

Editorial

This second edition of *2gether* focuses on our support to mechanisms and processes in the justice sector. Successes of our work include UNIPSIL-sponsored justice sector fora – which create a platform for justice sector stakeholders to discuss human rights flaws and map out strategies to improve justice delivery – UNDP’s support to the Saturday Gender Based Violence (GBV) courts – a mechanism for the speedy adjudication of GBV cases – and UNICEF’s assessment on the child Justice system, aimed at strengthening the referral mechanism and the management of cases of children in contact with the justice system.

The lead story of this issue, instead, tells about the joint efforts of Programme 2 partners in supporting the Fourah Bay College Post-Graduate Programme on Human Rights and Conflict Resolution. In addition, a very important event supported by UNIPSIL was the National Consultative Conference on the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, the outcome of which will be the framework for our support in this area.

The end of the year has also been intense with regard to the commemoration of several human rights days. In the framework of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UNIPSIL and OHCHR jointly released a Report on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the title “*Moving forward together: from national commitment to concrete action*”. The International Human Rights Day, instead, was also the occasion to award four Sierra Leonean journalists in recognition of their outstanding completion of a training on journalism and human rights supported by UNIPSIL.

Investing in peace and human rights education

Programme 2 partners support Fourah Bay College Post-Graduate Programme on Human Rights and Conflict Resolution



*Launching ceremony, right to left: Prof. Andrea de Guttry (Scuola Superiore Sant’ Anna, Pisa in Italy); Beatriz Balbin (Chief of Human Rights Section, UNIPSIL); Italian Ambassador to Cote d’Ivoire; Hon. Ebum Jusu (Sierra Leone’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs) and ??*

**FREETOWN** - As part of its focus on building capacities for strengthening the rule of law, access to justice and human rights protection in Sierra Leone, programme 2 partners together with the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies of Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, launched a Post-Graduate MSc. Programme in Human Rights and Conflict Resolution on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2011. The event followed a two-day curriculum finalizing and pedagogical workshop which attracted participation from UNDP, UNIPSIL and UNICEF, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) and university professors. The MSc. programme in Human Rights and Conflict Resolution is meant to enhance national capacity for the protection of human rights and prevention of conflict. It acknowledges

continues at page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

‘Reporting on Rights’ workshop
PAGE 2

National Conference on the UPR
PAGE 3

District Justice Sector Fora bring first results
PAGE 4

Special GBV Saturday Courts
PAGE 5

Report on the rights of Persons with disabilities released
PAGE 5

Supporting the Single Leg Amputee Sports Club
PAGE 6

An Assessment on Child Justice System
PAGE 6

Celebrating the International Human Rights Day 2011
PAGE 7

## Investing in peace and human rights education

the need to shift from a “fire brigade” approach to one of conflict resolution and prevention. The programme will be delivered by the University of Sierra Leone, FBC Campus in partnership with Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, Pisa in Italy.

“Education is the key to development and peace but ignorance is a disease” remarked one of the speakers at the launching ceremony stressing the need to promote studies that are critical to conflict resolution. Given Sierra Leone’s volatile situation in the pre-conflict era, when there was gross disregard for fundamental human rights, rule of law and weak capacity to effectively manage and pre-

vent conflict both at national and local levels, the postgraduate programme will be relevant in redefining people’s views and approach to conflict, ensure improved knowledge and respect for human rights and ultimately contribute to sustainable peace, security and development.

The proposed core courses of the post-graduate programme include: International Human Rights Concepts and Theory, International Humanitarian Law, Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice (1), Conflict Resolution (11), and African Development and Promotion of

Human Rights in Africa, Mediation, Preventing Diplomacy: the role of the UN system in Mediation, Human Rights of Women and Children, Research Methodology, Conflict sensitive approaches to Governance (Political Reconciliation, Inclusive processes, Civil Society, Engagement...) and African traditional approaches to Conflict Resolution.

Through these courses, students will be able to have a better understanding of the analytical framework of mediation processes and an improved ability to regulate and manage conflict situations.

*The programme will contribute to promote a culture of peace in West Africa*

### Reporting on Rights

Once a week for eight weeks, 24 Sierra Leonean journalists from print and radio media outlets gathered to learn about, review and discuss international human rights instruments, local laws and “rights media” story ideas.

The “Reporting on Rights” workshop series ran every Tuesday evening, from October 11 to November 29<sup>th</sup>, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and was hosted by JHR – Journalists for Human Rights, a Canadian-based media development organization working with local media outlets to enhance awareness of human rights issues. JHR was supported by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and the Human Rights Office of UNIPSIL. The U.S. Embassy also helped out by donating four prizes, two digital cameras and two audio recorders, to the Human



From left to right: Sheik Daud Fofanah, Tamba Tengbeh, Kadijatu Savage, Ahmed Sesay

Rights Reporting Awards presented on December 10<sup>th</sup>, International Human Rights Day.

Specific attention was paid to ensuring the participation of women journalists and it turned out that 13 of the 24 participants were women. Ages of participants ranged from 25-46 and both print and radio were represented with slightly more participants from the print media (16 out of 24 participants were from a variety of newspapers in Freetown).

The workshop series was intensive. A high level of commitment and dedication was required from each participant. “I was so impressed at the attendance, effort and enthusiasm displayed,” said Stephen Douglas, Country Director of JHR, “it helped restore my faith in the Salone media.”

Each journalist was required to participate in sessions that featured assignments, discussions, role-plays and other interactive, educational activities. The “Reporting on Rights” workshop series culminated with an awards presentation at the International Human Rights Day celebration held at the YWCA. Four Human Rights Reporting Awards were presented with the digital cameras and digital audio recorders to four deserving journalists. A gala dinner was held continuing the December 10<sup>th</sup> celebrations where workshop participants were presented with certificates, reporting kits including memory sticks, notebooks, pens and carry bags.

## National Conference on the Universal Period Review (UPR)



**FREETOWN** - The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, in collaboration with the office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with support from UNIPSIL/OHCHR held a National Conference to review the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

for Sierra Leone on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2011. The Conference, with the theme *"Developing a roadmap and strategies for the implementation of the UPR recommendations"*, attracted over 200 participants and was opened by the President of Sierra Leone Dr. Ernst Bai Koroma who delivered the Key Note address. The President expressed continued commitment to the implementation of the recommendations and underlined treaty body reporting, and the review of legislation to comply with human rights standards as recommendations to be implemented urgently. Also present were cabinet ministers, members of Parliament, other personalities in government, civil society, and international development partners. In his statement, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, who led the UPR process, highlighted key recommendations and the challenges ahead, and proposed a Mid term review in 2013.

The Conference reviewed the UPR recommendations in 4 different thematic areas: treaty body reporting and interaction with UN human rights mechanisms; constitutional and legal reform; policy formulation and strategies to address women, girls and other rights; and measures and institutional mechanisms, economic, social and cultural rights, poverty eradication. Recommendations were discussed and a link with the implementation of recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was drawn. Participants agreed on priorities, strategies, lead ministries and participating stakeholders. The two days event concluded with the adoption of a Conference Resolution and



Participants map out strategies to implement UPR recommendations at the UPR National Conference Organized by the Human Rights Commission and the Government of Sierra Leone with the support of UNIPSIL Human Rights Section and OHCHR

an outcome report with details of priorities, tasks and responsible actors. Following up on this outcome, the Office of the President wrote to all relevant Ministries and Departments directing that the UPR recommendations be mainstreamed into their programmes.

The Universal Periodic Review is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. The UPR is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfill their human rights obligations. The UPR was created by the UN General Assembly resolution 60/251 on 15 March 2006, which established the Human Rights Council itself. The first cycle has concluded in late 2011 and every member state has had its human rights records reviewed.

The final UPR report for Sierra Leone was adopted at the 18th session of the Human Rights Council on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011 and the UPR process for Sierra Leone had government's and other stakeholder's commitment. It advanced 129 recommendations some of which are either under implementation or already implemented. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, with support of UNIPSIL Human Rights Section and OHCHR actively participated in the process.

UNIPSIL HRS/ OHCHR will continue to work with the HRCSL to mainstream UPR recommendations in the overall development process of government.



## **District Justice Sector Fora supported by UNIPSIL HRS bring first results**



A Justice Sector Forum held in Waterloo, Western Area, rural, in October 2011. Sitting below on the right and standing, two UNIPSIL staff

Since March 2011, UNIPSIL supported the Justice Sector *coordination fora* to address monitoring findings in the area of administration of justice in different districts of the country. The *fora*, steered by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL), aim at creating a platform for justice sector stakeholders to examine the performance of justice sector institutions in the districts, discuss human rights flaws arising out of systemic and structural failings and map out strategies to improve justice delivery. The initiative was in response to the recurrent monitoring findings and challenges of the justice sector institutions, which indicated lapses and coordination flaws among the various actors within the administration of justice chain. Promoting coordination among the key actors through these *fora* has contributed to address some of the issues without requiring much resources.

A total of 8 justice sector *coordination fora* were held in 2011. The experience revealed that a common thread runs through issues needing urgent attention within the justice sector. The inadequate number of Magistrates to adjudicate cases is a common factor leading to delays in administration of

Justice which further results in prolonged detention and overcrowding of detention facilities. Another backlash of this shortage is the fact that Justices of the Peace adjudicate cases that should otherwise be solely handled by magistrates, including rape cases. Legal aid challenges, poor documentation in prisons, challenges in accessing medical reports for victims of SGBV, logistical and capacity challenges hampering effective and professional investigation of cases by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) were also extensively discussed during these *fora*.

The justice sector *fora* continue to score huge successes in every district where they have been organized. Changes in the justice sector as a result of these forums include provision of transportation for suspects to and from court, adjustment of the most pressing needs in detention centers, including renovations of cells and toilets and provision of mattresses and buckets for drinking water.

In Kenema, missing files of prisoners in the State Prison have been replaced, legal aid is now provided to SGBV victims in courts and over 50 remand and 15 trial cases received speedy trials at the magistrate court.

Bonthe has for the longest time not

had a magistrate for the district. The *forum* was used as a platform to successfully advocate for the Resident Magistrate based in Bo to hold sessions in Bonthe Island. Monitoring visits have confirmed that the Resident magistrate started sittings in Bonthe Island at least 3 days in a month. In several cases, people wrongfully imprisoned had regained their freedom as a result of highlighting their matter in these *forum*. In Bonthe and Pujehun, a large number of rape cases previously compromised by traditional leaders and the local court were transferred to police for further investigation and in some cases were charged to court.

The resident magistrate in Kono now organizes trials on weekends for backlog cases pending in court. Also, four juveniles in the Sefadu state prisons who had been detained for over 8 months were identified as such and released after the resident magistrate visited the facility following the *forum*.

In Makeni, the *forum* has addressed the delay in charging SGBV cases to court due to late endorsement of medical forms by the District Medical Officer. To circumvent the obstacle, now the SLP and the Magistrate proffer 'hold up charges' while awaiting medical results.

## **The Special Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Saturday Courts**

### **A Mechanism for Speedy Adjudication of GBV cases and matters on Women's Rights**

A new glimpse of hope for people who advocate for the legal protection of women and their right to access justice is now placed on the Special Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Saturday Courts, a mechanism for the speedy adjudication of GBV cases and matters involving women's rights.

GBV perpetrated against women and girls continues to be one of the most prevalent and pervasive problems in post-conflict Sierra Leone, particularly at the provincial level where they are constantly being defiled with little or no chances to access justice. As a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of all form of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Sierra Leone is required to develop policies and enact laws to enhance protection of women and end impunity on violence against women.

The Judiciary of Sierra Leone (JoSL) is making efforts to ensure that it deliv-

ers on its mandate to provide speedy and quality justice services to the population. The most recent initiative of the judiciary in this regard, guided by the Chief Justice and consultant Master & Registrar, was the establishment of the Special GBV Saturday Courts.

The JoSL instituted the Special GBV Saturday Courts on 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2011 with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its purpose is to accelerate the speed in adjudicating over GBV cases and matters arising from the three (3) Gender Acts: Domestic Violence Act, 2007, Devolution of Estate Act, 2007 and Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorces Act, 2009. The courts are meant to clear off a huge backlog of cases estimated at 700 and eventually enhance women's access to justice.

This Saturday court initiative is being piloted with 3 Magistrate Courts (2 in

Freetown and 1 in Makeni), and 1 High Court in Freetown. It brings an immeasurable value to the efforts at promoting women's rights in Sierra Leone. It not only removes women's issues from the normal business of the courts and allows victims of SGBV and their witnesses freedom to express themselves during court proceedings but guarantees speedy disposal of such cases as they command the sole attention of the specific court sitting. It also has the potential to increase confidence of litigants especially women who are the most vulnerable to human rights violations and yet the most disadvantage in accessing justice services.

#### **The Saturday Courts of the Sierra Leone Judiciary in Action**

On a typical Saturday, a court could hear between 5 to 15 cases of GBV. The preliminary investigations (PI) are, as far as possible, conducted speedily and fully on their date of first call.

The effectiveness of the Saturday Courts is evidenced by the fact that within seven months of establishment, by 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, the Magistrate Courts in Freetown heard 499 cases whilst in three months period the High Court heard 48 cases. The remaining cases are at various stages of trial both at the Magistrate and High Courts. Expressing her delight at the success of the courts, Madam Julia Sarkodie-Mensah, the Consultant Master and Registrar remarked: *"These courts demonstrate the fact that the Justice system can work effectively in Sierra Leone and indeed works for women. What is needed is a mix of commitment of the government, synergies from various institutions and a little support from external partners such as UNDP to set the ball rolling"*.

### **UNIPSIL and OHCHR release a report on disabilities**

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December 2011, UNIPSIL and OHCHR jointly released a Report on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the title *"Moving forward together: from national commitment to concrete action"*. The report analyzes obstacles and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone and focuses on five key areas: customs and traditions, employment and equal opportunities, health, political participation and international cooperation. The enactment of the Persons with Disability Act 2011 largely fills the gap between Sierra Leone's international obligations and its national legal framework. However, the report's findings illustrate that for these normative changes to make an impact on the lives of persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone, efforts must be made to ensure actual and timely implementation of the Act. The report aims to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone by offering advice to and support the Government, in particular on strategizing the implementation of this Act. A soft copy of the report is accessible on UNIPSIL's website.



## **An Assessment on Child Justice System**

Research has showed that most child abuse cases are dealt with by the Chiefs, even though sexual abuse cases should be reported to the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Police. One of the ways UNICEF and Defence for Children International address this is by strengthening the referral mechanism and management of cases of children in contact with the justice system including victims of child abuse and children in conflict with law. Information generated through the strengthened referral system contributes to better monitoring of service providers in the referral system and makes the impact of the system measurable.

The findings of the data collected so far are interesting. Since the project started in four districts in June 2011, total of 282 SGBV cases (Kenema – 54, Bo – 108, Makeni – 62, Kono – 58) were referred to FSU and Child Welfare Committees (CWC). There was an increase in reporting of 18% in Kenema, 28% in Bo, 14% in Makeni and 11% in Kono. This was due to awareness raised and commitment by CWCs and community leaders to refer to the FSU. In Makeni a conflict between FSUs and chiefs

due to lack of trust and communication was solved through a series of meetings to reach agreement on collaboration. Of all cases 249 were referred to appropriate service providers including health clinics and hospitals. There was an increase in referral of 40% in Kenema and Makeni and 18.75% in Kono. This was partly due to the fact that children started to report their actual age. Earlier, children used to pretend they were adults as their parents did not want the case to go through the judicial process. In Kenema it was noted that not all the cases were referred as victims withdrew cases. They did not want to prosecute the perpetrators but preferred a settlement with compensation. A total of 306 offenders were registered out of which 88.5% were male. Of the victims referred to the FSU 88.6% were female. Male victims of sexual abuse is a topic not easily discussed but coming to the surface through the new registration system. It was identified that there was an increase in referral to the FSU (56%) compared to CWCs (11.5%) and Chiefs (32.5%). These data allow the government, UNICEF and partners to develop more adequate interventions to prevent and respond to issues surrounding children in contact with the law.

*Of the victims referred to the FSU, 88,6% were female*

## **Support to the Single Leg Amputees Sports Club (SLASC)**



In recent years the country has made significant improvements to build on the peace that was achieved in 2002. Impressive efforts have rightly gone into disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating former combatants, and justice has been sought through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and The Special Court. In this context, however, physically challenged persons had limited access to social programs that would build their capacities and enhance their socio-economic participation in the peace and democratization process. Among the marginalized groups there are war and non-war related amputees.

It is against this backdrop that the Single Leg Amputee Sports Club (SLASC) was established in 2001 by a group of young amputees who wanted to continue enjoying their favourite sport... football. They wanted to use their team to promote

peace in their communities and to help the reintegration of amputees into society.

Playing football and running their own club has given these players back their confidence and their energy. SLASC has become more than the football team from which it started: it offers support and comfort as well as pro-active ways of moving on. Displaying the amputees as confident, talented, proud and determined people helps reduce stigma and reaffirms their role as capable members of the society.

The institutional capacity of SLASC has been hugely boosted by the support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Through funding received from the PBF and with IOM's technical support, management training for SLASC executive has been conducted while additional amputee players have been identified and brought into the teams established at regional levels. There are now over 350 amputees playing in the various teams, as well as a growing number of non playing amputees who support the teams. Football equipments have been procured, sports cinemas have been established and the office rent for the period 2011-2012 has been paid. In a bid for self-sustainability, 20 motor bikes were procured to run as taxis and raise funds for the association. Finally, 3 acres of land was purchased to open a sports complex to be financed by FIFA.



## Celebrating the International Human Rights Day 2011



On 10<sup>th</sup> December, UNIPSIL HRS in collaboration with its partners joined the global community to celebrate the International Human Rights Day. The theme for this year's celebration was "Human Rights defenders and the social media". The day was commemorated by all UNIPSIL HRS offices in collaboration with HRCSL. In Freetown, the celebrations included a march pass and culminated in a symposium where speeches were made by key stakeholders and young human rights "artists" performed their pieces. HRCSL used the opportunity provided by this year's theme to launch their new website and release a documentary on the first five year term of the Commission. In the context of the celebrations, Journalist for Human Rights (JHR) awarded 4 journalists in recognition of their work. JHR recently conducted training on journalism and human rights with the support from UNIPSIL HRS. March pass, quiz, drama and sporting competitions, radio discussions, and symposiums were held in all the regions. Overall, participants were encouraged to make effective use of the social media – in a broad sense, encompassing music, drama and social event – to promote human rights. The celebration was funded by the German cooperation agency GIZ



## HUMAN RIGHTS STORIES

The human right story of this issue is an excerpt from one of the published assignments of Sheik Daud Fofanah, from Kalleone Radio, one of the four winners of the human rights reporting awards from Journalists for Human Rights (see article on page 5). According to Country Director Journalist for Human Rights Stephen Douglas, “the assignments and award entries displayed all the fundamentals of rights media and good quality journalism. The radio and print stories were well-researched, balanced, fair, non-discriminatory, accurate and involve the voices of those affected and those responsible.”

*A 14-year-old boy who has lived for five years in the streets of Freetown explained with tears running down his cheeks that one evening around the central district of the capital city, Freetown (PZ area) he was arrested by two policemen on allegations of gambling and loitering.*

*“I was sleeping on one of the tables at the market when a police officer hit me with a gun stating that I am under arrest and requested that I pay five thousand Leones to secure my release or risk being locked up in a cell,” the boy narrated. He noted that at the time of his arrest three thousand Leones was in his possession for breakfast and lunch for the following day. He reluctantly refused to part with the money and as a result a ruthless beating was administered to him from the gun butts of the police.*

*According to the Don Bosco report, ‘Street Children Report Freetown 2010’, 2000 boys and 500 girls are living on the streets of Freetown day and night without any support from the government, International or local NGOs nor communities. The Inspector General of Police, Francis Munu, strongly rejected the claims put forward by the children stating that when the kids live on the streets they survive through criminal means and they in turn get into conflict with the law.*

Sheik Daud Fofanah, Kalleone Radio

## What is the Joint Vision Programme 2?

The UN organizations, agencies and programmes working in Sierra Leone, recognizing their joint responsibility for a fully integrated peace building mission, agreed in May 2009 to combine efforts and resources behind the UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone. The Joint Vision establishes the general framework of the UN family cooperation and sets a number of tangible benchmarks meant to guide the UN contribution to the implementation of the Sierra Leone’s Government Second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, also known as ‘Agenda for Change’. Within this framework, promoting rule of law and strengthening the justice system was considered essen-

tial in the consolidation of peace and stability and was formalized in one of the twenty-one programmes through which the Joint Vision is being implemented. The Joint Vision Programme 2, entitled “Access to Justice and Human Rights”, is composed of UNIPSIL Human Rights Section/OHCHR, UNICEF, IOM and UNDP, which is also the lead agency. National counterparts are the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice, the Justice Sector Coordination Office and the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL), while DFID and Irish Aid are the development partners supporting the programme.

## CONTACTS:

### UNIPSIL Human Rights Section/OHCHR

14 Signal Hill Road  
Cabenda Hotel  
Freetown  
Tel, 076-662-613  
E-mail: unipsil.hrs@un.org

### UNDP Access to Justice Project

76 Wilkinson Road  
P.O. Box 1011  
Freetown  
Tel. 022-223-13-14

### UNICEF SIERRA LEONE

#### Maud Droogleever Fortuyn

Chief Child Protection  
Jomo Kenyatta Road  
Freetown  
Tel.076-601-309  
PO Box 221

### IOM

18A Signal Hill Road  
Freetown