

STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE: 2016-2019

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PREFACE

The Parliamentary Service Act, 2007, a private member's motion, initiated by the then Minority Leader and now the President of Sierra Leone, H.E. Ernest Bai Koroma was passed into law setting up the Parliament Service Commission and a Parliament Service with eight Departments. In the years following the passing of the Act, a Strategic Plan 2009-2013 was designed to actualise the Parliament Service. With the support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other development partners, an organogram of the service and TORs of positions were developed and processes undertaken to recruit new staff who were then trained and coached to perform their specialized tasks. Today, at the beginning of 2016, it can be safely said that for the first time in the history of Sierra Leone, a Parliament Service as distinct from the public service which caters to the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of the government of Sierra Leone has come into being. At the same time, there is a realization that much, much more needs to be done to strengthen the service and the Parliament intrinsically as an institution to play its constitutionally mandated role of oversight, representation and law-making. It is in this light, that Parliament of Sierra Leone with the support of UNDP has developed this new **Strategic Plan, 2016-19 for the Parliament of Sierra Leone**.

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Freetown



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Preface</i> | i |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE..... | 3 |
| Our Vision..... | 3 |
| Our Mission..... | 3 |
| Our Core Values..... | 3 |
| PARLIAMENT'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOR 2016-19..... | 4 |
| <u>GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY</u> | 5 |
| <u>GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN LEGISLATIVE CAPACITY</u> | 10 |
| <u>GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN OVERSIGHT CAPACITY</u> | 14 |
| <u>GOAL 4: MAKE PARLIAMENT ACCESSIBLE, OPEN AND REPRESENTATIVE</u> | 19 |
| Implementation Road Map: Strategic Plan of the Parliament of Sierra Leone 2016-2019 | 22 |

INTRODUCTION

Parliaments occupy and play a central role in democratic governance systems that seek the holistic development of citizens. Having a strong and effective parliament has become an imperative, if citizens are to fully benefit from development goals and activities of elected governments.

In the last few decades the growth in the number of Parliaments around the world has been phenomenal. Today, 190 of 193 countries around the world have some form of functioning Legislature with a total of more than 46,000 representatives.¹ This growth has, understandably, come with increased public expectations of what Parliaments can and should be doing in the interest of the citizens that they represent.

Public expectations as well as interest in the work of Parliaments manifests itself at different levels: development partners/development community, parliamentary development experts/practitioners, academics and most importantly, citizens. These different groups have issues that account for why they are interested in the work of the Legislature. In analyzing their various interests, the common thread is the growing need and realization that:

1. The performance of Parliaments need to be assessed and measured on some global or universal benchmarks;
2. Citizens need avenues to engage with Parliaments; and
3. Citizens or civil society groups are keen on monitoring the outputs of their Parliaments.

This interest in the work of parliaments by citizens - who are seeking improvements to their livelihoods through the action of their elected representatives - and other actors in the democratic governance (local or international), have pushed parliaments to take steps that ensure a better representation for constituents. One major step taken by many Parliaments is the development of a Strategic Plan to help them better utilize their resources as well as better serve the needs of their citizens.

The challenges confronting Parliament and governance in Sierra Leone in general presently, while still daunting, are of a different nature compared to the time when the previous Strategic Plan was being put in place.

There are a number of significant recent developments that have an impact on the development of the new Strategic Plan. First, the Constitutional Review. The country is currently in the process of reviewing the 1991 Constitution. Article 73(3) of the 1991

¹Power, Greg, Global Parliamentary Report: The Changing nature of parliamentary representation, IPU-UNDP Publication, 2012, p. 4

Constitution vests legislative power in the Parliament. Parliament may make laws for the peace, security, order and good government of Sierra Leone. The Constitution also details the scope of the mandate of the Parliament to cover lawmaking, oversight of the executive, representation and resource allocation (Chapter VI).

While most of these key provisions related to Parliament might not change, there are possibilities that there might be some changes that will affect Parliament. There is therefore the need for Parliament to position itself and be in a state of readiness or preparedness to respond to changes that are likely to affect the institution following the Constitutional Review Process.

The second significant development – the Ebola outbreak - is both specific to Sierra Leone and regional in nature. Sierra Leone and the entire Mano River region (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) for the past two years, has been dealt a heavy blow with the outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus. This public health crisis of unimaginable proportions not only claimed thousands of lives in the three countries but also further weakened key institutions of state that were in the process reconstruction following the many years of civil war that all these countries have had to endure.

While there has been significant progress in the fight against Ebola, all three countries continue to face some threats of the disease resurfacing. While each country will need to put in place mechanisms to rebuild and strengthen their public health institutions, a future appropriate response to a crisis such as Ebola has to be regional in nature. Against this background, it is important for the new Strategic Plan to take cognizance of this important recent development by ensuring that the Parliaments of the three countries work together to develop a comprehensive framework to deal with future public health and related crises. It will also be important to position Parliament to benefit from its association with various international and regional parliamentary bodies through a forceful engagement that will inure to the benefit of all citizens.

The 2015-2019 Strategic Plan is therefore being developed against the backdrop of the two significant developments outlined above. The second development in particular – the outbreak of Ebola, its devastating effects as well as its current aftermath – calls for a Parliament that is able to effectively and efficiently execute its constitutionally mandated responsibilities with an emphasis most importantly on oversight and representation.

Importance, and the translation of those debates into policies. For MPs, effective representation requires engaging their constituents in continuing dialogue in order to understand their views and perspectives, and to rely on their knowledge on various topics. MPs must then utilize the powers vested in their office (i.e. legislating, participating in debates etc.) to voice the resulting ideas. Through the parliamentary committees, an MP can use the formal structure of parliament to engage

constituents and provide them with direct access to the decision-making process within the institution.

Given the importance of the dual function of oversight and representation within the context of Sierra Leone, the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan will seek to place emphasis on them while building on the lawmaking function.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

The 2016-2019 Strategic Plan is prepared against the backdrop of the challenges faced by Sierra Leone as a country and for which Parliament, as a representative institution of the people must rise. But its preparation has also been informed by specific guiding principles - the Vision, Mission and Core Values that inform the work of Parliament.

Our Vision

- *A Parliament that is a beacon of peace, hope, democracy and good governance.*

Our Mission

- *Making government work for the people, by giving a voice to the voiceless through lawmaking, transparency, accountability and equitable distribution of resources.*

Our Core Values

The Vision and Mission of the Parliament of Sierra Leone are anchored on a number of core values that must guide Parliament as an institution as well as every single Member of Parliament in the process of discharging their lawmaking, oversight and representational responsibilities. The Core Values of the Parliament of Sierra Leone are:

1. **Accountability:** Parliament will strive to act in a fair and equitable manner, ensuring that the needs of citizens are addressed.
2. **Inclusiveness:** Parliament will strive to take into account all shades of opinion in every decision the House makes.
3. **Gender Mainstreaming:** Parliament will recognize and value the diversity between men and women in legislation and policy.

4. **Transparency:** Parliament will act openly and make all its activities and decisions accessible to citizens.
5. **Integrity:** Parliament will be guided by high ethical and moral standards in the discharge of its duties.
6. **Impartiality:** Parliament will be objective at all times and guided by the interests of all citizens.
7. **Professionalism:** Parliament will strive to achieve the highest level of skill and competence in discharging its duties.
8. **Respect:** Parliament will value the views and opinions of all citizens at all times.

PARLIAMENT'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2016-2019

The 2016-2019 Strategic Plan is prepared with a focus on four (4) key Strategic Goals that will help build on the achievements of the last few years and help Parliament's long-term development. The Goals are interconnected and aimed at helping Parliament achieve its vision of being a beacon of peace, hope, democracy and good governance for the people of Sierra Leone. These include: Building the Institutional Capacity of Parliament; Strengthening Lawmaking; Strengthening Oversight; and Making Parliament Representative and Accessible to citizens. These Objectives are informed first and foremost, by the need to create an efficient and effective institution that is positioned to help Parliament and its Members achieve their triple functions of lawmaking, oversight and representation.

A number of activities will be implemented during the course of the Strategic Plan in order to help Parliament achieve the four broad Strategic Objectives. The activities, are carefully selected based on a Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of Parliament, consultation with the Parliamentary Service Commission, Members of Parliament as well as Parliamentary Staff.

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Parliaments have three major functions: lawmaking, oversight and representation. In order for any parliament to creditably discharge these functions, there needs to be in place an institution that can support elected members to carry out these duties. An effective Legislature needs an administration with sound institutional capacity to support Parliamentarians in executing their constitutional mandates.

In its Strategic Plan for 2016-2019, the Parliament of Sierra Leone recognizes the importance of putting in place a well-functioning institution as an important pre-condition for achieving all the other strategic objectives under the Plan. Under this goal, there are eight strategic activities. These are outlined below.

1.1 Streamline the Role and Functions of the Parliamentary Service Commission

The Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) was established in 2007 to among other things, provide Parliament with technical and administrative support and advisory services to enable the institution execute its constitutional mandate effectively and efficiently.

The role of the PSC is equivalent to that of a Board of a Corporation. The PSC has since its creation, played a very important role in providing direction to the Legislature. However, for Parliament to run effectively and efficiently, the role of the PSC has to be at the strategic level where it provides strategic direction and exercises oversight over the administration of Parliament. The day to day execution of its instructions and directions will be performed by the administration of Parliament, headed by the Clerk who performs the role of Chief Executive.

Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone undertakes to streamline the functions of the PSC by providing more clarity to its role. This will enable the Commission perform its important strategic functions.

1.2 Delineate the Role and Functions of the Office of the Clerk

The Office of the Clerk performs the role of the Chief Executive of Parliament with a mandate for the day to day administration of the institution. He renders services that also support members of Parliament in their parliamentary functions and reports to the Speaker. The Clerk advises the Speaker and all Members on the interpretation of parliamentary rules, precedents and practices. The Clerk is at the service of all Members, regardless of party affiliation, and must act with impartiality and discretion.

To perform these functions effectively and to run an efficient institution, there is the need to clearly delineate the role and function of the Office. Under this Strategic Plan, the role of the Office of the Clerk will be structured to clearly distinguish between the two key sub-functions of Administration and Finance on the one hand and Legislative Business on the other.

1.3 Make Parliament Autonomous

A key determinant of the effectiveness of a Parliamentary institution is whether or not it has the independence to operate as a separate branch of government. Under the broad principles of separation of powers, Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary are supposed to be clearly separated in terms of their independence. They however inter-depend on one another for the efficient functioning of the state.

To be effective, a Parliament must not be dependent and subordinate to any other branch of government. In addition, it must free to follow its own regulations. Two key elements of the autonomy of Parliaments are administrative and financial. Parliaments must have the freedom to run their administration and sufficient autonomy to determine their own budget as well as other resources needed to efficiently carry out the constitutional mandates accorded them.

The existence of a Parliamentary Service Commission is an important step towards the autonomy of a Parliament. Given the steps that have been taken in Sierra Leone to establish the PSC in 2007, further efforts will be made during the period of this Strategic Plan to deepen the process of autonomy by constructively engaging other branches of government, especially the Executive to ensure that Parliament becomes autonomous, financially and administratively, at the very least.

1.4 Enhance institutional capacity for: Administration and Management; Lawmaking, Oversight and Representation

A strong, dynamic, and effective Parliament cannot exist without a parliamentary administration of equal quality. The organization of the parliamentary administration is a key component of a successful parliamentary institution. The human resource management and policies, internal administration and finance management, internal audit processes and the provision of modern facilities and improved information technology (IT) system are critically essential for building a strong Parliamentary institution. With the development of the internet and broadband technologies, Parliaments can connect to a global network of information that assist legislative research, improving the quality of parliamentary debates and the quality of legislation and public policy generally.

In addition, parliamentary information management requires documenting the activities of Parliament and ensuring the availability of all relevant information in good time to people who seek such information. This is one of the key responsibilities of the parliamentary administration. Finally, informed legislation and decision-making relies on a Parliament having strong policy analysis and research capacities.

Recognizing the importance of enhancing its institutional capacity for effective administration, under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will put in place mechanisms for enhancing its administration and management by strengthening the Human Resource, Finance, Internal Audit and related departments. Another focus during this Strategic Plan period will be on developing a monitoring and evaluation system ingrained in the working of the parliament service. The Legislative and Committees Departments will be strengthened to support the Lawmaking and Oversight functions of Parliament. These departments will receive the needed supported through regular trainings and attachments as well as the development of manuals and tools that they will need to support Members to accomplish their legislative and oversight functions.

The Public Affairs, ICT and Hansard Departments will be strengthened to support the Representation role of Parliament. These departments will be provided regular capacity building and training; there will be attachments for the Public Affairs department, the ICT infrastructure will be upgraded; and the Hansard department will be equipped with modern gadgets.

1.5 Mainstream Gender in Parliamentary Administration

According the UN gender mainstreaming is: "...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."²

Gender mainstreaming occurs when the perceptions, experience, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making. Mainstreaming gender is a about equality, it is a human rights issue and above all, it is about inclusiveness, particularly in policy and decision making processes.

Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will ensure that in all its policies and decisions, the concerns of women and men are taken fully into

²UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

consideration. This is important against the backdrop of the on-going Constitutional Review process in Sierra Leone in which issues of gender are being highlighted. Parliament, the people's representative institution will need to show leadership.

1.6 Improve Donor Coordination and Partner Relations

The last few decades have seen a growing interest by donors and development partners in the work of Parliaments. This growth in interest is informed by the fact that Parliaments play a central role in development, particularly when it comes to the issues of resource allocation, distribution and most importantly, ensuring that such resources are used judiciously.

As an outcome of an assessment, a few years ago, the Parliament of Sierra Leone established the Parliamentary Affairs Coordination Office (PACO) with the goal of managing and harmonizing all donor/partners support to the institution. The Office also ensures that donor support is targeted and fairly distributed in order to avoid waste and duplication.

Under this Strategic Plan, PACO will be strengthened not only to attract more partners to support Parliament but also to ensure improved coordination and harmonization in the various support initiatives that come to Parliament. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation function of the Office will be strengthened so as to ensure that a results based approach is applied to all the support received by Parliament.

1.7 Enhance and Deepen use of ICT Towards a “Paperless Parliament”

According to the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in their report on the state of E-Parliament in 2010, the rapid growth of ICT is changing the environment within parliaments operate and influencing how they are perceived by the citizenry. The report notes that rather than being mere witnesses to these transformative effects, parliaments are exploring ways to use technology to strengthen democracy and encourage political participation.³

Today, a good ICT system is essential for building a strong parliamentary institution. It enables parliaments to connect to a global network of information that assists them in their research, improves the quality of parliamentary debates and legislation by providing Members easy access to information as well as all documents generated by the House for parliamentary business.

³ World E-Parliament Report 2010 at <http://www.ictparliament.org/wepr2010.html>

To deepen the use of ICT and move towards a 'paperless parliament', the Parliament of Sierra Leone under this Strategic Plan, will work to put in place the right infrastructure to ensure that gradually, all parliamentary documents – order papers, draft Bills, documents emanating from government departments – will be circulated to Members electronically. This environmentally friendly approach will reduce the use of paper and most importantly improve the efficient and timely access to information by Members. Members will also be provided with regular training on ICT as well as provided the necessary tools with which to operationalize the drive towards a 'paperless Parliament' and engage with citizens through modern interactive communication methods.

GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN LEGISLATIVE CAPACITY

Legislation is a very important role of Parliament. Members of Parliament are expected to debate and pass laws that inure to the benefit of citizens and ensure that the rights of citizens to freedom and equitable development are realized. The Laws they pass must be just and respond to the developmental needs of citizens. Legislative capacity also encompasses the chamber related work which in addition to law making is a means to hold the government of day the accountable.

Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will strengthen and improve upon the processes involved in lawmaking as well as raising matters in the House and especially the role of the legislative staff/Table Clerks, and the role played by Members in initiating discussions and legislating Bills into laws. The following initiatives will be carried out towards the attainment of this goal.

2.1 Review of Standing Orders to Strengthen Legislative Role of MPs

The level of influence MPs can exert during the course of debating and passing Bills as well as all their other constitutionally mandated duties depends largely on the powers and roles prescribed by the Standing Orders which constitute the internal regulations of Parliament.

Standing Orders are the written rules under which a Parliament conducts its business. They regulate the way Members behave, Bills are processed and debates are organized. However, not all rules found in the Standing Orders are clear enough. Often times, most of the rules are shrouded in ambiguity. In addition, most parliamentary procedures are not written into the Standing Orders but exist as the custom and practice of the institution, with some stemming from Speakers' rulings. These undocumented rules have been followed over time as a matter of precedent.

Against this background, and in order to bring clarity to the role Members play, particularly in their performance in the chamber in order to improve lawmaking and oversight of the executive undertaken through the House, there may be a need to revisit certain sections of the current Standing Orders. This will be important also in the context of the new Constitution which may come up during the period of this Strategic Plan.

2.2 Streamline the relationship between Sector Committees and Legislative Committee

Parliamentary Committees play a central role in the process of enacting laws. Before a draft Bill becomes law, it usually goes through a number of stages in Parliament. Once a Bill has been introduced, many parliaments hold a debate on the principle of what the Bill is trying to achieve, before they start looking at the exact provisions and wording. If the legislation is supported by a majority in parliament at this stage, then it does not normally proceed any further. If there is agreement to proceed, the Bill is referred to committee (s) for detailed consideration of the text.

This stage is usually the most complex and varies significantly between parliaments. The text of the legislation is considered in detail and changes are made. There are normally rules on the types of amendments which can be made and who can propose them. In many parliaments, this work is given to committees which represents the Parliament and is tasked to undertake in-depth analysis of the provisions, detailed consultations with experts and other stakeholders. As these processes can be very lengthy and would take up too much of the limited time available for plenary sessions committees look at it with time and expertise on their hands., . This approach has over the years become the norm in the lawmaking process. However, in Sierra Leone, even though specialist committees take part in reviewing draft Bills, they do not take lead. The lead role is assumed by the Legislative Committee.

For draft Bills to benefit from rigorous scrutiny and review, it requires Sector Committees taking the lead, while relying on the Legislative Committee for additional support and input. As part of this Strategic Plan, the review of the Standing Orders will also streamline the working relationship between Sector Committees and the Legislative Committee in the legislative process to ensure that the former take a lead role in the legislative process.

2.3 Build Capacity of MPs and Staff on the Legislative Process and Legislative Drafting

In order to have good laws that are fair, that appropriately respond to the challenges they seek to address, and that are implementable, it is necessary that Parliament has the capacity, knowledge and skills to play its role in the legislative process.

Even though Bills emanate from the Executive in most countries, including Sierra Leone, members and staff need critical skills in order to properly analyze and scrutinize Bills, provide their input before Bills become Law. Members and staff have a unique role of improving the law making process and its outcomes. Critical tasks in the legislative process include organizing, analyzing, evaluating, interpreting and

summarizing available facts. During the legislative process, there is also the need to present costs and benefits of draft Bills, assemble such authoritative opinions as may be available in respect to legislative questions under discussion in the legislature.

Apart from skills in analyzing and scrutinizing draft Bills, legislative drafting skills are also crucial. Bills are generally drafted by the Executive and submitted to Parliament for analysis, scrutiny and approval. In order to analyze and scrutinize, it helps if MPs and staff have some level of knowledge in how Bills are drafted. Without doubt, this will help them better understand all the Bills that come before them.

Improving legislative process also implies a more organized, well-documented and capacitated legislative department to manage the process effectively for law making and manage the running of the House. Under this Strategic Plan, efforts will be made to build the capacity of MPs and Staff on the legislative process and in the specific area of legislative drafting.

2.4 Strengthen Research Capacity on Legislative business

As with oversight, passing good laws also depends on having relevant information. MPs need to be supported with timely, accurate and up to date information, particularly during the committee consideration stage of Bills that come to the House. A well informed parliament translates into well informed laws.

Research is therefore deemed key to the legislative business of the House. Research staff need effective training in legislative research, in order to maximize the accuracy and usefulness of information they produce. They must also have skills to present the information in a meaningful form for their target beneficiaries, the consumers – MPs. The latter often have very little time to review and internalize information due to competing demands on their time. Again, parliaments by their very nature are often made up of representatives with varying backgrounds and expertise. Additionally, the immense range of policy issues with which parliament deals (e.g. Energy Crises, or budget deficit) makes it impossible for any single MP to be an expert in all areas; therefore, it becomes absolutely critical that research information particularly during the lawmaking process is repackaged and presented in a meaningful form for use by MPs.

Under this Strategic Plan, the research capacity of Parliament in the area of legislation will be strengthened through the provision of regular adequate training support and skills to the Legislative department and research staff of parliament.

2.5 Build an Open and Transparent Legislative process

The growth of democracy around the world coupled with the availability of information has created an informed citizenry who believe they should have the right to provide input into the work of the legislature. In its Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) notes that “Opportunities shall be given for public input into the legislative process.” This idea is echoed and supported by many Parliamentary associations and institutions such as the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) and the Confederation of Parliaments of the Americas.

Furthermore, the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness* notes that “Parliament has a duty to actively engage citizens and civil society, without discrimination, in parliamentary processes and decision-making in order to effectively represent citizen interests and to give effect to the right of citizens to petition their government.”

Many parliaments have recognized the value of actively soliciting citizen input in the legislative process by providing mechanisms for citizens to share their policy ideas, their experiences with a given law, and their expertise on the problems that a given law may seek to address.

In keeping with this belief, during the period of this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will open up the legislative process to create the space for citizen participation. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for instance can provide Parliamentarians with useful information during the legislative process and which will serve to improve the laws passed by parliament. Another intervention geared towards improving Parliament's performance on its legislative mandate will be to increase Parliament's interaction with the public in the course of legislation.

2.6 Establish the Office of Parliamentary Legal Counsel

In general, the Office of a Parliamentary Counsel specializes in drafting legislation. The office works closely with government departments to translate various government policies into clear, effective and readable laws. The Office also provides specialist advice on parliamentary procedure and parliamentary law, and administrative services to the Speaker and Members of Parliament.

Recognizing the importance of the latter function, under this strategic plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will establish the Office of Parliamentary Legal Counsel to provide sound legal advice to the Speaker and the Parliamentary Service Commission. The office will also provide advice to Parliamentary Committees on the effects and practical implications of any new legislation and proposed amendments to existing legislation.

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN OVERSIGHT CAPACITY

Parliament is responsible for approving government's development plan or policy with its corresponding budget. This gives the Executive branch the room to implement its development agenda. Parliament's role does not stop at approving the budget, but rather, it has the responsibility to police the Executive as it spends the country's resources and ensure that monies approved are used for the purposes stated and also ensure that development is not skewed nor citizens short changed. The oversight role of parliament is very critical as weak oversight could result in under development and wasteful usage of the country's resources. As part of this strategic plan, the Parliament intends to strengthen the capacity of Members of Parliament to provide effective oversight over the Executive. The following initiatives will be undertaken.

3.1 Develop Standard Operating Procedures for Committees on Oversight

Oversight is one of the most important functions of parliaments. If carried out efficiently and effectively, it can lead to ensuring Executive compliance with legislative intent; improvements in the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of governmental operations – value for money; prevent Executive encroachment on legislative powers and prerogatives; and most importantly, reduce abuse, waste, fraud and dishonesty.

Under this Strategic Plan, efforts will be made to re-classify the Committee system and ensure that there exists a uniform framework that will guide all parliamentary oversight committees in carrying out this important function. This is to ensure that when committees embark on oversight/investigative visits, they are well prepared, understand the key processes before, during and after their oversight visits. It will also help committees adopt a standard way of reporting their oversight activities to the plenary.

3.2 Strengthen Committees for Effective Oversight

Apart from developing a uniform mechanism by which committees undertake their oversight functions, one important rule of successful oversight is that there must be intensive preparation and understanding of issues. Members of oversight committees and their staff must be provided proper training and equipped with all the necessary tools they need to carry out their oversight functions. Oversight activities should be preceded by a sufficient period of fact gathering and fact checking and this is only possible if Members and staff have the right skills.

Under this Strategic Plan, all oversight committees – Finance related, Portfolio, House and Joint committees - will be strengthened through the provision of regular, targeted capacity building in the areas that are critical for effective oversight. These will include

trainings on Oversight Tools and how to apply them, Budget Scrutiny, Public Financial Management and Community Score Card. The goal will be to equip MPs to efficiently police the Executive to ensure that resources allocated for development are used according to legislative intent.

3.2.1 Create a Government Assurances Committee

Parliamentary oversight and scrutiny is not only limited to ensuring that duty bearers implement programs and projects according to legislative intent, it also includes the task of ensuring that promises made, particularly before Parliament, are kept. That is the duty of a Government Assurances Committee. It is tasked with the responsibility of scrutinizing the assurances, promises, undertakings, etc., given by Ministers on the floor of the House. The Committee will normally report on the extent to which such assurances, promises, undertakings, etc., have been implemented; and when implemented, whether such implementation has taken place within the minimum time necessary and according to legislative intent. This is a very important tool for oversight and has been used by many Parliaments in Africa.

Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will create a Parliamentary Committee on Government Assurances for the purposes of ensuring that Ministers keep the promises they make to the people.

3.2.2 Strengthen the Public Accounts, Transparency and Finance Committees

The oversight and accountability functions of every parliament is led by two key committees – the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Finance Committee. The two committees have distinguished roles in the annual budget process. While the Finance Committee performs an *ex-ante* (before the budget is approved), ensuring that resources get allocated based on development goals and priorities, the PAC has an *ex-post* function – after the budget is implemented and audited.

PACs in particular are viewed as the apex for financial scrutiny and accountability. They are promoted as a crucial mechanism to facilitate transparency in government financial operations under a model in which parliament is considered to be clothed with the ‘power of the purse’. A model in which parliament confers responsibility to the Executive and, in return, the Executive is accountable to the legislature.

Any effort to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of public funds, particularly the national budget, must be led by the key finance oversight committees of parliament. Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone undertakes to provide targeted training and support to the PAC and Finance Committee as well as the Committee on Transparency so as to ensure that the front end, the implementation stage and the back end of the budget process are properly monitored.

3.2.3 Strengthen the Committee on Health

The lesson that the recent Ebola epidemic has taught Sierra Leone as well as other countries in the West African sub-region, is the fact that countries like Sierra Leone need a robust, well developed and well-staffed health system. Developing a robust health system calls for carefully thought out policies and legislations, properly funded health institutions and a well-educated population on how to deal with epidemics.

Under this Strategic Plan, the Health Committee will be provided with regular training and analyses tools to (1) ensure the development of long term health sector budgeting; and (2) oversee funds allocated for public health programs, campaigns and all health related interventions. An efficient use of health sector budgets ensures that citizens are able to receive healthcare that is affordable and available. An effective policing of health expenditure also ensures that emergency funds that are approved in the case of health emergencies are managed properly.

3.3.4. Strengthen the Committee on Natural Resources

The formulation of policy in a reasonably transparent, accountable, and inclusive manner represents a fundamental element of sound governance for democratic societies, even those in developing countries where meaningful public deliberation and consultation face additional challenges. These challenges are compounded when government policies implicate extractive industries, as the financial and political stakes are high and societal fissures potentially deep.

Parliaments play, or can play, a key role in helping ensure that natural resources are managed in a sustainable way, where good governance and economic development are central societal concerns. This is particularly the case for the extractive sector (mining, oil and gas), which is often highly concentrated and vulnerable to strong corruption pressures and threats to government integrity.

Sierra Leone is endowed with natural resources and for its citizens to enjoy the prosperity that comes with such an endowment, parliament, particularly the committee on Natural resources needs to play a central role in entire value chain of the extractives sector - from early decisions to extract resources, to the establishment of fiscal terms and governing legal frameworks, to revenue collection and the investment of resource wealth in a way that powers broad-based growth.

Under this Strategic Plan, the committee will be provided with regular trainings, manuals and guides to position it to play the central role that it ought to play so as to ensure that Sierra Leone's natural resources become a blessing rather than a curse.

3.3 Strengthen Research Capacity for Oversight

For effective decision-making, MPs and Committees need well researched information that is complete, accurate, timely, relevant and often confidential, to perform their legislative and oversight functions. The US Congressional Research Service (CRS) notes that 'with public policy issues growing more complex and political debate turning more contentious, the need for insightful and comprehensive analysis has become vital. Congress relies on CRS to marshal interdisciplinary resources, encourage critical thinking and create innovative frameworks to help legislators form sound policies and reach decisions on a host of difficult issues. These decisions will guide and shape the nation today and for generations to come'.

Research is key for all parliamentary function. A parliament that is able to deliver effectively on its mandate especially in oversight, thrives on the availability of timely, adequate and useful information. Without information, parliament could be considered partially blind. The only way parliament can contribute meaningfully in the allocation and oversight of national resources is if parliamentarians are well informed on the range of issues that confront them in the House.

Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will strengthen through regular training, the capacity of support committee Clerks as well as staff of the Library and Research Departments. A Research Manual and Handbook will also be developed to properly position them to support Members and their information needs.

3.4 Establish a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)

In the last few years, there has been a growth in the number of countries establishing Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) given that these Offices have come to be seen as

a very important resource that helps Parliaments to address bias toward spending and deficits, and more generally enhance fiscal discipline; raise quality of debate and scrutiny; and ultimately promote transparency and accountability.

The PBO provides a high quality research that is independent of the Executive in order to assist Members and committees. It provides services for the conduct of independent expert analysis of policy measures, including the scrutiny of the annual Budget estimates, international agreements and other documents introduced in the House. The quality of information that would be provided is critical in ensuring that MPs are well informed and knowledgeable on the issues that are brought to them for approval.

In some countries, the establishment of a PBO is part of a broader package of reforms. In others, it is Parliament's own initiative and this is the case with Sierra Leone. Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone undertakes to establish a PBO to support the work of Members, particularly in the budget process.

GOAL 4: MAKE PARLIAMENT ACCESSIBLE, OPEN AND REPRESENTATIVE

Members of Parliament are elected so they can represent the interest of their constituents in the legislature. A parliament that is truly representative, advocates for the needs of citizens and engenders citizens' participation in its activities. Members have the duty to inform constituents, actively involve them in parliamentary processes and above all, be accountable to the people they represent.

Being the people's representative means, the MP is in touch with his constituents, knows their needs and development aspirations and is able to advocate for the needs of the people in the House. Development policy must reflect the realities and aspirations of citizens and one of the main ways for citizens' views and priorities to be reflected at the national level is through their representatives in parliament. Misrepresentation or ineffective representation may lead to dissatisfaction, resentment for government, disorder and a breakdown in law and order on the part of citizens.

To enhance the representational function of the Parliament of Sierra Leone and bring Parliament closer to the people, the following interventions will be carried out.

4.1 Set up Constituency Offices

Constituency Offices play two vital roles. First, they enable the public to become active citizens and take part in parliamentary activities. Second and most importantly, they provide avenues and opportunities for MPs to interact with their constituents. Services that give effect to this are direct interaction with MPs and the opportunity to lobby representatives, report-backs from MPs and advice on how to access services from both public and private sector establishments. They also offer assistance with challenges that face local communities and in participating in the processes of Parliament, such as preparing submissions or drawing up and presenting petitions. MPs also attend Committee meetings, so that they can convey information about what happens there to the public.

Getting citizens to take an interest in and participate in governance processes augers well for development, as development then becomes all inclusive. When citizens participate in governance, they do not feel left out and are more willing to cooperate with governance institutions as they work to deliver goods and services. The setting up of constituency offices under this strategic plan is one of the ways through which parliament hopes to take representation and participation to the doorstep of the people. These offices will serve as a field office of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, where

citizens could go to for information on parliamentary activities as well as channel their concerns to their Members of Parliament.

4.2 Build Committee Capacity in Public Outreach and Representation

Parliament embodies the will of the citizens and therefore provides the space for the expression of that will. It provides a forum where issues of local and national importance are raised and debated and these debates may translate into policies. Effective representation requires MPs to continually interact with their constituents in order to understand their views and perspectives and to use various legislative or parliamentary processes such as questions, motions, resolutions and other oversight mechanisms to bring these to the attention of implementing institutions for redress. In many developing countries, MPs are expected to lobby for projects and financial support on behalf of their constituencies and to demonstrate their accomplishments to warrant a re-election.

Overall, the effectiveness of the representational role of an MP and for that matter the Legislature depends to a large extent on the quality of the interaction between constituents and MPs.

In order to fully represent the electorates, Members of Parliament need to cultivate the skill and habit of engaging citizens on various matters. Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will provide regular capacity building for Members in public outreach and representation. Annual regional outreach programs will also be instituted.

4.3 Streamline Media set up in Parliament

According to the AGORA portal on parliaments, “Parliamentarians and media have a symbolic relationship. MPs and the institution of parliament rely upon the media to deliver their message and opinions to the general public. On the other hand, the media plays an important role in monitoring the work of the MPs and parliament that can result in a critical analysis of their work. This relationship is unavoidable in a multi-party system in which the media is ensured of freedom of expression.”⁴

The relationship between the media and Parliament is often described as a ‘double-edged sword’. If handled properly, the media can be a good ally of parliament. It could also create unpleasant situations for the institution. Parliaments have been urged to accept the fact that the media have a role to play in observing and, sometimes, criticizing MPs and the institution of parliament. But such work must be done within the norms of good journalism.

⁴ www.agora-parl.org

To ensure journalists are meeting such standards, parliaments can promote the regulation of journalists and/or provide capacity building. Many parliaments across the globe have established codes of ethics for journalists. In some countries this is done through self-regulated press galleries in which the journalists and media outlets ensure all journalists that work at parliament are accredited and ensure minimum standards are met in their work. Other parliaments produce their own systems of accreditation and codes of ethics to which journalists must comply.

Focusing on the positive side of the work of the media, good and accurate reportage on the proceedings of parliament and all parliament related activities serves to inform the public, project the image of the institution and whip up public interest in the work of parliament. To achieve these, the Parliament of Sierra Leone as part of this Strategic Plan will develop a framework that will guide the operations of the media within and outside of the House.

4.4 Build Linkages with Media and Civil Society Organizations

Over the past two decades, civil society participation has become recognized as critical to the national ownership of development processes. An active civil society with the ability to suggest different methods of political participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance. In many countries, the relationship between Parliament on the one hand and CSO/Media on the other, have resulted in very strong platforms for advancing the goal of accountability and serving the needs of citizens. But there exists mutual mistrust between these two groups. Parliaments do not trust CSOs/Media and the reverse is true. To be beneficial, the relationship needs to be cultivated and nurtured.

If the relationship is well developed, the winners are ordinary citizens, the vulnerable voiceless whose views will be articulated by CSOs to Parliaments and eventually make their way into shaping policies and legislations.

Under this Strategic Plan, the Parliament of Sierra Leone will put in place a Parliament-CSO engagement plan, which will provide a framework to guide CSO engagement with parliament. It is also hoped that the framework will help build, nurture and strengthen the relationship between the two parties in the interest of accountability.

4.5 Institute Civic Education at Tertiary Levels

In most African countries, there is a generally perceived lack of knowledge about political institutions, particularly Parliaments. In particular there are very low levels of knowledge about, and interest in, politics amongst young people. This has serious implications for most of Africa's young democracies as democracy is a system of governance that relies on an informed citizenry for its efficacy and legitimacy. Without active, knowledgeable citizens the forms of democratic representation remain empty. Without vigilant, informed citizens there is no check on potential tyranny.

To enhance the youth's understanding of parliament and develop their interest in politics and political institutions, Parliament will take civic education to the schools starting from tertiary institutions. A joint team of MPs and staff from the Public Affairs department undertake regular civic education tours in tertiary institutions to educate students who may have attained voting age, on Parliament, its activities and political institutions in Sierra Leone.

4.6 Develop Clear Rules and Procedures for Constituency Development Funds

In recent years Africa has been witnessing the burgeoning of fledgling democratic institutions, notable among these is the mushrooming of democratically elected National Assemblies/Parliaments. This healthy development in the democratization process across the political landscape in Africa has had a catalytic effect on the quality of representation where citizens at the grassroots are becoming increasingly assertive and conscious of their entitlements in regard to the provision of constituency services. Elected representatives across Africa, faced with increased citizens' demands by their constituents for the provision of constituency services, including the provision of basic social amenities, have been grappling with ways to meet these challenges.

The most significant measure adopted by some legislatures in Africa is the establishment of CDFs. These are funds allocated by central government to MPs to help execute development projects in their constituencies. The funds are a direct transfer of budgeted funds from central government to parliamentary districts for financing of local development. Making the case for CDFs, its proponents contend that African legislatures are under intense pressure to provide constituency service, and their reelection depends on the extent to which they are able to deliver services to their constituents.

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has had a recent experiment with CDFs. While commendable, there is the need to put in place clear rules and procedures to guide the administration of CDFs otherwise, benefits that will inure to citizens will be lost. Under this Strategic Plan, clear rules and procedures for the administration of CDFs will be developed.

Implementation Road Map: Strategic Plan of the Parliament of Sierra Leone 2016-2019

| Strategic Objective 1: Strengthen Institutional Capacity | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Activity | Inputs | Responsible Division/ Section | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
| 1.1 Streamlining the Role and Functions of the Parliamentary Service Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PSC Act 2007 reviewed to bring more clarity on the role of the commission b. Study visits to sister Parliaments in the sub-region | Office of Clerk, PSC | X | | X |
| | | | X | | |
| 1.2 Delineation of the Role and Functions of the Office of the Clerk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clearly define the role of the Clerk (properly defined Terms of Reference) b. Positions of Deputy Clerk in charge of Administration and Finance and Deputy Clerk for Legislative Business created | Office of Clerk | X | X | |
| | | | X | | |
| 1.3 Making Parliament Autonomous | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Parliament is administratively and financially autonomous through the engagement of the Executive | Office of Clerk, PSC | X | X | X |
| 1.4 Enhancement of institutional capacity for: Administration and Management; Lawmaking and Oversight; and Representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. HR Policy that comprehensively addresses all HR related issues adopted b. Financial Management Policy adopted c. Training and capacity building for all staff implemented regularly | Office of Clerk, HR Deptt. | X | | |
| | | | X | | |
| | | | X | X | X |
| 1.5 Mainstreaming of Gender in Parliamentary Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gender policy for parliament developed b. Gender considerations reflected in hiring practices c. Gender considerations in all Parliamentary engagements with partners | Office of Clerk, PSC, HR Deptt. | X | | |
| | | | X | X | X |
| | | | X | X | X |
| 1.6 Improvement of Donor Coordination and Partner Relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PACO staff trained in networking and fundraising b. PACO staff trained in financial management and | PACO | X | X | X |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| | reporting | | | | |
| | c. PACO staff trained in monitoring and evaluation/results based management | | X | X | X |
| | | | X | X | X |
| 1.7 Enhance-ment of the use of ICT towards a "Paperless Parliament" | a. Official parliament e-mail system created for staff and MPs | ICT | X | | |
| | b. Parliament website enhanced and regularly updated | | X | X | X |
| | c. ICT equipment such as desktops and tablets provided for MPs and staff | | X | | |
| | d. All parliamentary documents are circulated electronically | | | | |
| | e. Internet connectivity in Parliament is upgraded and wireless access to internet provided | | X | | |
| Strategic Objective 2: Strengthen Legislative Capacity | | | | | |
| Activity | Inputs | Responsible Division/Section | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2019 |
| 2.1 Review of Standing Orders to strengthen legislative role of MPs | a. Standing Orders reviewed b. Sensitize MPs on new Standing Orders | Office of Clerk, PSC, MPs, Legislative Department | X X | | |
| 2.2 Streamlining of the relationship between Sector Committees and the Legislative Committee | a. Standing Orders reviewed to bring clarity to relationship between Sector Committees and Legislative Committee | Office of Clerk, PSC, MPs, Legislative Committee, Committees Department | X | | |
| 2.3 Building the capacity of MPs and Staff on the Legislative Process and Legislative Drafting | a. Training for MPs and Staff on Legislative process b. Training for MPs and staff on Legislative drafting c. Benchmarking study visits | PSC, Legislative Department, Committees, | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 2.4 Strengthen-ing of Research Capacity on | a. Training for Research, Committee and Legislative department staff on legislative research | Library, Research and | X | X | X X |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Legislative business | b. Develop Research Manual and Guide on Legislative Business | Documentation | X | X | |
| 2.5 Building an Open and Transparent Legislative process | a. Number of public consultations on Bills increased b. Training for MPs and staff on public consultations on Bills c. Develop a structured mechanism for public consultation and input on all Bills | Committees Department, Public Relations Department, ICT | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 2.6 Establishment of the Office of Parliamentary Legal Counsel | a. Office of Parliamentary Legal Counsel established b. Parliamentary Counsel recruited and trained | Office of Clerk | X X | | |
| Strategic Objective 3: Strengthen Oversight Capacity | | | | | |
| Activity | Inputs | Responsible Division/Section | 2016/17 | 2018 | 2019 |
| 3.1 Development of Standard Operating Procedures for Committees on Oversight | a. Oversight Manual for Committees developed | Committees Department | | X | |
| 3.2 Strengthening Committees for Effective Oversight | a. Training for Committees on Oversight Tools and how to apply them b. Training for MPs on Budget Scrutiny and Public Financial management c. Training for MPs on Community Score Card d. Manual on Community Score Card developed | Committees Department, Public Relations Department | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 3.3 Creation of a Government Assurances Committee | a. Provision made for a Government Assurances Committee in the Standing Orders b. Benchmarking visit to a sub-regional Parliament with properly functioning Government Assurances Committee | PSC, Office of Clerk | X | X | |
| 3.4 Strengthening the Public Accounts, Transparency and Finance | a. Training for the PAC on Oversight and How to Conduct Public Hearings | PAC | X | X | X |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Committees | b. Develop a PAC Guide for Members | | | | |
| | c. Providing Committees with expert and technical support on a need basis | | X | X | X |
| | d. Training for Finance Committee and Transparency Committee on Budget Scrutiny | | X | X | X |
| | e. Secretariat for the PAC, Finance and Transparency Committees is established | | X | X | X |
| 3.5 Strengthening the Committee on Health | a. Training for the Health Committee on long term Health Sector Budgeting | Health Committee, PSC | X | X | X |
| | b. Training for the Health Committee on Oversight of Health Sector Budgets and Programs | | X | X | X |
| | c. Providing technical experts to help the Committee on a need basis | | | | |
| | | | X | X | X |
| 3.6 Strengthening the Committee on Natural Resources | a. Training for Committee on Oversight of Extractive Industries and Natural resources | Mines & Minerals Committee, PSC. | X | X | X |
| | | | X | X | X |
| | b. Manuals and Guides for Oversight of the Extractive Sector developed | | | | |
| 3.7 Strengthening research capacity for oversight | a. Training for Committee staff/secretariat on legislative research | Committees Department, Library & Research Department | X | X | X |
| | b. Secondment of staff of the Research Department to Committees secretariat | | X | | |
| | c. Research Manual for Staff developed | | X | | |
| | | | | | |
| 3.8 Establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office | a. Parliamentary Budget Office established | PSC, Office of Clerk, PAC, Finance Committee | | X | |
| | b. Experts recruited for Parliamentary Budget Office | | | X | |

| Strategic Objective 4: Make Parliament, Accessible, Open and Representative | | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Activity | Inputs | Responsible Division/Section | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2019 |
| 4.1 Setting up of Constituency Offices | a. Build/establish Constituency Offices | | X | X | X |
| | b. Staff recruited and trained for constituency offices | | X | X | X |
| 4.2 Building Committee Capacity in Public Outreach and Representation | a. Training for MPs and Staff on Outreach and citizens' engagement | Public Relations, etc. | X | X | X |
| | b. Annual regional outreach activities instituted and implemented | | X | X | X |
| 4.3 Streamlining Media set up in Parliament | a. Minimum standards for media accreditation into the parliamentary Press Corps developed | Public Relations Deptt., etc. | X | | |
| | b. Guidelines and Code of Ethics for Press Corps developed | | X | | |
| 4.4 Building of Linkages with Media and Civil Society Organizations | a. Parliament-CSO/Media engagement plan developed | Public Relations Deptt., etc. | X | | |
| | b. CSO/Media participate in select Parliamentary activities | | X | X | X |
| 4.5 Instituting Civic Education at Tertiary Levels | a. Annual sensitization programs in all Tertiary institutions | Public Relations Deptt., PACO, etc., | X | X | X |
| 4.6 Development of clear Rules and Procedures for Constituency Development Funds | a. Rules and procedures for the utilization of Constituency Development Funds developed | | X | | |
| | b. Sensitize MPs on the rules and procedures for the utilization of Constituency Development Funds | | X | | |



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