



**Peace Africa Alliance
Consulting, Education & Training Centre**

56 Ranchero Rise, N.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T3G 1E2
Phone: 001-403-803-5320
Website: www.paacet.org

PAACET MONTHLY UPDATES – JULY 2016

Welcome to the second edition of our monthly updates – July, 2016. This edition provides news and events, but also suggests critical accountable measures to contribute to curb existing human rights challenges in Sierra Leone, Liberia and South Sudan. This is a drive by PAACET to contribute to promote the protection of human and people's rights. We will look at the events at country specific levels.

SIERRA LEONE:

PAACET continues to comply with national legal provisions to meet the legal requirements to operate in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Some achievements made in this direction include; profile presentation and introduction of PAACET and its Africa Regional Director, Charles Lahai to line Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs). Institutional engagement to build strategic linkages with Universities and other peace, human rights and development organisations in order to promote development cooperation in Sierra Leone.

In line with this, PAACET has consulted and established linkages with the Njala University covering the two campuses in Njala and Bo, line Ministries such as:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST),
- Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA),
- Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA),

- National Youth Commission of Sierra Leone (NAYCOM),
- Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone (HRC-SL),
- Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (SLANGO)

As well as civil society peace and human rights organisations including:

- FAMBUL TOK Sierra Leone,
- Center for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA),
- Defense for Children International – Sierra Leone (DCI-SL),
- National Human Rights Defenders Network (NHRDN),
- Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD),
- Center for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL),
- Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI),
- Campaign for Good Governance (CGG),
- Advocacy Movement Network (AMNET),
- West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP),
- West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF),
- Institute for Governance Reform (IGR),
- Amnesty International- Sierra Leone Chapter (AI-SL),
- Youth and Child Advocacy Network (YACAN),
- Non State Actors (NSA),
- National Elections Watch (NEW),

- Democracy and Development Associates – Sierra Leone (DADA-SL),
- Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR),
- Bo District Human Rights Committee,
- Bo District Civil Society, and
- Society for Learning and Yearning for Equal Opportunities (SLYEO).

PAACET has also registered with the West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF).

Project ideas and need for stronger partnerships was key in four project ideas identified as follows;

- ✚ Construction of a peace centre at Bomaru, in the Eastern region of Sierra Leone and where the first gun shot was fired in 1991 that commenced the civil war in Sierra Leone. This initiative is to sustain the notion that never again will Sierra Leoneans tolerate any situation that has the tendency of promoting conflict; neither will they embrace war of any type. This center will serve a multi-purpose function including a peace research library, hostels, conference rooms, reconciliation and mediation rooms, training halls, recreational facilities, among others. It will also be used as a center for excursion and research for international and national students.
- ✚ Citizens engagement in civic education through nation-wide education and training targeting youth, students, motorists, market women, and particularly first-time voters and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Key messages will be developed to cascade maximum understanding of civil and political rights and tolerance. The paradigm of Paolo Frere's Regenerated Frerean Literacy to Empower Community Techniques

(REFLECT) will be useful in driving this initiative. This initiative will be particularly useful as Sierra Leone moves closer to its Presidential and General elections in 2018.

- ✚ Support to Young Single Ebola Mothers through livelihoods training and support in small scale farming and gardening to improve their skills in micro enterprise development that will enable them to cater for the education, health and other needs of their children.

- ✚ Partner with other established local Human Rights NGOs to conduct two quarterly seminars, symposiums or workshops in human rights and peace education in at least six institutions to include Universities, Colleges, Poly-Techniques, Secondary School and Civil Society Organisations across Sierra Leone.

Our nature as a learning organization enabled us to hold consultative meetings with senior colleagues of the southern region civil society and human rights sector, including;

1. ***Center for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL),***
2. ***Peace and Reconciliation Movement (PRM)***

After a welcoming remark and briefing on PAACET's organizational background, Jeremy Simbo, Programme Manager for CARL (and also doubles as the Chairperson for the Bo district Civil Society Forum) expressed appreciation to the Board and management of PAACET for their thought to establish PAACET in Sierra Leone. He committed, on his organisation's behalf, to work with PAACET in the areas of human rights issues, human rights education within

the precinct of rights demand, knowledgeable-ability of rights, and rule of law among others.

Similarly, Andrew from Peace & Reconciliation Movement in Sierra Leone (PRMSL) expressed gratitude for the steps taken by PAACET and their models of indigenous reconciliation. While maintaining that PRM is a local peace building organization, he said that PRMSL has made remarkable gains in the areas of traditional conflict resolution, reconciliation and Alternative Dispute Resolution. He added that PRM has partnered with strategic allies including Conciliation Resources.

Further discussion of key human rights issues and concerns revealed that there are challenging human rights and social justice issues in the district that are mostly concerned with state actors. CARL and PRMSL believe that PAACET can work with other players to mobilize resources to address them. These are urgent growing concerns, but more critical to these concerns were as follows;

- ✓ There are no sitting or resident magistrates in some regional districts and district headquarter towns like Pujehun district and Matru Jong in the Bonthe district. This is further exacerbated by the fact that even though Sierra Leone produces lawyers from its highly esteemed Law School every year, the lawyers shy away from going to practice or work in the more remote districts. There is a high concentration of lawyers in Freetown, the capital city. This may be suggestive that their services are not only better paid for in the capital city but the close proximity to professional services and other opportunities within western context are impregnable in rural cities.
- ✓ The high handedness of the police, backed by high demonstration of professional misdemeanor has presented several unanswered questions. What came out clearly was that the Police as a state institution and policemen who are not only mandated by law to provide certain services

in the areas of protection of life and property (SECURITY), but are also paid from Sierra Leonean tax payers money are not up to the task. As it was put: "*the police are more of politicians*, supporting the current government". Some junior and senior police officers are quoted as saying "we serve the government of the day". This statement sounds quite duplicitous and may imply that the police are supporting state officials and not the people or the state. The rule of law however, undeniably guarantees that the security forces, the Police, the Military, the Prisons, etc., should be subjected under civilian control. Going beyond just what this would mean interprets that "power is in the hands of the people" (Bernie Konkin, 2016 Information, Education and Communication - IEC message, Alberta, Canada). The police are said to have gone for four months without receiving their regular monthly ration of one 50-kilogram bag of rice. Further to that is that they have been supplied new uniforms for which they (the police) are required to pay. No rain gear has been provided amidst the heavy rains. This is a misstep and the police are said not to be happy with this situation. This is a potential intervention area for PAACET.

- ✓ The maximum security prison, previously called the Pademba Road Prisons has been renamed "Correctional Center". As is understood, it is only the nomenclature that seems to have changed, and not the conditions. The prison conditions are said to be deplorable and jail conditions are exceedingly appalling. While detention facilities are said to be poor, most people are held in detention for longer periods before most are later found not guilty of the crime for which they have served long detention periods. This relates with PAACET's collaborative engagement with the John Howard Society of Manitoba in "conflict prevention and building peace", "working with people in jail and those that have been released in communities". These restorative justice interventions were discussed with the

Society within the context of community service and community correction vs. incarceration correction.

- ✓ Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) issues are also on the increase in the district. Most crimes were identified as being committed by persons in high positions or “high personality” as they called it. The high prevalence with excessive counts and undue delays has left victims and their families with no less an option but to settle for indoor negotiations and bury the hatchet. Traditional stereotypes are also closely associated to this.
- ✓ The position of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice still remains inseparable and the appointment is made by the President. This is a cause for concern. These positions are preferred to be separate and distinctive.
- ✓ Anti-Corruption challenges are huge. In both the first and second and last tenure of the President of Sierra Leone, fighting corruption has been very high on the government’s priority. For two consecutive terms, corruption has remained a debilitating national growth factor.
- ✓ Land grabbing is notably a concern and is increasingly accumulating mistrust, grudge and resentment in the hearts and minds of indigenes and their traditional power structures and government. Being a natural endowment, land has a natural connection to man. While there is no distinction between government and private lands, multi-national companies are also grabbing land from local peoples and communities through manipulative legal procedures, thus distorting indigenous community livelihoods. There is a high need to advocate for sound policy on land that ensures that communities and individuals are involved in all negotiations to give out their lands to companies or individuals.
- ✓ Conflicts between community residents and state officials have led to situations where the residents in Kono in the eastern region have vowed not to recognise the resident

Minister of State. This is not a good scenario to reckon with and will therefore need prompt intervention.

- ✓ Politics is all about numbers not about quality. Local party leaders with no civic education or understanding are using their own networks to influence and use youth to promote the leader’s own interest in party and national leadership.
- ✓ Cost of living is regrettably higher and has the potential to limit the enjoyment of our fragile peace. The TRC notes the antecedents of the civil conflict within the context of poverty and lack of access to resources.
- ✓ The civil society landscape is polarised. Most civil society actors have limited knowledge in existing public policies as well as international human rights instruments. There is a crucial need for PAACET to prioritise this component of trainings for CSOs.
- ✓ Natural disaster poses an imminent threat to Sierra Leone. One year after the last torrential rains which caused heavy flooding and subsequent displacement of communities and peoples, Sierra Leone is still not up to the task. There is a need for public education on environmental protection and safe-guarding measures. This falls within PAACET’s environmental justice component.
- ✓ Ebola survivors mostly hold the feeling of marginalisation for two reasons. While free treatment is still a challenge, there is absolutely no medication for such treatment. Secondly, survivors are not being consulted as to their own interest areas for follow-up trainings and instead are being placed only wherever the government determines there is room in existing programs. Thus capacity building is failing.
- ✓ There are feelings of intimidation from government officials, and yet there are no forums where people can meet and vent out their feelings on such matters. Even in situations where people may want to demand their rights to peaceful protests they are mostly denied clearance by the police. A

cited example is about the Deputy Internal Affairs Minister who ordered the arrest of a journalist in Kenema in the Eastern region to be taken to Freetown in the Western area (the country's capital city) on detention, on the ground that the said journalist had uttered false statements about the Minister's personality. The journalist was detained on alleged "orders from above" for four days. This is certainly an area in our seditious libel law that needs repealing or amendment.

Some fundamental challenges associated to the issues highlighted above were identified as follows:

- ❖ Necessary funding to address the human rights challenges is low.
- ❖ The knowledge base of civil society organisations to articulate and challenge the issues using existing national and international human rights instruments is inadequate and therefore needs increased capacity building and human rights training.
- ❖ CSOs are at par, with limited collaboration between them. There is seemingly inactive North-South and West-East collaboration among CSOs which makes the CSO landscape potentially highly polarised.
- ❖ Some CSOs interference in national politics limits public trust and confidence.
- ❖ International donors restrict their funding windows and thus make it more open to international organisations rather than to national organisations.
- ❖ An enabling environment is not created by government. This results in a lot of speculations and insinuations, from dysfunctional state machinery to limited and/or restrictive public policy engagement, etc.
- ❖ Land grabs by foreign multilateral agencies that are perceived to be supported by government. A case in point is the SOCFIN in Malen in the Pujehun district. The President of Sierra Leone, H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma was quoted to have said that "Civil Society are allowed by government to do their work but their responses are not

acceptable, and that government will soon start clamping down on them". This is understood to be intimidating. CARL believes that if these conditions are not seriously addressed, it may lead to severe tensions. CARL also cited a recent scenario that led to confrontations between members of the traditional Poro society and some inhabitants in the Bonthe town in the Bonthe district which the police and military did not have the manpower to control. CARL has been collaborating with other agencies to follow up the matter in Bonthe.

These presumptions presuppose that coming events are casting their shadows, as such the following suggestions were made:

- The need for external actors as Sierra Leone moves closer to its national / general elections
- Need for vetting of politicians
- Establishing PAACET's Africa Regional office in Sierra Leone can create confidence in CSOs.

Conclusively, the feeling that CSOs are not better placed to utilize their space does not speak well for a thriving democracy. This will lead to shrinking their importance and watering down their value.

Civil society views the current situation as one that puts Sierra Leone on the cross roads. If the main opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) or other political parties lose the coming national/general elections, will Sierra Leone be seen to revert to a one-party state? If the ruling All People's Congress (APC) loses the coming national / general elections, will their excesses bring them to book? Whatever the situation may be, what will be the position of the human rights defenders even before that? Who will defend the human rights defenders?

It is imperative that collaborative and joint partnerships for resource mobilisation to confront and address these challenges is the best way forward for a nation that is still

recovering from an eleven (11) year old civil war – SIERRA LEONE!

LIBERIA:

We are still on with our intended expanded operations in Liberia. William Bwewusa, a colleague currently working with the UN, has been very supportive of our efforts and is making significant contributions towards the travel of the Africa Regional Director. Due to unforeseen circumstances William the proposed trip to Liberia has been postponed to the second week of September. However, a detailed travel plan has been developed and sent to William for pre-planning purposes.

SOUTH SUDAN:

Our planned engagement with political leaders and other stakeholders in South Sudan is still on course. Following PAACET's letter to Governor Louis Lobong Lojore of Namorunyang State and other statesmen and UN officials in May this year, several follow up actions have ensued, especially from citizens in the diaspora. Our attempt to visit South Sudan and participate in the peace process is still under consideration. Augustino Lucano, Director, and Janyce Konkin, Executive Director both resident in Calgary, Alberta, Canada are working relentlessly to keep our shoulders to the wheel. Augustino has been in touch with key stakeholders back in South Sudan and will be committing one day a week on this issue from that end. We are told that the governor has made inroads to get the Toposa to finish the construction of the road to the Peace Center which is situated on the Didinga land. This is a good step towards the peace initiative. Once this is done, the peace process between the Didinga and the Toposa will commence.

We are working flat-out on relevant projects for Sierra Leone, including the BMA application for the Para Medical Department of the Njala University in Bo. PAACET Africa Regional Director will take this discussion

forward with the relevant authorities in recognition of our legal status in Sierra Leone.

Apologies for the non-display of photos due to photography technology. We assure you of some better quality photos in our next edition.

For further information, please contact us on the contact details above.

-----**See Next Edition**-----