



Right to Access Information Commission - Sierra Leone

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Beyond the numbers:
using access-to-information data to
achieve the SDGs

DEVELOPMENT
**DATA
GROUP**
Learning
Series



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Thursday, April 15th 2021
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
via WebEX



Officials of RAIC and Ministry of Lands



Cross Section of RAIC and Ministry of Water Resources Officials

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION



**Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Chairman
and Information Commissioner**



**Mary Wuyata Karimu,
Commissioner, East**



**Abu Bakar Kargbo,
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Commissioner, South**

Secretary to the Commission



Hon Mustapha Mohamed Braima, Executive Secretary

1. CHAIRMAN AND INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

I am very delighted to present the 3rd Edition of the Annual Report of the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC). This report vividly presents the contributions made to access to information (ATI) by the Executive Board of Commissioners, Members of Staff and freedom of information stakeholders from the 1st January to the 31st December, 2021. As the regulator, the RAIC prides itself of being a key player in promoting transparency, openness and accountability which are unarguably the major key enablers of good governance. Of what good would the efforts of the Commission have been if this nation was not guided by the vision of His Excellency the President of Sierra Leone to exist in an environment of free speech where citizens are enabled to exercise and claim their rights? About one and half years ago, on the 28th October 2020, a symbolic scene made banner headlines the world over, when His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio signed the amended Public Order Act 1965, which effectively repealed the 55-year-old Part 5 of the seditious libel section that criminalized free speech. The 2013 Right to Access Information (RAI) Act lays the foundation for the repeal of this horrible law in our land. Freedom of information cannot succeed in a society where free speech is muzzled.

The purpose of the RAI law is to enhance the accountability and transparency of public bodies in order to promote an open and democratic society, and to enable public debate on the conduct of those bodies. Access and use can empower people to hold government to account, combat corruption, and pursue services, resources, and opportunities to improve the quality of lives and livelihoods among the underprivileged and marginalized. It is one of the most important mechanisms in helping journalists gather the facts and data necessary to fulfil their professional function.

The RAIC under my stewardship has made tremendous strides in ensuring that all institutions that are receiving monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone comply with the provisions binding them as stipulated in the RAI Act. Evidence to be adduced in the main body of this report will show the level of integration of access to information in Sierra Leone owing to the various interventions made by members and staff of the Commission which largely inform, educate and inspire citizens to request for information from public authorities whom a considerable number of them are now graduating from the culture of secrecy to one of openness.

The year under review was punctuated by a number of challenges; Sierra Leone coming from the brink of the COVID-19 pandemic to the institution of the state of emergency measures which regulated public assemblies. In spite of these unavoidable circumstances, the Commission mustered its enduring conviction to improve the ATI regulatory and governance environment.

In the year under review, the Commission further strengthened its administrative and programmatic wings to ensure 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. This put its technical workforce in a good stead to engage the gamut of more than 180 MDAs in the country.



Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw

Also worth noting was the effort made by the Commission to develop instruments that are intended to shape the manner in which staff conduct themselves to responding to the demands of information rights. The Commission developed a staff manual that spells out the principles, procedures and systems which it operates as a public institution. The Staff Manual was established to clearly indicate how the Commission should function effectively and sustainably. This in turn, strengthens communication, collaboration and team work within the RAIC. The Commission also developed a Strategic Plan that sets out its activities and deliverables for the next five years. The Plan honours the past challenges, the present and creates the future for RAIC.

2021 being the mid-term of my stewardship as Chairman and Information Commissioner of the RAIC, I adopted a strategy that focused on effective consultation and engagement with stakeholders. The reason for this method of approach was that it became apparent that the leadership of most MDAs are either not fully knowledgeable about the statutory provisions binding their institutions or even if they are knowledgeable, they are unwilling to give a full measure of their appreciation of these provisions. Largely, the 22 classes of information to be proactively disclosed as provided for in section 8 of the RAI Act are a case in point. Those engagements however brought a significant turnaround in the way a number of the MDAs respond to their obligations.

As head of the RAIC, I am very pleased with the level of compliance demonstrated on one hand by MDAs and on the other hand by the citizens in the year under review. The Commission saw an exponential increase in the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, the Annual Compliance Reports (ACR) and the Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) compliance. Let me at this juncture express my sincere appreciation to Minister of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED), Dr. Francis Kaikai and his Ministry for responding to an FOI request made by Mohamed Kabba, CEO of SierraLeaks Media Network, dated 27th July, 2021 regarding the financial disbursement made by the Mano River

CHAIRMAN AND INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

Union (MRU) host country for the purpose of the Guinean 2020 Elections Assessment of which the requester wanted to know whether dignitaries of the Sierra Leone foreign ministry attended, and if ever they did, who was responsible. This was a clear demonstration on the part of MoPED to ensure an open and accountable environment. Profound gratitude should also be extended to media practitioners for the support given to the RAIC when it took the decision to fine the Bank of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Health and Sanitation the sum of Le. 70,000,000 each for failing to disclose information to requesters even after the intervention of the RAIC. It is but necessary to state that there is a political will to ensure a transparent and corrupt free society. This was evident in the number of fines slammed on those institutions that are not playing by the provisions of the RAI Act and the growing confidence the citizens have in the RAIC to intervene on their behalf if the information they request in line with the RAI Act are not provided.

We have made a steady progress in compliance with 112 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests made in 2019 out of which about half were responded to successfully; 144 FOIs made in 2020 out of which 132 were successful; 369 FOIs made in 2021 out of which 332 were successful. 10 MDAs submitted their Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) Publication Schemes to the Commission in 2019 out of which 1 was 100 % successful, 2 90% successful, 6 50% successful, and 1 rejected. 20 MDAs submitted their PDIs to the Commission in 2020, out of which 10 were 90% successful, 8 were 50% successful, and 2 were rejected. 52 MDAs submitted their PDIs to the Commission in 2021 and more than half of them were successful.

The success of an endeavor depends squarely on robust partnership. Partnership that encompasses both internal and external players. The year under review saw an incredible cooperation and support from our development partners notwithstanding the persistence of the COVID-19 which was encroaching its second year of its outbreak. The World Bank, Open Society Initiative for Africa (OSIWA) now Open Society Foundation (OSF) Africa and UNESCO, gave a tremendous support to the programmes of the RAI Act.

The World Bank through the Project Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP) supported a project embarked by the RAIC to find out the degree in which state and non-state actors are complying with the proactive publication provisions of the RAI Act. The World Bank also supported the RAIC in establishing an inventory of high-priority sustainable development Goals (SDGs) aligned datasets in Sierra Leone. It funded the review of the Archives and Records Management Bill 2017 to support the implementation of the RAI Act. It also funded the production of a strategic plan that strives for and sets the roadmap of the RAIC for five years. Over and above, it further strengthened the capacity of the technical work force of the Commission.

Even as when the first half of 2021 was the end of the pilot project funded by OSIWA, this body gave a full measure of its willingness to support transparency and accountability. Through the OSIWA funded project 'Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building,' the Commission in February 2021, convened under a single roof, professional interest groups promoting human and workers' rights and enlightened them about the RAI law and some of the provisions that underscore the fundamentals of freedom of information. The RAIC through the OSIWA funded project brought together students of institutions of higher learning in Sierra Leone to a debate on the

FOI law with the aim of reinforcing the recognition of freedom of information in Sierra Leone through these educational institutions so as to foster a knowledge- based information society across the academia.

UNESCO, the convening monitoring body for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 16.10, broadened its focus from conducting surveys on the status of Access to Information in Sierra Leone to support the RAIC and MOPED to contribute for the first time to the Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDG 16, including the funding of the validation and training activities for the implementation of the Records Management Code of Practice Training Manual.

At the international level, the recognition of the Sierra Leone in its effort to ensure a transparent and open society created another opportunity of the RAIC to participate in the UNESCO-World Bank Symposium (WebEx) on ATI on 15th April 2021. As the country representative, I elaborated on how Sierra Leone is actually pursuing access to information reforms and implementation; the progress the country is making; the challenges faced over the years and the support needed. In the year under review, I also gave an introductory lecture on Freedom of Information at a virtual workshop with public information officers in Africa as principal beneficiaries organized by the Kampala-based Africa Freedom of Information Network.

The year under review saw another unwavering commitment on the part of the Civil Society and the Media to ensure an open, transparent and vocal society. The contributions they made last year to our usual commemoration of the International Day of Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) was phenomenal. As torchbearers of information dissemination, they make a large chunk of the FOI requests on a yearly basis. Their actions incentivize the citizens to claim access to information. Notwithstanding the glaring improvement in compliance with the various provisions of the RAI Act, the important role of the MDAs in proactively disclosing information to citizens to enable them to understand how the decisions that affect them are made is very critical. It is in view of this that they should be reminded of their statutory obligations to show compliance and commit themselves to their ACR, PDI and management of records.

To this end, I would like to underscore immense gratitude to the Ministers and officials of the Ministry of Information and Communications, the Parliamentary oversight Committee, my regional Commissioners, the Executive Secretary and other staff of the RAIC. Immense appreciation is given to our development and local partners namely, the World Bank, OSIWA, UNESCO, PFMICP and ICIC; the CSOs, Academia, the Media, for their unflinching chain of support to ATI.

Above all, let me heartily extend special indebtedness to His Excellency, Dr. Julius Maada Bio for his commitment in engendering an enabling environment of free speech and smooth access to information.

Once again, I thank you all and hopeful that you would find this annual report, which contains a financial statement covering the period under review, motivating and valuable.

Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw



31st August, 2022

2. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

| | |
|---------|---|
| ACHPR - | African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights |
| ACR - | Annual Compliance Report |
| 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 |
| MoPED - | Ministry of Development and Economic Planning |
| NCD- | National Commission for Democracy |
| NGO - | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| NSA - | Non-State Actors |
| OGP- | Open Government Partnerships |
| OSIWA - | Open Society Initiative for West Africa |
| OSF - | Open Society Foundation |
| 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 |

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FORWARD**

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the third edition of the Annual Report of the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC). The Report captures the work of RAIC from the commencement of its operation on 1st January 2021 to 31st December, 2021. As provided for in Section 41 of the 2013 RAI Act, the Commission shall submit to the Minister of Information and Communications the Commission's activities and programmes, including its accounts, financial statement and audit report in the year under review. Section 41 subsection 3 provides that this report should include the reports of compliance with the RAI Law by public authorities

In line with the provisions of the RAI Act, the Commission managed its records of accounts appropriately. These records were as tradition demands audited by the Audit Service Sierra Leone.

The Report is divided into five parts:

Part One captures the Chairman and Information Commission's message which shed light on the integration of access to information in the international realm in general and Sierra Leone in particular and his appreciation of the remarkable contributions made by stakeholders and citizens in the year under review. It also gives a summary of the historical background of the Commission and an expansion on the Commission's statutory mandate and composition, roles and responsibilities, its Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Objective.

Part Two covers in general, the activities of the Commission and its accompanying achievements; its institutional and infrastructural developments; programmes and projects; complaint, investigation and compliance mechanisms; its development of instruments for effective oversights; its public awareness and sensitization efforts; the role of national and international partners including the World Bank, Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), and the United Nation Economic, Social and Cultural Organization and what the International Day of Access to Information brought in 2021.

Part Three encapsulates 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 demanded by the Office of the Auditor General to carry out the audit process

Part Four shed lights on the challenges faced and lessons learnt while applying the RAI Act notwithstanding the remarkable improvements that the Commission made in the year under review.

Part Five suggests 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, not least, the Strategic Plan.

4. BACKGROUND

The RAI Act 2013 made provision for the establishment of the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) which came into existence and 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 RAIC

was founded on the principles of promoting transparency, accountability and good governance. The Commission operates on a platform of fundamental human right recognized by international human rights instruments, especially Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides for the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, through various channels regardless of borders. Its operations are also consistent with Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Right of access to information held by public authorities is a fundamental 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 agreements 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 legislation aligns itself with Section 25 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone which guarantees freedom of expression and of the press.

The mandate of the RAIC as provided for in the Right to Access Act 2013 is 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 Management
- ” undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information
- ” promote the demand and supply of information among the general public

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

Chairman / Information Commissioner

The Chairman / Information Commissioner is entrusted with the following roles and responsibilities: Provide overall leadership for the Commission and professional staff to deliver the core mandate of the RAI Act.

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.

Initiate and lead on proposal for funding from donors and other development partners to support the Commission strategic annual work plans.

Provide leadership over the designing of the commission's strategic plan

Prepare the Annual Report of the Commission to be presented to the Hon Minister of Information and Commission for onward presentation to Parliament

Monitor and report on the compliance by public authorities with obligations under the Right to Access Information Act 2013.

Make recommendations for reform of policies rules and regulations, both of a general and specific nature of the Commission.

Cooperate with or undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information and the effective implementation of the Act.

Refer to the appropriate public authority, cases which reasonably disclose evidence of lack of compliance under the Act.

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:

" Provide oversight function of the commission in their regions of station obligation under the Right to Access Information Act 2013

" Make recommendation for reform both of a general nature and specific authorities

" Cooperate with or undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information and the effective implementation of the act

" Refer to appropriate public authority cases which reasonably disclose evidence of criminal offences under the Act

" 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:

Support the formulation of the strategic plan for implementation by the Commission.

Work closely with the Chairman as his Principal Adviser.

Collaborate with governance institutions and Civil Society Organizations to ensure compliance with the provision of the RAI Act.

Source funding from donor partners and government for the smooth operations of the Commission

Identify staffing needs of the Commission and facilitate recruitment of the requisite staff

Facilitate the implementation of the Commission's activities for presentation to the Chairman / Information Commissioner and Regional Commissioners.

Undertake any other duties assigned by the Commission

6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MISSION

To promote open access to information, as a way to achieve transparency, accountability and good governance

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

- ? Request (to all, irrespective of class)
- ? Openness (accessible)
- ? Fairness (Justice)
- ? Swiftness (Quick response)
- ? Transparency (clearness)
- ? Accountability (Answerable to the people)
- ? Integrity (honest and reliable)

Offices and Locations:

National Secretariat:

58 Kroo Town Road,
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Tel: +23279-101314 / 030359669/030-319948
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Email: pmsesay01@gmail.com

PART II - ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

7. INSTITUTIONAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

7.1 INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ADMINISTRATIVE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

7.2 Operational Matters

In its effort to provide high quality and professional management of the Commission, while supporting the management and Board of Commissioners to achieve organizational effectiveness, the Administrative and Human Resource Management Department undertook the following activities in the year under review.

7.3 Staff Manual

The Commission in the year under review succeeded in the development of a Staff Manual that details out the standards, procedures, processes and methods which the Commission operates as an organization. Largely, it was established to clearly indicate how the Commission should function efficiently, effectively and sustainably. With support from other core staff of the Commission, the AHRM undertook a lot of research, engagements and consultations to develop this instrument. The Staff Manual covers among others, the general employment policies and practices, the staff code of conduct, employment contracts, performance management, staff welfare, leave entitlement policy, discipline, recruitment process and procedures, and health and safety procedures. It has been drafted and awaiting approval from the Board of Commissioners.

Other RAIC Staff List 2021

| No | Name | Designation |
|-----|---------------------|---|
| 1. | Margarette B. Bendu | Administrative & Human Resource Manager |
| 2. | Alan S.A Benjamin | Legal Counsel |
| 3. | Davida Campbell | Senior Investigator |
| 4. | Fanta Morgan | Archivist |
| 5. | David P Kamara | Public Information Officer - National Secretariat |
| 6. | Alhaji Bakarr Kanu | Public Information Officer - Northern Region |
| 7. | Mariama Shaw | Account Officer |
| 8. | Rebecca S Kalokoh | Admin. Assistant |
| 9. | Abdulrahman Timbo | Office Assistant /Messenger |
| 10. | Osman Samura | Driver, National Secretariat |
| 11. | Mohamed Sesay | Driver, National Secretariat |
| 12. | Sorie Mansaray | Driver, Eastern Region |
| 13. | Alpha Sesay | Driver, Northern Region |
| 14. | Mohamed Lansana | Driver Southern Region |

7.2 Infrastructural Developments

In February 2021 the Commission in a bid to get a more conducive work environment Relocated to a new and much bigger office situated on 58 Kroo town Road which provided more office rooms parking space and a less noisy atmosphere. The open data centers established in the four (4) regional offices were relaunched in the year under review after the COVID-19 measures were relaxed. They are now opened to the public.

7.4 Staff Recruitment

Following approval from the Ministry of Finance, the Commission recruited 6 additional staff through the Public Service Commission in November 2021 to start 1st of January 2022. These new staff were the Programme Manager, three Public Information Officers for the regional offices, one Admin Assistant, and one Office Assistant.

8. PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

The Commission since its reconstitution in 2018 focused on programmes and projects to translate its strategic vision into actionable goals. This has enabled it to deliver outcomes that have tremendously impacted the major stands of Access to Information, which include proactive disclosure, open data and records management.

The beginning of 2021 had been challenging because of the COVID 19 pandemic and the existing Public Health Emergency measures adopted by the government which in fact delayed the completion of projects tied to 2020. In spite of the persistent Covid-19 challenges, the Commission reinforced engagements with the aforementioned development partners for steady improvement of the existing projects to ensure the gains already made were realized.

Proactive Disclosure of Information

Proactive Disclosure is one of the most important aspects of open government. It is the release of information by government ministries, departments and agencies in anticipation of the needs and interests of the public in line with section 8 of the RAI Act. It is critical to improving transparency and accountability and promoting more informed public debate

With support from the World Bank through the Project Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP) the Commission in 2020 embarked on carrying out an assessment of the degree in which state and non-state actors are complying with the proactive publication provisions of the RAI Act. The full implementation of this project occurred in the year under review when the COVID-19 measures were relaxed. A consultant, Sahr Kendema, was hired to spearhead this project with assistance from the Public Information Officer of the National Secretariat.

The specific objectives of this project were as follows:

- " to review the systems and structures put in place by MDA's and other non-state actors to proactively publish information in their care
- " to assess the general compliance levels in making information accessible to the public
- " to analyze the ramification of the identified state of affair on the rights of citizens and proffer recommendations to improve public access to information

After consultations, meetings and engagements, the consultant presented findings from 20 pilot MDAs including the Ministries of Health, Basic and Secondary Education, Tourism, and 10 Non-State Actors (NSAs), Campaign for Good Governance and Society for Democratic Initiative at a ceremony held at the conference room of the Ministry of Finance. From the findings, it showed that even though the MDAs were complying with the provisions of the RAI Act, the much needed information citizens so require to hold public officials accountable as provided for in the RAI Act were insufficiently made available.

The findings further revealed that the Civil Society organizations that have the duty to demand accountability and transparency from government institutions to deliver their statutory mandate in line with the RAI Act are themselves not complying with the established RAI provisions.

Open Data

The RAIC provides an important basis for open data for every public authority. Data, when shared in an open and standardized format, can foster collaboration and enable greater and timely access to vital information. The establishment of the Open Government Initiative (OGI) in 2008 by the Government and the accession to the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2014 was the foundation for open data initiative in Sierra Leone. This is one of the key priorities of the World Bank. To further strengthen national institutional coordination on open data with the aim of ensuring that some data should be freely available to everyone to use and republish in line with the RAI provisions, the Commission with support from the World Bank again through the PFMICP) embarked on establishing an inventory of high-priority sustainable development Goals (SDGs) aligned datasets in Sierra Leone. The project involved working with five pilot MDAs: Ministry of Health & Sanitation; Ministry of Basic & Senior Secondary Education; Ministry of Water Resources; Ministry of Gender & Children's Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry; and Ministry of the Environment. The service of a consultant in the person of Dr. Umaru Bah was hired to facilitate this process. The Consultant examined data production / collection capacity, methods and gaps, and agreed on available quality priority datasets aligned with SDGs and information from the proactive publication scheme of the five pilot MDAs; agree on validation process through a data clearing house and modality (data format how, when, who) for provisioning the identified datasets and information into the open data portal. It however became clear that there was no known data sharing platform used by more than one ministry, and no known IMS shared among any of the pilot ministries. It was recommended that a closer collaboration among managers of information management systems (IMS) within and across MDAs to yield the desired results. Data-gathering and sharing activities could be significantly enhanced by enabling greater interoperability between online MIS platforms within and across MDAs.

Records Management

Promotion of openness is one of the guiding principles of the Commission. This explains why Records Management is a fundamental component in the Commission's transparency and accountability drive. Without access to authentic and reliable records, efforts to establish good and open governance cannot be fully realized. The practical benefit of effective records and information management is that it does not only provide assurance to those requesting the information that it will be authentic

and reliable, it also enable those keeping the records to timely locate and retrieve them upon request.

The management and coordination of the Commission's records activities is entrusted in the Archives Unit headed by an Archivist. The unit ensures, among other things, the filing of all documents in a folder system and electronic format to preserve and secure records for long term access. The Archivist provided basic records management in-house training on records keeping and file referencing procedures for staff of the Commission and time after time recommends capacity building opportunities for commissioners and records managers and officers of the MDAs.

The Commission played a tremendous role in the year under review to strengthen the capacity of records managers and officers of MDAs with the aim of protecting public records and enhancing operational efficiency, thereby making records valuable assets of organizations. With support from the World Bank, the Commission embarked on the review of Archives and Records Management Bill 2017 to support the implementation of the RAI Act in a bid to improve public transparency. The legislation for Public Records and Archive Management (the 1965 Act) is obsolete and does not provide use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). The government of Sierra Leone was committed to building a reliable and resilient evidence-based information management system to support policy-making and service delivery across the public service. The implementation of the RAI law will not be effective without improvements in public records management and archiving. This necessitated the drafting of the Archive and Records Management Bill 2017. The RAIC came to look into the Draft Archive and Records Management Bills and took the necessary steps to review it with the hiring of a consultant in the person of Albert Moore. Before the review took full effect, the Commission embarked on a pre-consultations with stakeholders across the five regions of the country. The views of stakeholders consulted across the country were taken on board. This was to ensure that the Draft National Records and Archives Bill 2017 have a national face. The final review was followed by a validation exercise held at the Family Kingdom Resort, Aberdeen, Freetown, which attracted representatives from all works of life ranging MDAs, the Civil Society, the Academia, etc. The validation of the Draft National Records and Archives Bill 2017 was believed to be bringing lasting solutions and replacement of the outdated National Archives Act of 1965 and bring sanity and respectability to professionals in the Records and Archives sector. The bill is at the Ministry of Information and Communications to be table in Parliamentary.



Cross-section of Participants at the Validation of the Draft Records and Archives Bill 2017

Records Management Code of Practice Training Manual

The RAIC held validation and training activities on Records Management Code of Practice Training Manual in August 2021 with funding from UNESCO. It was hosted at the Family Kingdom Resort. Largely, it brought together representatives from Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) who handle records in their respective institutions. The Records Management Code of Practice was earlier developed by the Commission through a consultant, Muiniru Kawa who spearheaded the training and validation exercise.

The main objectives include, among others, to promote the integration of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.10.2 into the Voluntary National Review of the SDGs process; promote records management and documentation; and boost compliance with the provisions of the RAI Act 2013 among state actors with a view to promoting the supply and demand of information among them; and to promote records management and documentation as a way of creating an enabling environment for easy information accessibility.



Cross-section of Participants at the Training of the Records Management Code of Practice

Chairman and Information Commissioner of the RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw described poor records management as a major factor that hinders the smooth flow of responds to information requests. A reason he said was why records management professionals were assembled in what he also qualified as a training of trainers' workshop

The idea of this stake-holder consultation and capacity building workshop was to empower the professional in the implementation of the training manual in their various institutions.

At the end of the training session, participants expressed delight on the detailed successful deliberations, hoping to replicate the training to bridge the gaps that have existed for the past decades. All unanimously agreed on the following outcome (take-aways) as short term plan for execution:

- " Expedite the review and passing of the draft Records and Archives Bill
- " RAIC to collaborate with Civil Service Training College on the design of RM COP to be included in the curriculum
- " Strategize on effective RM programmes with public authorities through collaborative approach
- " Clear pathway of records management professional cadre
- " Improve capacity building for records professionals

Launching of the Records Management Training Manual

The RAIC in November 2021 launched the Records Management Code of Practice Training Manual at the Ministry of Finance Conference Hall with representatives from MDAs, CSOs, the Academia and the Media.



Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw Launching the Training Manual



Cross-section of Participants at the Launching

RAIC Chairman and Information Commissioner (CIC) Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw said the launching of the Records Management Code of Practice Manual climaxes a series of events the Commission had over the past months conducted with support from UNESCO. This, he said, is aimed at promoting openness as there is no accountability without records, and moreover decisions and policies are informed by the availability of not just records, but credible records.

Consultative Engagements with MDAs

The Commission in the year under review deepened its public engagement drive considerably in a bid to enforce compliance and ensure that personnel of middle to higher levels of the MDAs are familiar with the provisions of the RAI law and the statutory obligations binding these MDAs. The Commission adopted a unique mode of engagement with the MDAs with the aims of interfacing with a considerable number of participants from one MDA to another. Fundamentally, the engagements were held interactively in the conference halls of the MDAs. A good number of the top cadres of the MDAs who used to send representatives to functions conducted by the RAIC had the opportunity to receive and relate with members of the RAIC right in their office premises. Ministers, Chairmen, Permanent Secretaries, Director Generals, etc., of the MDAs consulted participated in most of the engagement sessions conducted.

The issues discussed across the board bordered around the whole gamut of the RAI law, ranging from the regulatory mandate of the RAIC to ensure public access to information; the mandate of the MDAs to ensure the 22 classes of information provided for in Section 8 of the RAIC Act are proactively disclosed; the duty of every MDA to have a website so as to make this information available and accessible; the knowledge of the MDAs in respect of the exempt provisions and that of public interest; the presentation of the annual compliance report by the MDAs to the RAIC in line with Section 41 of the RAI Act, the recruitment of public information officers, the keeping and management of records and recruitment of records officers; the response to information requests by information requesters, the timeframe pending the response and the fees notice; the right of the information requesters to institute a law suit against any MDA that refuses to provide access to information; the power of the RAIC to impose fines and penalties on non-complying MDAs and its powers equivalent to that of the high court when adjudicating on complaints.

The engagements were across the board led by the Chairman and Information Commissioner, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, the Commissioners and the Executive Secretary, Hon. Mustapha Braima, supported with the Legal Counsel, Alan Benjamin, the Archivist, Fanta Morgan (Mrs) and the Public Information Officer of the National Secretariat, David Patrick Kamara.

Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Chairman and Information Commissioner RAIC, threw weighty lights on the obligations of Public Authorities in responding to information requests from members of the public as stipulated in Section 2 of the RAI Act and Proactive Disclosure of Information in section 8 of the Act, and reemphasized the relevance of Section 8 to Public Authorities.

The MDAs engaged in the year under review were as follows:

- " Ministry of Lands and Country Planning
- " Ministry of Water Resources
- " Ministry of Tourism
- " Ministry of the Environment
- " Ministry of Labour and Social Security
- " Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- " Ministry of Justice
- " Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security
- " Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
- " Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The aforementioned ministries had their departments and agencies represented



Cross Section of RAIC and Ministry of Water Resources Officials

What came out very clearly were as follows:

" Quite a large number of staff of these MDAs commencing from the top to the bottom have a fair knowledge about the RAIC Act and its provisions

" There are no proper records management systems in these MDAs

" Most MDAs do not have Public Information Officers. The Public Relations Officers in the MDAs already engaged were not properly trained about the roles and responsibilities of a Public Information Officer

" The conflict between the Code of Secrecy and the RAIC Act which promotes openness was an issue expressed by most civil and public servants that participated in the engagements

The major takeaways of all the engagements included but not limited to the appointment of focal persons from both the RAIC and each MDA for continuous collaboration. The RAIC was urged to liaise with the Public Service Commission to look into the Code of Secrecy binding Civil Servants, which run contrary to some of the provisions of the RAI Act and draw a fine line between the two instruments. Also mentioned was need to review the RAI Act to keep it abreast with recent trends keeping in mind the time of its enactment to present date was also suggested.



Officials of RAIC and Ministry of Lands

Five-Year Strategic Plan

The first ever Strategic Plan of the RAIC was fully developed in the year under review. The endeavour was funded by the World Bank through PFMICP. The plan strives for and 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.

Implementation Framework for the Strategic Plan

The purpose of the Strategic Plan will be meaningless if it is left in the shelf without turning its strategies and plans into actions in order to accomplish its strategic objectives and goals. This explains why an implementation framework was created to adopt key principles and assumptions that are considered pertinent for the successful and timely implementation of the Strategic Plan. It will target specific institutions that will play a role towards the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The implementation framework has an institutional framework that will ensure the realization of the policy vision, goal, strategic objectives and policy measures of the Commission. It has a programming and planning which largely encompasses a logical framework which captures the overall goal, purpose and outputs of the framework, including objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs), means of verification (MOVs) and assumptions. Over and above, it specifies the phases in which the Strategic Plan is to be implemented within the five years.

The Commission is looking for funding for the validation and implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Public Sensitisation and Awareness Raising

The Commission in the year under review intensified its public sensitization and education drive to ensure a broader knowledge and awareness of the RAI law and the work of the Commission. The Commission carved out a public engagement strategy that brought onboard diverse individuals and platforms necessary to achieve its objective. The Public Information Unit of the Commission was very critical in the coordination of media and public sensitization activities. The Public Information Officer (PIO) of the National Secretariat who plays the dual role of a Public Relations Officer ensured all public functions of the Commission were covered by the media. He prepared press releases, organized radio sensitization programmes and facilitated media interviews for members and staff of the RAIC. These programmes were accompanied with public feedbacks. They were documented for upload on the RAIC website and its other social media platforms. The PIO of the National Secretariat also ensures that this mode of media engagement and public sensitization is replicated in the regions. This in the year under review increased FOI requests from citizens and PDI compliance on the part of the MDAs.

RAIC and the Media

The RAIC has over the years developed good working relationship with the media. Given the media related mandate of the Commission and media practitioners being very handy in the propagation for the enactment of the RAI law, every step undertaken by the RAIC is largely media interest. The Commission in the year under review granted interviews with Radio Democracy, Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), Africa Young Voices radio /tv, Universal Radio, among others. RAIC Chairman, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, PIO, David Patrick Kamara and other staff of the Commission sensitized the public on various aspects of the RAI law and the mandate of the RAIC through these platforms.

The other key roles played by the Public Information Unit include supporting the Commission in the identification of capacity building programmes for Public Information Officers of MDAs and the partnering with the civil society in carrying out public awareness and public education programmes on the RAI law using various platforms. Public Information officers of the MDAs have in the past couple of years been privileged to be trained about the key provisions of the RAI law and the global trends on freedom of information.

The Public Information Unit of the RAIC has also partnered with civil society groups such as the Multi Stakeholders Task Force on Public Disclosure of Sub-national Transfers, Diamond Area Community Development Fund on issues relevant to access to information and proactive disclosure. The RAIC was part of the team that held one of the biggest town hall meetings in Sierra Leone in the southern part of Sierra Leone. The RAIC PIO David Patrick Kamara made a presentation in that meeting on the significance of proactive disclosure of information and openness for transparency.

Print Media

Access to and information dissemination being a critical function of media practitioners, not least the print, the popularization of activities undertaken by an institution entrusted by law to ensure access to public information is pretty vital. According to an Independent Media Commission (IMC) report, almost all the media houses in Sierra Leone have for the past couple of years carried at least a story of the work of the RAIC. When the RAIC took the decision to fine the Bank of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Health and Sanitation the sum of Seventy Million Leones (Le. 70,000,000) each for failing to disclose information to requesters even after the intervention of the RAIC, the media made banner headlines of that development.



Independent Observer Newspaper publication of the RAIC press release

Articles and press releases issued out by the Commission were published across a broad spectrum of the media. This was primarily for the popularization and public knowledge of the RAI law, the transparency and accountability these laws are engendering.

Home page of the RAIC website: www.raic.gov.sl

The RAIC Website

The Commission runs a standard regularly updated website (www.raic.gov.sl) where notices, press releases and all classes of information to be proactively disclosed can be found. The website has been referred to by many as an exemplary of proactive disclosure of information.



PIO David Patrick Kamara at SLBC Radio studio

The Social Media

With the new media taking the lead in information dissemination, the RAIC takes this current phenomenon of convergence as the channel for outreach, education and interaction. To reinforce the objective of information sharing, the Commission, through its Public Information Unit thoughtfully created a WhatsApps Group, 'PIOs Forum,' for all Public Information Officers of the MDAs to interact and share key developments obtained in their respective MDAs for broader public knowledge. The RAIC also uses the PIOs Forum as a key medium of relating its policy and regulatory decisions for onward dissemination to the MDAs and the public at large. Time after time, PIOs of the MDAs respond on the PIOs Forum promptly to queries that directly affect their institutions.

The RAIC also runs a facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Right-to-Access-Information-Commission-Commission-RAIC>. This page serves as another main channel of information dissemination for the Commission. All public notices and press releases of the Commission are posted therein. With a little over two years of existence, the page has attracted followers in the neighbourhood of four thousand (4000) across the world. This platform is also managed so that legitimate concerns made therein are taken onboard and duly responded to.

Report on Regional Activities

Introduction

The regional activities of the Commission are

entrusted in the regional offices of Freetown, Bo, Kenema, and Makeni under the leadership of the four regional Commissioners. The regional offices are the face of the Commission in the regions. They interface with MDAs, local councils and non-state actors through consultations and public engagement and ensure that the relevant bodies comply with the provisions of the RAI law with special reference to the proactive disclosure provisions stipulated in Section 8 and the Annual Compliance Report consistent Section 39 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.

Eastern Region

The Eastern Regional Office in the year under review embarked on intensive popularization of the RAI Act in the main communities of Kenema, Kailahun and Kono, organizing radio talk shows, stakeholder engagements through town hall meetings and press briefings. Under the supervision of the Eastern Regional Commissioner, Mary Wayatta Karimu, the staff carried out the following activities:

Engagements with NGO and CSOs in Kenema District

The staff of the Eastern Regional Office also engaged other interest groups mainly NGOs and CSOs in the Southern Region. The focus was to further broaden their horizon on the provisions of the RAI Act and their roles in holding to account institutions that are receiving monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone. What was specifically brought to their knowledge was their right to access information and the process involved in requesting information from public institutions. Also brought to them that was of critical importance was those sections of the RAI Act that stipulate the type of information to be accessed by the public, the information that are exempted and those that are of public interest.

The following were the interest groups engaged:

NGOs

Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH)
Social Enterprise Development
Network Movement for Justice and Development

CSOs

Humanist Watch
Network Movement for Rural Development

Radio Sensitization

The Regional Office undertook twelve (12) combined radio engagement and discussion programmes in the year under review on different radio stations. Commissioner Karimu had two radio engagements in March and April, 2021, at the Nongowa Radio and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) in Kenema respectively. In June, 2021, two staff members were invited to the Star-line Radio for public education on the "Role of Citizens in Governance through Access to Information." In June and July, 2021, Commissioner Mary visited Kono District and engaged the media, mainly the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) therein. She also had engagements with key stakeholders as regards the work of the Commission and the RAI Act. Over and above, Commissioner Mary again in October 2021, had four (4) media engagements with SLBC and Radio Nongowa respectively in Kenema.

School Visit

In its drive to ensure an extensive public awareness of the RAI Act in the four corners of the Eastern Province, Commissioner Karimu and her team carved out a strategy to engaging the academic institutions. She spearheaded the engagements and later urged staff members to make follow-up visits to 10 schools including the following four major secondary schools in Kenema namely: Government Secondary School Kenema (GSSK), Holy Rosary Secondary School (HRSS), Islamic Secondary School Kenema (ISSK), and Holy Trinity Secondary School Kenema (HTSSK) to popularize the work of the Commission as well as urge them to update their Proactive Publication Schemes.

Complaints Received

Among the many complaints received by the Eastern Region office, the following were very key:

" A complaint was received in April 2021 by a journalist, James Jamiru Fatorma about the National Safety Net office. Frantic efforts were made by the Commission with the involvement of the head office in Freetown but no amicable solution has been reached yet as it has a lot of complications.

" In June 2021, the Regional Office got a letter from the Holy Rosary Secondary School (HRRSS) Administration. In the letter there was a complaint regarding an unofficial parallel subsidy account stashed at the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank (SLCB). For two years the official school account operated in the same bank has been going without subsidy but the unofficial account has been deposited with subsidy severally which according to the complaint has not been coming to the school. The Ministry of Education was said to be promptly informed for its necessary action on the matter.

The Relaunch of the Open Data Center in Kenema

The Commission received funding to carry out a relaunch of the Open Data Center that was a little dormant owing to the Covid-19 outbreak. The event took place in November, 2021 in Kenema. The relaunch of the Open Data Centre and the invitation of participants from different interest groups of the Eastern Region was to rekindle the minds of the public about the availability of the open data center and its relevance to information access in the region.

The outcome of the re-relaunch of the Open Data Centre revived and even increased the utility of the center and research which the center was initially created.

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee's Visit

The Eastern Regional Office received honorable members of the Oversight Committee on Information and Communication from the House of Parliament in October, 2021. Explaining the reason for the visit, Hon. Dr. Kalokoh said it was for the Committee to have firsthand information about the work of the Commission in the region since 2018.



Participants taking note



Journalist James Jamiru Fatorma making contribution

Northern Region

Introduction

The work of the RAIC Northern Regional Office covers both the North-Western and North-Eastern Regions. There are tremendous success stories of the RAIC in those parts of Sierra Leone following years of popularization of the RAI law therein in spite of the financial challenges besetting the operations of the Northern Regional Office over the years. With sustained advocacy campaign and outreach, the regional office made considerable effort to familiarize the work of the RAIC to major MDAs, NSAs, and academic institutions in the region.

In the roundtables and town hall meetings held in the northern district headquarter towns in the year under review, staff of the Northern Regional Office created platforms for citizens to ask questions where the law relates to them. They referred the citizens to key sections of the RAI law with special reference to the Freedom of Information Request, the type of information guaranteed by law to be disclosed by the MDAs and request by the citizens and the information that has exempt provisions. The RAIC Northern regional staff challenged participants in the functions they held in the year under review to test the law by requesting for the information they so require thereby holding state institutions accountable. These campaigns inspired public knowledge of the RAI Act which in turn increased freedom of information request to a considerable margin compared to the previous years.

Below are some of the activities the regional office embarked on in the year under review :

- " Held consultative meetings with MDAs representatives on the enactment of the Archives and Records Management Bill
- " Trained teachers and various heads of schools on the RAI Law and their statutory responsibility in disclosing information to the general public on the use of the school subsidies.
- " Relaunch of the Regional Data Centre
- " Monthly media engagements with civil society activists, media practitioners, the academia, and heads of parastatals about the PDI which is a requirement of all public authorities as provided for in Section 8 of the RAI Act.
- " Extended the awareness raising on the RAI Law to a number of chiefdoms in Port Loko and Bombali districts respectively.
- " Trained 32 Local Council chairmen and their Council clerks on the RAI Law and their obligations as public authorities in their proactive disclosure of information to the public
- " Held the community engagement programmes that waere geared towards bringing the Commission closer to the people.
- " Held monthly inspections of publication scheme of key MDAs and NSAs in the region.
- " With support from our partners such as the ACC and media institutions, held weekly radio talk shows to educate the general public about the RAI Act and the mandate of the Commission
- " Distributed letters to the 9 local councils in the region, requesting them to proactively publish certain classes of information on their notice board or website for public consumption
- " To ensure the full realisation of the Northern Regional Data Centre, the office targeted a host of organisations including MDAs, NSAs to inform them about the availability of the data centre at no cost and its importance in increasing public knowledge about the operations of state institutions.
- " Distributed RAIC IEC materials (RAI Act, Brochure, wooden file boxes) to all MDAs, educational institutions, public libraries in all districts headquarter towns in the entire region
- " Because of its robust actions in implementing the RAI mandate, the Northern Regional Office has been included in the budget presentation of the local councils within the region with the aim to promote transparency and accountability



Sensitization on the RAI Law in Schools



Training of teachers and various school on the RAI Act and how to account for the school fees subsidies



Training of Local Courts Chairmen and Court Clerks on the RAI Act

Commissioner Mary Wuyatta Karimu gave the visitors a warm welcome and expressed profound appreciation for the courtesy call paid on the regional office. She went on to present the entire staff members of the regional office to the delegates. She explained the mandate of the Commission and the role the regional office is playing in the region.

Commissioner Mary used the occasion to voice out the challenges the regional office is facing which as she put it, affect the effective performance of the Commission in that part of the country. She noted that there is a problem of staffing in the regional office. She also presented the problem of insufficient funding for project implementation. She further spoke about the challenges of mobility to facilitate the movement of staff to Kono, Kailahun and the Kenema

environs.

She concluded by sharing some of the successes made by the Commission over the years. Honorable Quinton Fortune expressed concern about the level of progress made by the Commission in that part of the country since 2018, which according to him was not quite visible. Honorable Kalokoh however advised the Commission to uphold a very cordial working relationship with the councils of the region and to strengthen the Commission's outreach efforts in Kono.

Honourable Boston thanked Commissioner Mary and team for the effort they are making in the popularization and public engagement. He assured the regional office of the Oversight Committee's efforts in looking inot to the challenges of the Commission upon their return



Commissioner Karimu giving a welcome speech



Honorable members introducing themselves



Honorable Quinton raising concerns



Honorable Dr. Kalokoh giving advice

SOUTHERN REGION

The Southern Regional Office carried out a host of public education campaigns to increase awareness of the work of the Commission, the relevance of the RAI law and how it binds different facets of society including the public authorities, local councils, the Civil Society, Community Based Organizations and the citizens at large. The Office in the year under review also provided advice to clients regarding access to information request. Staff of the regional office received FOI requests made to MDAs, it carefully processed and dispatched these requests on behalf of the requesters. In spite of the successes made in the course of discharging the Commission's Southern Regional activities were faced challenges that will be adduced in the final body of this report

FOI Requests

Two Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were made in the year under review. An FOI request was made by Mr. John Kargbo requesting the data of 2015 Population Census from Statistics Sierra Leone for personal use.

Another FOI request was made by the Local Court Clerk of Lugbu Chiefdom requesting the local court in Bo to provide access to the mandatory fines made by local courts.

Follow Ups

Follow ups were made to ensure compliance on both requests. The public authorities to which the requests were made complied.

Activities

Popularization of the Rai Act

The year under review saw a robust move by the Southern Regional Office to ensure the people in the South have a full grasp of what the RAI provides. This was done in the form of effective radio sensitizations that involved panel discussions and feedback programmes. Commissioner Biah Yorma Idriss held a live radio programme with four individuals from the civil society.

The Regional Office selected two widely listened radio stations in Bo city. These are: Classic Radio and All Out Radio. The radio discussions started on the 11th and ended on the 14th November 2021. Each radio station was booked for two hours. The discussions were typically around Section 8 of the RAI ACT which deals with Proactive Disclosure by MDA's. The act was not fully discussed because of limited time and lack of financial resources to extend beyond the stipulated time but justice was done to Section 8. Other radio stations were also used to popularize the RAI Act such as Kiss 104 Bo, SLBC Bo and Radio New Song.

Engagement with MDAs

The Southern Regional Office visited up to 10 MDAs in Bo, Pujehun and Moyamba districts in the year under review to discuss the Proactive Disclosure of Information provisions of the RAI Act and to ensure that the mandate of the Commission is complied with. Led by the Regional Commissioner, Biah Yorma Idriss the regional office enlightened the MDAs especially the heads, assistants and Public Information Officers about the role of the Commission and the obligations of MDAs, being the receivers of moneys on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone, to endeavour to make available proactively the 22 classes of information stipulated in Section 8 (2) of the 2013 RAI law and to reactively provide access to information requested by the citizens at large.

Among the MDAs engaged include:

- " Bo District Council
- " Bo City Council
- " Pujehun District Council
- " Moyamba District Council
- " Ministry of Agriculture, Bo
- " Teaching Service Commission, Bo

- " Ministry of Social Welfare and Children's Affairs, Pujehun
- " **Ministry of Social Welfare and Children's Affairs, Moyamba**
- " **Bo Government Hospital**
- " **Some schools in Bo**

Parliamentary Oversight Committee's Visit

On the 11th October 2021, the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Information and Communications visited the RAIC Southern Office in Bo. They held a brief meeting with the regional staff. Introductions were made by both the visitors and hosts. Among the committee members was Hon. Dr. Kalokoh, who in his opening remarks noted that the visit of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee was to get information on the activities of the Commission in 2021. In his response, Commissioner Idriss took them through the RAI Act, the role of the RAIC ensuring access to public information, the role of the public authority and the role of parliament in ensuring the effective implementation of the RIA law. The regional Commission however brought forward the constraints faced by the Southern Regional office especially in the areas of mobility which will facilitate the movements of the regional staff to reach out to citizens in the entire Southern Region at regular interval. He also mentioned some successes of the Commission. What came out clearly in that engagement was that the Commission should adequately relate with the MDAs in the region to ensure that the mandate of the Commission is met.

The Right to Know Day

The Southern Regional Office observed the International Day of the Universal Access to Information also known as Right to Know Day, held on the 28th of September every year. In the midst of financial challenges, the National Secretariat of the RAIC provided financial support to hold this important day in Bo. A radio discussion programme was held at the New Song Radio in Bo. The discussants were from among the civil society and the media. It was an hour discussion that ended successfully.

Re-Launch of the Open Data Center

The Commissioner of the Right to access Information Southern Region and staff organized a one day activity with a clear objective to re-launch the Bo Open Data Center established by the RAIC through the World Bank which existed before but later came to a closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the relaxation of the COVID 19 measures by the government, the RAIC thought it necessary to extend the use of the open data center so that the gains already made by the World Bank did not go in vain. The idea for the extension was embraced. As a way to consolidate the effort of the World Bank, the RAIC as a Commission gave support to the regional office to carry out a re-launch activity.

The Southern Region office organized the re-launch activity on the 10th of November 2021 at the regional office. Invitations were made to media houses and civil society organizations to witness the function.

The welcome address was done by the SLAG President, Mr. Ngavao, the purpose of the gathering was detailed by the Commissioner South who gave a background of the Commission, the reasons for the establishment of the open data center and how students, the civil society and ordinary citizens enjoyed using it. The Commissioner also explained the plans for the way forward for sustainable access and usage by the public. The participants' reactions were around sustainability, continuity and the limited number of computers and how they can be managed.

Responding to the concerns of the participants, the Commissioner assured them that nothing will limit the existence of the center but further emphasized on the good use of the computers and that the participants should help disseminate information about the center. It was also stated that the more the public use, the more the life of the center will be extended.

9.COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

The Compliance Team is ensuring that the Commission as well as all MDAs fulfil their obligations as contained in the RAI law. The Compliance Team is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the compliance level of MDAs singularly and collectively.

Section 41 (3 & 4) of the RAI Act of 2013 mandates the RAIC to keep a record of efforts made by public authorities (PAs) in accordance with their obligations in the RAI Act; 41(1) provides that the RAIC should produce an annual report capturing its activities of the previous year 41(3) "The annual report shall also include an overview of the performance of all public authorities in implementing this Act.41(4) 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."

The Commission in the year under review saw tremendous increase in the FOI requests and complaints from the public following intense public engagements with citizens, and nationwide popularization of the RAI law. There was also an exponential increase in PDI and ACR compliance from the MDAs owing to the strategic approaches carved by the Compliance Team which include among others, the notifications of the MDAs through memoranda; the prioritization of different platforms including the media to reach these MDAs, and the repeated calling through phone lines of relevant staff of these MDAs reminding them of their PDI and ACR Compliance.

Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) Report 2021-22

Section 8(2) of the RAI Act states that every public authority shall adopt and disseminate widely, including on its website, a publication scheme which has been approved by the Commission, within six months of the coming into operation of this Act or its approval, whichever comes later.

Section 8(3) states that the publication scheme shall set out the classes of records that the authority will publish on a proactive basis; and the manner in which it will publish these records. In adopting a publication scheme, a public authority shall 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 seven 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 MDA's to submit their PDI Schemes to the Commission before 1st February 2022. The deadline was extended to March 25 during which 31 MDAs submitted their PDI schemes to the Commission for approval.

In the Commission's assessment of PDI in 2021/2022, it noted that out of 31 public authorities that submitted their Proactive Publication Schemes, 3 are fully approved, 10 are given approval with observation because they are on the verge of being fully approved owing to the fact they complied with 15 and above obligations, 13 are given conditional approval as they complied with between 10 and 14 obligations, and 5 are rejected as they complied with less than 10 PDI obligations.

All those approved with observation and/or given conditional approval will be further engaged and supported by the

The summaries of the PDI Assessments are as follows:

APPROVED

The Ministry of Social Welfare: complied with all their PDI obligations. Therefore, this PDI Scheme is APPROVED
Statistics Sierra Leone: complied with all their PDI obligations. Therefore, this PDI is APPROVED
Right to Access Information Commission: complied with all their PDI obligations. Therefore, this PDI is APPROVED

APPROVED WITH OBSERVATION

Independent Police Complaint Board: complied with many of the PDI obligations, they however failed to disclose Six (6) of their 22 classes information including

- a directory of its officers and employees;
- the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers
- the budget allocated to each of its agencies.

Therefore this PDI Scheme is approved with OBSERVATION

Office of the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice: Complied with many of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 6 of them including,

- The powers and duties of its officers and employees;
- a directory of its officers and employees;
- the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees

This PDI scheme is

therefore approved with OBSERVATION

National Commission for Social Action (NACSA): NACSA complied with most of their PDI obligations, they failed to disclose 7 of them including:

- a guide sufficient to enable any person wishing to apply for information under this Act to identify the classes of information held by it,
- a statement of the boards, councils, committees and other bodies available to citizens for obtaining information, including the working hours of a library or reading room.

--the particulars of facilities

This PDI Scheme is therefore approved with OBSERVATION

Min. of Planning and Economic Development: complied with only few of their PDI obligations, they failed to disclose 8 of them including:

- The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;
- The procedure followed in the decision making process, including channels of supervision and accountability;
- The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;

This PDI Scheme is therefore given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): complied with some of the PDI obligations they however failed to disclose Six (6) of their obligations including:

- The powers and duties of its officers and employees;
- a directory of its officers and employees;
- the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees.

This PDI Scheme is approved with OBSERVATION

Standards Bureau: Complied with most of their PDI obligations, they however failed to disclose 7 of them including:

- Governing Legislation and Regulations organization, functions and duties;
- The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;
- The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;
- The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;

This PDI Scheme is therefore given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Guma Valley Water Company: Complied with most of their PDI obligations, they however failed to disclose 6 of them including:

- a directory of its officers and employees;
- the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees
- particulars of concessions, permits or authorizations granted by it;

This PDI Scheme is approved with OBSERVATION

Independent Media Commission: Complied with most of their PDI obligations, they however failed to disclose 12 of them including:

- The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;
- The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;
- A directory of its officers and employees;

This PDI scheme is given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL.

Public Service Commission: Complied with some of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 11 of them including:

- The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;
- The powers and duties of its officers and employees;
- The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;

This PDI Scheme is given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL.

Maritime Administration: Complied with most of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 7 of them including:

- The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;
- a directory of its officers and employees;
- the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees,

This PDI Scheme is therefore given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Pharmacy Board Sierra Leone: Complied with most of the PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 4 of them including:

-the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees

-The powers and duties of its officers and employees;

This PDI Scheme is therefore approved with OBSERVATION

BO City Council: Complied with most of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 7 of them including:

- a directory of its officers and employees;
remuneration received by each of its officers and employees;
each of its agencies

-the monthly
-the budget allocated to

This PDI scheme is approved with OBSERVATION

Kenema District Council: Complied with most of their PDI obligations they however failed to disclose 5 of them including:

-the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees;
of facilities available to citizens for obtaining information

-The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;

-the particulars

This PDI scheme is approved with OBSERVATION.

Pujehun District Council: complied with most of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 5 of them including:

-The powers and duties of its officers and employees;
monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees

-The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;

-the

This PDI Scheme is approved with OBSERVATION

Makeni City Council: Complied with some of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 3 of them including:

available to or held by it, in an electronic form;
obtaining information, including the working hours of a library or reading room,

-details in respect of the information

-the particulars of facilities available to citizens for

This PDI scheme is approved with OBSERVATION

Political Parties Registration Commission : complied with some of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 4 of them including:

its officers and employees;
in an electronic form;

--the monthly remuneration received by each of

--details in respect of the information available to or held by it,

This PDI scheme is approved with OBSERVATION

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Local Government Service Commission: Complied with some of the PDI obligations, they however failed to disclose 12 of their obligation including:

Associations, Trusts, Foundations;

-List of Committees, Boards, Councils,

-a guide sufficient to enable any person wishing to apply

for information under this Act;

-a statement of the boards, councils, committees and other

This PDI Scheme is given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

BO District Council: complied with some of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 8 of them including

-The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;
of the boards, councils, committees and other bodies consisting of two or more;
employees;

-a statement

-a directory of its officers and

This PDI Scheme is Given CONDITIONAL APPROVAL.

Office of the Administrator and Registrar-General: Complied with most of the PDI obligations, they however failed to disclose 8 of their obligation including:

for information under this Act;

-a guide sufficient to enable any person wishing to apply

-a statement of the boards, councils, committees and other the monthly

remuneration received by each of its officers and employees,

This PDI Scheme is given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Ministry of Labor & Social Security: Complied with some of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 9 of them including:

-The procedure followed in the decision-making processes
-the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees,

-The powers and duties of its officers and employees;

This Scheme is therefore given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Anti - Corruption Commission : Complied with some of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 10 of them including:
-a statement of the boards, councils, committees and other bodies;
-a directory of its officers and employees;
-the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees,

This PDI Scheme is given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

National Fire Force: Complied with most of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 8 of them including:

-The procedure followed in the decision making process, including channels of supervision and accountability
--the powers and duties of its officers and employees;
--the budget allocated to each of its agencies

This Scheme is therefore given a CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

REJECTED

Local Content Agency: only complied with few of their PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 14 of them including:

- a statement of the boards, councils, committees and other open to the public, or the minutes of the meetings are accessible to the public;
- a directory of its officers and employees;
- the monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees

This PDI Scheme is therefore REJECTED

National Commission For Democracy: Complied with some of the PDI obligations; they however failed to disclose 13 of their obligations including:

-The particulars of its organization,
-The powers and duties of its officers and employees; a directory of its officers and employees;

This PDI Scheme is therefore REJECTED

Sierra Leone Commercial Bank: Complied with some of the PDI obligations, they however failed to disclose Fourteen (14) of their obligations including:
-The particulars of its organization,
--The powers and duties of its officers and employees;

-A directory of its officers and employees;

This PDI Scheme is therefore REJECTED

Parliament of Sierra Leone : complied with only few of their PDI obligations, they failed to disclose 13 of them including:- The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;

-The powers and duties of its officers and employees;
The procedure followed in the decision making process, including channels of supervision and accountability;

This PDI Scheme is therefore REJECTED

Annual Compliance Report On FOI and other Obligations

In order to be able to gather such data and properly implement RAIC's mandate as provided for in Section 41 , a questionnaire (Annual Compliance Report Template) was on 12 January 2022 sent out in a memo to PAs for them to complete and return to the RAIC by the 1st February deadline. The deadline was extended to March 25, and by this deadline, 26 PAs submitted their completed ACR templates which reveal that 174 FOI requests were received by them out of which 171 were responded to with requested information while 3 were denied. There are no pending cases; none of the 26 complying Public Authorities have ever been complained to the RAIC, therefore there are no resolved or unresolved complaints among them that required the intervention of the RAIC. The completed ACR templates by the 26 PAs also reveal that 19 of them have PIOs and ICT units, while 18 have Records Management units

The ACR is very crucial to monitoring the level of compliance as many a time the Commission is not copied or notified when a request is made and responded to. A report is only brought to the attention of the Commission when there has been lack of compliance warranting the Commission's intervention.

Freedom of Information Requests and Complaints by Regions

Below is the breakdown of the total number of FOI Requests and Complaints made by region in 2021

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Western Area | |
| Requests | 13 |
| Complaints | 11 |
| Follow-Up Cases | 3 |
| Requests/Complaints Successes | 20 |
| Pending Cases | 3 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Northern Region | |
| Requests | 92 |
| Complaints | 48 |
| Follow-Up Cases | |
| Requests/Complaints Successes | 132 |
| Pending Cases | 3 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Eastern Region | |
| Requests | 13 |
| Complaints | 6 |
| Follow-Up Cases | 24 |
| Requests/Complaints Successes | 14 |
| Pending Cases | 5 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Southern Region | |
| Requests | 2 |
| Complaints | 10 |
| Follow-Up Cases | 12 |
| Requests/Complaints Successes | 8 |
| Pending Cases | 4 |

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

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total Number of Requests Received by the Commission----- | 120 |
| Total Number of Complaints Received by the Commission----- | 75 |
| Total Number of Follow-Up after Complaints by the Commission----- | 39 |
| Total Number of FOI Requests/Complaints----- | 195 |
| Total Number of FOI Requests/Complaints Successful----- | 174 |
| Total Number of FOI Requests/Complaints unsuccessful or pending----- | 21 |
| Total Number of FOI Requests received by 26 PAs submitted In their ACR Report but which the Commission was not aware of----- | 174 |
| Total Number of successful FOI Requests out of the 174 without The Intervention of the Commission----- | 171 |
| Total Number out of the 174 FOI Requests Denied----- | 3 |
| Grand Total of Successful FOI Requests/Complaints----- | 345 |
| Grand total of unsuccessful FOI Requests/Complaints----- | 24 |
| Grand Total Numbers of FOI Requestd and Complaints----- | 369 |

Some Key FOI Requests/ Complaints in 2021

Following are some of the key complaints made in the year under Review.

Martha Kargbo: Request for Information to the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL)
On the 30th December 2019, Martha Kargbo (a Journalist, Requester) made an FOI request to the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL) asking for information on foreign exchange history in Sierra Leone. A letter of complaint/application for review pursuant to Section 43(a) (b) (c) of the RAI Act 2013 was sent to the RAIC by Martha Kargbo dated 30th March 2020 as regards failure on the part BSL to provide the information requested. The RAIC wrote BSL in that light. The BSL did not reply notwithstanding the patience exercised by the RAIC. This was a development that left the RAIC with no option but to fine the BSL the sum of Le 70,000,000.

As is the right of the Public Authority, solicitors acting on behalf of BSL filed an appeal in the High Court of Sierra Leone asking that the court squashes the decision of the Commission, claiming that they had in fact complied with their obligations under the RAI Act 2013. The matter came up for hearing in June 2021 and after all arguments had been concluded, the matter is pending the ruling/judgment of the High Court.

Case Status:

Awaiting judgment

Eleanor Thompson: Request for Information to Freetown City Council (FCC)

In a letter dated 31ST May, 2021 Ms. Eleanor Thompson made an FOI request to the Freetown City Council regarding the proposed church complex and health centre at Congo Cross, Freetown. Owing to the failure by FCC to reply to the same, an application for review by the Commission was made by the requester by a letter dated 30th June 2021

Action Taken By RAIC:

There was a letter from RAIC to the Freetown City Council dated 13th September 2021 reminding them of their obligation.

Case Status:

The requester later informed the Commission that the FCC sent her a letter without providing the information requested but the said letter contained information from which she was able to get the documents from the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General. Even though the Commission was copied, it did not receive the copied document.

Eleanor Thompson: Request for Information to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

In a letter dated 23rd December, 2021 Ms. Eleanor Thompson made an FOI request to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in respect of an application for Environmental Impact Assessment license. A complaint was made to the RAIC by Madam Thompson dated 24th January 2022 which the RAIC actioned. In a letter dated 1st February, 2022, the EPA provided Madam Thompson the information she requested. The requester sent a letter of withdrawal to the Commission dated 3rd February 2022.

Campaign for Human Rights & Development International (CHRDI): Request for Information to the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA)

Case Description:

By a letter dated 25th May 2021, a request for information was made by CHRDI to the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA). There was an electronic reply from MOYA dated 28th May 2021. There was another letter of response by CHRDI to the Ministry dated 3rd June 2021 asking for a waiver of fees. The waiver was granted through a letter by the Ministry to CHRDI dated 8th June 2021. The Ministry sent information to CHRDI but CHRDI in a letter to the Ministry claimed that the information was incomplete. CHRDI subsequently made a letter of Complaint to

RAIC dated 28th June 2021.

Action Taken By RAIC:

The RAIC sent a letter to MOYA in relation to CHRDI's FOI request. In response, MOYA stated that all documents were provided to CHRDI with the Ministry bearing all cost associated with printing

Case Status:

The Commission is carrying an investigation into the matter to give its decision.

Mohamed Kabba: Request for Information at the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED)

In a letter dated 27th July, 2021, Mr. Mohamed Kabba, CEO of Sierra Leaks Media Network made an FOI Request to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) through the Minister, Dr. Francis Kaikai, regarding the financial disbursement made by the Mano River Union (MRU) host country for the purpose of the Guinean 2020 Elections Assessment of which the requester wanted to know whether dignitaries of the Sierra Leone foreign ministry attended, and if ever they did, who was responsible.

In a letter date 6th August 2021, Development Secretary, Peter Sam-Kpakra replied Mohamed Kabba. In the letter, Mr. Kpakra drew the attention of Mr. Kabba to a meeting held in the ministry on the 4th August, 2021 regarding the letter under reference. The Development Secretary presented the following:

- 1) the officers mentioned in Mr. Kabba's letter never attended the Guinean Assessment Mission in October 2020;
- 2) the MRU Secretariat planned to mount a peace mission to Conakry, Republic of Guinea to assess the situation following the elections that were held in that country;
- 3) the budget for the peace assessment mission was estimated at Le 65, 340,000 for logistics and other charges for members of the delegations;
- 4) the planned mission was abutted because the government of Guinea did not grant the mission permission to travel to Conakry
- 5) the said amount was then paid back at

the Rokel Commercial Bank
Mr. Kpakra furthered that the ministry had copies of the bank transactions relating to the abutted mission to substantiate the clarification stated in paragraph 3 above.

Action Taken By RAIC

No action was taken by the RAIC because the RAIC was only copied by the FOI Requester, and besides there was no need for an intervention by the Commission since the requested information was provided by MOPED within the stipulated deadline.

FOI Request Status:

It was learned that it ended amicably between MoPED and Media Leaks.

Ethnic Youth Development Organization:

Request for Information to the Clerk of Parliament

Case Description:

From a letter dated 6th June 2021, the Ethnic Youth Development Organization, a registered agency with the National Youth Commission requested for information from the Clerk of Parliament pertaining to the Constituency Development Fund to find out if it was fully disbursed to the Parliamentarians (MPs) in the various constituencies in Sierra Leone and how the funds were implemented.

According to a letter dated 9th July, 2021, the Ethnic Youth Development Organization informed the Anti - Corruption Commission of their request for information sent to the clerk of Parliament and their failure to respond to the said request. On the 3rd September, 2021, the Anti-Corruption Commission responded by transferring the said information request to the RAIC.

Case Status:

The Commission sent a letter to the requester to ascertain whether the request was complied with but no reply was received to date.

Testimonies from people who have benefitted from the work of the RAIC

The following is the testimony from an investigative journalist who participated in the aforementioned workshop organised by RAIC in collaboration with SLAJ:

I am Marion Precious George, journalist working for Sky Radio in Freetown and Intern International News Agency in 2017. Through an interview I did with Dr Seaga Shaw, Chairman and Information Commissioner of the RAIC, during a Parliamentary Budget Allocation Programme in 2018, I learnt a lot about the work of the Commission and immediately understood that as a journalist and citizen of this country I have the right to access information from government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and the RAIC Chairman via the interview encouraged the public to request for information from MDAs when ever they need it and present complaint to the Commission when such a request is rebuffed.



I see the establishment of the RAIC as a good initiative in the promotion of democracy and good governance in the country, and I have already utilised my knowledge and right in having access to information when I first started working for the Intern International News Agency. I participated in the training for journalists organised by the RAIC and learnt a lot from the facilitators about the relevant steps in having access to information from government MDAs in the country. I have now realised that some information cannot be disclosed because they are classed as exempt information according to Part 3 of the Right to Access Information (RAI) Act of 2013, and examples of such information are tagged with the security of the state, examination integrity, people's personal life amongst others, coupled with the fact that one has to go through the relevant procedures in having access to information from any MDA by writing a letter, presenting it to the Public Information Department, followed by subsequent steps.

When I was asked to do an hour-long radio feature story on gender balance within the forces in Sierra Leone i.e the Police, Military, Prisons, Fire Force, and the Metropolitan Police by the Intern International Media Agency, I had to go through the relevant procedure and utilised the knowledge I acquired from the RAIC training on 23rd October 2020 to embark on such an investigative reportage. To God be the glory, I was able to get all the information I needed from the forces at that time to do my feature story when I contacted them in writing citing the relevant sections of the RAI Act. I am grateful to the Commission for acquiring knowledge on the relevant skills on how to receive information from government institutions, but on the flip side, if my FOI request was rejected, I would have presented a complaint to the RAIC. I believe that the legal compliance unit of the Commission would have investigated and granted me the right to access the information I needed. The following is a testimony from a public relations officer who participated in trainings and workshops organised by RAIC:



I am Ibrahim Tanko Bangura, working for the Freetown City Council (FCC) as an intern in the Public Relations Unit. I see the establishment of the RAIC as a blessing to Public Relations Officers (PROs) at different institutions in the country, seeking to derive information from government's MDAs. I have already utilised my knowledge in having access to information when I started working for the FCC having gone through the training organised by the Commission for journalists, public information officers, and other public sector staff in the country. I learnt a lot from the facilitators regarding the relevant steps to be taken in having access to information held by MDAs. I now know that there is a central data centre I can go to access a lot of information about government and I intend to use it more. I also believe that we as PROs should respond speedily to FOI requests for all legally sharable information. The world has now become a global village, and access to information is much more predominantly needed in this era of real time media globalisation.

10. INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Right to Access Information is a basic human right that the International Community pays great attention to in order to promote and sustain effective international collaboration and partnership. The accession of the RAIC 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, creates the room for international partnership. The commitment on the part of the RAIC to maintain and develop influence within the global community in order to improve standards of access to information practices has set the stage for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to strengthening RAI initiatives and improving the perceptions held about the RAIC. Notwithstanding the attendant ramifications of the COVID 19 pandemic, the relationship that has been thriving between the RAIC and its development partners since the appointment of the current Commission steadily progressed in the year under review. One major interest in the RAIC on the part of development partners like the World Bank and OSIWA is the transparency and accountability in which the RAIC promotes. This explained why the projects funded by these organizations were not put on hold for a long time amid the challenges of COVID-19. The RAIC's consistent promotion of transparency, accountability and openness also attracted international organizations such as UNESCO to funding programmes related to records and information management.

World Bank

The World Bank has for the past couple of years been playing a significant role in promoting public access to information. The World Bank through Project Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP) in the Ministry of Finance continued to support the implementation of projects aiming to promote the major strands of ATI projects (Proactive Disclosure, Open Data and Records Management) and capacity building, in spite the COVID-19 and their accompanying challenges. The project activities referenced in the Projects and Programmes section of this Report funded by the World Bank were PDI, Records Management, Open Data, capacity building, and developing a 5-year Strategic Plan

Open Society Initiative For West Africa (OSIWA)

Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) is a 21st century watch dog established with the primary objective of supporting transparency, accountability and good governance in West Africa. The OSIWA Mano River Hub office in Sierra Leone supported the completion of its first ever funding of programmes promoted by the RAIC following two years of implementation of the OSIWA funded project, titled: 'Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building.' The implementation of this project was however suspended by OSIWA for a period spanning six months owing to the advent of the COVID-19 and the state of emergency measures adopted by the government.

The project activities presented in the Projects and Programmes Section of this Report funded by OSIWA include popularisation of the RAI law and capacity building involving professional interest groups such as the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, the Teachers Union, the Bar Association, student unions; Covid 19 ATI sensitisation, development of an ATI Training Manual, and capacity building of the the RAIC Commissioners and professional staff

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the convening monitoring body for the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.10 indicator. The adherence of the RAIC to the UNESCO Convention on ATI increased the UN Special Agency's renewed interest in fostering transparency and accountability in Sierra Leone. The year under review saw UNESCO expand its focus from conducting surveys on the status of Access to Information in Sierra Leone, to supporting the RAIC in collaboration with the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning (MOPED) to contribute to the Voluntary National Review on the SDG 16, including the funding of the validation and training activities on Records Management Code of Practice Training Manual.

International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI)

2021 Theme: Regulating Sensitive Data in the Context of Right to Access Information

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

over to celebrate the 2021 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 perspective. It brought MDAs, CSOs, media practitioners, 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 2021 celebration was: 'Bringing Back Better with Access to Information.' While commemorating this event, the RAIC was mindful of the technological growth that has impacted the way personal data is generated, processed, stored and distributed and that there is presently an unregulated and arbitrary use of personal data. In view of this, the RAIC deemed it necessary to broaden the scope. This compels the theme for this year: "Regulating Sensitive Data in the Context of Right to Access Information."

WORLD BANK-UNESCO CONFAB ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The integration of access to information in Sierra Leone over the years and the effort on the part of the RAIC to ensure compliance with the provisions of the RAI law has increased further recognition of Sierra Leone on the international arena on ATI. The year under review saw the participation of Sierra Leone in the UNESCO-World Bank Symposium (WebEx) on ATI. The event which took place on the 15th April 2021 focused on the role and importance of access to information for development. It spotlighted how UNESCO and additional World Bank partners are tracking countries' progress in strengthening their data and information ecosystems. This symposium attracted a wealth of ATI contributors across the globe including Prof. Guy Berger, Director for Policies and Strategies for the Communication and Information sector at UNESCO; Claudia Cadena, a development specialist on the promotion of democracy, governance, and human rights; Sara Hamouda, a more than decade long specialist in international cooperation and development; Jaco du Toit, Chief of the Universal Access to Information Section at the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO; James Anderson (Jim), Lead Governance Specialist for the World Bank Governance Global Practice, and Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Chairman and Information Commissioner of the Right to Access Information Commission in Sierra Leone and expert on Information Rights. Dr Shaw shed lights on how Sierra Leone is actually pursuing access to information reforms and implementation; the progress the country is making; the challenges faced over the years and the support needed. The outcome of the symposium helped UNESCO and the World Bank share findings on country impacts and persistent gaps emerging from their practitioner experience and share insights on what is ahead for the future of access to information ecosystem support as an integral part and amplifier of the SDGs.

**Beyond the numbers:
using access-to-information data to
achieve the SDGs**

**DEVELOPMENT
DATA
GROUP
Learning
Series**

Guy Berger
UNESCO

Claudia Cadena,
PADF

Sara Hamouda,
APRM – South Africa

Jaco Du Toit,
UNESCO

Ibrahim Shaw,
Right to Access Information
Commission, Sierra Leone

Chair:
Jim Anderson
Lead Governance
Specialist, World Bank
Governance Global
Practice

Thursday, April 15th 2021
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
via WebEX

ATI Webex Symposium Contributors

The SDGs affirm the crucial importance of access to information regimes for social and economic development. SDG 16.10 urges countries to "ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements."

The 2021 World Development Report on Data for Better Lives highlighted the importance of access to information policies and practices as key enablers of use and re-use of public sector data for multi-stakeholder value-creation.

RAIC boss presents introductory lecture to RTI Course for African Public Officers

In an effort to be better positioned to discharge its functions as the oversight body on information rights and access, the RAIC participated in a Right to Information (RTI) eLearning course for government officials organized by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) from the 10th to 14th May, 2021. The eLearning training brought together top global access to information experts including the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) and the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD). The course was designed to empower government officials, especially public information officers working for RTI oversight bodies in Africa and oversight officers to contribute to the promotion of access to information on the continent. It provided useful and comprehensive comparative resources that can be adapted to the different national contexts. Members and staff of the RAIC were among the gamut of participants that were privileged to avail themselves of the critical modules offered in the online seminar. Largely, it was an opportune time to learn from and discuss diverse issues bordering on RTI with the global experts present.

The modules offered in this event include: Introduction to the Right to Information, the Legal Framework for the Right to Information, Overview of Implementation, and Proactive and Reactive Disclosure and Interpreting Exceptions.

A unique atmosphere obtained in the event when the Chairman and Information Commissioner of the RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw was chosen to give the introductory remarks. Below is the speech Dr. Shaw so thoughtfully delivered.

Introductory Remarks Delivered by Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw Delivers to an International RTI Course at the RTI ELearning Programme for Information Officers, Staff and Members of Oversight Bodies, 10 - 14 May 2021

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you and to give the introductory remarks in this remarkable online training course for public officials regarding the right to information (RTI). This course has been co-developed and organised by the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC), and Fray College, in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) media project.

The aim of this course is to build the capacity of public officials, especially information officers and the staff and members of Information Commissions to give full effect to the right to information, in accordance with local legislation on this right. The course also seeks to raise awareness of the significance of the right to information, which is a fundamental human right.

As the Information Commissioner of the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC), Sierra Leone, and a member of the African Information Commissioners' Network, I prioritised the advocacy for the passage and implementation of RTI laws because Africa needs these regimes urgently. The number of countries with RTI laws has increased exponentially from five in 2010 when only South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda and Ethiopia had adopted these laws. Civil society partners including AFIC, the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI) and CLD have worked closely with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), alongside respective Information Commissioners and UNESCO to strongly advocate for RTI laws in the context of the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leading to the number of African countries with RTI laws to increase to twenty-five today. Simply passing any RTI law was not enough for me. In my role as the Information Commissioner, I have experienced situations where public officials either refuse to disclose requested information or fail to comply with other obligations as required by Sierra Leone's Right to Information Act 2013. Many times, it is not lack of will but rather knowledge to implement the law.

This course is therefore timely. The passage of an RTI law is only the beginning of enabling citizens to exercise their right to information. RTI laws must also be implemented properly. Without concrete mechanisms that ordinary citizens can actually use to exercise their right to information, an RTI law is just a piece of paper.

I thank you all for gracing this event and hope that the knowledge you would acquire from the training would be judiciously replicated in your respective countries.

PART III - FINANCIAL STATEMENT

11. 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 |
| Mary W. Karimu | - | Commissioner East |
| Baih Y. Ideiss- | - | 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.

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.

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 2021 comprise those of the Commission alone.

Results

The annexed Financial Statements disclose the financial activity of the Commission for the period ended 31st December, 2021.

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.

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 2021 to 31 December 2021, 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'.

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.

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.

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.

By order of the Chairman



Signature and stamp of the Chairman, dated 10/11/2022.

12. 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, 2021, 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 2021 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.

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 2021 has been reflected in the accounting records of the organization.

Freetown



ARVS PARTNERS
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

**Statement of Financial Position
As at 31 December 2021**

| | Notes | 2021 | 2020 |
|---|--------|------------------|----------------|
| | LE'000 | LE'000 | LE'000 |
| Non-Current Assets | | | |
| Property plant & equipment | 6 | 147,472 | 214,392 |
| Current assets | | | |
| Cash & Cash Equivalent | 7 | 3,470 | 426,579 |
| Current liabilities | | | |
| Payables | 5 | (108,007) | (121,007) |
| Current asset less current Liability | | (104,537) | 305,572 |
| Net Assets | | 42,935 | 519,964 |
| Represented by: | | | |
| Accumulated Fund | | 42,935 | 519,964 |

The Financial Statements were approved on -----2022.

-----Chairman and Information Commissioner

**Income Statement for the year ended 31st December 2021
In thousands of Leones**

| | Notes | 2021 | 2020 |
|-----------------------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | LE'000 | LE'000 | LE'000 |
| Income | 3 | 1,204 | 1,001,400 |
| Administrative Expenses | 4 | (1,203,974) | (1,002,838) |
| Depreciation charges | | <u>(74,004)</u> | <u>(71,464)</u> |
| Deficit for the year | | <u>(73,596)</u> | <u>(72,902)</u> |

Cash Flow Statement

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| | LE'000 | LE'000 |
| Deficit | (73,596) | (72,902) |
| Depreciation | 74,004 | 71,464 |
| Net cashflow from operating activities | 408 | (1,438) |
| Investing Activities | | |
| Purchase of property, plant & equipment | (12,700) | - |
| Net increase/decrease in cash 3,043 | (439,460) | |
| Cash and cash equivalent at start | 427 | 864,601 |
| Cash and cash equivalent at close | <u>3,470</u> | <u>426,579</u> |

Notes forming part of the Financial Statement for the year ended 31st December 2021

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 2021 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.

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 assets. The estimated useful lives of the assets are as follows:

Notes to the Financial Statements (Continue)

3. Income

| | 2021 LE'000 | 2020 LE'000 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Government of Sierra Leone (Subvention) | 974,300 | 1,001,400 |
| Funds from UNESCO | 221,582 | - |
| Refund from UNESCO | 8,500 | - |
| | 1,204,382 | 1,001,400 |

4. Administrative Expenses

| | 2021 LE'000 | 2020 LE'000 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Audit Fees | 21,000 | 21,900 |
| Electricity and Water | 23,754 | 22,321 |
| Fuel | 289,600 | 203,768 |
| Internet modems | - | 9,900 |
| Local Travelling | 19,564 | 11,366 |
| Office & General | 128,213 | 148,985 |
| Programming/meetings/annual reports | 81,973 | 33,700 |
| Rent | 38,700 | 38,700 |
| Repairs and Maintenance | 45,149 | 48,050 |
| Security | 63,579 | 70,390 |
| Stationery | 121,384 | 133,105 |
| Stipend | 42,500 | 20,000 |
| Sundry/provision | 79,692 | 155,654 |
| Imprest | - | 85,000 |
| Withholding Tax | 24,989 | - |
| Workshop UNESCO (Activity 1 and 2) | 223,877 | - |
| | 1,203,974 | 1,002,839 |

Notes to the Financial Statements (Continue)

5. Payables

| | 2021 LE'000 | 2020 LE'000 |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Rent | 32,667 | 32,667 |
| Audit fees - Invoice | 23,000 | 21,000 |
| Withholding Tax | 52,340 | 67,340 |
| | 108,007 | 121,007 |

6. Property, Plant and Equipment

| COST | Computer & Accessories | Furniture & Fittings | Total |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| | LE,000 | LE,000 | LE,000 |
| Bal as at 1 Jan 2021 | 193,820 | 163,500 | 357,320 |
| Additions | 5,700- | 5,700 | |
| Balance as sat 31 Dec | 199,520 | 163,500 | 363,020 |

Depreciation

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Bal as at 1 Jan 2021 | 77,528 | 65,400 | 142,928 |
| Charge for the year | 39,900 | 32,700 | 72,600 |
| | 117,428 | 98,100 | 215,528 |

Net Book value

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| As at 31 Dec 2021 | 82,072 | 65,400 | 147,472 |
| As at 31 Dec 2020 | 116,292 | 98,100 | 214,392 |

7. Cash & Cash Equivalent

| | 2021 LE'000 | 2020 LE'000 |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Bank of Sierra Leone | 835 | 426,579 |
| Petty cash | 2,635 | - |
| | 3,470 | 426,579 |

8. Accumulated Fund

| | 2021 LE'000 | 2020 LE'000 |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Accumulated Fund b/fwd | 519,964 | 1,092,061 |
| Surplus/deficit (73,596) | (72,902) | |
| Accumulated Fund | 42,935 | 519,964 |



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 conflicts with older legislations promoting secrecy
- " 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;
- " inability of the Commission to acquire and maintain necessary logistics and equipment including ICT equipment due to funding challenges. This is compounded by regular breakdown of computers and weak internet connectivity which has posed a major challenge for the effective operations of the Commission;
- " 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 strengthen it and include the North-West Region and the appointment of its Commissioner to ensure fairer representation and efficiency in the commission's devolution programmes;
- " 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 cybersecurity, electronic transactions, social media, etc.;
- " enactment by GoSL of the Records and Archives Management Act;
- " 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
- " Validating the Commission's Strategic Plan for the next five years which will involve highlighting management and service delivery challenges, and a review of RAIC's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in order to allow for proper allocation of people, resources, funds and time for achievement of its strategic priorities, defining strategic goals and priorities for the ensuing 5 years;
- " 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 rollout 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;
- " working with the Ministry of information and Communications 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



Promoting Open Governance
for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development
Through Transparency and Accountability
RAIC

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RAIC ANNUAL REPORT 2021

MISSION

To promote open access to information, as a way to achieve transparency, accountability and good governance

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

- ? Request (to all, irrespective of class)
- ? Openness (accessible)
- ? Fairness (Justice)
- ? Swiftness (Quick response)
- ? Transparency (clearness)
- ? Accountability (Answerable to the people)
- ? Integrity (honest and reliable)

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