



### (Human Rights Monitor)

#### The Impact of Migration on the Enjoyment of Human Rights

By: Sidratu Kargbo Esq.

According to the International Organisation for Migrants (IOM), *migration is the movement of persons away from their usual residence, either across an international border or within a state.* Migration is often driven by a desire to seek better economic opportunities, escape conflict or persecution, or reunite with family members.

Migration and human rights are closely linked issues, as the right to migrate and the right to seek asylum are fundamental human rights recognised by international law. However, the reality is that many migrants face significant challenges and violations of their human rights, such as discrimination, exploitation, abuse, and violence of all forms. These challenges have profound impact on the enjoyment of human rights, both for migrants themselves and for the communities in which they live including the rights to life, health, security of persons, freedom of movement, favorable conditions of work and the safe environment amongst others.

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#### Promoting Human Rights and Ensuring Free and Fair Elections: The Sierra Leone Multi-tier Election



National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) play a pivotal role in fostering citizens' participation in elections and particularly advocating

for the safeguard of the prerequisite rights at elections. In Sierra Leone, the Human Rights Commission has exemplified its commitment to protecting and defending the rights of all individuals, effectively serving as a vital guardian of democratic values.

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#### Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



In December 2023, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, the UN Family, and partners held a grand celebration of International Human Rights Days marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which was adopted on the 10th of December 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly.

This international human rights document is a significant instrument in the Bill of Rights and its articles provide for the protection of human rights across the globe. For instance, its very first article declares that *all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.* The provisions of this law has formed a fundamental basis in national human rights laws in many jurisdictions of the world. Upon the adoption of this Declaration, it was proclaimed as a **“common standard of achievement”** for all people and all the nations of the earth towards which individuals and societies should strive by progressive measures, national and international to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.

The theme for the commemoration was; **“Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All”.**

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## EDITORIAL

Dear readers,



The year 2023 was full of activities in the Commission. It was an election year and so many pre, during, and post-election activities were carried out by the Commission. In this edition, we shall have the opportunity to know how some of these activities unfolded.

Leading to the June elections, the Commission engaged over 500 youths in the Western Area on

Elections and Non-Violence. The reason for the engagement was to ensure that our youths stay clear of harmful vices that may cause violence and possibly disrupt the elections.

In the same vein, the Commission also trained over 170 of its staff and members of the District Human Rights Committees (DHRC) on how to monitor the elections with a human rights-based approach. The DHRCs were trained to help the Commission have a wider coverage of the elections nationwide.

During the elections, several teams were set by the Commission to monitor the elections nationally helping to bring the issues as they were in all parts of the country. Days leading to the elections, a situation room was set up at the Bintumani Hotel to receive and process complaints of human rights violations and to relay same to the appropriate authorities for real time interventions.

In December, the Commission commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UDHR. Several activities were lined up to celebrate this day, including; A seminar for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, A Friendly Football Gala, Human Rights Walk, Nationwide Quiz competition among our School Human Rights and Peace Clubs, and climaxed with a formal event where state and non-state actors were invited to commit themselves to protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone.

**Richard Tamba M'Bayo**

Director of Education Communication and Training

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## Promoting Human Rights and Ensuring Free and Fair Elections: The Sierra Leone Multi-tier Election

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### **Empowering Youth for Nonviolent Engagement:**



*About 600 youths engaged by the Commission in Western Rural and Western Urban on Non Violence during the elections*

Recognizing the significance of young people's involvement in electoral violence, the Human Rights Commission has undertaken a commendable initiative by organizing a National Conference for over 500 youths on the edge which included but not limited to Ghettos, Car Wash Points, Commercial Sex Workers, Bike Riders, Cliques, and Ataya Bases. It was also an opportunity for the Commission to undertake one of its functions 'awareness raising' among youths who according to the current national statistical data show that they form 40% of the country's population among which 70% are either underemployed or unemployed and 50% are illiterate. This underpins the fact why these groups of persons are being misled which eventually leads to their involvement in crime-related acts. According to the Commission's monitoring reports, this group forms the greatest number of people in detention.

### **Capacity Building for Human Rights Monitors:**

To ensure effective monitoring of human rights violations during the election period, the Human Rights Commission has prioritized training initiatives. These programs have successfully equipped human rights monitors, staff members, and the District Human Rights Committees (DHRCs) spread throughout the country to identify human rights issues on polling day and to relay that to the Situation Room for a swift response from the designated Electoral Management Body.

Although the commission's presence is primarily concentrated in the Regional Headquarters towns, the formation

of these DHRCs that are found in all the 16 (sixteen) Districts in the country are comprised of local non-governmental organisations that are involved in human rights advocacy. These bodies were enabled in order to comprehensively cover the nation during Election Day and after.



### **Elections Monitoring:**

The Human Rights Commission has been unwavering in its commitment to monitoring the election campaigns leading up to the Sierra Leone Multi-tier Election. With utmost dedication, the commission diligently observed the political campaign across the country identifying key human rights issues, especially around violence which had the tendency to affect other antecedent rights – freedom of movement, right to education, etc. One hundred and seventy (170) trained monitors comprising Commissioners, staff, members of the District Human Rights Committees (a consortium of CSOs), volunteers, and youth ambassadors were deployed nationwide to monitor the conduct of the elections on polling day with the objective of ensuring the enjoyment of human rights and it being an integral part of the electoral process. Over 400 polling centers were monitored which comprises an approximate 3,000 polling stations.

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# Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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The Commission however coined a localised theme titled “**Stand up and fight against the impact of climate change.**” Climate change threatens the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights including the right to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture, and development.

To mark this big event, several activities were lined up including; a Human Rights Seminar for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), a quiz competition among selected schools, a Human Rights Walk, a Football Competition, and the climax was a formal event where commitments were made by government and partners to continue to protect and promote human rights in Sierra Leone.

## *Human Rights Seminar for MDAs*



The Human Rights Seminar for MDAs in partnership with UNFPA and the Office of the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice focused on the role of MDAs in fulfilling the government’s human rights obligations. Heads and senior management of selected MDAs whose work interlinks with the Commission were invited to review their roles as state actors to help the government fulfill its human rights obligations. In her statement, the Chairperson of the Commission Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema said the government fulfills its human rights obligations by respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights. She noted that the collaboration was to ensure that MDAs provided necessary information to the Commission on their different thematic areas that relate to human rights

The Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Mohamed Lamin Tarawally Esq. commenced his statement by recognizing the Commission’s work over the years leading to the attainment of a “**Grade A Status**” for three consecutive re-accreditation cycles. He assured the audience of the government’s continued support for the protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

The seminar was climaxed with the adoption of a Communiqué to further deepen the collaboration between the Commission and MDAs. The communiqué’ gives a clear road map for interaction

and information sharing between the HRCSL and the MDAs.

## *National Quiz Competition for Secondary Schools*

As part of the 75<sup>th</sup> celebrations, the Commission organised a brain teaser for Secondary School pupils on human rights. The national quiz competition was for selected



schools in the five regions of Sierra Leone – Port Loko and Makeni in the north/northwest, Bo and Kenema in the southeast, and Waterloo in the Western Area Rural District. The team developed 250 questions on general human rights and women’s and children’s rights which were asked randomly to the pupils. The pupils amazed the Commission with their excellent performance. Cash prizes were handed over to the best quizzers and schools in all five regions.

## *Human Right Walk*

Public education is one among many other functions of the Commission. Routinely, the Commission engages schools, universities, and communities to talk about citizen’s rights and obligations in the enjoyment of human rights.



As part of the IHRD commemoration, the Commission with support from UN Women in Sierra Leone embarked on a human rights walk from Up-gun roundabouts to St. Joseph’s Convent Secondary School. During the walk,

## Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

the Commission carried placards with messages on human rights as well as spoke about the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Some onlookers requested more information along the way and contacts for the Commission.



Chairperson, Madam Patricia Narsu Ndanema described the human rights walk as one that rejuvenated the spirit of 1948 when the UDHR was adopted – a declaration that is still relevant to everyday human rights work 75 years on.

She stated that even though citizens have rights, they also have a responsibility to ensure that human rights work in Sierra Leone, citing Section 13 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 a provision that clearly states duties and responsibilities of citizens.

### **Friendly Football Gala Competition**

The Commission over the years has built good working relationship with institutions doing human rights work or that promote human rights through their daily work. In order to create a more collaborative workspace outside the formal, the Commission held a '**Friendly Gala Competition**' between HRCSL, the UN Family, the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) at the St. Edwards playing field, Kingtom in Freetown.



The four teams played on the first day with HRCSL going against the UN Family and the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone versus the Anti-Corruption Commission. HRCSL and the ECSL emerged winners from the matches.

The final which was dubbed "The Tower Hill Derby" ended

with a draw between the two institutions. Both teams were declared winners and trophies distributed.

The Chairperson of HRCSL, Madam Patricia Narsu Ndanema, and the Chief Electoral Commissioner of ECSL, Mr. Mohamed K. Konneh expressed their gratitude to the players and staff who displayed excellent sportsmanship and camaraderie.

### **Formal Event**

The celebration of the UDHR at 75<sup>th</sup> was climaxed by a formal event held on 11<sup>th</sup> December at the Freetown City Council Auditorium in Freetown. The event was graced by government agencies, the UN Family, the Diplomatic Community, Civil Society Organisations, the Human Rights and Peace Club



members, District Human Rights Committee members, and the media among others.

The event reflected the thirty articles (30) of the UDHR adopted on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948 in a video documentary by members of the Human Rights and Peace Clubs.

The highlight of the event was a solemn pledge taken by stakeholders working in the field of protecting and promoting human rights in Sierra Leone.

In her IHRD message, the Chairperson, Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema said the local theme was carefully couched to reflect the impact of climate on the enjoyment of several human rights. These rights she said include; right to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture, and development. She cited abnormal rainfall, flooding, mudslides, excessive seaweeds, and water shortages caused by deforestation as examples of the impact of climate change. Meanwhile, she reminded the government of its human rights obligations to protect, respect, and fulfill human rights by complying with international human rights standards. She said that the government must enact laws that ensure that people enjoy their rights within the appropriate legal human rights frameworks.

The UNFPA Country Representative, Ms. Nadia Rashid, speaking on behalf of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, pledged the support of the UN Country Team to the government and key partners and stakeholders, including the HRCSL, in fulfilling Sierra Leone's human rights commitments and ensuring to leave no one behind in their interventions.

Deputy Minister of Justice, Alpha Sesay, delivered the keynote address, in which he reiterated the government's dedication to upholding the principles of the UDHR and to protecting and promoting the human rights of all citizens. He highlighted the various legislative, policy, and institutional reforms that the government has undertaken to ensure the respect and protection of fundamental human rights in the country.

## HRCSL Briefs President Bio



Commissioners of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) in November 2023 held a briefing with H.E. President Julius Maada Bio at State House to discuss the activities of the Commission.

In her statement, the Chairperson Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndane highlighted four key areas for the President's attention; the re-accreditation of the Commission to "Grade A" Status, the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), review of the HRCSL Act, 2004 and the ratification of the Optional Protocol on Civil and Political Rights.

The Chairperson informed the President that the Commission was re-accredited as a Grade A National Human Rights Institution by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations through its accredited body known as Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) following an assessment in conformity with the Paris Principles.



She however called on the government to commit to ratifying the Optional Protocol on Civil and Political Rights which concerns the abolition of the death penalty since the Government

has already enacted the Abolition of the Death Penalty Act, 2022.

On the review of the HRCSL Act of 2004, the Chairperson stated that the Commission hopes to have powers to initiate proceedings before the courts against multinational companies and public entities and individuals for human rights abuses and violations respectively once the Amendment is effected by Parliament. "We want to have the power to bring an action to Court on behalf of victims of human rights violations", she concluded."

Adding to the discussion, the Vice Chairperson, Victor Idrissa Lansana Esq. acknowledged the efforts being made by the Government to fight against the impact of climate change but he however called on the President to declare a state of public emergency consistent with section 29 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 to create more awareness about the impacts of climate change and bring about legal reform and the needed resources for adaptation and prevention of this global menace.

In his response, H.E. President Bio congratulated the Commission for maintaining the "Grade A" Status. He said, "Human rights is a great issue around the world, and for a country like Sierra Leone that has gone through war, we have to ensure that our commitments to human rights are met." President Bio added that institutions need independence to enable them to do their work effectively.

He admonished the Commission to keep up its good work amidst funding constraints in carrying out its operations – "It takes everybody's effort to fix this nation, I can only take the lead", he ended.



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### ***Safeguarding Freedom of Speech and Participation:***

The right to freedom of participation was observed during the just concluded multi-tier elections.

Section 31(1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 states that “every citizen of Sierra Leone being eighteen years of age and above and of sound mind shall have the right to vote, and accordingly shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda”. Additionally, Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states: “every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity....(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors” (with similar provision in Article 21(1) & (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

During the pre - election period citizens were able to send out campaign messages in support of the candidates of their choice without fear and favour.

During the polling day, there were long queues of people at various polling stations across the country waiting to cast their votes with enthusiasm in an atmosphere that was largely calm and peaceful. Citizens participated freely in the electoral process without any hindrance from either the security personnel or the polling staff.

*contd. from pg. 14* exercise their right to freedom of movement and they reunite with their families, and to also seek asylum. In general, migration can create a platform for the realization of civil and political rights on one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other.

To ensure that migration supports the enjoyment of human rights, it is essential to develop policies that respect the human rights of all migrants. This includes protecting migrants from exploitation, discrimination, and abuse, as well as ensuring their access to basic services and social protections. It also requires addressing the root causes of migration, including poverty, conflict, and persecution, and creating opportunities for individuals to fulfill their potential in their home countries.

In Sierra Leone, tremendous efforts have been made in putting together legal and policy frameworks to improve the administrative and legislative procedures towards migration governance and strengthen the capabilities of the institutions involved. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security launched its new National Labour Migration Policy to improve protections for migrant workers in Sierra Leone and Sierra Leoneans working abroad. In 2022, the Immigration Department in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs launched the National Migration Policy for Sierra Leone. On July 18, his Excellency the President Julius Maada Bio signed into law the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022 (Act Number 12 of 2022). In 2023, Parliament of Sierra Leone passed into law the Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers’ Act that provides legal framework and guidance for Sierra Leoneans employed to work overseas.

HRCSL, which is the statutory body with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, continues to collaborate with relevant institutions / partners and monitor issues relating to migration and the wellbeing of migrants in and out of the country.

## **The Ethiopian Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts Meets HRCSL**

In August 2023, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) hosted the Ethiopian Delegation on Transitional Justice at the Headquarters of the Commission, Tower Hill, Freetown. The 13-man delegation comprised members of an Independent Committee of Transitional Justice and the Human Rights Commission of Ethiopia.

According to Kalkidan Dereje a member of the Transitional Working Group of Experts who spoke on behalf of the Head of the Delegation, the purpose of the visit was to

conduct a study mission to the country to better understand the setting up and operationalization of a transitional justice mechanism and how it impacts a post-conflict nation. She stated that the Ethiopian Government is trying to have a lasting solution to human rights violations and injustices in their country and has therefore chosen the path of transitional justice through a comprehensive and holistic transitional justice policy framework.” She added that it was along those lines that the Ministry of Justice established an independent and impartial transitional working group of experts that is responsible for crafting the policy.

# HIGHLIGHT OF 20



# 2023 ACTIVITIES



## Understanding Gender Laws Protecting Rights of Women and Children



In August, HRCSL with support from UNDP and Irish Aid held community engagements across the five regions of the country on key provisions relevant to the advancement of the rights of women and children in Sierra Leone. This was meant to increase community stakeholders' understanding of relevant laws and policies that protect women and girls in Sierra Leone.

HRCSL has over the years conducted community engagements in urban and rural areas to educate community stakeholders about their rights, responsibilities, and legal protections supporting the enjoyment of these rights. These efforts have reached hundreds of individuals and have resulted in increased reporting of human rights violations and improved access to justice for survivors.

The regional engagements targeted a total number of 250 participants, including youth, women, and men in various sectors such as market women, women in agriculture, religious and traditional leaders, youth groups, community-based organisations, university students, secondary school pupils, and government institutions, among others.

These engagements focused on sensitizing community stakeholders on the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act of 2022, the Sexual Offences Act of 2012, as amended in 2019, the Domestic Violence Act of 2007, the Devolution of Estate Act 2007, Registration of Customary Marriage, the Disability Act of 2011 and the National Referral Pathway Protocol.

In summary, the GEWE Act of 2022 provides for 30% quota for women to appointive and elective positions, prohibition of discrimination against women in employment, prohibition of sexual harassment, paid maternity leave, financial institutions to improve women's access to finance, and women empowerment. On the other hand, the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 as amended in



2019 broadly addresses rape and sexual penetration with life imprisonment as the highest penalty.

The Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act of 2009 provides for, the registration of customary marriages and divorce and cohabitation, among others. Meanwhile the Child Rights Act of 2007 includes parental duty and responsibility, minimum age of recruitment, treatment of disabled children, protection from exploitative labour, and protection from torture and degrading treatment.

Head of Women Advocacy and Agriculture Development Organisation in Waterloo, Madam Doris Fatima Webber said "Majority of those living in these rural areas are not aware of laws protecting women and children. This session will serve as an eye-opener in letting our people better understand these laws," she said. She urged the Commission to conduct these types of sessions regularly to remind community people about provisions in the gender laws and policies.

### Empowering the Next Generation of Human Rights Ambassadors

Since 2016, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone has established seventy-six (76) Human Rights and Peace Clubs in Secondary Schools across Sierra Leone on the 'catch them young' mantra.

The school pupils through the clubs serve as Ambassadors for human rights in their schools, homes and communities.

The Human Rights and Peace Clubs have formed an integral part of the Commission's structure hence the involvement of the clubs in some of the Commission's activities marking Human Rights Days such as – World Menstrual Hygiene Day, the Day of the African Child, Africa Human Rights Day, Sixteen Days of Activism, and International

## Empowering the next generation of Human Rights Ambassadors

Human Rights Day. The pupils join the Commission in public education and outreach in schools to share knowledge with their peers on rights and responsibilities. To further embolden this next generation of human rights Ambassadors, the Commission has been organising debates and quiz competitions among various schools to enhance their knowledge of human rights.

To strengthen the clubs and enhance their operations, the



Commission partnered with UNDP and Irish Aid to conduct refresher training in Bo, Pujehun, Makeni, Karene, and Western Area Rural Districts and establish leadership structures. During the training and together with the teacher coordinators bye-laws were drafted that will guide the operations of the clubs.

Kojo A. Hottaga, a pupil from Bo Government Secondary School while reviewing the impact of the training said the knowledge gained will be used by club members to support public education in schools and their communities. “We are committed to reaching out to many of our peers and communities to imbibe the culture of human rights,” he said.



The Commission’s Guideline for Human Rights and Peace Clubs in Secondary Schools in Sierra Leone was presented to each school Coordinator to guide the activities of the clubs.

## Ethiopian Experts Meets HRC SL



Responding on behalf of the Commission, Chairperson Madam Patricia Narsu Ndanema did a PowerPoint presentation on the Background to the transitional justice mechanism in Sierra Leone and how HRC SL has since been involved in enhancing the implementation of recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report as well as the challenges recorded so far. The background discloses efforts made by the government and its partners during the 11 years of civil war to bring an end to the war which included the Lomé Peace Agreement (1999), the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2000), and the creation of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL, 2000).

The Chairperson succinctly explained that while the TRC was primarily charged with the responsibility to create an impartial historical record of the war, address impunity, and respond to the needs of the victims among others; the SCSL’s mandate was to try those who bore the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity as a means of discouraging impunity and promoting accountability. She further stated that HRC SL was established by an Act of Parliament in 2004 consistent with the UN Paris Principles following recommendations from both the Lomé Peace Agreement and the TRC Report.

As a national human rights institution in Sierra Leone, HRC SL’s mandate is to protect and promote human rights of all in the country. Therefore, the institution has been key in the transitional justice processes. According to the Chairperson, section 18 of the TRC Act 2000 makes provision for the establishment of “a committee or other body including the representatives of the Moral Guarantors of the Lomé Peace Agreement” as a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of the recommendations of the TRC Report but regrettably, this Committee

## Ethiopian Experts Meets HRCSL

has not been constituted despite calls from the Commission to have it established.

However, in 2006 the role of the Follow-up committee as noted by the Chairperson, was verbally assigned to the Commission. She said the Commission has since been engaged in public awareness raising, archiving, and regulating access to TRC records. She also elaborated on the Commission's general operations including monitoring, complaints handling, public education, collaboration and partnerships, providing human rights advisory to the government, etc.

The Chairperson noted that the TRC completed its work by producing four volumes of a credible report containing the historical

background and causes of the war, findings, and recommendations for the attention and action of successive governments. The SCSL equally completed its work by trying those indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity and left behind a Residual Court which is still in operation in the country.

The presentation was followed by interactive general discussions which further enhanced the understanding of the visiting delegation on the transitional justice history and mechanism in Sierra Leone.

## OHCHR builds the capacity of CSOs and HRCSL staff on ECOSOC Rights



Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights otherwise known as ECOSOC rights are the freedoms, privileges, and entitlements that individuals and communities require to live a life of dignity. These rights include the rights to food, housing, education, health, water and sanitation, employment, social security and to take part in cultural life. They are interlinked with other human rights whether civil or political rights.

States are required to progressively achieve the full realization of these rights over a period of time. Regardless of resource availability, States have an immediate obligation to take appropriate steps to ensure continuous and sustained improvement in the enjoyment of these rights over time. Similarly, the State must ensure its policies and measures do not undermine the enjoyment of these rights.

On the 13th and 14th December, HRCSL in partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted a training to build the capacity of selected civil society organisations and staff of HRCSL on “Monitoring Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Sierra Leone.”

The training was facilitated by the UN Senior Human Rights Advisor Dr. Uchenna Emelonye as the lead facilitator, the vice chairperson of HRCSL Comm. V. I. Lansana Esq. and Mr. Amadu Shour a retired UN OHCHR staff.

The Commission's Chairperson Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema said the training on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC) being the second generation of rights was timely, noting “some of these rights are right to work, education, health, social security, family to name just a few.”

According to the chairperson, the overarching goal of the training was to build the capacity of civil society organisations and the Commission's staff on effective monitoring and robust advocacy on the promotion of ECOSOC rights in Sierra Leone.

The content of the training was informed by the outcome of a baseline study conducted by a consultant to assess the impact of SDG4 and SDG16 accelerators from a human rights perspective. The research which focused on two districts; Moyamba and Bombali showed greater appreciation and impact of Free Quality Education.

The outcome of the training was the establishment of the CSO Network to monitor the implementation of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR).

# 14th International Conference of National Human Rights Institutions



The Vice Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) Victor Idrissa Lansana Esq. in November 2023 joined other human rights institutions in Copenhagen, Denmark for the 14th International Conference of National Human Rights Institutions on the subject, ***“Torture and other ill-treatment: The Role of National Human Rights Institutions.”***

During a plenary session, he presented on behalf of a group on the subject “Practical Perspectives on the work of NHRIs: Using NHRIs’ mandates and functions to protect at-risk persons and marginalized groups from torture and other ill-treatment”. The Vice Chairperson called on NHRIs “to move beyond the traditional role of monitoring and take the next step by dealing decisively with findings from monitoring reports and holding perpetrators of torture accountable”.

from the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the countries they operate after the NHRI would have carried out a human rights impact assessment.

He emphasised that the operations of multinational companies continue to adversely affect the enjoyment of many rights including the right to safe drinking water, the right to education, the right to health, and the right to a safe environment among others.

He noted that while these companies create jobs and contribute to the tax base of African countries, the human rights and environmental impacts of their activities must not be swept under the carpet in favor of the argument around job creation and tax base expansion.

The Vice Chairperson is an avid advocate of climate change & human rights and is a Co-convener of the Climate Change Caucus of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) comprising members across the global regions.



At a side event organised by the Danish Institute for Human Rights on “the impact of climate change on human rights across the globe”, Mr. Lansana called on African States including his country,

Sierra Leone to enact a law that would require multinational companies to obtain a human rights compliant certificate



## The Impact of Migration on the Enjoyment of Human Rights



The process of migration can be excruciating, and migrants are often vulnerable to a range of human rights abuses. One of the most fundamental human rights is the right to life. Migration can pose a significant risk to the lives of migrants, particularly when they are forced to travel through dangerous routes, often with limited resources and without adequate protection. Migrants may also be subject to violence, including sexual violence and trafficking. These abuses can have a lasting impact on the mental health and well-being of migrants, as well as their ability to enjoy other human rights.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990, provides comprehensive protection for the human rights of migrants and their families.

This Convention defines a migrant worker as "a person who is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a national," and it applies to both documented and undocumented migrants.

The Convention recognises that migrants are vulnerable to human rights violations due to their precarious legal status, lack of social protection, and exposure to exploitation and abuse. It obliges states to respect and protect the human rights of migrants and their families, regardless of their immigration status, and to ensure that they have access to essential services, such as healthcare, education, and housing.

Other International human rights instruments that provide a framework for protecting the rights of migrants includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child etc.

These legal instruments recognise the right to seek and enjoy asylum, the right to non-discrimination, the right to work, the right to education, and the right to health care, among other rights. However, the enforcement of these instruments is often a challenge and as such migrants usually face discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

Migrants are also vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in the workplace. They may face low wages, long hours of work, and unsafe working conditions, and may be denied access to healthcare and social protections. Xenophobia is a recent barrier that limits the right of migrants to work. These abuses not only violate migrants' human rights but also have broader implications for the enjoyment of human rights within the communities in which they settle.

Right to education – children of migrant families often face barriers to accessing education, including discrimination, racism and limited resources. These barriers can have long-lasting consequences, limiting children's ability to fulfill their potential and contribute to their communities.

Additionally, migrants may face exploitation and abuse, including forced labor, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation, which can result in violations of their rights to freedom from slavery, forced labor, and sexual exploitation. This is particularly true for irregular migrants who may be more vulnerable to exploitation due to their lack of legal status and protections.

Furthermore, migration can also have negative impacts on the rights of communities in which migrants settle. For example, migration can lead to tensions and conflicts over resources, including housing, jobs, and social services, which can result in violations of the rights of both migrants and host communities.

On the other hand, migration can also have positive impacts on the enjoyment of human rights. For example, migration can provide access to better economic opportunities, allowing individuals to improve their standard of living and fulfill their potential. Migrants may also bring new skills and perspectives to the communities in which they settle, contributing to cultural diversity and innovation.

Another positive impact of migration is that it can provide opportunities for individuals and families to *continue in page 7*

## HRCSL Joins the Independent National Human Rights Commission of Liberia to Monitor the Liberia Elections



The Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL), Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema, and two other Commissioners Simitie Lavalay and Hassan Samba Yarjah joined the Independent National Commission for Human Rights (INCHR) from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2023 to monitor the Presidential and Legislative elections in Liberia on the 10<sup>th</sup> October. During the course of their visit, they provided cross learning information from HRCSL's monitoring of the elections in Sierra Leone on 24th June, 2023.

The team monitored the last day of campaigns on 8th October in Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, and Montserrado counties en route to Monrovia. The Vice-Chairperson of INCHR, Charles K. Harris at Mamba Point Hotel in Monrovia welcomed the team and discussed deployment and key human rights issues to monitor during the elections.

On polling day, the team monitored the following counties; Montserrado, Buchanan, Margibi, and Grand Bassa covering over ten precincts/centres. According to the National Elections Commission (NEC), polling should start at 8 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. Most of the precincts/centres monitored commenced voting on time which supported an easy process and close of polls.

However, at one station in Garden of Prayer Church, Cauldwell, Montserrado, polling could not commence on time due to a spoilt ballot box cover, which affected the commencement of voting in that station. It was also reported during the Press Briefing of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and the media that several precincts in Sinkoh County and Grand Cess County could not vote due to electoral materials arriving wet or not arriving in time.

The NEC Chairperson informed the meeting that provisions will be made for rights holders who did not vote on

polling day to do so within the 15-day period before the pronouncement of the final results. Meanwhile, security personnel and other uniformed workers who were registered to vote in the precincts/centres monitored were also given priority to enable them to vote early and undertake their duties at their assigned locations. In some stations, this preference caused slight tension



between voters in the queue and the NEC personnel.

Local, Regional, and International (roaming) Observers were seen accessing polling precincts. Notable among them were: Election and Democracy Activity (EDA), EU, USAID, ECOWAS, Sweden SVERIGN, ABIC, Liberia Council of Churches (LCC), and INHCR. The other international Elections Management Bodies (EMB) - Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) and Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) Sierra Leone - were also seen roaming. Media houses and journalists were seen moving freely to cover the situation on the ground- Sky Radio, Radio Maria, Love FM and TV, Local Voice Radio Liberia, Press Premium Times, and 004 Press. They all had unhindered access to the precincts monitored.

The Chairperson of HRCSL Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema thanked the INCHR for the collaboration and congratulated the NEC and the people of Liberia for undertaking a peaceful election.



## Our Mission Statement

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone exists to take the lead role in building a culture of human rights (including respect for individual responsibilities) which maintains human dignity for all in Sierra Leone in full compliance with the constitution, laws, international and regional instruments, through effective partnership and collaboration.

## Our Vision Statement

A Sierra Leone where a culture of Human Rights prevails and the People respect the rule of law and live in peace and dignity.

## HRCSL Mandate and Functions

Section 7(1) of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Act (No. 9) of 2004 stipulate that "The object for which the Commission is established is the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone." and section 7(2) states the following functions:

- Investigate or enquire into any allegation of human rights violations
- Promote respect for human rights through public education and awareness raising Programs
- Publish guidelines, manuals, and other materials on the human rights obligations of public officials and others;
- Cooperate with institutions working in the field of human rights;
- Review existing legislation and advise government on its compliance with international obligations
- Monitor draft legislations, policies, programmes and administrative practices to ensure they comply with human rights principles, standards and obligation;
- Advice and support government in the preparation of treaty body reporting.
- Visit correctional centres and other places of detention to inspect and report on conditions;
- Monitor and document violations of human rights in Sierra Leone; and Publish and present to the President and Parliament an Annual Report on the State of Human Rights in Sierra Leone.

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