



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM UNIT

(PSRU)

**MANAGEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL REVIEW OF THE MINISTRY OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**



AC

FINAL REPORT

AUGUST, 2021

	ance Press
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIU	Central Cyber Security Unit
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GPD	Government Printing Department
H.E.	His Excellency
HR	Human Resources
HRMO	Human Resource Management Office
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IPAS	Individual Performance Appraisal System
MDAs	Ministries, Department and Agencies
MIC	Ministry of Information and Communication
MDIC	Management and Development International Company
MFR	Management and Functional Review
NATCOME	National Telecommunication Commission
ONS	Office of National Security
PANA	Pan-African News Agency
PSRU	Public Sector Reform Unit
SALPOST	Sierra Leone Postal Services
SLBC	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
SLBS	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service
SLENA	Sierra Leone News Agency
WIPSEL	Women in Sierra Leone Media

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings and recommendations from the Management and Functional Review conducted by PSRU with technical backstopping from the Human Resource Management Office (HRMO). The need for this MFR was expressed by the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) in a bid to rationalize its oversight and supervisory functions; and examine its structures and administrative processes and procedures. This MFR process is critical to the Ministry's efforts to transform itself into an entity that performs at optimal capacity and delivers high-quality services to the citizens of Sierra Leone.

In line with the set goals and objectives of the MFR, the Review Team examined the institutional efficiency and effectiveness of MIC, assessed its mandate/vision/mission and proffered recommendations that will strengthen its Management and Functional capabilities and realign its operations, structure and functions within the context of the National Medium Term Development Framework. Given the fact that there is strong leadership commitment and political will for ICT to be a critical catalyst for the nation's development and for the transformation of the Ministry that is the primordial policy driving and implementing agency, the need for the MFR process is crucially important.

The MFR commenced with a preliminary consultative meeting held with the leadership and staff in the senior and Middle Management levels of the Ministry to discuss the overall management and functional issues of the Ministry and agree on the scope, methodology and timelines for the conduct of the MFR were discussed and agreed.

The review team realized from the outset that the Ministry enjoyed political will to implement cluster 8 sub component 8.9 dubbed "Communications for Development" of the National Medium Term Framework (2018-2023), that is specific to Information and Communications. This is reinforced by the fact that several transformative policies including the National Innovation Digitalisation Strategy are either being reviewed/validated or awaiting Cabinet approval. The review underlines critical efforts the Ministry is making to revolutionize/modernize Sierra Leone's ICT sector and ensure its operations and functions are aligned with contemporary trends. The review further noted the Ministry's determination

to enhance its productivity, recalibrate its systems and processes and reposition itself to ably handle its broad mandate, operationalize its responsibility carved out in the NMTDF.

1.1. Summary of Preliminary Findings

1.1.1. Structural and Operational System of the Ministry

The Review Team considers the following as most mentionable: 1. incomplete implementation of the existing Organizational Structure 2. Prolonged vacancies for critical positions 3. Increased levels of staff demotivation and dissatisfaction 4. General weaknesses in the Ministry's systems, processes and procedures and 5. High attrition rates.

Recommendations

The review team recommends the establishment of new directorates and units that will enhance its output and operationalize its policy directives. The review team further recommends: 1. the recruitment of competent staff 2. The clarification of roles, functions and reporting lines 3. Inter-departmental coordination and collaboration and 4. Strengthening of the Ministry's Policy, Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation functions.

Information and Communication Directorates: The review revealed that both Directors of Communications and Information acting as the Professional Heads of the Ministry are serving in acting capacities for prolong periods. The review further noted the disparities and distortions in remuneration and incentives evident by the fact that the ICT Directorate was comparatively better remunerated, which has left the Communications Directorate staff feeling undervalued and demotivated.

• Recommendations

We **recommend** that the Ministry solicits the expertise of HRMO and PSC to either recruit substantive Directors or regularize the positions of those in acting capacities. The review team further **recommends the creation of the position of Chief Director of Information, Communications and Technology that will be the overall** Professional Head of the Ministry and the chief technical adviser to the Minister. **We recommend that** the recruitment process for all existing vacancies and impending vacancies be fair, transparent, consistent with the Equal Opportunity Employment model.

- **We also recommend the establishment of the Directorate of Policy, Planning and Research:** which will focus on research, developing and monitoring the implementation of the Ministry's strategic plan, evidence-based policy formulation, partnership building and strengthening processes. The directorate will collaborate with other directorates in the areas of policy/planning/research, strategic and operational planning, monitoring and evaluation.

1.1.2 Human Resource Management

The review team examined the HR functions of the Ministry, focusing on: recruitment and selection, training and career development and performance management.

The key issues identified were: 1. high staff turnover 2. lack of an effective succession planning mechanism resulting to high attrition rates 3. issues with career growth pathways 4. demotivation related to stagnation and 5. staff capacity gaps.

Recommendations

We **recommend** that the Ministry puts in place mechanisms to address its core HR challenges. In particular, the Ministry should: 1. Develop an effective succession plan 2. Develop a clear career growth path and 3. Invest in institutional and staff capacity strengthening.

1.1.3 Staff Recruitment and Selection

The review revealed that the Ministry is struggling with a relatively high attrition rate evident by its weak staff strength. The review further notes critical capacity gaps due to the lack of an effective recruitment and selection mechanism.

Recommendations

We **recommend** that the Ministry expedites recruitment processes for existing positions employing the Equal Opportunity Employment (EOE) model which impliedly levels the playing field for both internal and external candidates. We also **recommend** that the Ministry invests in staff development and ensures mandatory and career enhancement/enrichment trainings are available to staff on a periodic, predictable and fair basis. **We further recommend that** the Ministry in collaboration with Public Service Commission (PSC) and HRMO utilize the EOE model when recruiting for positions across cadre.

1.1.4 Training and Career Development

The review revealed that opportunities for professional development including external trainings are unstructured, misaligned and irregular. The review also revealed that the Ministry lacks an annual staff development plan from which an effective annual staff training needs assessment (TNA) mechanism could be derived.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Ministry makes the requisite critical investments in staff training across cadre.

We also recommend that the Ministry transitions from engaging in ad-hoc, misaligned and irregular trainings, to having a structured staff development plan preceded by a training needs assessment.

1.1.5 Performance Management System

The review noted the concerns of the Ministry's staff regarding the Individual Performance Appraisal System (IPAS) system which they claimed to be subjective. The review further notes the inadequate training on the IPAS. The review also notes that the IPAS does not inform promotion as it is intended.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that the Ministry puts mechanisms in place that will restore confidence in the IPAS. **The team further recommends** training of staff across cadre on the IPAS to restore confidence and increase its usability. **The Review team also recommends** the development of an effective and fit-for-purpose staff performance management system that scientifically determines staff productivity and accordingly rewards high performers.

1.2.6. Records Management System

The review revealed that the Ministry's Records Management function is weak, evident by the fact that its archiving and retrieval/access mechanisms are fragmented and unsophisticated. The review team noted that the different Directorates and Units manage their respective records and data in silos, in the absence of a Central Information Management System. The review however revealed the existence of backup systems which the team hastens to caution are not the industry gold standard.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Ministry recruits a qualified **Records Management Officer** to strengthen the Ministry's records management function and spearhead the centralization of its information Management system. **We further** recommend that the Ministry builds the capacity of its staff across cadre in records management and digitization.

1.1.7. Information Communications Technology (ICT)

The Team noted that the Ministry is optimizing the use of its internet facility being the pioneer of fibre optic system. The review revealed that the Ministry being the institution of Government with the mandate and expertise to manage the country's ICT system, expectedly has a centralized ICT infrastructure with competent ICT Officers managing same. The review however, noted that though the Ministry has a reliable internet connectivity which contributes to information sharing, it lacks modernized ICT equipment that will optimize its ICT capability.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Ministry makes the requisite investments in modernizing its ICT capability, including the procurement of cutting-edge technology and a transition to contemporary ICT infrastructure and systems.

1.1.8. Logistics and Equipment

The review noted that the Ministry continues to grapple with logistics and equipment constraints with adverse impact on staff and institutional productivity. In particular, the review revealed gross inadequate office equipment, tools and furniture.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Ministry ensures logistics and equipment is prioritized in its annual budgetary and procurement plans to ensure the provision of the requisite logistics and equipment required by staff to perform at optimal capacity.

1.1.9. Office Accommodation

The review also revealed that the Ministry is grappling with accommodation challenges evident by the fact that staff are working in overcrowded spaces that are not congenial, and hinder productivity optimization.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Ministry makes the requisite investments that will address its accommodation challenges, including ensuring that staff are working in a spacious and congenial work environment both at Headquarters and in the regions.

1.1.10. Internal and External Communications

One of the principal functions and mandates of the Ministry is to ensure the effective and timely flow of information between the Government, the public and development partners.

It is against this backdrop that the following were assessed and accompanying findings noted:

1.1.11. Internal Communication

The review revealed that the Ministry's internal communication system is weak, thereby affecting team building and inter-directorate collaboration and coordination.

Recommendations

The review team **recommends** that the Ministry develops an effective internal communication mechanism that will foster inter-directorate partnership and collaboration and enhance team building.

We further recommend that the Ministry: 1. ensure regular Change Management meetings, and 2. Ensure that information/action points/directives from same are cascaded.

1.1.12. External communication (Stakeholder)

The review revealed that though the Ministry's external communication strategy has been a critical mechanism for strengthening partnership and collaboration between the Ministry and its diverse stakeholders, notable gaps persist.

Recommendations

The team recommends that Ministry recalibrates its external communication strategy and conducts regular outreach activities across the country. **We also recommend that** the Ministry revives Sierra Leone News Agency (SLENA) which is one of its constituent agencies to further enhance its communications outreach functions. **Consistent with this recommendation, we recommend** the revitalization of SLENA and insulate its staff from being subsumed by the Ministry.

4.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Cyber Security Issues and Concerns

The review team noted that though there is political will to address both policy and legislation relating to cyber security, there is yet very little public attention and awareness on same. The Review further noted the following:

- The general lack of public knowledge about national cyber-security issues including attacks and its implication on national security.
- Low private sector interest or intervention in every spectrum of cybersecurity
- The lack of an effective cybersecurity monitoring and oversight mechanism
- Low awareness of the multiplicity and severity of risks related to data protection and Cyber Security. This is important in view of the ubiquity of the internet and pervasiveness of social media (fake news/misinformation and hacking)

4.1.1 Recommendations

- We **recommend** that the cybersecurity unit is strengthened and remains a permanent outfit within the **Directorate of Communications**. We also recommend the enactment of a legislation and legal framework to enhance the units work. **We recommend** that the Ministry embarks on effective public education, awareness raising and information sharing on Cyber Security and data protection.
- We **recommend** that MIC spearheads and facilitates inter-sectoral dialogue and strategic tripartite engagements between the relevant stakeholders, the Office of the National Security (ONS), and Cyber Security Unit of the Police. As part of the implementation of this

recommendation, we also **recommend** the need to strengthen the Cyber Security monitoring mechanism.

- We **recommend** that MIC encourage the Cyber Security Unit of the Sierra Leone Police to strengthen its investigative mechanism. We further recommend that the Ministry strengthens the capacity of sectoral players and security institutions in cyber security.
- We **recommend** that the MIC identifies ICT officers attached to MDAs to provide skills transfer and technical backstopping in the areas of Cyber Security, Data Protection and cybercrimes prevention. Such trainings should also be cascaded to Local Councils as well as District and Chiefdom Security Committees across the country.