



Right to Access Information Commission - Sierra Leone

ANNUAL  
REPORT

2020





President Rtd Brigadier Dr Julius Maada Bio



# PART I. THE COMMISSION

## 1. CHAIRMAN & INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

It is with great pleasure that I humbly present the second edition of our annual report covering the work of the RAIC from 1st January to 31st December, 2020.

In 2013, the Government of Sierra Leone through Parliament enacted the Right to Access Information (RAI) Law to create the necessary legal and regulatory environment, and the institutional framework to ensure that both government and the citizens enjoy a common platform on information access. The motivation for giving effect to the right of access to information is to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in both public and private bodies, and to promote a society in which the people of Sierra Leone have effective access to information to enable them to fully exercise and protect all their rights. The RAIC under my leadership has done extensive work to create awareness about the law, establish the necessary structures, forge partnerships and hold strategic engagements to address challenges, and chart the way forward. In the last two years, significant time and resources have been invested into transforming the way that the Commission works in order to optimize the use of our resources.



Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw

2020 had been a year of challenges. These challenges stemmed from the COVID-19 outbreak which compelled the Government to institute state of emergency regulations. Thus, in the course of discharging its statutory functions, the Commission conducted itself in the year under review in a manner consistent with the Government's COVID-19 regulatory measures. The other challenges are on oversight and compliance but have met with commitment and focus to achieve the Commission's objectives and aspirations.

The Commission is mandated to:

1. ensure the effective implementation of the RAI Act;
2. promote access to information held by a body, or organization, that receives monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone
3. ensure compliance to disclose information to the general public if that information is required for the protection or enforcement of any right
4. promote proactive disclosure of information
5. promote maintenance of Records Management
6. undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information
7. promote the demand and supply of information among the general public

This report highlights the work and dedication of the employees of the Right to Access Information Commission in 2020. It summarizes the RAIC's efforts to ensure that Sierra Leoneans' right of access to information is fully respected. 2020 brought significant changes to the way the RAIC conducts investigations and carries out the other work that supports its mandate. The way my team adapted to these transformations demonstrated the resilience of the RAIC workforce and the growing calibre of the people who work in my office.

The pandemic forced the RAIC to greatly expand the use of technology. With this, the Commission developed a strategy that aided the proper documentation and proactive disclosure of public health emergency related information to

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... CHAIRMAN & INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

complement government's extraordinary measures in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Guided by this strategy, the Commission in line with the established emergency regulations organized capacity building seminars to strengthen the capacities of MDAs, including agencies on the frontline of the emergency response to enable them to proactively and proficiently disclose COVID 19 related information. Furthermore, it called on all public authorities, including businesses and research institutions in the country, to document their COVID 19-related decisions and transactions to ensure practical learning on how to prevent and contain future public health emergencies. The ability to study the COVID-19 pandemic in order to prevent similar public health emergencies requires the existence of records management services and archives, otherwise records and data would not be generated and captured in ways that would enable their preservation and access, now, or in the future.

Proactive disclosure is one of the bedrocks of Access to Information. The Commission worked hard in the year under review to ensure compliance on the part of public bodies to improve the proactive disclosure of information so that Sierra Leoneans are better able to hold the government and public-sector officials accountable notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission under my stewardship obliged public bodies to generate timely and quality information and proactively disseminate it for broader access by citizens. This includes the regular publication and dissemination of key information and documents in a manner that is easily accessible to the public, even without request. The benefit is that the more information routinely published the less need for citizens to make request for information application, therefore saving time and money. New technologies make it easier to publish and disseminate information, for example, the websites by public authorities.

With support from OSIWA, the Commission undertook a nationwide promotion of access to information and proactive disclosure of Covid-19 related information. This was carried out in different folds. Radio and television discussion programmes were held in different places around the country. The Commission created more awareness in this drive by producing jingles and information and communication materials. This in essence created a greater awareness of the importance of access to information related to such a devastating pandemic as COVID-19 and the knock-on effect of building public trust in the response to address and mitigate its impact on the public by frontline public agencies.

With support from the World Bank through the Project Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP), the Commission embarked on carrying out an assessment on the compliance of state and non-state actors in proactive publication.

After consultations, meetings and engagements with pilot MDAs and NSAs, the consultant presented his findings to 20 pilot MDAs. From the findings, it showed that even though the MDAs are complying with the provisions of the RAI Act, the much needed information citizen required to hold public official accountable as provided for in the RAI Act is insufficient. The findings further revealed that the Civil Society organisations that have the duty to demand accountability and transparency from government in delivering on the RAI Act, are themselves not complying with the established RAI provision. We will sustain engagement with the MDAs, especially those MDAs we have worked with on the proactive disclosure scheme. We will be strict in following up with deadlines set for the assessment and publication in line with section 8 of the RAI Act 2013. We will reinforce penalties for defaulters irrespective of which MDA is found wanting. We will encourage Civil Society to develop strategies for proactive disclosure with clear timelines and they should be monitored by the RAIC on a yearly basis.

The World Bank again through the Project Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP) supported RAIC in strengthening national institutional coordination on open data. The project involved working with five pilot MDAs on data production, collection capacity, methods and gaps. It however became clear that there was no known data sharing platform used by more than one ministry, and no known information management systems (IMS) shared among any of the pilot ministries. We will ensure closer collaboration among managers of 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 MDAs and across MDAs.

Extensive work had been done to create awareness about the law, establish the necessary structures and institutions, forge partnerships and hold strategic engagements to address challenges facing compliance. After holding series of engagements, workshops and roundtables with the civil society, the media and professional interest

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... CHAIRMAN & INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

groups working on human and workers' rights, we found out that request for information improved considerably. It is worth noting that more requests were made in respects of funds received and disbursed on the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone. Such developments demonstrate the transparency and accountability that is integrating in Sierra Leone with the establishment of institutions such as the RAIC.

The RAIC has been making effort to develop other instruments that would make it necessary to implement the RAI Law effectively. These include the access to information rules of procedure and dispute resolution guidelines that will guide the decision of the Commission; a Whistle Blowing Policy to demonstrate the Commission's commitment to promoting the provision of the disclosure of information held by public authorities, or by persons providing services for them.

With all this in mind, the RAIC has taken the steps necessary to review the provisions of the Draft Archive and Records Management Bill that conflict with the RAI Act to be in harmony with this Act to create the needed enabling working environment. With a draft data protection bill and data legislation and regulations already prepared, the RAIC is advocating the institution of a data protection programme to ensure the proper management and regulation of data protection.

The Commission under my leadership commenced the process of developing the first 5-year strategic plan. This plan defines the Commission's direction, and rationale in making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue its strategy. With this Strategic Plan, the Commission has a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate its relevance by having a direct impact on public trust. And trust in freedom of information regulation is fundamental to democracy. Open governance, freedom of information and data innovation are all dependent on a transparent approach to information management.

We invested significant time and resources in the last three years transforming the way that we work in order to optimize the use of our resources. Notwithstanding the good progress that had been made, the Commission can perform better and deliver the expected results more effectively and efficiently through a more streamlined and focused planning process. I am confident that the RAIC will forge ahead with even more momentum to achieve our goal in records management, proactive disclosure.

Let me take this opportunity to thank HE President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, Vice President, Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh, and Information and Communications Minister Mohamed Rahman Swarray for demonstrating high political will in freedom of information and open governance in Sierra Leone. With their blessing and support, we have been able to achieve a lot in making Sierra Leone part of the global information rights society to the extent that Sierra Leone scored 85% in Freedom of Information in the 2020 Millennium Challenge Corporation Score Card.

While acknowledging the significant role of MDAs and CSOs in the management of records and proactive disclosure, I would like to remind them of their obligations under the law to fully comply with the provisions and regulations as provided for in the RAI Act 2013.

To conclude, I would like to register my profound appreciation to the Ministers and officials of the Ministry of Information and Communications, and to my regional Commissioners, Executive Secretary and other staff of the RAIC, and to our local and development partners namely, the World Bank, OSIWA, UNESCO, PFMICP, NCD and ICIC, the CSOs, the Academics, the Media, for their unflinching chain of cooperation in the year under review.

I thank you all and hope that you would find this annual report, which includes a financial statement covering the period under review, remarkable and beneficial ■

Signature:



Date 25th June 2020

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## 2. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMES

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CIC	Chairman and Information Commissioner
ES	Executive Secretary
FOI	Freedom of Information
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICIC	International Conference of Information Commissioners
MDAs	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MIC	Ministry of Information and Communications
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NCD	National Commission for Democracy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSA	Non-State Actors
OGP	Open Government Partnerships
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
PIO	Public Information Officer
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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### 3. Chairman and Regional Commissioners



Chairman & Information Commissioner  
Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw

#### Regional Commissioners



Mary Wuyata Karimu,  
Commissioner, East



Abu Bakar Kargbo,  
Commissioner, North



Biah Yormah Idriss,  
Commissioner, South



Pastor Mohamed Sesay,  
Commissioner, West



Executive Secretary  
Hon. Mustapha Braima



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# RAIC National & Regional Offices and Data Centres Locations:

## National Secretariat:

58 Kroo Town Road, Freetown,  
Tel: +23279-101314 / 030359669 / 030-319948  
Email: [accessinfo@raic.gov.sl](mailto:accessinfo@raic.gov.sl);  
[ibrahim.shaw@raic.gov.sl](mailto:ibrahim.shaw@raic.gov.sl);  
[mustapha.braima@raic.gov.sl](mailto:mustapha.braima@raic.gov.sl)

## Regional Offices

### Eastern Region:

22 Turay Street,  
Kenema City,  
Kenema District  
Tel: +232-76201020 / 88180643  
Email: [marywuyattakarimu57@gmail.com](mailto:marywuyattakarimu57@gmail.com)

### Northern Region:

31, Mabanta Road,  
Makeni City,  
Bombali District  
Tel: +232-77204558  
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### Southern Region:

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Bo District  
Mobile Tel: +0232 80109750  
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### Western Region:

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Freetown,  
Western Area Urban  
Tel: +232 77580436  
Email: [pmsesay01@gmail.com](mailto:pmsesay01@gmail.com)

Web Site: <http://www.Raic.gov.sl>

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# 4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By provision of the Right to Access Information Commission, this second edition of the annual report encapsulates the work of the Commission from 1st January to 31st December 2020. Accordingly, the Commission shall submit to the Minister of Information and Communications the Commission's activities, operations and undertakings and finances including the Audit report. Consistent with Section 39 of the RAI Act 2013, the Commission kept proper books of account and proper records in relation to its accounts. These books and accounts were audited by the Office of Auditor-General. This report also includes an overview of the performance of all public authorities in implementing the RAI Act consistent with Section 41 of the RAI Act 2013

The COVID 19 pandemic saw a considerable work of the Commission measured by the Government's State of Emergency Regulations. The phenomenon however put the Commission in a pole position in terms of being able to deploy proactive disclosure as a strategy to contain the pandemic. The Commission in the year under review gave premium in the content and quality of the information to be proactively disclosed and the extent to which that information would help the people appreciate what they need to do and how best they can do it during the pandemic.

## The Report is divided into five expansive parts:

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

**Part Two** covers in general, the activities of the Commission and its accompanying achievements; its institutional and infrastructural developments; programmes and projects; compliance and investigation mechanisms; its public awareness and sensitization efforts notwithstanding the COVID-19 and the state of emergency regulations. It covers also the role played by development partners including the World Bank and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa in supporting the effective implementation of the three major strands of the Commission, i.e., Proactive Disclosure, Open Data and Records Management.

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

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

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

## 5. BACKGROUND

Consistent with the provisions of the RAI Act 2013, the Right to Access Information Commission is mandated to ensure the effective implementation of the RAI Act; promote access to information held by a body or organization that receives monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone; ensure compliance to disclose information to the general public if that information is required for the protection or enforcement of any right; promote proactive disclosure of information; promote maintenance of records; undertake training activities for public authorities on the right to access information; promote the demand and supply of information among the general public.

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 regimes including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

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

In the year under review, the Commission strengthened its collaboration with partners such as the World Bank, Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), Public Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP), of the Ministry of Finance and the National Commission for Democracy (NCD), to carry out its initiatives. It reinforced its enforcement and intervention procedures to enable a flexible, proactive approach to tackle systemic performance issues in public authorities. With this, there has been significant improvement in records management and FOI practice and performance, not just in one case, but across the board. The cornerstone to this is extensive intervention motivated by recommendations to improve practice, through to a detailed, evidence-based audit of procedures, practice and culture followed by a substantial monitoring phase. ■

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## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

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

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



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## REGIONAL COMMISSIONERS

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

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

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

## EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

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

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

# 7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## OUR MISSION

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

## OUR VISION

To be part of the Global Information Rights Society

## OUR VALUES

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

## OUR OBJECTIVE

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

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## PART II. ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

# 8. INSTITUTIONAL & INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

The work of the Commission in the year under review was predicated mainly on the drive to overcome the challenges of the previous years, prioritize the recommendations made in the number of workshops and roundtables organized by the Commission and improve upon the 2019 input quality which, by all accounts, was relatively high.

The Commission took key recommendations made in the management and functional review undertaken by Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU) in 2019 to examine the its roles, institutional structure, staffing, functional relationships and service delivery. Also, the recommendations made in the Strategic Planning Retreat organized by the Commission in November 2019 guided the direction the Commission took to execute its functions in the year under review. The Commission prioritized its transparency and accountability drive in the year under review. This necessitated the holding of public engagements with MDAs and professional interest groups in Sierra Leone. The whole of 2020 was overwhelmed by the COVID 19 pandemic. As such, a considerable work of the Commission was done in a manner consistent with the COVID response measures.

The steps undertaken by the Commission to identifying and addressing the risks and challenges that may affect its future effectiveness, viability, and relevance are critical to the sustained enhancement of its performance. As a result, there was significant improvement in the staff working environment which consequently strengthened the Commission's public engagement capacity. As a body relatively young within Sierra Leone and among its sister regulatory bodies the world at large, the Commission prioritized institutional and infrastructural development as the bedrock to key success criteria.

The focus of the Commission to have well defined structures with properly articulated roles, responsibilities and functional relationships to enhance its performance became a priority in the year under review. The Commission increased its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and strengthened its managerial, administrative, financial

and institutional capacity to meet its growing needs. It increased information requests through effective engagement with media practitioners and non-state actors about the RAI Act. The introduction of new opportunities to improve public access to information through open data initiatives, proactive disclosure, etc., has increased compliance with the provisions of the RAI Act. It established data resource centers in the four regional offices to create an enabling environment for public access to information in the regions.

The Commission developed a strategy that will aid the proper documentation and proactive disclosure of public health emergency related information to complement government's extraordinary measures in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. It developed a Records Management Code of Practice that provided guidance to public authorities in the keeping, management and destruction of records as well as the review and transfer of such records to public archives. It called on all public authorities, including businesses and research institutions in the country to document their COVID 19-related decisions and transactions to ensure pragmatic learning on how to prevent and contain future public health emergencies.

With funding from the World Bank through the PFMICP and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), the Commission carried out a nationwide sensitization campaign on Proactive Disclosure of Information (PDI) and Access to Information (ATI) related to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Commission incorporated the civil society in its awareness drive; it engaged public authorities and sensitized them on their obligations as provided for in the RAI Act. It embarked on serious advocacy in order to be assigned the responsibility for the management and regulation of data protection in Sierra Leone in a bid to strengthen national institutional coordination around data protection. This has necessitated planning for the management and regulation of data protection in Sierra Leone for appropriate safeguards ■

# 8.1. Operational Matters



The RAIC recognises its responsibility to provide an opportunity for employees to develop skills and abilities for full and effective performance within their position and career advancement. The Administrative and Human Resources Unit(AHRU) is doing its best to provide administrative and management support to the Commission management functions and activities of the Secretariat. This unit is responsible for facilitating the process of staff recruitment, compensation and classification, the keeping of proper records and providing quality services for the proper functioning of the Commission.

The RAIC had permanent staff strength of 13 supported by 8 volunteers in the year under review. The staff team can be seen operating at different units such as the Compliance Unit comprising the Legal Counsel and Snr. Investigator. The Records and Data Management Unit include the Archivist and the Public Information Officer; the Administrative Unit is headed by the Executive Secretary supported by the Admin/HR Manager and the Admin Assistant. The Account Unit is run by the accountant and a few support staff to help in the day-to-day activities of the Commission.

The AHRU reviewed and compiled a host of data on staff recruitment and selection, contractual conditions, entitlements, performance and training requirements, existing vacant positions, etc. The department has also reinforced the maintenance of confidential personnel records to ensure that data and files are accurately stored and updated in compliance with the established standards. The AHRU is building relationships with a number of national institutions including HRMO, NCD, PSRU, for effective collaboration. It took the lead in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RAIC and NCD for knowledge exchange ■



# 8.2. Staff Welfare

## STAFF WELFARE /BENEFITS POLICY

The Administrative and Human Resources department adopted an employee welfare policy to help develop and implement a proper working environment and other facilities as per approval by Commission. This is also to ensure that the employees maintain proper productivity.

The objectives of this include:

1. To enhance the level of morale of employees.
2. To create a loyal and contented workforce in the RAIC.
3. To develop a better image of the Commission in the minds of the employees.
4. To enable the workers to live comfortably and happily.
5. To develop efficiency of the workers.

The Commission's Lead on Human Resources is Commissioner A.B Kargbo. He has been working in close collaboration with the Admin/HR Manager. The current Commission did not inherit any structured staff welfare and benefits policy. This necessitated the need to establish one in line with best practice. The policy has now been developed to be submitted for review and approval by the Commission.

### STAFF WELFARE ASSOCIATION

A Staff Welfare Association was established by staff members of the RAIC to foster healthy relationships and congenial atmosphere among the employees, to provide assistance and aid to the members in professional matters and to assist the members in personal affairs as and when needed.

The Association serves as a liaison between the RAIC and the staff. Its membership constitutes the entire professional, functional and lower cadre of the Commission. It currently has an interim executive headed by a chairman and deputy who are responsible for spearheading the affairs of the association. It has established rules and regulations that bind every member of the committee.

It has selection and appointment, dismissal, resignation, and records of committee member's procedures. It has

norms of meetings; rules concerning custody and utilization of welfare fund.

### ACCIDENTS

In a case where a staff is involved in a road accident, RAIC will take full responsibility of medical bills as well as the maintenance and repair of vehicle where applicable.

### DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Any change programme will give rise to development and training needs. These must be identified and met in a structured way to ensure the right people get the right development at the right time. It is important to identify the skills gap – ie the gap between the skills currently available and those required to meet future objectives.

### ARRIVALS /DEPARTURES

The Admin/HR Unit recorded two departures and two arrivals in October 2020

#### Departures

1. Yeamah Thompson Resigned as Commissioner West to take over as DG of SLENA
2. Esther M. Kanu resigned as senior investigator to pursue further studies in the UK.

#### Arrivals

1. Mohamed Sesay Pst. Commissioner for the Western Region was appointed by His Excellency, Dr. Julius Maada Bios

The Admin/HR unit supported / facilitated the recruitment, processed payroll and maintained employee records, e.g the verification and issuance of NASSIT cards and NCRA verifications and ensured Accountant Generals department have these new staff of the Commission on the payroll.

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# 9. Programmes and Projects

The Commission in the year under review made tremendous effort in its drive to ensuring effective records management, open data and proactive disclosure through its programmes and development supported by World Bank and OSIWA. The increase of the COVID19 and the adoption of public emergency measures by the government saw a shift in the implementation of programmes and projects. Thus the Commission tied most of its activities to the COVID-19 Protocols.

## 9.1. Proactive Disclosure

With support from OSIWA, The Commission embarked on a nationwide Promotion of Access to Information and Proactive Disclosure of Covid-19 Related Information. This was carried out in different folds. Public engagements were undertaken through zoom. Coupled with this was the holding of radio and television discussion programmes. The Commission created more awareness in this drive by producing jingles, and information and communication materials. This in essence created a greater awareness of the importance of access to information related to such a devastating pandemic as COVID-19 and the knock-on effect of building public trust in the response to address and mitigate its impact on the public by frontline public agencies.

This was primarily to ensure that Sierra Leoneans are better positioned to respond to potential outbreaks. It was also to increase public trust and confidence in the access to COVID-19 related information and to ensure a knowledge society in accessing information relevant to the pandemic.

With support from the World Bank through the Project Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP) the Commission embarked on carrying out an assessment of the degree in which state and non-state actors are complying with Proactive Publication provisions of the Right to Access information law of 2013.

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Records are valuable assets of organizations. Good records management helps protect records and also enhance organizations' operational efficiency. The Commission has a Records Management Unit currently managed by an Archivist that spearhead all Records Management effort. In the year under review, the RAIC threw more weight on records management because it has the strong conviction that proper records management has direct relation to accountability and transparency as it will improve the quality of public service delivery and able to help organizations to equip themselves easily in acquiring quality certification. One giant step taken by the Commission was to call on all public authorities, including businesses and research institutions in the country to document their COVID 19-related decisions and transactions to ensure experiential learning on how to prevent and contain future public health emergencies. The Commission required decision-makers in the public and private sectors to recognize and uphold the value of records management and archives. With this, they can turn the threat of COVID-19 into an opportunity for greater support to documentary heritage.

The Commission made three calls to action consistent with those made in a joint statement released in May 2020 and signed by 8 international organizations, including the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC), of which RAIC is a member, UNESCO and International Council on archives (ICA). These three calls to action to all MDAs, Businesses and Research Institutions are as follows: Documenting Decisions and Transactions, the Security and Preservation of Records and Data in all Sectors and Evidence of Economic and Societal Impact of COVID 19. This call impacted public institutions considerably in managing COVID 19 related information.

The Commission in the year under review embarked on Public Financial Management in MDAs through records management to ensure the effective retrieval of records in a good format so as to enhance transparency and accountability. This initiative was funded again by the World Bank through the Public Finance Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMICP).

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## ... Proactive Disclosure



Cross Section of Participants for the Presentation of Records Management Equipment to the five (5) Pilot MDAs.

Five MDAs of Ministries of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, Agriculture and Forestry and Food Security, Lands, Housing and Country planning, the Public Service Commission and the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General benefit from the process. The overall objective of this project is to ensure that records keeping is improved in MDAs as identified in sub-section 29: a, b & c of the RAI Act which made provisions for:

- (a) Facilitate access to information;
- (b) Ensure transparency and accountability;
- (c) Improve record keeping.

The Tiwai Memory Masters (TMM) was selected to conduct the pilot in accordance with the Terms of Reference (TOR) defined in the Request for Proposal (RFP) that was published to bidders.

The Consultant introduced the system as one with international and web-based standard ie the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 15489-1) which other parts of world are using and has also worked locally for the Accountant General's Department. The system was described as simple that can be handled with a common sense.

The scope of the project comprises of three parts as defined below:

- Design and implement an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) – a system that is international standards-based, web-based and centralized to facilitate the management of records
- Develop records management policies governing the practice of records management and the use of the digital system in performing and managing records management functions
- Train the trainers comprising two (2) representatives from each of the five participating MDAs.

These MDAs received packages of 5 digital scanners, 5 toners/cartridges for printing, 5 boxes of A4 papers and assorted stationery items, 2 servers for centralized electronic records management system and aluminium shelves. ■

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## PUBLIC ENAGEMENTS AND CAPACITY BUILDING FUNCTIONS

The RAIC held a host of public engagement and capacity building functions in the year under review. Some of these functions were conducted in the form of workshops, seminars, and roundtables. They involved a host of stakeholders who made tremendous inputs that helped to shape the manner in which the Commission conducted activities and engagements.



## 9.2. TRAINING OF TRAINERS' WORKSHOP FOR JOURNALISTS

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) organized a Training of Trainers Workshop for Journalists on the Freedom of Information Law on Friday, 23rd October, 2020, at the Family Kingdom Resort, Aberdeen, Freetown. The one-day workshop was funded by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). The event attracted media practitioners and other institutions entrusted with the responsibility to provide oversight, and the regulation of information dissemination in Sierra Leone. Largely, the Commission aimed to reinforce the recognition of freedom of information in Sierra Leone through journalists keeping in mind their critical role in information dissemination.

Deputy Minister of Information & Communications, Mamadi Gobehe Kamara who delivered the keynote address said the Right to Access Information (RAI) Act 2013 provides the moral basis for journalists to access and disseminate information. Madam Kamara maintained that without the fundamental freedom to speak and the right to know, the media will be unable to demand basic rights and hold duty bearers accountable. She said that Sierra Leone is one of the 17 African countries that has adopted a national right to information law.

She reiterated the government of President Julius Maada Bio's commitment to pluralistic journalism. She concluded by thanking OSIWA for playing a tremendous role in supporting state institutions and non-state actors in promoting transparency, accountability and good governance in Sierra Leone.

Earlier in his opening statement, Chairman and Information Commissioner of RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw said the relatively low number of information requests from journalists since the establishment of the RAIC necessitated the workshop. He said the Commission engaged the Executive of SLAJ to agree on the best way possible to train investigative journalists to put them in a position to resourcefully request for information held by public authorities. He disclosed how the current Commission had in its early commencement of operation organized training for MDAs and the Civil Society on the RAI Law, and added that this was the time for journalists.

In his Statement, Chairman of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Information and Communication, Hon. Boston Munda, described access to information as a tool for citizens' participations and holding government





functionaries accountable. He pointed out that while parliament legislate laws of the land, the Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) have a responsibility to uphold those laws. He encouraged journalists to go out there and help people understand their rights.

Chairman of the Independent Media Commission (IMC) George Khoryama said the training could not be more relevant than in the wake of the repeal of Part (V) of the Criminal Libel Law and the Enactment of the IMC Act 2020. He said as regulators, the IMC is now pre-occupied with the prospect of a responsible press. He was concerned about the binding constraints in the Sierra Leone media landscape which borders on media house financial challenges and the lack of professionalism, technicalities and ethics on the part of media practitioners. Only trainings of sort he said, would help mitigate the effect.

SLAJ President, Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, who had been working with the RAIC right from the planning stage said, the FOI law is a unique instrument to promote accountability, adding, it is one of the biggest opportunities to transform societies. He thanked the RAIC for the initiative, OSIWA for the funding; and extended profound appreciations to the Society for Democratic Initiative (SDI) for being at the forefront for the enactment of the FOI law. He however bemoaned that Journalists have not fully embraced the FOI law. The training as he put it was therefore important to meet the most needed expectations.

The Workshop was moderated by Hon. Mustapha Brima, Executive Secretary of RAIC who informed that access to information is one of the international benchmarks for transparency, accountability and good governance and emphasized the fact that the RAIC relies on journalists to inform and educate the population about the FOI Law. The vote of thanks was delivered by Asmieu Bah, SLAJ Secretary General. Other speakers include Marion George of Sky Radio who expressed concerns over the challenges journalists are facing with MDAs in requesting information and called on SLAJ to engage with MDAs to facilitate an MoU with Journalists so as to enhance the work of journalists in accessing information.

The workshop was facilitated by Alan Benjamin, Legal Counsel of RAIC who made a presentation on key and relevant provisions of the FOI law. Other facilitators were RAIC Chairman and Information Commissioner, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, who provided some useful interjections and anecdotes related to the relevant provisions of the FOI Law 2013, journalist and researcher Abu Bakar Jalloh who, together with Dr Shaw, made presentations on investigative journalism. The workshop was punctuated with question and answer sessions where journalists expressed their experience with public authorities in information request and where the RAIC offered vivid explanations about the process they should follow when they face challenges in accessing information. ■



L to R (front row) – RAIC Chairman, Dr. Shaw, Deputy Information Minister, Mamadi Gobeh Kamara, IMC Chairman, George Khoryama. Back Row –from Right Mr Asmieu Bah (SLAJ Sec Gen), Marion George (Journalist), Sahid Nasralla (SLAJ President), Hon Boston Munda etc.

## 9.3. RAIC Hands Over 2019 Annual Report to the Ministry of Information and Communications (Mic)

When His Excellency the president of Sierra Leone Rtd. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio appointed Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw as Chairman and Information Commissioner (CIC) of RAIC, one of his promises was to deliver on one of the mandates of the commission which is to produce and launch an annual report. Section 41 (1) of the Right to Access information Act of 2013 states that ‘The Commission shall, within three months after the financial year, submit to the Minister a report on the performance of its functions during that year and on its policies and programmes.’ Dr. Shaw inherited a commission that has never neither produced nor published an annual report which was hard for him and his team to know where to start.

Within one year of taking up the reigns of leadership of the commission, The Right to Access Information Commission handed over its annual report to the Ministry of Information and Communications MIC at a brief ceremony held at the MIC conference room at Youyi Building in Freetown.

Recounting the journey that has led to the production of the first ever annual report of the commission, Chairman and information Commissioner RAIC, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw said when they took over in December 2018 with a focus to do what is right, they inherited a ground zero situation with no annual report, no audited financial report, weak internal controls, weak staff capacity and very low budget ceiling Upon assumption of duty, the chairman noted that the Commission responded by inviting the Public Sector Reform Unit to conduct a management and function



Deputy Minister of MIC and RAIC Chairman & Information Commissioner

review of the commission and invited internal auditors from Ministry of Finance to carry out an audit of the systems and controls as well as the account of the Commission covering the period between 2014 when the Commission was set up to 2018 when the new Commission under his leadership took over.

“In going further, we started work towards producing an annual report that will cover the activities, programmes undertaken in 2019 as early as September that year. The near final draft of this report was ready by December 2019.” Dr. Shaw said

The Commission invited auditors from ministry of finance assigned to MIC and they conducted an internal review of the financial statements and records of the commission covering the 2019 financial year, an activity that was also carried out by an external auditing service. These audited financial statements, the Chairman added, were approved at the last commission meeting held in Makeni on Friday 21st August 2020 and were factored verbatim into the 2019 report. Dr Shaw paid tribute to staff of the commission, local and international partners, CSOs, the academics, the Media, PFMICP, World Bank, OSIWA, and many more for their invaluable support in the year under review.

Therefore, he concluded, as section 41 of the RAI Act provides, he is honored on behalf of RAIC to present the RAIC 2019 Annual report to the Minister of MIC to be laid in Pa presented to parliament for as required by law.

Receiving the report on behalf of the Minister of MIC, Deputy Minister of MIC Mamadi Gobeh-Kamara said she is delighted about the strides the commission has made over a short period to produce the first ever annual report of the RAIC since its establishment in October 2014.

The Deputy minister said the report which is divided to five broad parts factored key areas as the synopsis of the historical background, particulars of the commission, general activities and achievement programs, projects, compliance and investigations, accounts and financial statements, challenges, lessons learnt and suggestions on areas that can be improve moving forward.

She assured the RAIC of her Ministry’s continued support to the work of the commission in ensuring that it continues to perform at maximum level. The Annual Report was eventually laid in parliament and then presented to the President. ■



Officials of MIC and RAIC at the presentation ceremony



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## 9.4. RAIC COMMEMORATES ACCESS TO INFORMATION DAY

The Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) on the 28th of September, 2020 joined other countries across the globe to commemorate the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI).





The proclamation of 28th September every year as IDUAI has created the platform for citizens, civil society organizations and partners to reflect on the significance of data access. The global theme “Access to Information – Saving lives, Building Trust, Bringing Hope,” was localized by the commission as Access to Information - Saving Lives through

## Transparency and Accountability.

Speaking at the ceremony at the RAIC headquarters on Kroo Town in Freetown, Chairman and Information Commissioner of RAIC Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw said the IDUAI is an opportunity for countries to identify challenges and design new and innovative ways to promote the advancement of access to information as a tool for development and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



MDA representatives at the ATI Day

This day the Chairman adds, sends a clear message that countries like Sierra Leone are committed to enhancing access to information and achieving SDGs. Dr. Shaw said strengthened transparency and accountability prevents corruption as the right to information complements other rights to foster governance growth.

The Chairman of The National Council for Civic Education (NaCCED) Kalilou Tutangi commends RAIC for bringing to the fore such an important day at a time when fake news and rumor mongering are taking a prominent stage in our society. NaCCED, he added, sees the RAIC partner they can as a collaborate with to achieve the desired result. Mr. Tutangi called on all MDAs and civil society organizations present to ensure that data literacy is factored in their various schedules, commending Statistics Sierra Leone (StatSL) for the data review which has positioned data as a tool for monitoring in Sierra Leone. Speaking on behalf of StatSL, Clementina Akram said governments should know that data belongs to the people and should therefore ensure it is always available to them. She said the role data plays cannot be overemphasized especially, in the COVID 19 response and calls on MDAs to abide by the RAIC demand to proactively disclose information, which StatSL has done. Representing civil Society organizations in the country, Charles Kobai from FORWARD SL, delved into the local theme of how access to information can save lives through transparency and accountability, citing the lack of adequate data on in the COVID 19 response and its rippling effect. Mr. Kobai said access to information cannot be trivialized as it is key for the development of every country.

Francis Laguba Kieli from the Office of National Security ONS, underscored the need for information to be accessed responsibly highlighting the classified information that fringes on national security, of which the Right to Access Information RAI Act of 2013 is aware of. Mr. Keili said the security sector thrives smoothly where the credible data is readily available, calling on MDAs to do such.

The International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) was also observed in the provincial headquarters of Sierra Leone, coordinated by the RAIC regional offices. ■

## 9.5. RAIC CALLS FOR ACCESS TO CREDIBLE COVID-19 RELATED INFORMATION

On the 13th of March 2020, Sierra Leone registered its index COVID-19 case. Though the country at that time had commenced preparation and prevention strides ahead of the COVID-19 strikes so the country will not be taken by surprise, when the announcement of the index case was eventually made in March of 2020, an uneasy feeling gripped many Sierra Leoneans.

As Sierra Leone scratches around for credible COVID-19 related data, the memories of the misappropriations of the fund meant for the fight against Ebola in 2014 lingered in the minds of many Sierra Leoneans.

Therefore, the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) through a press statement calls on all public authorities, especially those on the frontline of the prevention and response efforts, and members of the public to provide public access to credible corona virus (COVID-19)-related information in their stride to support Government's effort to prevent and stop the spread of the epidemic in Sierra Leone. The Commission is cognizant of the compelling public interest in the outbreak of such a deadly global pandemic that has brought a myriad of challenges across sectors and disciplines, and notes that these challenges are not unconnected with access to information rights.

The Commission as regulator and facilitator of Information Access in Sierra Leone underscored the critical importance of information in every aspect of human life in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16.10, having access to information is having access to resources that make it possible to enjoy a healthy life and other related human rights, as well as having awareness of major challenges facing humanity. The Commission believes that the COVID-19 pandemic can only be contained in Sierra Leone if there is credibility in the information disseminated about it by public

authorities and members of the public.

“It is in this light that the RAIC joins the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) to promote proactive disclosure and access to credible coronavirus-related information and widespread awareness of measures to control and prevent the spread of the virus in their countries of jurisdiction and globally, and above all promote transparency and accountability in how public funds are used in the collective response to prevent its spread and support those in desperate circumstances as a result of the global pandemic”, said Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, RAIC Chairman and Information Commissioner.

That call then by RAIC came at a time when the Government of Sierra Leone has heightened its surveillance, contact tracing of confirmed cases, and testing measures, and the just concluded its first three days national lockdown, the Commission seized that opportunity to call on all public authorities and members of the public not only to proactively provide access to credible COVID-19-related information, but also provide access to it when requested, but to also follow the established channels to access such information. The Commission firmly believes that this is needed to build public trust in the transparency and accountability of service delivery and avoid the spread of fake news.

That venture by RAIC largely helped to shape the conduct of public authorities and boosts the confidence of the citizens to request for information from those that are in authorities thus avoiding the grave mistakes of the response to the Ebola outbreak in 2014. ■



## 9.6. REPORTS FROM THE REGIONAL OFFICES

The roles and responsibilities of the regional offices are to among other things provide oversight function for the Commission in their respective regions of station, monitor and report on the compliance by public authorities as provided for in 2013 RAI Act, as well as increase the visibility, capability and relevance of the RAIC within the regions.

### NORTHERN REGION

#### BACKGROUND

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

Even though the Commission's northern region operations were punctuated by financial difficulties, there were however tremendous success stories. In the year under review, the regional office, headed by Commissioner Abu Bakarr Kargbo reinforced the connection of the Commission with a host a of MDAs, NSAs, the Academia and stakeholders all over the region engaged them in diverse ways about RAI Law and its importance to transparency, accountability and good governance. The Northern Regional Office also broadened its outreach drive to reaching the citizens using different channels and platforms including the radio, town hall meetings, roundtables, disseminating of information, education and communication materials across communities in the respective northern districts so as to encourage the citizens to have a full understanding of the RAI law and how to requests information or make complaints where access to information is denied.

The robust engagement drive adopted by the northern regional team attracted lots of FOI requests for information form the public to public authorities. 2020 saw an FOI information request that outdid that 2019.



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



Stakeholders' engagement on the Right to Access Information Act in Kambia

## FOI REQUESTS

Amidst huge critical challenges, the work of the commission has been practically successful in the northern part of the country as it attracted 47 FOI requests/complaints in 2020, of which 42 were successful.

## SUMMARY OF REQUESTS

The major components of the RAI Law are requests and complaints provision. The regional office has attracted FOI requests in all seven districts in the region. However, such achievements have been possible due to a steady awareness raising campaign, strengthening institutional collaboration with MDAs and media Institutions

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

A considerable span of the year under review was overcome by the COVID-19 and the government's State of Emergency Regulations. The Northern Regional office played a key role in developing a strategy that came to aid the proper documentation and proactive disclosure of public health emergency related information to complement government's extraordinary measures in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Guided by this strategy, the regional office, in line with the established emergency regulations, organized capacity building seminars to strengthen the capacities of MDAs, local court men and chairmen, in the region, including agencies at the frontline of the emergency response to proactively and proficiently disclose COVID 19 related information. It was a renewed enthusiasm to let citizens fully enjoy their right to information.





: Northern Region Commissioner Abu Bakar Kargbo addressing a stakeholders engagement on PDI in Kambia

The Northern Regional office's visits to the districts in the year under review were well appreciated by the communities that were reached out in particular. These visits gave residents the opportunity to know about the existence of the RAI Law in the country and its importance to national development and the content and quality of the information that is proactively disclosed and the extent to which that information has been able to help the people appreciate what they need to do and how best they can do it during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the office is in need of more financial support from the secretariat and professional cooperation from the compliance departments

## EASTERN REGION

Like all regional offices and the RAIC Headquarters at large, the Eastern regional office in Kenema faced a number of implementation challenges in the year under review as a result of the advent of the COVID-19 and the government state of emergency regulations. However, the office, led by Commissioner Wuyata Karimu held a number of public engagements. Most of which were centered around COVID-19.



The Eastern Regional office was pivotal in the initiation, planning and implementation of a strategy that prioritized the need to aid the proper documentation and proactive disclosure of public health emergency related information to complement government’s extraordinary measures in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

It held a host of press briefings, media sensitizations and engagements with regional MDAs, CSOs, Parliamentarians from the Southern Province, and other non-state actors through town hall meetings as regards the management and dissemination of COVID-19 related information. In these engagements, Commissioner Wuyata Karimu shed light on the relevance of proactive disclosure in the COVID 19 response and access to information as a very important tenet in democratic governance, transparency and accountability. Among other things, she touched on the importance of voluntary disclosure of information and its tremendous service to the citizens. Her key message in the series of engagements held by the regional office was that if MDAs uphold the value of records management and proactive disclosure, they can turn the threat of COVID-19 into an opportunity for greater support to documentary culture.



Eastern Region Commissioner Mary Wuyata Karimu speaking at stakeholders engagement on PDI in Kenema

She was emphasizing through and through that ‘where there is proactive disclosure of information citizens will know exactly where the treatment and isolated centres are located.’ She also touched on the importance of accountability which as she put it, is very important the COVID-19 response. ■

**RAIC: Promoting Open Governance for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development through Transparency and Accountability. We work with local, national, and international Partners to achieve this Goal.**



## 9.7. Engagements With Ministries, Departments, & Agencies In Kenema

The Eastern Regional staff engaged fourteen (14) MDA's in Kenema. The focus of the engagement to ensure compliance in the submission of Proactive Publication Schemes that the Commission issued out. During the process, MDAs that were not previously educated on the preparation of publication schemes were guided as well. The following MDA's were engaged:

NAME OF MDA VISITED	COMPLIANCE
1. Kenema city council	YES
2. Kenema district council	NO
3. Kenema government hospital	YES
4. Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs	YES
5. Ministry of Lands and the Environment	YES
6. Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education	YES
7. Ministry of Labor and Social Security	YES
8. Ministry of Agriculture	YES
9. National Revenue Authority	YES
10. National Youth Commission	YES
11. Mines and Minerals Agency	YES
12. Teaching Service Commission	YES
13. Sierra Leone Water Company	YES
14. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	NO

Out of the fourteen (14) MDAs that were engaged, twelve (12) were able to submit their Publication Schemes. Amid all the huge challenges, the following are the successes made under review:

1. Received many FOI requests from the public as a result of the awareness-raising campaigns most of which were responded to with the intervention of the Commission
2. Stakeholder and community engagements were well attended
3. Increased phone calls during our radio talk shows within and remote communities
4. Stakeholders and public authorities recognize the work of the Commission and treat its staff with respect
5. Kono district requested for more concentration of the work of the Commission in Kono
6. In-house training has been handy in boosting the efficiency of the staff



Stakeholders engagement on PDI in Kenema



## CHALLENGES

The following challenges were recorded in the year under review. These include:

1. Insufficient number of personnel to handle the huge workload of the office
2. Staff mobility into the rural communities
3. Delays of staff stipends
4. Lack of trained Information Technology specialist to maintenance equ
5. Deliberate refusal of the Kenema District council to submit their publication scheme and to respond to the request
6. Repair of faulty office equipment (computers, printers, etc)

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improvement of a healthy working relationship with both local and international partners
2. More transportation needs in the regional office
3. employment more technical staff to maintain excellent work
4. More capacity building training for staff
5. Empower the regional office to be able to handle cases and set precedence without compromise.

## SOUTHERN REGION

Southern Regional Commission held a host of radio discussion programmes, press briefings and public engagements with the CSOs, MDAs, and media practitioners in the regional headquarter towns in the Southern Province. Most of the engagements were centered on COVID 19 related information. Like the other regional offices, the Southern Regional Office played a major role in developing a strategy that came to aid the proper documentation and proactive disclosure of public health emergency related information to complement government's extraordinary measures in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.



Southern Region Commissioner Idris Yormah Biah addressing a stakeholders meeting.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON COVID 19

The key messages delivered in the different parts of the Southern Province by the resident Regional Commissioner, Biah Idris Yormah were that the willingness on the part of public institutions in all arms and tiers of government to embrace the culture of proactive disclosure of information, both as a key obligation and an essential requirement of access to information rights was still not at the level the Commission wanted it be. Among other things, he was ramming home the message that the impact of the pandemic would be far reaching if MDAs were not cognizant of the importance of proper records management and proactive disclosure.

Educating residents of Bo, Moyamba, Pejehun and Bonthe as regards the relevance of access to information in the COVID 19 pandemic, Commission Idriss noted that proactive disclosure of information “is at the heart of all the containment measures of COVID 19.” He added that “even in the Water and Sanitation Hygiene, if there is no proactive disclosure of information to enable the people to appreciate how it is done especially where water is not in good supply, the communities at that point will be at a disadvantaged position and would not be able to do the needful.” Largely, because of the respective public engagements on COVID 19 related information, the people in the Southern Province demonstrated high level of adherence to the COVID 19 measures which made that part of the country being among the least to contract the COVID 19.



## PUBLIC SENSITIZATION

Commissioner Biah and Staff of the regional office embarked on a public sensitization to broaden the perspective of the citizens on the Right to Access Information (RAI) law to put them in a position to resourcefully request for information held by, or under the control of bodies or organizations that receive monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone. This development attracted a host of information request from the public.

## CHALLENGES

1. Inadequate staff to carry out its core functions due to the prevailing moratorium on recruitment
2. Inadequate training opportunities and absence of a training policy and programmes
3. Inadequate financial allocations to the regional offices
4. Lack of staff mobility to reach out to rural communities

## WESTERN REGION

The Western Area Regional Office saw a transition in the year under review. His Excellency, Dr. Julius Maada Bio appointed then Western Regional Commissioner, Yeama Sarah Thompson as Director General of Sierra Leone News Agency (SLENA).

The current Western Regional Commissioner, Pastor Mohamed Sesay was appointed afterwards by President Bio on the 26th October 2020. He went through a successful parliamentary confirmation. He subsequently participated in two major functions held by the Commission. From a journalistic background, he played a significant contribution in the Training of Trainers Workshop for Journalists on the Freedom of Information Law held in November, 2020, at the Family Kingdom Resort, Aberdeen, Freetown. He also meaningfully contributed to the Roundtable for Professional Interest Group organized by the RAIC where he shed lights on the hunger for public awareness in the FOI law.

The Western Area Regional Commission earlier in 2020 played a key role in joining the Commission to develop a strategy that aided the proper documentation and proactive disclosure of public health emergency related information to complement government's extraordinary measures in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the number of public engagements held by the Commission, the key mes-



Western Region Commissioner Pastor Mohamed Sesay with a cross-section of staff

sage from the Western Regional Commission was on the content and quality of the COVID 19 related information to be proactively disclosed. Coupled with this was the need for public authorities to provide unfettered access to COVID 19 information to the public.

## CHALLENGES AT THE WESTERN REGION OFFICE

1. Limited staff to handle administrative work at the Region
2. Lack of mobility for community outreach
3. No professional staff to empower the compliance team

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# 10. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

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

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

Two things have helped the newly constituted Commission to monitor and report on compliance by public authorities with public access to information in Sierra Leone. First, it set itself the target of producing an annual report of its activities covering 2019 in accordance with Section 41 of the RAI Act for the first time since it was set up in 2014, and Sub Section 3 of that Section provides that such annual report should include reports of the status of compliance by all public authorities. Second, it has since 2019 been participating in an annual UNESCO Survey. UNESCO is the UN agency mandated to monitor and report on compliance by member states of the United Nations with SDG 16.10.2 which speaks directly to Public Access to Information. This Survey focused on central information about adoption and implementation of the right to information (RTI) and was designed to help Member States provide the core data that UNESCO and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics are seeking at that moment to fulfil UNESCO's mandate.

The Commission in the year under review further strengthened its compliance and enforcement provisions. The Legal and Investigative Unit helped the Commission tremendously in ensuring that state and non-state actors work in accordance with the established guidelines and institute enforcement provisions where necessary. During the period under review, ninety eight percent (98%) of the cases were wrapped up and dealt with accordingly and the remaining two percent (2%) are still work in progress. The complaints made were from different folds but were on information requests and denial of access to information requested. The institution that made the highest number of complaints in the year under review was the Society for Democratic Initiative. This institution made complaint against the following MDAs:

- Ministry of Health and Sanitation
- About funds received and disbursed on the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone.
- National Youth Commission
- About funds received and disbursed on the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone
- National Commission for Social Action (NACSA)
- About funds received and disbursed on the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone
- Ministry of Finance (MoF)
- About the MoF's obligation to comply with information requested as a public authority in the RAI ACT 2013.
- Ministry of Youth Affairs
- About funds received and disbursed on the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone



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## Action Taken by RAIC To Resolve the Complaints:

Upon receipt of the complaint from SDI, RAIC wrote letters to the above-mentioned institutions to the National Youth Commissioner on the 17th September 2020 with specific sections of the RAI Act 2013. In light of the above, RAIC demanded that the information requested by the said SDI is provided to them and copied sent to the RAIC within 48 hours upon receipt of the Commission letter and failure to adhere would leave the RAIC with no alternative but to enforce the penalties as stated in section 48(1) of the RAI Act 2013.

## Result from Action Taken

National Youth Commission provided Society for Democratic Initiative with the requested information and copied sent to the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC).

## National Youth Commission

By a letter dated 22nd September 2020, National Youth Commission replied stating that due to some challenges, their commission was not able to provide the information within the time stipulated in the RAI Act 2013 but they have however done the needful by providing the requested information.

## Ministry of Health and Sanitation

Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI) requested for information from Ministry of Health (MOH) and four other MDAs for funds received and disbursed on the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone. These requests were made on the 16th of June 2020; no responses were received from MOH. This gave cause for a re-request for the same on the 18th August 2020 but to no avail. As a result, SDI made a complaint to the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) on the 2nd of September 2020 of which due action was undertaken

## Action Taken by RAIC To Resolve the Complaint:

Upon receipt of complaint to RAIC through the compliance department on the 7th of September 2020, wrote and requested SDI for the copies of the letters of requests sent to these MDAs. In due time, SDI provided copies of the requests and re-requests on the 14th of September 2020. On receipt of the letter of complaint from SDI. And whereas a letter dated 17th September 2020 the MoH was edified about the specific Sections of the RAI Act 2013 which demand compliance. By a letter dated 16th November 2020, SDI made an application for review pursuant to section 43(a) & (b) of the RAI Act 2013.

On receipt of the application for review from SDI, a letter dated 20th November 2020 was sent from RAIC to the MOH requesting they replied to the alleged violations pursuant to section 45 of the RAI Act 2013. On the 30th November 2020, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation replied to the letter of 20th November 2020. In a letter dated 30th November 2020, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation acknowledged receipt of the application for review letter from RAIC redirecting the request to NaCOVERC given that they are the autonomous body created by the Presidential Task Force to manage COVID-19 funds. Therefore, stating that they are the competent authority to provide the relevant information.

## Result from Action Taken:

On the 17th December 2020, the Right to Access Information Commission in light of Section 44 of the RAI Act 2013 issued an 'ORDER' against Ministry of Health & Sanitation and was informed of their right to appeal pursuant to Section 46 of the RAI Act 2013.

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## National Commission for Social Action (NACSA)

By a letter dated 16th June 2020 the Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI) made the same request for information to the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) on the funds received and disbursed on the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone. On the 18th August 2020 a follow up / reminder letter was sent by SDI. According to a letter dated 18th August, 2020, SDI sent a reminder for the same requested information.

### Case Outcome:

National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) in light of Section 4(1) of the RAI Act 2013 complied with providing the requested information.

## Ministry of Finance (MoF)

In a letter dated 16th June 2020 the Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI) made a request to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) on the funds received and disbursed in the fight against COVID-19 in Sierra Leone. A follow up / reminder letter was sent on the 18th August 2020 reminding MoF of their obligation to comply with information requested as a public authority in the RAI ACT 2013. A letter of complaint dated 2nd September 2020 was made by SDI to the RAIC alleging the failure to respond to their request for information and to confirm or deny whether they hold the requested information.

### Action Taken By RAIC To Resolve the Complaint:

On receipt of the letter of complaint from SDI, a letter dated 17th September 2020 was sent from the RAIC to the MoF demanding their compliance. The Legal Counsel enlightened them with some specific sections of the RAI Act 2013, and the MoF were given 7 (seven) days' notice to reply to the alleged violations.

### Result from Action Taken:

The Ministry of Finance promised to provide SDI with the requested information upon receiving a letter from RAIC reminding them of their obligation towards the RAI Act 2013.

Case Status: No further correspondence was received from Society for Democratic Initiative

## Ministry of Youth Affairs

By a letter of complaint from SDI dated 2nd September 2020 regarding the failure of the Ministry of Youth Affairs to acknowledge and reply to a request for information on the funds received and disbursed in the COVID-19 fight in Sierra Leone dated 16th June 2020 and a follow up reminder dated 18th August 2020.

### Action Taken By RAIC To Resolve the Complaint:

On the 17th September 2020, a letter was written by Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth Affairs drawing their attention to specific sections in the RAI Act 2013. The letter also demanded that the Ministry provide SDI with the requested information within 48 hours of receipt of the letter or face the penalties for failure to supply information requested under the RAI Act.

### Result from Action Taken:

On receipt of a letter dated 17th September 2020, the Ministry of Youth Affairs responded in a letter dated 25th September 2020 elucidating the challenges which led to the preclusion of a prompt response and with documents attached the Ministry provided the requested information.

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## Martha Kargbo and Bank of Sierra Leone

On the 30th of December 2019, Martha Kargbo (Complainant/Requester) made a freedom of information request to the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL) asking for information on foreign exchange history in Sierra Leone.

And whereas by a letter dated 7th January 2020, BSL referred Martha Karbgo to three websites claiming that the information could be located there. By a letter dated 13th January 2020, the requester informed the BSL that the information could not be found on the websites and therein subsequently made another follow up / reminder request for the same information.

A letter of complaint/application for review pursuant to Section 43(a) (b) (c) of the RAI Act 2013 was sent to the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC) by Martha Kargbo dated 30th March 2020 informing the RAIC of the failure by the BSL to provide the information requested.

### Action Taken By RAIC To Resolve the Complaint:

On the 14th April 2020, Right to Access Information Commission wrote to the Bank of Sierra Leone but no written response was made to the said letter by BSL. A phone call was however made by the Governor of the BSL to the Chairman/Information Commissioner of the RAIC intimating that a written reply would be sent to the Commission but this was never done.

The 13th July 2020, RAIC sent a letter to the BSL informing them that the reply had not been sent by them. An investigation was done on the 30th November 2020 by the Senior Investigator and the Public Information Officer of the RAIC on the referred websites and a concluded report was done stating that the information could not be sourced from the websites.

According to a letter dated 30th November 2020, RAIC gave BSL an opportunity to respond to the Application for review and further invited them to a meeting and whereas again the BSL failed to respond to the letter but rather called the Chairman informing him that the information was available but Martha Kargbo would need to inspect it and both parties would agree on a medium of transfer for the requester to retrieve the information.

Based on the Information received by the Chairman/Information Commissioner on the 15th December 2020 as evidenced by a report done by the Senior Investigator, the meeting between Martha Kargbo & the BSL was futile as the information was not available on the web site of the BSL when it was searched using their own computers.

### Result From Action Taken:

On the 17th of December 2020, the Bank of Sierra Leone was fined the sum of Le 70,000,000 (Seventy Million Leones) by the Right to Access Information Commission for failure to comply with Section 2 Subsection 2 of the RAI Act 2013 and ordered to release the information in question.

As is the right of the Public Authority, solicitors acting on their behalf 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 Appeals Court.

Below are some of the other people and institutions who filed FOI requests/complaints to the Commission in the year under review.

1. Lawyer Melron C. Nicol -Wilson and Co.
2. Alhaji Murtada Mohammed Sesay, a journalist,
3. Campaign for Human Rights & Development International (CHRDI)
4. Abdulrahman Koroma, a journalist by profession from Awoko Newspaper
5. Hasbin Shaw, a journalist
6. Stephen V. Lansana, a journalist
7. Badara Mansaray II, an investigative journalist

## TOTAL NUMBER OF REQUESTS AND COMPLAINTS BY REGION

### Western Area

Requests	38
Complaints	4
Follow-Up Cases	3
Requests/Complaints Successes	39
Follow-Up Cases	3

### Northern Region

Requests	44
Complaints	3
Follow-Up Cases	2
Requests/Complaints Successes	42

### Eastern Region

Requests	30
Complaints	4
Follow-Up Cases	2
Requests/Complaints Successes	32

### Southern Region

Requests	32
Complaints	8
Follow-Up Cases	2
Requests/Complaints Successes	19

Total Number of Requests Received by the Commission	- 125
Total Number of Complaints Received by the Commission	- 19
Total Number of Follow-up by the Commission	- 9
Total Number of Requests/Complaints Successful	- 132

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# PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE

The Compliance Department worked hard in promoting Compliance with the Proactive Publication Scheme aspect of the act as provided in Section 8 (2) of the Right to Access Information Act 2013, which 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 (5) of the Right to Access Information Act 2013 further states that “every public authority shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme.”

As much as there had been compliance by some MDAs to previous letters from the Commission, the Commission being driven to ensure that all MDA's comply with fulfilling their Proactive Disclosure of Information mandate as stipulated in the RAI Act 2013 continued to support. With reference to the above, the Commission provided support in the submission of Proactive Publication Schemes by Public Authorities and the review of all the Proactive Publication Schemes submitted to it .

The Commission in the year under review worked hard to improve the proactive disclosure of information so that Sierra Leoneans are better able to hold the government and public-sector officials accountable notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission under the stewardship of Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw obliged public bodies to generate timely and quality information and proactively disseminate it for broader access by citizens. This includes the regular publication and dissemination of key information and documents in a manner that is easily accessible to the public, even without request. The benefit is that the more information routinely published the less need citizens would have to make request for information application, therefore saving time and money. Moreover, new technologies make it easier to publish and disseminate information, for example, the websites by public authorities.

The Commission in the year under review asked MDAs to comply with their proactive disclosure of information schemes and a few had complied with their obligations and by a letter dated 7th July 2020 further requested MDAs to submit their proactive publication schemes to the Commission for assessment.

A qualitative research was set up with a list of the 22 classes of information, which all public authorities are required to provide and was to be completed by the MDAs. Out of the 20 MDAs that submitted their PDI Publication Schemes to the Commission, the following 10 were approved with observation (for providing between 15 and 21 of the 22 classes of information required):

National Youth Commission, Political Parties Registration Commission, National Mineral Agency, National Revenue Authority , Cabinet Secretariat, Public Sector Reform Unit, Police Complaints Board, Local Government Commission, Right to Access Information Commission, and Ministry of Political and Public Affairs.

The following 8 were given Conditional Approval (for providing at least half or a little more than half of the 22 classes of information required):

SL Library Board, SL Fire Force, SL Police, SL Road Transport Corporation, National Commission for Democracy, National Commission for Social Action, Independent Media Commission, Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

The following 2 were rejected (for providing less than half of the 22 classes of information required). These include:

- Government Printing Department, Medical and Dental Association,
- The legal foundation for open governance in Sierra Leone is the RAI Act.



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# ANNUAL REPORT

Another area of improvement was in the Area of Annual Reports in keeping with Section 41 of the Right to Access Information Act which makes it mandatory for the Right to Access Information Commission to submit a yearly annual report.

Section 41(3) and 41(4) state that “The annual report shall also include an overview of the performance of all public authorities in implementing this Act 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.

As part of the mandate of the Commission is to help Public Authorities improve their compliance with their obligations in the RAI Act 2013 such as on FOI, PDI, Records Management, Public Information, and ICT, a draft template covering all these compliance indicators for the Annual Report was sent to all Public Authorities to aid them to promptly respond to sending the status of their compliance for the 2020.

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## 11. NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The history of the Freedom of information law in Sierra Leone will always remain incomplete if the efforts made by national and international partners are not mentioned. The signatory of Sierra Leone to international instruments such as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights since the RAI Act was enacted has strengthened its international partnership. It has further reinforced its participation in the UNESCO convention on Access to Information (ATI); this UN agency is mandated to monitor progress on the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 16.10.2 which calls for ensuring public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. Given its steady integration into ATI, Sierra Leone, through RAIC is making remarkable contributions to the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC).

The International Conference of Information Commissioners is an international body established to foster the protection and the promotion of access to public information as a fundamental pillar to social, economic and democratic governance in the world. The RAIC Chairman and Information Commissioner, Dr Shaw served as a member of the first Executive Committee of the ICIC representing Africa. The Commission through its partnership with the World Bank, has benefitted Sierra Leone tremendously in the implementation of many projects on records management, open data, proactive disclosure, as well as the popularization of the RAI law.

The Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) has also been a major partner with the RAIC. The Commission is implementing its first ever grant from this body to support its institutional strengthening and staff capacity building. Again, the Commission is benefitting from the expertise of the Open Society for Justice Initiative (OSJI) in the implementation of the FOI law and the capacity building of relevant stakeholders. Nationally, the Commission is working in collaboration with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Coalition, relevant CSOs such as the Society for Democratic Initiatives, media practitioners and academia on the implementation of the RAI law. Successes made by the Commission in the year under review through partnership are as follow:



The World Bank is and always has been a major partner to the RAIC. A host of the projects implemented in the year under review were World Bank sponsored. The World Bank through the Project Financial Management Improvement and Consolidation Project (PFMIPC) in the Ministry of Finance funded a project that facilitated the establishment of an inventory of high-priority SDG-aligned datasets and information required for sustainable development in Sierra Leone. This 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.

A host of the projects implemented in the year under review were World Bank sponsored.

The World Bank through PFMIPC again funded a project titled: Services to Review Proactive Disclosure Scheme for the Right to Access Information Commission. The project looked into the degree in which state and non-state actors are complying with Proactive Publication provisions of the Right to Access information law of 2013.

In the year under review, the World Bank through PFMIPC funded a project on Public Financial Management in MDAs through records management to ensure the effective retrieval of records in a good form to foster transparency and accountability. The project benefitted five MDAs. These include: the Ministries of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, Agriculture and Forestry and Food Security, Lands, Housing and Country planning, the Public Service Commission and the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General benefit from the process.

The aforementioned World Bank funded project have brought tremendous improvement in the manner in which MDAs are conducting themselves in line with the provisions of the RAI Act.



Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) is an open governance outfit that fosters citizen participation in the building of a freer, more vibrant and a more tolerant society. This body showed high level of consistency and cooperation with the RAIC in the implementation of its funded project, Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building. 2020 saw a lot of citizens participation in the ATI process through activities funded under the OSIWA project notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic which compelled the suspension of all OSIWA activities across the West Africa sub-region until the third quarter of 2020.

Upon the relaxation of the state of emergency regulation, the Commission through the OSIWA funded project undertook a nationwide promotion of Access to Information, Data Protection, Records Management, and Proactive Disclosure of Covid-19 Related Information. The main objective of this activity was to ensure a public awareness of COVID-19 related information including how this information should be accessed by the public; how data should be protected, public records properly kept and managed, and information proactively disclosed. The Commission further conducted a Training of Trainers workshop for Journalists on the Freedom of Information Law. The focus of the Commission was to broaden the perspective of media practitioners on the Right to Access Information (RAI) law. This in essence put them in a position to resourcefully request for information held by, or under the control of bodies, or organizations that receive monies on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone

There have been delays in delivering other activities captured in the project owing to the COVID-19 and the State of Emergency Regulations adopted by the Sierra Leone Government. The delayed activities include:

1. Roundtable Discussion Involving Participants from Professional Interest Groups such as the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA), Sierra Leone Teacher's Union (SLTU), Sierra Leone Farmers Union (SLFU), etc., (one-day event with one month planning)
  2. RAIC Staff Training on the RAI Act and Mandate on Legal Enforcement via the RAIC Commission to Try Cases of Non-compliance or Defaulters
  3. Panel Discussion Involving Students from 30 Educational Institutions on the RAI Law
- Activity 1 was completed in 2020 while activities 2 and 3 were completed earlier in 2021.



The ICIC is an international membership body established to foster the protection and the promotion of access to public information as a fundamental pillar to social, economic and democratic governance. The RAIC joined in on 24th September 2019. It provides a platform for diverse global voices to address current issues that impact on access to information, including transparency and accountability, competing interests, the rights of vulnerable societies and the role of technology. It offers an opportunity to local, regional and international Information Commissioners, Non-Governmental Organizations and promoters of access to information to share experiences and insights on how to strengthen public access to information through international cooperation.

In the year under review, the international body played a crucial role in helping ATI regulatory bodies the world over on how to help MDAs of different counties to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ICIC was cognizant of the impact the COVID-19 and the unprecedented challenges it continued to cause both nationally and globally and the challenges governments around the world are facing in responding to the pandemic to protect public health, civil liberties and individual prosperity. Against this backdrop, the ICIC issued two calls to order, one a statement on proactive publication of information relating to the Covid-19, the importance of transparency and the right to access information, and the other a statement calling on all public authorities to document their decisions and transactions related to the COVID 19 pandemic. It recognized the role that access to information has in building trust in the global community during times of crisis and beyond, and reemphasized the significance of proactive disclosure of information held by government or public institutions and how it increases citizen participation in government processes and promotes better informed decision making through increased scrutiny, discussion, comment and review of government decisions.

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

The Commission received word in June 2020 that its COVID-19 Public Engagement through the media funding application of US\$ 7,400 to OSIWA-Sierra Leone has been approved. Using this funding, the RAIC took further steps to provide technical guidance for frontline agencies in the COVID 19 response in the proactive disclosure and public access to COVID 19 related information. The RAIC outlined the following objectives to achieve the aforementioned endeavour:

1. To promote transparency and accountability in the COVID 19 response
2. To promote access to credible public health emergency information
3. To enhance accountability of decision makers through mechanisms of open and transparent governance
4. To ensure first-hand learning on how to prevent and contain future public health emergencies
5. To turn the threat of COVID-19 into an opportunity for greater support to documentary evidence
6. To ensure that proceedings and outcomes of COVID-19 related activities are properly documented and proactively disclosed for public knowledge and reference
7. To ensure regional offices play a critical role in ensuring proactive disclosure and access to information

The outcome of aforementioned endeavours impacted positively as it contributed in creating transparency and accountability in the COVID 19 activities. It ensued that MDAs are better positioned to proactively disclose public health emergency-related information; increased knowledge on how to prevent and contain future public health emergencies, and ensured public trust and confidence in the access to public health emergency-related information. ■



# International Day for the Universal Access to Information

International Day on Universal Access to Information (IDUAI)

The RAIC co-sponsored the draft resolution: A/74/L.1 which brought about the Proclamation of September 28 as International Day for Universal Access to Information by the United Nations General Assembly, on 15th October, 2019. The draft resolution submitted to the United Nations General Assembly stemmed from Resolution 38 C/70, adopted unanimously by the Member States of UNESCO at its General Conference in Paris, France in 2015, proclaiming September 28 as International Day for Universal Access to Information. Since the adoption of the UNESCO Resolution, several countries and civil society organizations celebrate the day annually, raising awareness on the importance of access to information.

The Proclamation of September 28 as IDUAI by the United Nations General Assembly in October 2019 created the biggest global platform for governments, civil society organizations, citizens and development partners to reflect on the importance of access to information; identify challenges and design new and innovative ways to promote the advancement of access to information; as a tangible tool for development and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Proclamation also sent a clear and important message globally that countries like Sierra Leone are committed to enhancing access to information and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the year under review, the RAIC for the second time in the history of Sierra Leone joined UNESCO and other countries the world over to commemorate the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI). The global focus for for 2020 was “Access of Information – Saving lives, Building Trust, Bringing Hope.” Keeping in mind the importance of access to information in helping people appreciate what best they can do during the COVID-19 pandemic, RAIC deemed it necessary to locally contextualize the focus. Thus, this necessitated the theme for 2020 to be, “Access to Information - Saving Lives through Transparency and Accountability.”

The RAIC commemorated the 2020 International Day for Universal Access to Information alongside a number of CSOs, the Media, Academia, MDAs and development partners. The day provided a platform for panellists to discuss on how access to information would support crisis response and save people’s lives.

In his speech on this day, Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Chairman and Information Commissioner, of the RAIC said, “inalienable right to access government-held information strengthens transparency and accountability in policy making, administrative decision making, government service delivery, and improves people’s livelihoods.”

The celebration of International Day for Universal Access to Information was necessary because it made Sierra Leoneans reflect as a nation and created an opportunity for national stakeholders to shed light on where Sierra Leone was in the area of transparency and accountability, and where necessary to strengthen to achieve the objectives of open governance and socio-economic development. The day was also observed in the provincial headquarters of Sierra Leone, coordinated by the RAIC regional offices. ■





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# UNESCO Survey

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the convening monitoring body for the Sustainable Development Goal 16.10 indicator 2. After completing a successful UNESCO survey on the status of Access to Information in Sierra Leone in April 2019 as part of the monitoring and reporting on SDG 16.10.2, the RAIC commenced another UNESCO survey in 2020. The survey engaged a number of respondents mainly from public institution like the Right of Access Information Commission and Statistics Sierra Leone. The 2020 UNESCO survey focused on two main sections:

## 1. Adoption of Access to Information Laws

1. Implementation of Access to Information Laws
2. Adoption of Access to Information Laws

This section looks at the adoption aspect of the legal framework(s) guaranteeing public access to information in Sierra Leon, country. It contains a number of questions related to the following:

- Legal guarantee on Access to Information and the permissible exemptions that are consistent with international standards

## 2. The following exemptions is/are mentioned:

1. National security
2. International relations
3. Public health and safety
4. The prevention, investigation and prosecution of legal wrongs Privacy
5. Legitimate commercial and other economic interests
6. Management of the economy
7. Fair administration of justice and legal advice privilege
8. Conservation of the environment
9. Legitimate policy making and other operations of public bodies
10. Implementation of Access to Information Laws

This section looks at the implementation aspect of the legal framework(s) guaranteeing public access to information adopted by Sierra Leone. This section also contains a number of questions that includes the following:

1. Whether the RAIC performs the following activities:
2. Publish an Annual Report
3. Provide implementation guidance and/or offer training to officials from public bodies (Ministry/Agency/Department)
4. Raise public awareness
5. Keep statistics on requests and/or appeals
6. Request public bodies to keep statistics of their activities and decisions

It came very clear that most of the questions asked were answered in the affirmative. In the 2019 UNESCO survey the questions were more or less similar although they were not specifically categorized under adoption and implementation. Moreover, there were more questions in the 2019 Survey which included challenges and the independence of the ATI oversight body, which did not form part of the 2020 survey. ■

## PART III

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

- Back Ground (ACCOUNTANT)
- Financial Statement – period ending 31/12/2020 (ACCOUNTANT)
- Annex: Audited Financial Statements 2020 (ACCOUNTANT)

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# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## for the period ended 31st December 2020

### 12. GENERAL INFORMATION

Address:

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. Idriss - Commissioner South  
Pastor 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.

## 13. 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:

1. maintaining efficient and effective systems of financial management and internal controls;
2. safeguard and manage assets and public money of the entity in the best interest of the entity with the due care and diligence;
3. keep full and proper records of the financial affairs of the entity; and
4. 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 2020 comprise those of the Commission alone.

**Results:** The annexed Financial Statements disclose the financial activity of the Commission for the period ended 31st December, 2020.



## ...Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2020

### 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 2020 to 31 December 2020, 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:

1. The reason(s) for a period other than one year being used; and
2. the fact that comparative amounts may not be comparable.)
3. 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.

## ...Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2020

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.

## ...Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2020

### 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.

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## ...Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2020

### 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

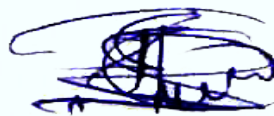
The GPFS shall disclose all numerical information relating to previous period (at least one year). Where necessary comparative figures for the previous financial year have been amended or reconfigured to conform to the required changes in presentation.

### 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

.....  
on the 01/12/2021





## 14. 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, 2020, Income Statement, Cash Flow Statement and the notes to the Financial Statements which include a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

### 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 2020 has been reflected in the accounting records of the organization.

### 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 2020 and the results of its activities and its Cash Flow for the year then ended in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.



Date:..... 09/12/2021

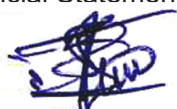
ARVS PARTNERS  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

# 15. Statement of Account

for the period ended 31st December 2019

	Notes	2 020	2 019
	Le,000	Le,000	Le,000
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Property plant & equipment	6	214,392	285,856
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash & Cash Equivalent	7	426,579	864,601
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Payables	5	(121,007)	(58,396)
Current asset less current Liability		<u>305,572</u>	<u>806,205</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<u>519,964</u>	<u>1,092,061</u>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Accumulated Fund		<u>519,964</u>	<u>1,092,061</u>

The Financial Statements were approved on .....04/12/2021



Chairman/Information Commissioner

## Income Statement for the year ended 31st Dec. 2020

In thousands of Leones

	Notes	2020	2019
		Le,000	Le,000
Income	3	1,001,400	1,120,989
Administrative Expenses	4	(1,002,838)	(1,087,830)
Depreciation charges		<u>(71,464)</u>	<u>(71,464)</u>
Deficit for the year		<u>(72,902)</u>	<u>(38,305)</u>

## Cash Flow Statement

Deficit	(72,902)	(38,305)
Depreciation	71,464	71,464
Net cashflow from operating activities	<u>33,159</u>	<u>33,159</u>
Investing Activities		
Purchase of property, plant & equipment		(357,320)
Net increase/decrease in cash	(439,460)	(324,161)
Cash and cash equivalent at start	<u>864,601</u>	<u>1,188,762</u>
Cash and cash equivalent at close	<u>426,579</u>	<u>864,601</u>

## Notes forming part of the Financial Statement for the year ended 31st December 2020

### 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 2020 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

## ...Financial Statement for the period ended 31st December 2020

Notes to the Financial Statements (Continue)

3. Income	2020 LE,000	2019 LE,000
Government of Sierra Leone (Subvention)	1,000,400	1,063,500
Funds from AFOIC	-	4,656
Bank balance at beginning of year	-	24,833
Loan Repayment	-	28,000
	-----	-----
	<b><u>1,001,400</u></b>	<b><u>1,120,989</u></b>

4. Administrative Expenses	2020 LE,000	2019 LE,000
Audit Fee	21,900	-
Fuel	203,768	119,378
Electricity and Water	22,321	14,100
Programming/meetings	33,700	87,655
Rent	38,700	367,535
Repairs and Maintenance	48,050	7,963
Imprest	85,000	157,296
Security	70,390	64,838
Stationery	133,105	15,413
Others	-	24,670
Stipend	20,000	26,000
Sundry/provision	155,654	23,149
Local Travelling	11,366	71,070
Office & General	148,985	-
Internet modems	9,900	76,123
	-----	-----
	<b><u>1,002,839</u></b>	<b><u>1,087,830</u></b>



Notes to the Financial Statements (Continue)

5. Payables	2020 LE,000	2019 LE,000
Rent	32,667	-
Trade Payables	-	7,500
Adit Fees	21,000	-
Withholding Tax	50,896	50,896
	<u>121,007</u>	<u>58,396</u>

6. Property, Plant and Equipment

	Computer & Accessories LE,000	Furniture & Fittings LE,000	Total LE,000
Bal as at 1 Jan 2020	<u>193,820</u>	<u>163,500</u>	357,320
Additions	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 Dec	<u>193,820</u>	<u>163,500</u>	<u>357,320</u>
Depreciation			
Bal as at 1 Jan 2020	38,764	32,700	71,464
Charge for the year	<u>38,764</u>	<u>32,700</u>	<u>71,464</u>
	<u>77,528</u>	<u>65,400</u>	<u>142,928</u>
Net Book value			
As at 31 Dec 2020	<b>116,292</b>	<b>98,100</b>	<b>221,392</b>
As at 31 Dec 2019	<b>155,056</b>	<b>130,800</b>	<b>285,856</b>

7. Cash & Cash Equivalent	2020 LE,000	2019 LE,000
Bank of Sierra Leone	<u>426,601</u>	<u>864,601</u>
	<u>426,601</u>	<u>864,601</u>
8. Accumulated Fund	2020 LE,000	2019 LE,000
Accumulated Fund b/fwd	1,092,061	-
Support from PFMICP	-	316,320
Surplus/deficit	(72,902)	(38,305)
Prior year adjustment	<u>(499,195)</u>	<u>814,046</u>
Accumulated Fund	<u>519,964</u>	<u>1,092,061</u>

## PART IV

# 16. CHALLENGES & LESSONS

Notwithstanding the notable progress that the Commission had made, the Commission in the year under review faced with significant challenges including the following:

1. Very limited ceiling on government budgetary allocation and delays in payment of quarterly allocations
2. Inadequate staff to carry out its core functions due to the prevailing moratorium on recruitment coupled with an inadequate work environment and staff welfare problems and conditions of service
3. limited number of staff in the regions to undertake its statutory activities
4. 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
5. Limited transportation (in fact the commission had only one old rickety vehicle used by the Chairman and Information Commissioner) and funds to effectively undertake massive civic engagement nationwide and other outreach activities on the RAI Act, 2013.
6. Lack of institutional support/incentives to attract high caliber of staff to strengthen the Human Resource capacity of the Commission.
7. Inadequate financial allocations to the Commission compounded by delays in payment of quarterly allocations
8. Non-provision of sufficient allocation to enhance more effective and efficient synergies and partnerships building with CSOs, NSAs, DBOCs, Local Communities representatives, Traditional Leaders, Religious Leaders, MDAs and other stakeholders to enhance effective service delivery in our interventions.
9. Conflicts in some of the provisions of the RAI Act, 2013, with the ACC and Civil Acts on non-disclosure of classified information/data (secrecy).
10. Limited executive support to the commission to help it fully carry out its statutory regulatory function of ensuring unhindered access to information, data protection, and records management.
11. Delay in preparing, reviewing and updating relevant policies and regulations to support the implementation of the RAI law.
12. Very limited cooperation and participation from duty bearers such as MDAs and other public authorities to complement our work poses threats to the smooth running of our operations.
13. Low compliance with proactive disclosure of information by MDAs
14. Some MDAs deliberately refuse to comply with Freedom of Information (FOI) requests
15. Fixed mindset of the bureaucracy and people who hold information
16. weak accountability mechanisms on the part of MDAs
17. poor records management system among MDAs
18. lack of capacity in relation to records keeping and records making
19. inappropriate use of exemptions by some MDAs
20. inadequate support for those who are administering access request
21. weak guidelines for disclosure of reason for the request of information
22. dealing with policy and legal-related constraints including non-compliance with legislation
23. Ineffective institutionalization of records management in the Commission coupled with the absence of a record center that could be used by members of staff, researchers and the general public
24. Inadequate mechanisms to monitor and assess the Commission's impact in advancing observance of human rights in the country;

## PART V

# Key Priorities and the Way forward

## 17. Key Priorities

1. Amendment of the RAI Act to include the North-West Region and the appointment of its Commissioner to ensure fairer representation and efficiency in the Commission's devolution programmes;
2. ensuring clarity of the RAIC's legal mandate and identifying its vision, mission and core values
3. 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
4. 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
5. Development of a Strategic Plan for the next five years
6. Work closely with other stake-holders to develop a holistic Access to Information (ATI) policy and a Multi-Sectoral Access to Information Council, or Task Force, to provide oversight support to its effective implementation
7. Work closely with other stake-holders to develop an open data policy and Multi-sectoral Open Data Council, or Task Force, to provide oversight support to its effective implementation
8. Work closely with other stake-holders to develop the Data Protection law and Multi-sectoral Data Protection Council, or Task Force, to provide oversight support to its effective implementation
9. Work closely with other stake-holders to develop the Records Management Law and the Multi-sectoral Records Management Council or Task Force to provide oversight support to its effective implementation
10. A training and development plan on experience sharing for staff to be expedited to enhance their capacity.
11. installation of information request boxes in strategic locations nationwide and to encourage Information officers to make regular collection of those requests.
12. The installation of landline telephone services for information requesters who may want to remain anonymous.
13. Develop the manual for complaint handling to enforce the compliance of public authorities
14. Develop and rollout a communication and advocacy strategy to ensure an effective popularization of the RAI Act.
15. Translation of the Act into major local languages.
16. Hold workshops with institution aimed at enhancing proactive disclosure
17. Hold public engagements with key ATI CSOs
18. Develop the RAIC website to make it more user-friendly and interactive with a discussion forum, social media features as well as Freedom of Information request and complaint forms that can be completed and submitted online

## 18. The Way Forward

1. Work with the Ministry of information and Communications to further develop and manage the GoSL Portal for promoting Access to Information by MDAs
2. Work with MDAs to develop a framework for regularly updating their websites and publishing their Annual Reports.
3. Developing the ICT infrastructure and digital systems of the RAI and MDAs.
4. Work with GoSL and other stakeholders in accessing adequate and timely funding for implementing the RAI Act, 2013.
5. Work with MIC and other relevant partners to implement the RAI Act Regulations and the Code of Practice for Records and Archives Management.
6. Robustly implement the World Bank support project, covering Popularization of the RAI Act, Capacity Building of Commissioners and Professional staff, Records and Archives management, and Pro-active disclosure and Publication schemes.
7. Enactment by GoSL of the Records and Archives Management Act
8. Work with the relevant GoSL and relevant Stakeholders to enhance mobility and efficiency of the Commission from one vehicle
9. Explore opportunities for support to enhance implementation of its programmes under the RAI Act, from national and international institutions.
10. Request the appointment of Commissioner for the North Western Region by His Excellency President Dr Julius Maada Bio.





Vice President Dr Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh



Chief Minister Mr Jacob Jusu Saffa



Minister of Information & Communication  
Mr Mohamed Rahman Swaray



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

**RAIC**

Visit RAIC Website:  
[www.Raic.gov.sl](http://www.Raic.gov.sl)

# RAIC National & Regional Offices

## National Secretariat:

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Email: [accessinfo@raic.gov.sl](mailto:accessinfo@raic.gov.sl);  
[ibrahim.shaw@raic.gov.sl](mailto:ibrahim.shaw@raic.gov.sl);  
[mustapha.braima@raic.gov.sl](mailto:mustapha.braima@raic.gov.sl)

## Regional Offices

### Eastern Region:

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Kenema District  
Tel: +232-76201020 / 88180643  
Email: [marywuyattakarimu57@gmail.com](mailto:marywuyattakarimu57@gmail.com)

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Email: [aakargbo548@gmail.com](mailto:aakargbo548@gmail.com)

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Bo District  
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Email: [idrissbiah@gmail.com](mailto:idrissbiah@gmail.com)

### Western Region:

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Western Area Urban  
Tel: +232 77580436  
Email: [pmsesay01@gmail.com](mailto:pmsesay01@gmail.com)

Web Site: <http://www.Raic.gov.sl>