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Sierra Leone

Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I. Background

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21, taking into consideration the outcome of the previous review.¹ It is a compilation of information contained in relevant United Nations documents, presented in a summarized manner owing to word-limit constraints.

II. Scope of international obligations and cooperation with human rights mechanisms

2. While acknowledging that Sierra Leone continued to demonstrate commitment to engaging with international human rights mechanisms,² the United Nations country team noted that the ratification of several key instruments remained pending. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, and the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. The country team and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended that Sierra Leone ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.³

3. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), although Sierra Leone was a Party to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, it had not yet incorporated those instruments into domestic law.⁴



III. National human rights framework

1. Constitutional and legislative framework

4. The United Nations country team noted that, two decades after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its report of 2004 had called for a constitution that reflected the aspirations of the people, the constitutional review had not been completed. It indicated that two white papers on constitutional review had been issued in 2017 and 2022, but the process had yet to be finalized. In addition, the country team noted growing demand from stakeholders for inclusivity and accountability in the process. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone finalize the constitutional review by 2027 through an inclusive and participatory process in conformity with international human rights standards and national aspirations.⁵

2. Institutional infrastructure and policy measures

5. While acknowledging the effectiveness of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, the United Nations country team noted the challenges posed by its limited operational independence, which hampered the enforcement of its decisions. The country team was also concerned at the persistent challenges in terms of resources. It recommended that Sierra Leone expedite the amendment of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Act; provide the Commission with adequate funding; and ensure the timely disbursement of funding to enable the Commission to carry out its human rights protection and promotion mandate in the regions.⁶

IV. Promotion and protection of human rights

A. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

1. Equality and non-discrimination

6. The United Nations country team recommended that Sierra Leone review and repeal discriminatory laws and provisions, such as section 27 of the Constitution, to ensure equality for women, children and persons with disabilities and to continue aligning with its international obligations.⁷

2. Right to life, liberty and security of person, and freedom from torture

7. The United Nations country team noted that Sierra Leone had made efforts to improve conditions for detainees, including by implementing an innovative Prison Court initiative to address overcrowding in correctional centres and enhancing access to justice, particularly for detainees in vulnerable situations.⁸

8. According to the country team, Sierra Leone had also made efforts to prevent torture, through capacity-building initiatives for police, judicial officials and social workers. Those initiatives included child-friendly procedures, prevention of violence and the protection of children in conflict with the law.⁹ The country team recommended that Sierra Leone accelerate the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.¹⁰

3. Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

9. On 10 August 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was alarmed by reports of several casualties and fatalities in Freetown during public protests. She called upon the Government of Sierra Leone to hold prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into the violence that had occurred on 9 August 2022 and bring those responsible to account, regardless of their status and political affiliation. She urged all sides to embrace dialogue.¹¹

10. The Human Rights Committee asked Sierra Leone to respond to the consistent reports of excessive use of force to disperse peaceful assemblies, resulting in serious injuries and killings, including during the August 2022 and June and September 2023 protests.¹²

11. The United Nations country team stated that, in 2024, the president of Sierra Leone had promulgated the new Criminal Procedure Act, 2024, which had modernized criminal proceedings, reinforced compliance with international obligations by reducing trial delays, expanded access to legal representation and introduced alternatives to detention. It noted that the fifth generation of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan 2024–2028 had been launched.¹³

12. According to the country team, the police bill, once passed into law, would improve relations between the police and communities; and police services would be people-centred, with respect for human dignity and police accountability.¹⁴

13. The country team noted that Sierra Leone had established two specialized model courts for sexual offences in the western area and southern region to expedite the adjudication of cases of gender-based violence.¹⁵

14. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone improve the knowledge of judicial and law enforcement officials of the Criminal Procedure Act, by training justice personnel, including judges, magistrates, prosecutors, police officers and correctional staff, to ensure harmonized application of the new law. It also recommended that Sierra Leone comply with the landmark ruling of the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States by enacting legislation to decriminalize petty offences, which disproportionately affected the poor, women and children, and accelerate the enactment of the police bill into law.¹⁶

4. Fundamental freedoms and the right to participate in public and political life

15. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed that Sierra Leone must remain firmly on the path of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The authorities should facilitate rather than seek to prevent peaceful protests and desist from unnecessary and disproportionate responses to the protests, such as shutting down the Internet and imposing open-ended curfews.¹⁷

16. UNESCO recommended that Sierra Leone assess the system of supervision of the broadcasting sector in order to ensure that the process was transparent and independent; review existing legislation to ensure it did not restrict the exercise of freedom of expression in ways that were incompatible with international human rights law; and ensure a transparency and accountability mechanism on the governance of digital platforms to ensure upholding of human rights and mitigate the risks associated with the spread of harmful content online.¹⁸

5. Prohibition of all forms of slavery, including trafficking in persons

17. The United Nations country team noted efforts to address trafficking in persons, such as the revision of the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, in August 2022, and the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking, in accordance with the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2022, which criminalized both sex and labour trafficking.¹⁹ The country team recommended that Sierra Leone increase funding to support anti-trafficking victims and witnesses by 30 per cent by 2028.²⁰

18. According to the country team, Sierra Leone had taken steps to address the worst forms of child labour in line with its international obligations, including by adopting the National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2021–2025); and Sierra Leone had enhanced enforcement mechanisms through strengthened labour inspectorates and interministerial coordination. Despite those efforts, child labour remained widespread, particularly in the informal sector, mining, domestic work and agriculture. Available data indicated that children in rural and poor households were disproportionately affected.²¹

19. The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO) requested Sierra Leone to pursue its efforts with a view to educating and informing all sections of the population about trafficking in persons and other forms of forced labour.²²

6. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

20. The ILO Committee of Experts expressed its concern about measures taken by Sierra Leone in the context of the ongoing restructuring of the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security, to ensure that any functions assigned to labour inspectors did not interfere with their primary duties, which were related to enforcement of the legal provisions relating to the conditions of work and the protection of workers while engaged in their work. The Committee requested Sierra Leone to take the measures necessary to ensure that labour inspectors were recruited with sole regard to their qualifications for the performance of their duties, in accordance with international law; and to ensure that the labour inspection services had sufficient human resources necessary for their operation.²³

21. In addition, the ILO Committee of Experts requested Sierra Leone to take the measures necessary to ensure that the workers covered by the Holidays with Pay (Agriculture) Convention, 1952 (No. 101), effectively enjoyed a period of annual holiday with pay every year.²⁴

7. Right to social security

22. The United Nations country team noted that social protection programmes did not sufficiently cover vulnerable children.²⁵

23. The country team welcomed the enactment of the Social Protection Act, 2025, which built upon the revised National Social Protection Policy (2020) and Strategy (2022–2026) and consolidated the right to social protection. According to the country team, the Act established a unified framework, with a centralized Social Protection Authority and a dedicated fund to deliver services to vulnerable populations, covering maternity benefits, healthcare access and pensions.²⁶

8. Right to an adequate standard of living

24. According to the United Nations Development Programme, poverty and inequality were persistent in Sierra Leone, with almost 60 per cent of the country's 8 million inhabitants living in multidimensional poverty. The country was ranked among the low human development countries on the human development index, at 184 out of 193 countries.²⁷

25. The United Nations country team indicated that Sierra Leone had launched its National Medium-Term Development Plan (2024–2030) – a comprehensive strategy aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, designed to support the country's progression towards an inclusive, green and middle-income economy and to tackle development challenges, including poverty.²⁸

26. The country team also noted that a dedicated fund, known as the Social Protection Breadbasket Fund, supported targeted initiatives, including cash transfers and services for women in poverty, informal work or caregiving roles.²⁹

27. The country team appreciated the efforts of Sierra Leone to strengthen domestic financing and resource mobilization for the water, sanitation and hygiene sector. It also appreciated that the country was enhancing advocacy for increased public funding, while exploring private sector engagement.³⁰

9. Right to health

28. The United Nations country team indicated that, in 2023, Sierra Leone had established the National Public Health Agency to coordinate emergency response in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Agency. It noted that the Government and partners provided continued support to enhance the capacity of health facilities with the purpose of providing services even during public health emergencies, including the minimum initial service package for sexual and reproductive healthcare.³¹

29. The country team stated that Sierra Leone continued to implement the Free Health Care Initiative, which provided essential health services at no cost to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under 5 years of age.³²

30. In 2022, special procedure mandate holders welcomed the President's announcement of his support of a bill on risk-free motherhood, which would help improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls.³³

31. The United Nations country team noted that the national response on HIV and AIDS had advanced through the development of key strategies, including an HIV prevention road map, a condom strategy and a key population service package, and that progress had been made in reducing rates of mother-to-child transmission, including during breastfeeding, which had declined from 26.94 per cent in 2010 to 11.5 per cent in 2024.³⁴

32. The country team noted that services had been partially integrated into the health sector for children affected by HIV/AIDS, although challenges persisted in accessing those services.³⁵

33. The country team also noted that Sierra Leone had improved access to maternal and newborn health services and under-5 mortality had decreased by 15 per cent, from 109 deaths for 1,000 live births in 2019 to 94.3 deaths for 1,000 live births in 2023.³⁶

34. The country team noted that Sierra Leone had developed national guidelines on adolescent and youth friendly services to equip health workers to provide adolescent-friendly services in health facilities and sexual and reproductive health hubs. However, adolescent pregnancy rates remained among the highest in West Africa, owing to poverty, gender inequality and limited access to adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.³⁷

35. The country team noted positive measures to address maternal and perinatal mortality and sexual and reproductive health, including the safe motherhood and reproductive health bill currently under parliamentary consideration. If enacted, that legislation would broaden access to contraceptives and services for the safe termination of pregnancy under specific circumstances, thereby strengthening the country's sexual and reproductive health framework.³⁸

36. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone increase health spending and ensure compliance with financial commitments; enhance the legal and policy environment for universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the upholding of reproductive rights by enacting the safe motherhood and reproductive health bill, including by ensuring clear frameworks for the age of consent; reduce mother-to-child transmission rates to below 5 per cent; and strengthen legal and policy frameworks to safeguard rights and enhance access to health services by amending the National HIV and AIDS Commission Act, 2011, to address inequalities.³⁹

10. Right to education

37. UNESCO indicated that the Constitution of Sierra Leone of 1991, as amended in 2022, did not comprehensively enshrine the right to education.⁴⁰ UNESCO recommended that Sierra Leone consider enshrining the right to education for all in the Constitution and legislation.⁴¹

38. UNESCO noted that no provision guaranteeing 9 years of compulsory education or 12 years of free education had been identified in the national legal framework, despite recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review.⁴² UNESCO recommended that Sierra Leone guarantee in law at least 12 years of free primary and secondary education, including 9 years of compulsory primary and secondary education.⁴³

39. UNESCO highlighted the lack of sufficient data on enrolment rates.⁴⁴ It recommended that Sierra Leone continue efforts to increase enrolment rates.⁴⁵

40. UNESCO further recommended legally proscribing corporal punishment in education settings, without exception, and continuing efforts to ensure the right to inclusive education, including for girls and women, particularly those who are pregnant or parenting, and for students with disabilities.⁴⁶

41. The United Nations country team indicated that Sierra Leone had enacted and operationalized the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act, 2023, and had developed complementary policies. The country team also stressed that the Education Sector Plan (2022–2026) further mainstreamed gender equality as a central objective. The implementation of the plan had contributed significantly to increased enrolment and improved learning outcomes. However, persistent challenges related to resource allocation, teacher training and school infrastructure required continued attention.⁴⁷

42. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone mainstream human rights education in the national primary and secondary school curriculum; ensure adequate and equitable resource allocation to operationalize education reforms fully, particularly in underserved and rural areas, and strengthen intersectoral coordination on education, health and child protection; and develop and implement a comprehensive teacher workforce management strategy.⁴⁸

11. Cultural rights

43. UNESCO recommended that Sierra Leone implement fully the relevant provisions that promoted access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, were conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Sierra Leone was encouraged to facilitate the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and non-governmental organizations from the civil society, and vulnerable groups (minorities, migrants, refugees, young persons, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities were given to women and girls to address gender disparities.⁴⁹

12. Development, the environment, and business and human rights

44. The United Nations country team noted that Sierra Leone had promoted inclusive participation in climate change and disaster risk reduction frameworks, particularly by engaging children and young people in climate policy dialogues. The Government had conducted structured consultations to integrate their perspectives into national strategies, including the nationally determined contributions.⁵⁰

45. The country team indicated that Sierra Leone had developed the first national plan of action for human mobility in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. According to the country team, that framework established evidence-based and rights-based interventions that were aligned with regional and global standards.⁵¹

46. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone invest in awareness-raising among front-line populations and host communities in the context of climate-related mobility and take preventive measures to mitigate the impact of climate-related displacement, including on peace and security.⁵²

47. The country team appreciated that Sierra Leone had developed a climate-resilient policy on the water, sanitation and hygiene sector, as a key tool for evidence-based budget planning and sustainable financing, in line with national climate and development goals.⁵³

B. Rights of specific persons or groups

1. Women

48. In 2022, special procedure mandate holders called for stronger measures to prevent and penalize female genital mutilation in Sierra Leone, following criminal proceedings on the death of a 21-year-old student who had been subjected to the brutal practice in the Bonthe District. They urged the Government of Sierra Leone to establish a comprehensive set of legal prohibitions, including through strengthening the memorandums of understanding with local practitioners and amending the Child Rights Act to explicitly prohibit female genital mutilation for all age groups.⁵⁴

49. The United Nations country team noted the efforts made to criminalize the practice of female genital mutilation, albeit with mixed outcomes. In July 2025, the Parliament of Sierra Leone had passed the revised Child Rights Act, 2025, replacing the earlier 2007 law. The country team indicated that, while Sierra Leone, through the Act, had overhauled child protection policies across the board and introduced stronger legal protections against harmful practices, it had failed to criminalize female genital mutilation or introduce any penalty for it. The country team further stated that, in July 2025, the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States had found the Government of Sierra Leone to be in violation of the rights of women and girls for failing to criminalize female genital mutilation explicitly, which was in breach of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.⁵⁵ The country team recommended that Sierra Leone revitalize and implement the national strategy for the elimination of female genital mutilation and enact legislation criminalizing that harmful practice. It further recommended that Sierra Leone actively popularize and institutionalize the male involvement strategy to address patriarchal norms that perpetuated gender-based violence and increase accountability.⁵⁶

50. In March 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had welcomed the new law passed by Sierra Leone prohibiting gender discrimination; mandating at least 30 per cent participation of women in Parliament, the diplomatic corps, local councils and the civil service; and establishing equal pay for women, among many other steps.⁵⁷ The United Nations country team recommended that Sierra Leone increase the representation of women in all elective and appointive positions to 30 per cent by 2028, including following the review of the Public Elections Act, 2022, and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, 2022, aiming to promote women's leadership in political parties.⁵⁸

51. The United Nations country team noted that more one-stop centres dedicated to serving victims and survivors of gender-based violence were needed and that further attention should be paid to gender-based violence issues.⁵⁹ The country team recommended that Sierra Leone establish one-stop centres in at least 50 per cent of the districts to support services, including counselling and legal assistance, for victims and survivors of gender-based violence and other harmful practices.

52. The United Nations country team acknowledged that Sierra Leone had enacted the Customary Land Rights Act in 2022, establishing a legal framework that recognized and protected community land rights under customary tenure systems. The Act was specifically aimed at securing land tenure for vulnerable groups, particularly women, and providing safeguards against unfair exploitation or dispossession of their lands.⁶⁰

53. The United Nations country team also highlighted that Sierra Leone had established the Women's Empowerment Fund through the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act to provide financial support to women entrepreneurs and promote economic empowerment.⁶¹

2. Children

54. UNESCO indicated that the bill for the new Child Rights Act, 2025, had been approved by Parliament in 2024. In article 19 of the proposed legislation, it was stated that boys and girls should be protected from harmful traditions and social norms that led to unequal access to resources, disparities in social status and unequal opportunities for development.⁶²

55. The United Nations country team noted that Sierra Leone had strengthened its legal framework for child protection through the enactment of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2024, and the Child Rights Act, 2025, which expanded protections for vulnerable children.⁶³

56. UNESCO highlighted that, under the new Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act, corporal punishment and other forms of degrading punishment were explicitly prohibited. However, the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Ordinance, which allowed for corporal punishment, appeared to not have been formally repealed.⁶⁴

57. According to the United Nations country team, the National Commission for Children continued to provide oversight on child rights. However, limited human resources capacity restricted the implementation of child protection policies. The country team affirmed that strengthening enforcement mechanisms, increasing resource allocation and addressing systemic barriers remained priorities for advancing child rights in Sierra Leone.⁶⁵

58. The country team noted the persistence of significant challenges for the realization of the rights of children, including discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, children affected by HIV/AIDS and children in remote areas. Despite legislative progress, conflicts between statutory, customary and religious law continued to create protection gaps, particularly regarding child marriage and sexual offences.⁶⁶

59. According to the country team, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act was aimed at protecting the rights of children, especially girls, and created a system of multisectoral services for affected children. The law was expected to reduce child marriage and keep girls in school.⁶⁷

60. The country team recommended that the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs allocate adequate funding for the popularization of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in all 16 districts and for the legal support of victims and the successful prosecution of offenders. The Ministry should also facilitate a multi-stakeholder review of the Act and other related laws to ensure consistency with human rights standards.⁶⁸

61. The country team also recommended that Sierra Leone develop comprehensive regulations to operationalize the Child Marriage Act fully, ensuring its effective implementation and enforcement across the country.⁶⁹

3. Persons with disabilities

62. The United Nations country team noted some progress in protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Achievements included more dedicated engagement and leadership by persons with disabilities on peace and social cohesion. Sierra Leone had also engaged in efforts to align national legislation with international disability rights standards, particularly through advocacy and support for legal reforms that enhanced protection and inclusion for persons with disabilities, including children.⁷⁰

63. UNESCO highlighted that the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act provided that schools, including private schools, should be inclusive and disability friendly.⁷¹

64. According to the United Nations country team, the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act reinforced the country's commitment to inclusive education. Diverse special educational needs were explicitly acknowledged in the Act, marking progress toward recognizing and addressing the requirements of all learners within the national education system.⁷² However, the country team noted that Sierra Leone continued to face challenges in ensuring full physical accessibility of schools and in building a qualified teaching workforce for children with special needs. According to the country team, approximately 38 per cent of teachers lacked formal qualifications and had not received training in inclusive, special needs and gender-responsive teaching practices. The country team highlighted persistent structural barriers to equitable education.⁷³

65. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone establish and operationalize the Disability Fund, as mandated in the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2011, to accelerate government programmes and support disability services and programmes falling outside routine government operations, as well as interventions requiring urgent attention, particularly those targeting girls with disabilities, who faced compounded vulnerabilities. The country team also recommended that Sierra Leone institutionalize the use of the data and checklist tool developed to aid in the review of laws, policies and strategies in a range of sectors, in order to ensure compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Persons with Disabilities Act. It further recommended that Sierra Leone ensure that all public facilities and major institutions had inclusive infrastructure to enable accessibility by persons with disabilities and that at least 50 per cent of teachers nationwide possessed formal qualifications and training in inclusive and special needs teaching methods,

enabling them to effectively support diverse learners and uphold the principles of equitable education.⁷⁴

4. Migrants and refugees

66. The United Nations country team noted that Sierra Leone remained committed to the protection of children in the context of migration, which included efforts to ensure access to essential services for all children, irrespective of migration status, and to advocate for a children's rights-based approach to migration issues.⁷⁵

67. The country team also noted that Sierra Leone continued to strengthen protection and service provision for refugees and displaced children and was working to reduce discrimination and exclusion, although implementation challenges persisted due to limited institutional capacity and budgetary constraints.⁷⁶

68. The country team recommended that Sierra Leone set up a migrant one-stop shop to provide medical, legal and psychosocial guidance to migrants and thus enhance their working experience and enable them to receive information about their migration for labour. It also recommended expanding the national referral mechanism for returned migrants to include all migrants.⁷⁷

69. The ILO Committee of Experts encouraged Sierra Leone to pursue its efforts to ensure that migrant workers were fully protected from abuses and fraudulent practices during the recruitment and placement process. It requested Sierra Leone to provide information on the measures taken in that regard, including in the framework of the implementation of the National Labour Migration Policy and National Migration Policy and in relation to the sensitization of migrant workers to their rights and the risks of forced labour; the pre-departure services provided to them; the monitoring of recruitment agencies and violations observed; and the implementation of agreements concluded with receiving countries to enable migrant workers to assert their rights and have access to justice in cases of abuse.⁷⁸

70. UNHCR recommended that Sierra Leone address the dysfunction of the asylum system and strengthen institutions by establishing an eligibility commission and training specialized personnel to process asylum applications; rehabilitate infrastructure by reconstructing the Kissy reception centre in accordance with appropriate standards; mobilize technical and financial support from international partners to enhance the capacity of the National Commission for Social Action; and implement a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of the asylum system.⁷⁹

5. Internally displaced persons

71. UNHCR recommended that Sierra Leone establish an effective asylum system to ensure the protection of forcibly displaced persons, including their registration and the provision of basic legal and social needs.⁸⁰

6. Stateless persons

72. UNHCR stated that, despite progress in civil registration and identity management, the lack of an effective birth registration system posed a particularly high risk of statelessness for certain groups, such as refugees and migrants, internally displaced persons, nomadic and border populations and, in some circumstances, ethnic minorities and persons living in remote areas. Birth registration record management was poor, with no established standards to guide the systematic archiving of vital events. UNHCR also indicated that, according to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2017, 28.2 per cent of children did not have a birth certificate.⁸¹

73. UNHCR recommended that Sierra Leone harmonize national legislation with the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness; establish a statelessness determination procedure aligned with the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017–2024 and aimed at identifying and assisting stateless individuals, including foreign nationals and those with uncertain nationality, in acquiring or confirming their nationality, supported by effective, efficient and

sustainable national policy programmes; and strengthen awareness among communities and training for relevant stakeholders. It also recommended implementing a national action plan with clear indicators, alongside reinforcing strategic partnerships, including regional institutions, to support those efforts.⁸²

74. The United Nations country team noted that gaps in civil registration hindered children's access to education, social protection and justice services. According to the country team, it was necessary to enhance the institutional capacity of and resource allocation to the National Civil Registration Authority.⁸³ The country team recommended that Sierra Leone strengthen the civil registration mechanisms, ensure that every child was registered immediately after birth and raise awareness on the importance of birth registration.⁸⁴

Notes

- ¹ [A/HRC/48/17](#), [A/HRC/48/17/Add.1](#) and [A/HRC/48/2](#).
- ² United Nations country team submission for the universal periodic review of Sierra Leone, p. 1.
- ³ United Nations country team submission, paras. 3–5; and UNESCO submission for the universal periodic review of Sierra Leone, para. 38.
- ⁴ UNHCR submission for the universal periodic review of Sierra Leone, pp. 1 and 2.
- ⁵ United Nations country team submission, paras. 6 and 7.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, paras. 8 and 9.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 7.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 34.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 36.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 36.
- ¹¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-michelle-bachelet-protest-deaths>.
- ¹² [CCPR/C/SLE/QPR/2](#), para. 21.
- ¹³ United Nations country team submission, paras. 37 and 38.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 39.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 40.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, paras. 37–40.
- ¹⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-michelle-bachelet-protest-deaths>.
- ¹⁸ UNESCO submission, paras. 33–35.
- ¹⁹ United Nations country team submission, para. 42.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 41–43.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, paras. 21 and 22.
- ²² See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID%2CP13100_LANG_CODE:4410662%2Cen.
- ²³ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P11110_COUNTRY_ID,P11110_COUNTRY_NAME,P11110_COMMENT_YEAR:4359918,103269,Sierra%20Leone,2023.
- ²⁴ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID%2CP13100_LANG_CODE:4367643%2Cen.
- ²⁵ United Nations country team submission, para. 20.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 46.
- ²⁷ See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-12/undp_sierra_leone_2024_annual_report_0.pdf.
- ²⁸ United Nations country team submission, para. 47.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 48.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 49.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, para. 50.
- ³² *Ibid.*, para. 51.
- ³³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/sierra-leone-end-impunity-female-genital-mutilation-say-un-human-rights>.
- ³⁴ United Nations country team submission, para. 50.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 20.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 53.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, paras. 20 and 57.

- ³⁸ Ibid., para. 58.
- ³⁹ Ibid., paras. 50–59.
- ⁴⁰ UNESCO submission, para. 2.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., para. 32 (i).
- ⁴² Ibid., para. 3.
- ⁴³ Ibid., para. 32 (ii).
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., para. 6.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., para. 32 (iv).
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., para. 32 (iii) and (v).
- ⁴⁷ United Nations country team submission, paras. 60 and 61.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., paras. 60–63.
- ⁴⁹ UNESCO submission, para. 36.
- ⁵⁰ United Nations country team submission, para. 31.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., para. 33.
- ⁵² Ibid., paras. 31–33.
- ⁵³ Ibid., para. 49.
- ⁵⁴ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/sierra-leone-end-impunity-female-genital-mutilation-say-un-human-rights>.
- ⁵⁵ United Nations country team submission, para. 16.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., para. 16.
- ⁵⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/03/global-update-high-commissioner-outlines-concerns-over-40-countries>.
- ⁵⁸ United Nations country team submission, para. 7.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., para. 15.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., para. 12.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., para. 13.
- ⁶² UNESCO submission, para. 13.
- ⁶³ United Nations country team submission, para. 17.
- ⁶⁴ UNESCO submission, para. 5.
- ⁶⁵ United Nations country team submission, para. 18.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., para. 19.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., para. 62.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., para. 23.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., para. 16.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., paras. 24 and 27.
- ⁷¹ UNESCO submission, para. 15.
- ⁷² United Nations country team submission, para. 25.
- ⁷³ Ibid., para. 26.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., para. 27.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., para. 30.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., para. 28.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., para. 30.
- ⁷⁸ See https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID%2CP13100_LANG_CODE:4410662%2Cen.
- ⁷⁹ UNHCR submission, p. 2.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 2.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 1.
- ⁸² Ibid., pp. 2 and 3.
- ⁸³ United Nations country team submission, para. 44.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., para. 45.