact on the financial statements may be adjusted with the concurrence of the Accountant General's Department.



Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION COMMISSION

We have audited the financial statements of Right to Access Information Commission which comprise the balance sheet as at 31st December, 2022, Income Statement, Cash Flow Statement and the notes to the Financial Statements which include a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

Opinion

In our opinion the Financial Statement referred to above present fairly, in all material respect, the financial position of the Agency as at 31st December 2022 and the results of its activities and its Cash Flow for the year then ended in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

The Commissioners Responsibility for the Financial Statements

As described on page 2, members of the Commission are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these Financial Statements in accordance with Generally Acceptable Accounting Principles (GAAP) and in the manner required by the Public Financial Management Act 2019 and the Right to Access Information Commission Act, 2013. This responsibility includes; designing, implementing and maintaining internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are freed from material misstatement whether due to fraud, error or other irregularities.

Our report had been prepared pursuant to the requirements of the Public Financial Management Act 2016, the Right to Access Information Commission, 2013 and the International Auditing Standards as promulgated by International Federation of Accountants. No person is entitled to rely on this report unless such person is a person entitled to rely upon this report by virtue of and for the purpose of Right to Access Information Commission Act, 2013 and the Public Financial Management Act 2019 or has express responsibility for any other purpose and we hereby expressly disclaim any and all liability.

Basis of Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Auditing Standards as promulgated by the International Federation of Accountants. An audit includes examination, on a test basis of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the Financial Statements.

Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

It also includes assessment of significant estimates and judgements made by members of the Board with regards the preparation of the Financial Statements and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the organization's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

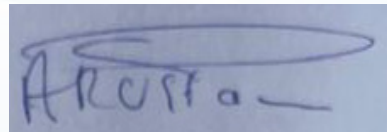
We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the Financial Statement are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion, we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the Financial Statements.

In common with many organization of this nature, the system of control of Right to Access Information Commission is dependent on the close involvement of management. We have accepted assurance from Management and the Board that all the financial transactions for the year ended 31st December 2022 have been reflected in the accounting records of the organization.

Freetown

ARVS PARTNERS
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Date:.....30th August, 2023

A rectangular stamp containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature appears to be "ARVS PARTNERS" written in a cursive style.

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Statement of Financial Position As at 31 December 2022

	Notes	2022		2021	
		LE'000	LE'000	LE'000	LE'000
Non-Current Assets					
Property plant & equipment	6		112		147,472
Current assets					
Cash & Cash Equivalent	7	7,985		3,470	
Current liabilities					
Payables	5	-		(108,007)	
Current asset less current Liability			<u>7,985</u>		<u>(104,537)</u>
Net Assets			<u>8,151</u>		<u>42,935</u>
Represented by:					
Accumulated Fund			<u>8,151</u>		<u>42,935</u>

The Financial Statements were approved on 25th August, 2023.



-----Chairman and Information Commissioner

Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Income Statement for the year ended 31st December 2022

In thousands of Leones

	Notes	2022 LE'000	2021 LE'000
Income	3	1,700,980	1,204,975
Administrative Expenses	4	(1,694,445)	(1,203,830)
Depreciation charges		<u>(95)</u>	<u>(74,004)</u>
Deficit for the year		<u>(6,440)</u>	<u>(73,596)</u>

Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Cash Flow Statement

	2022 LE'000	2021 LE'000
Deficit	6,440	(73,596)
Depreciation	95	74,004
Net cashflow from operating activities	<u>(6,535)</u>	<u>408</u>
 Investing Activities		
Purchase of property, plant & equipment	<u>(113)</u>	<u>(12,700)</u>
Net increase/decrease in cash	(4,425)	(3,043)
Cash and cash equivalent at start	3,470	427
Cash and cash equivalent at close	<u>7,895</u>	<u>3,470</u>

Right to Access Information Commission

Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Notes forming part of the Financial Statement for the year ended 31st December 2022

1. Reporting Entity

The Commission was established under the Sierra Leone Government Right to Access Information Commission Act 2013 with the key aim to provide for the disclosure of information held by Public Authorities or by persons providing services for them and provides for other related matters. The address of the Commission's registered office is 58 Krootown Road, Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Financial Statement of the Commission as at the end of the year ended 31st December 2022 comprise those of the Commission alone.

a) Basis of Preparation

The Financial Statement have been prepared in accordance with Generally Acceptable Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the Laws of Sierra Leone including Right to Access Information Commission Act, 2013.

b) Foreign Currencies

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated to Leones at the rate of exchange ruling at the date of the transaction. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign exchange rate ruling as at that date. Foreign exchange differences arising from such transactions have been recognized and form part of the income statement.

c) Depreciation

Depreciation of tangible fixed assets has been provided on a straight-line basis at the following annual rates, which have been calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected useful lives as follows:

Computer and Accessories	-	20%
Furniture & Fittings	-	20%

d) Income

Government grant and other grants are accounted for as and when they are received and no provision is made for grants due but not received by the Commission as at the balance sheet date.

Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Notes to the Financial Statements (Continue)

(f) Expenditure

All expenses are accounted for on a cash basis.

2(a) Accounting Policies

The accounting policies set out below have been applied consistently to all periods presented in these financial statements.

Depreciation is recognised in income statement on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of each asset. The estimated useful lives of the assets are as follows:

Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Notes to the Financial Statements (Continue)

3. Income

	2022	2021
	LE'000	LE'000
Government of Sierra Leone (Subvention)	1,700,000	974,300
Funds from UNESCO	-	221,582
Refund from UNESCO	-	8,500
	980	-
	<u>1,700,980</u>	<u>1,204,382</u>

4. Administrative Expenses

	2022	2021
	LE'000	LE'000
Computer & Printer	112,658	-
Audit Fees	25,185	21,000
Electricity	9,200	23,754
Fuel	340,400	289,600
Internet /Web Hosting & ICT Support	65,877	-
Local Travelling	48,900	19,564
Office & General	175,822	128,213
Programming/ meetings	93,853	81,973
Rent	82,881	38,700
Repairs and Maintenance	70,512	45,149
Security	45,700	63,579
Stationery & Cartridges	166,297	121,384
Stipend	22,500	42,500
Sundry/provision	34,900	79,692
Imprest	188,739	-
Withholding Tax	57,695	24,989
Printing and designing	153,326	-
Workshop UNESCO (Activity 1 and 2)	-	223,877
	<u>1,694,445</u>	<u>1,203,974</u>

Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

Notes to the Financial Statements (Continue)

5. Payables

	2022	2021
	LE'000	LE'000
Rent	-	32,667
Trade Payables	-	23,000
Audit fees	-	-
Withholding Tax	-	52,340
	<u>-</u>	<u>108,007</u>

6. Property, Plant and Equipment

	Computer & Accessories LE,000	Furniture & Fittings LE,000	Total LE,000
COST			
Bal as at 1 Jan 2022	199	164	363
Additions	113	-	113
Balance as sat 31 Dec	<u>312</u>	<u>164</u>	<u>476</u>
Depreciation			
Bal as at 1 Jan 2022	117	98	215
Charge for the year	62	33	95
	<u>179</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>310</u>
Net Book value			
As at 31 Dec 2022	<u>133</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>166</u>
As at 31 Dec 2021	<u>82,072</u>	<u>65,400</u>	<u>147,472</u>

Right to Access Information Commission
Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2022

7. Cash & Cash Equivalent	2022	2021
	LE'000	LE'000
Bank of Sierra Leone	6,440	835
Petty cash	1,455	2,635
	<u>7,895</u>	<u>3,470</u>
8. Accumulated Fund	2022	2021
	LE'000	LE'000
Accumulated Fund b/fwd	43	519,964
Surplus/deficit	6,440	(73,596)
Prior year adjustment	1,668	403,433
	<u>8,151</u>	<u>42,935</u>

PART IV – CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Notwithstanding the notable progress that the Commission had made in the year under review, the Commission continues to face significant challenges including the following:

- Dealing with policy and legal-related constraints including non-compliance with legislation;
- Institutional challenges typified by the non-clarity of roles clarity reflected by employees not having a clear understanding of their tasks, responsibilities, functional relationships and processes at work;
- Inadequate staff to carry out its core functions due to the prevailing moratorium on recruitment coupled with an inadequate work environment and staff welfare problems and poor conditions of service;
- Inadequate training opportunities and absence of a training policy and programme;
- Inadequate staff understanding of the details regarding their primary role, the results expected, what success “looks” like, minimum expectations, and clear metrics or how they are evaluated all along the way;
- Public providing the required support and cooperation to aid the work of the institution;
- Obtaining cooperation of MDAs and other agencies;
- Ineffective institutionalization of records management in the Commission coupled with the absence of a record centre that could be used by members of staff, researchers and the general public;
- Inadequate stakeholder engagement and inadequate communication; and
- Inadequate complaints mechanisms;
- Inadequate mechanisms to monitor and assess the Commission’s impact in advancing observance of human rights in the country;
- Inadequate financial allocations to the Commission and inability to attract substantial funding elsewhere compounded by delays in payment of quarterly allocations; and
- Information technology and communication inadequacies and risks.

PART V – KEY PRIORITIES AND THE WAY FORWARD

The following strategic priorities for moving forward are as follows:

- Amendment of the RAI Act to include the North-West Region and the appointment of its Commissioner to ensure fairer representation and efficiency in the commission's devolution programmes, as well as the appointment of two Commissioners responsible data protection and Records Management, respectively;
- Increasing popularisation of, and capacity building on, the newly enacted RAI Regulations involving state and non-state actors involved in the supply and demand of information
- Increasing popularisation of, and capacity building on, the Code of Practice for Records and Archive Management involving state and non-state actors involved in the supply and demand of information.
- Upgrade the RAIC web site to integrate digital platforms from the RAI Regulations to enable online freedom of information requests and filing of complaints for non-compliance
- ensuring clarity of the RAIC's legal mandate and identifying its vision, mission and core values;
- Reviewing the scope of work of RAIC to ensure alignment and fit between its institutional mandate and the higher-level objectives of freedom of information and accountability for good governance;
- Ensuring that the operationalization of the mandate of the RAIC is guided by recent developments in the sector to ensure coherence and alignment, such as the development of legislation for cyber security, electronic transactions, social media, etc.;
- Enactment by GoSL of the Records and Archives Management and Data Protection Bills
- Work with GoSL and other stakeholders in accessing adequate and timely funding for implementing the RAI Act, 2013;
- Developing a comprehensive and holistic Access to Information Policy that will capture all the three key areas of its mandate namely open data, records management and data protection be developed to support the effective implementation of the Right to Access Information Act 2013;
- Reviewing the appropriateness of RAIC's current organizational structure, plan for rationalization and engagement of the right people, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of all its Units and officers;
- Streamlining RAIC's internal work systems for effective collaboration with partners, clients and the general public;
- Identifying critical supporting components related to funding, human resources and other inputs for effective work;
- Engaging in more serious and aggressive approach for the improvement of conditions of service of staff;
- Developing and rolling out a communication and advocacy strategy to ensure an effective popularization of the RAI Act including simplification of the Act, translation of the Act into the local languages etc.;
- Expanding and strengthening Stakeholder/Partner relations and engagements especially with MDAs and other actors including Civil Society through investing in partnerships; and not just working with large ones, because smaller ones have proven to be quite effective in awareness-raising and service delivery;
- Improving complaints management and speeding up response to requests;
- Installing information request boxes in strategic locations nationwide and to encourage Information officers to make regular collection of those requests;
- The installation of landline telephone services for information requesters who may want to remain anonymous;

- Setting up of Open Data Centres in the remaining 12 districts of Sierra Leone
- Working with the Ministries of Information and Civic Education, and Communication, Technology and Innovation to further develop and manage the GoSL Portal for promoting Access to Information by MDAs;
- Working with MDAs to develop a framework for regularly updating their websites and publishing their Annual Reports;
- Developing the ICT infrastructure and digital systems of the RAI and MDAs;
- Exploring opportunities for support and resource mobilization to enhance implementation of the Commission's programmes under the RAI Act, from national and international institutions; and
- Instituting efficient financial management systems to handle money properly and build trust.

MISSION

To ensure an open space in information accessibility through effective collaboration for sustainable development

VISION

To be a part of the Global Information Rights Society

VALUES

Openness, Transparency, Accountability, Fairness, Swiftness, and Integrity

OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the Commission is to promote the demand and supply of information among the general public, public authorities, and the private sector in accordance with the Act enacted by the Sierra Leone Parliament on 29th October, 2013.

VALUES

- Openness (information accessibility)
- Fairness (Justice)
- Swiftness (Quick response)
- Transparency (openness)
- Accountability (Answerable to the people)
- Integrity (honest and reliable)

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