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National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*

Sierra Leone

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. This is the 4th National Human Rights Report of the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone (the Government or GoSL), submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism.
2. The report covers the period from September 2021 to January 2026. It details the GoSL's implementation of recommendations it accepted, and voluntary pledges it made, during the 3rd cycle UPR in May 2021.
3. It also outlines the Government's efforts to implement recommendations from previous UPR cycles, as well as noting the challenges it faced during this reporting period.

II. Methodology

4. Following the 3rd cycle review on 12 May 2021, the Government of Sierra Leone consulted widely on the 274 recommendations received. Stakeholders included ministries, departments and agencies and civil society organisations. The process was led by Sierra Leone's Inter-Ministerial Committee for Human Rights under the National Reporting Mechanism (NRM) Secretariat, housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Based on these consultations, the Government accepted 216 recommendations, noted 58, and made *three* voluntary pledges at the 48th session of the Human Rights Council (13 September–1 October 2021).
5. Implementation of the accepted recommendations was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Sierra Leone, like many countries, imposed land, air, and sea travel restrictions, quarantined affected sections of the population, and redirected national resources to combat the pandemic. These measures delayed the preparation of a mid-term review report. However, throughout this period of global emergency, the Government ensured that fundamental human rights were respected. The Government ensured the inviolability and non-derogability of all absolute rights during the implementation period.
6. The accepted recommendations were organised into 48 thematic clusters. The NRM Secretariat developed an implementation matrix based on these clusters and allocated responsibilities to ministries, departments, and agencies to facilitate follow-up and data collection as evidence of implementation.
7. Although the Government provided the core financial resources for the production of this report, the NRM received technical and financial assistance from the International Communities Organisation (ICO), a London-based NGO, to organise a capacity-building workshop for government officials and CSO members, as well as a national stakeholders' consultation to inform the drafting of this report.
8. The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Freetown provided support for data collection and drafting.
9. The Global Centre for Health Diplomacy and Inclusion (CeHDI), a Geneva-based NGO, funded the national validation workshop. This workshop brought together stakeholders from Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), civil society, the national human rights institution, diplomatic community and other NGOs.
10. Data collection was undertaken by the NRM Secretariat in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice. The drafting team relied on data received from MDAs as well as desk research using open sources on Sierra Leone's human rights record. The drafting process commenced with a UNDP-funded workshop in Freetown (5–6 June 2024), which reviewed progress on the 3rd cycle recommendations.

III. Developments in the promotion and protection of human rights in Sierra Leone

11. Since the last review of Sierra Leone's human rights record in May 2021, the Government has responded to two significant security challenges, including violent protests nationwide from 8–10 August 2022 and a failed coup attempt on 26 November 2023. During this period, the Government has also implemented legal, policy, and institutional reforms to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and to expand the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms, while recognising that challenges remain.

12. The violent protests of 8–10 August 2022 occurred in Freetown (Western Area) and in Makeni and Kamakwie (Northern Province). The events received extensive coverage by local and international media, reflecting the prevailing environment of press freedom. No restrictions were imposed by the Government on media reporting. Attacks by the protesters and counterattacks by the security forces resulted in the deaths of *six* security personnel and 26 civilians, as well as significant damage to public and private property. In response, the Government lawfully imposed a nationwide curfew under constitutional emergency powers to restore public order and protect lives and property. A Special Investigation Committee (SIC), chaired by a respected human rights lawyer and anti-corruption campaigner, concluded that the violent incidents were a well-planned and well-financed insurrection aimed at "undermining the peace and stability of the state by removing the legitimate and democratically elected President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Brig. (Rtd) Dr Julius Maada Bio, from political power." It identified a combination of social, economic, and political factors that contributed to the disturbances. (The SIC report is annexed to this report).

13. On 26 November 2023, an armed group of military personnel and former security personnel staged an unsuccessful coup aimed at overthrowing the democratically elected Government, killing more than 20 people, many of them loyal soldiers. The military thwarted the attempted coup and helped restore law and order. The Government charged a total of 46 former military officers and 13 civilians in civilian courts for treason and related offences, while 27 serving military personnel were tried by court martial. Civilians were charged under existing criminal law, and the military personnel under the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces Act of 1961, reflecting the Government's commitment to due process and the rule of law in addressing threats to national security.

14. As part of the implementation of the Agreement for National Unity signed on 18 October 2023 under the Tripartite Committee, set up between the Government, the main opposition party and international partners as guarantors to address disputes following the 2023 elections, the opposition All People's Congress submitted a list of detainees alleged to be connected to electoral offences and/or the attempted coup. Following a review, the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice ordered the release of 37 individuals on the list, underlining Government's commitment to the agreement.

15. The Government noted recommendations on female circumcision or genital mutilation at the 3rd UPR. It recognises that certain traditional practices are harmful and infringe upon fundamental human rights but are structurally difficult to legislate effectively against.

16. Given this fraught situation, the Government is developing a National Strategy on the Reduction of FGM, targeting a 20 per cent reduction in child FGM over a five-year period. Implementation measures include agreements with traditional authorities to prohibit under-18 initiations, as well as community-level Memoranda of Understanding with Soweis (Circumcisers), supported by nationwide sensitisation and advocacy in collaboration with the Council of Soweis and other stakeholders. These initiatives are complemented by programmes promoting alternative livelihoods for Soweis through access to microcredit and business skills training. Progressively widespread education at the primary and secondary levels since 2018 is having a positive impact in this direction as well.

A. Constitutional review and legislative safeguards

17. Sierra Leone continues to advance its constitutional review process as a key component in strengthening and safeguarding human rights. The process seeks to align constitutional reform with principles of fairness, inclusivity, and access to justice. In March 2025, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice reaffirmed the Government's commitment to pursuing constitutional amendments aimed at promoting transparent and accountable governance:

“The constitutional review process is an essential step in ensuring that our legal framework reflects the values of fairness, inclusivity, and justice for all Sierra Leoneans.... As we move forward, the amendments being considered will pave the way for a stronger, more transparent, and accountable governance system.”

B. International human rights treaty obligations

18. Sierra Leone continues to meet its treaty commitments through legislative and policy reforms aimed at harmonising domestic laws with international and regional human rights standards. At the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, held in Bogotá, Colombia (7–8 November 2024), the Government – represented by the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs – pledged to strengthen the legal and policy framework to end violence against children, including the prohibition of corporal punishment, and to enhance response and support services for child victims and survivors of violence.

19. The enactment of the Child Rights Act 2025 represents a significant milestone in Sierra Leone's implementation of obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as its pledges at the Bogotá Conference. Ratified by Parliament on 3 July 2025, the Act provides important frameworks for the protection of children under 18 from abuse, violence, harmful practices, and exploitation, while strengthening legal safeguards for their physical and mental well-being.

C. Human rights institutions

20. Sierra Leone has established several national institutions mandated to promote and protect human rights, peace, and democratic governance. Among these is the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC), created by an Act of Parliament and operational since 2021. Its mandate includes promoting peace, unity, inclusivity, and mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

21. In furtherance of its mandate, the ICPNC coordinated and facilitated dialogue between the country's two main political parties, with support from international partners including the African Union, ECOWAS, and the Commonwealth, in the aftermath of the 2023 post-electoral tensions. This dialogue led to the establishment of the Tripartite Committee which examined electoral systems and processes, addressed contentious issues, and made recommendations to strengthen transparency and credibility in future elections. The Committee submitted its report to His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio on 1 July 2024, and its recommendations have been incorporated into the ongoing Constitutional Review process.

D. Policy measures

22. Since the 3rd UPR in May 2021, Sierra Leone has undertaken a range of legislative, policy, and institutional measures to strengthen human rights protection and advance democratic governance. These measures reflect the Government's continued efforts to respond to the UPR's recommendations and address longstanding human rights challenges.

23. The Government pursued policy and institutional reforms to enhance inclusive governance and access to justice. These include decentralisation initiatives aimed at expanding regional and urban governance structures to promote citizen participation at both local and national levels. The Medium-Term National Development Plan (2024–2030), launched in 2023, outlines key national priorities (see Chapter VI).

24. The Justice Sector Reform Strategy (2024–2030), published in 2024, seeks to improve access to justice, efficiency, and accountability across the justice sector. Supported by development partners, implementation efforts have contributed to increased access to legal services, resolution of human rights complaints, and targeted support for vulnerable groups, including women and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

IV. Promotion and protection of human rights in Sierra Leone: Implementation of recommendations from the 3rd and previous UPR cycles

25. This section outlines measures undertaken by the Government to implement recommendations accepted during the third cycle of the UPR. For ease of reference, the relevant paragraph numbers of the corresponding UPR recommendations are indicated under each thematic cluster, from A to N.

26. Recommendations originating from the first and second UPR cycles that remain unimplemented or partially implemented, and which were reiterated during the third cycle, have been taken into account in the responses below; however, their recommendation numbers are not specifically referenced.

A. Scope and status of the implementation of international instruments

Recommendations 143.1–143.26

27. The Government has a constitutional obligation to uphold international treaty commitments under Section 10(d) of the Sierra Leone Constitution, Act No. 6 of 1991. The Government has demonstrated its commitment by signing, ratifying, and implementing several international human rights instruments, including UN core treaties and key African Union instruments.

28. Sierra Leone abolished the death penalty through the enactment of the *Abolition of the Death Penalty Act, No. 6 of 2022*.

29. The Government has pursued a policy of strengthening and rebranding Sierra Leone's international profile. This policy prioritises active engagement with the United Nations system and other international organisations, including seeking membership in key international bodies and promoting the nomination of qualified Sierra Leoneans through transparent, merit-based selection processes.

30. In furtherance of this policy, Sierra Leone was elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2024–2025 term. The Government has also secured the election of suitably qualified Sierra Leonean candidates to international judicial and legal bodies, including:

- Justice Miatta Maria Samba to the International Criminal Court (2020).
- Ambassador Osman Keh Kamara as Judge of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (June 2023).
- Professor Dr. Charles C. Jalloh, as member of the International Law Commission (re-elected 2023).
- Justice Sengu Mohamed Koroma, as judge of the Community Court of Justice ECOWAS (2022).
- Mr Joseph Sunday Sinnah, Member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (February 2025).

B. Constitutional and legislative framework

Recommendations 143.27–143.30, 143.44–143.45

31. Successive Governments have invested considerable time and commitment in reviewing the 1991 Constitution, recognising that it was adopted during a period of political transition and civil unrest and requires updating to address contemporary needs of citizens. The review process has been inclusive, participatory, and consultative, originating from commitments under the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement and recommendations of the 2002 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. It has been informed by earlier initiatives and reports, including those led by Dr. Peter Tucker (2007–2008) and Justice Edmond Cowan (2013–2017), as well as Government White Papers issued in 2017 and 2022, reflecting sustained political commitment to advancing constitutional reform. The current phase of the review aims to modernise Sierra Leone’s foundational law and incorporate recommendations from the Tripartite Committee established following the 2023 electoral impasse, particularly in relation to electoral reform and governance.

32. Building on the Tripartite Committee’s recommendations, the Government has adopted a two-pronged strategy, focusing on electoral reforms (integrated with Tripartite recommendations) and addressing broader constitutional provisions. The Government plans to hold a referendum on entrenched provisions before or by the general elections of 2028.

C. Institutional and human rights infrastructure and policy measures

Recommendations 143.33–143.45

33. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) is the national human rights institution, established by an Act of Parliament to guarantee independence and funding in line with the Paris Principles. Operational since 2006, the Commission regularly produces national human rights reports, which it submits to His Excellency the President to ensure the highest level of prominence and attention across government.

34. Budgetary allocations to the Commission have progressively increased. In 2025, the HRCSL received NLe 6,767.5.00 million (excluding salaries and interest recurrent expenditure), compared to NLe 5,645.7.00 million in 2024, indicating an increase of 20%. The Government has committed to further increases, with a projected allocation of NLe 8,161.1.00 million, indicating a projected increase of 21%.

35. Strengthened financial capacity has enabled the Commission to expand its presence in underserved communities, including the establishment of a new office in Port Loko District to serve the North-Western Region.

36. In October 2022, the Commission was re-accredited as a Grade A National Human Rights Institution for the third time by Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, reaffirming its compliance with the Paris Principles.

D. Cooperation with treaty bodies

Recommendations 143.23–143.26

37. The Government has a strong track record of cooperation with human rights treaty bodies. In 2025, Sierra Leone submitted its periodic report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. A national validation workshop was convened prior to submission, attended by government officials, civil society representatives, child-led organisations, development partners, and UN agencies in Sierra Leone.

38. In line with recommendations on cooperation with treaty bodies and special mechanisms of the OHCHR, the Government reiterates its standing open invitation to treaty bodies and all OHCHR and other United Nations Special Procedures mandate holders to visit and engage with Sierra Leone for the purpose of conducting human rights assessments and strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

E. Equality and non-discrimination

Recommendations 143.46, 143.121, 143.158, 143.170, 143.202, 143.239, 143.247, 143.262, 143.265, 143.270, 143.271

39. The Government of Sierra Leone takes seriously its responsibility to eliminate all forms of discrimination against children, women, persons with special needs, persons living with HIV/AIDS, persons affected by leprosy and their families.

40. Section 27 of the 1991 Constitution guarantees protection from discrimination. To reinforce this safeguard, the Government has enacted several key pieces of legislation, including:

- National Land Commission Act No. 19 of 2022.
- Customary Land Rights Act No. 20 of 2022.
- Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act No. 23 of 2022.
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act No. 5 of 2024.
- Child Rights Act No. 16 of 2025.

41. These Acts complement earlier legislation such as the Persons with Disability Act No. 3 of 2011 and the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act No. 8 of 2019, providing a robust statutory framework for protection against discrimination.

42. GoSL has demonstrated strong commitment to promoting the rights of women and girls, advancing empowerment, and curbing discrimination through the flagship initiative “Hands Off Our Girls” led by First Lady Dr. Fatima Maada Bio. In December 2025, the President officially launched the 2025–2027 campaign of the Organisation of African First Ladies for Development (OAFSLAD) under the theme “*Building Resilience for Women and Girls in the Face of Climate Change and Conflict.*” The event, held in Freetown, was attended by First Ladies from Burundi, Cape Verde, Gabon, Liberia, and Senegal, reaffirming collective commitment to women’s empowerment, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. The launch coincided with the seventh anniversary of the Hands Off Our Girls Campaign.

43. In fulfilment of its obligations to address discrimination against women, the Government submitted in 2024 its Combined 16th–21st periodic reports on the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, as well as its Initial and Combined 2nd–4th periodic reports on the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

F. Right to life, liberty and security of the person

Recommendations 143.84–143.88 and 143.116–143.126

44. The Government upholds the sanctity of life and guarantees the liberty and security of the person. These fundamental rights are enshrined in Chapter III of the 1991 Constitution, which provides protection against arbitrary arrest and detention, slavery and forced labour, and inhuman or degrading treatment. Section 16(1) of the Constitution which permits the lawful deprivation of life, can no longer be invoked by virtue of the abolition of the death penalty.

45. Sierra Leone has enacted laws, policies, and training programmes to combat human trafficking, slavery, and arbitrary detention. On 29 January 2025, the Government – working in collaboration with Interpol (France) – conducted training on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling for 49 officers (39 male and 10 female).

46. In 2025, the Interpol National Central Bureaux (NCB) in Freetown and Conakry intercepted, rescued, and facilitated the repatriation of trafficked persons. Between April and May 2025, NCB-Freetown rescued and handed over 10 Guinean nationals to NCB-Conakry, who were being trafficked to Europe. On 13 May 2025, NCB-Freetown intercepted two

Somali nationals trafficked into Sierra Leone under the pretext of facilitating travel to Spain; both were repatriated to Somalia.

47. In 2022, the Complaints, Discipline and Internal Investigation Department of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) established a Human Rights Unit to monitor compliance with internal regulations and international treaty obligations. To improve conditions of custody and detention, the Inspectorate, Monitoring and Evaluation Team of the SLP inspected cells at 17 police stations in the Western Area (28 August–10 September 2024) and cells at 12 police stations across the Northeast, Northwest, Southern, and Eastern Regions (27–31 July 2025). Inspections revealed deplorable and inappropriate detention facilities, particularly for women and juveniles, and called for urgent interventions. Addressing these issues was deemed essential to strengthening public trust in the SLP.

48. In June 2025, the SLP, in partnership with the civil society organisation, Campaign for Human Rights and Development International, provided human rights training to 138 police officers (98 male and 40 female). The Family Support Unit (FSU), also benefitted from training delivered by UNICEF and the Justice Sector Coordination Office (JSCO). In May 2023, social workers from FSU nationwide received training on the National Framework on Diversion and Alternatives to Detention, aimed at preventing and reducing the number of children placed in detention.

49. The SLP is undergoing a transition from a force to a service. This transformation includes reviewing the legal framework, strengthening operational and institutional capacity for community-centred policing, building partnerships for effective security service delivery, and introducing the SLP Informal Resolution (IR) Policy. The IR policy provides a free, quick, flexible, simple, and expedient alternative for resolving minor disputes with the consent of the parties involved.

50. As of 7 January 2026, the SLCS operates 21 correctional facilities nationwide. The system faces significant overcrowding, with 4,431 inmates above approved capacity, representing an occupancy level of 156%. Remand inmates constitute 27% of the total population, with the average length of pre-trial detention at approximately 8 years, largely due to delays from reserved judgments and late service of indictments. To address overcrowding and prolonged detention, the Government has implemented measures including granting bail, holding regular prison court sittings, conducting judicial case reviews, and facilitating payment of fines by philanthropists and civil society organisations.

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

Recommendations 143.80–143.99, 143.100–143.105, 143.214, 143.232

51. Since 2021, the GoSL has implemented far-reaching reforms within the justice sector, combining legislative and institutional reforms with enhanced anti-corruption measures aimed at improving access to justice and reinforcing respect for the rule of law.

52. On 12 September 2024, GoSL launched the Justice Sector Reform Strategy 2024–2030, designed to address structural gaps in justice delivery and ensure equitable access to justice for all, regardless of socio-economic status. Building on the Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan IV (2018–2023), the new Strategy consolidates gains, accelerates institutional reform, and strengthens the protection of human rights and the rule of law. It is aligned with the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024–2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, providing a framework for improving case management, institutional capacity, and compliance with human rights standards.

53. A major legislative development during this reporting period was the repeal of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1965 and its replacement with the Criminal Procedure Act of 2024. The new Act improves judicial effectiveness through measures such as recruitment and training of court officials, ensuring expeditious trials and strengthening of the Legal Aid Board through the expansion of paralegal services to rural communities. The Act also introduces alternative sentencing options, including community punishment orders, suspended sentences, and deferred sentences for offences carrying a maximum sentence of two years.

54. The abolition of jury trials under the new Act, following a closely contested parliamentary vote (65 in favour, 38 opposed), has generated public debate. A Judge and two assessors now bear responsibility to determine cases involving treason, murder and robbery with aggravation. While the reform aims to improve efficiency and consistency in adjudication, some stakeholders have expressed concern about its implications for participatory justice and public confidence. The Government remains committed to respecting the democratic will of Parliament and supporting the changes enacted.

55. In July 2021, Parliament voted to abolish the death penalty, with the reform formally promulgated in April 2022. Capital punishment was replaced with life imprisonment or a minimum custodial sentence of 30 years, marking a historic milestone in the protection of the right to life and the advancement of human rights in Sierra Leone.

56. Broader gender equality reforms have been reinforced through the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022, which mandates equal pay for equal work, extends paid maternity leave, introduces a 30 per cent quota for women in elective and appointive positions, and addresses gender disparities in employment and training in line with relevant labour conventions. These measures contributed to a significant increase in women's representation in Parliament, rising from 14.5 per cent in 2018 to 30.4 per cent in 2023.

57. The Customary Land Rights Act 2022 and the National Land Commission Act 2022 further strengthened land governance by guaranteeing free, prior, and informed consent for community land use, eliminating gender-based discrimination in land ownership, and ensuring equal land rights for women.

58. Efforts to combat human trafficking and corruption have also intensified. The Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act 2022 introduced stronger penalties for trafficking-related offences, strengthening the legislative framework for addressing trafficking in persons.

59. Since 2019, a dedicated Anti-Corruption Division of the High Court has been operational, supported by specialised judges and modern facilities to expedite corruption cases. In 2022, sentencing guidelines for corruption offences were introduced to promote consistency, proportionality, and deterrence, addressing long-standing concerns about lenient sentencing in corruption cases. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has also recovered significant public funds through non-conviction-based asset recovery, following legislative amendments that strengthened asset declaration requirements and penalties in line with international standards.

60. These reforms have contributed to improved international perceptions, with Sierra Leone recording an upward movement in the Corruption Perceptions Index between 2017 and 2022. Anti-corruption investigations and prosecutions have extended across all levels of society, encompassing current and former public officials, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector, including several high-profile cases. Preventive measures especially systems and process review of MDAs and recommendations for preventing corruption and corrupt practices, have also been very instrumental in fighting corruption. In 2025, parliament through a statutory instrument passed a regulation on whistle blowers and witness protection to further strengthen the fight against corruption.

61. Access to justice for vulnerable populations has been further enhanced through sustained investment in the Legal Aid Board, which has received substantial government funding to support nationwide service delivery. The Board has expanded its geographic presence in all judicial districts in Sierra Leone, and significantly increased the number of beneficiaries served. For example, the Board provided legal advice and assistance to a total of 139,515 beneficiaries in 2023 and 167,888 as of December 2025, an increase of 20.3%, with women and girls comprising the majority of those assisted.

62. Judicial capacity has continued to improve through the appointment and promotion of judges and magistrates at all levels, complemented by continuous professional development delivered by the Judicial and Legal Training Institute, including nationwide training on the new Criminal Procedure Act. In April 2025, seven Magistrates were elevated to the High Court, including two women. In addition, three High Court Judges were promoted to the Court of Appeal, and one female Court of Appeal Judge was elevated to the Supreme Court.

These advancements have strengthened the capacity of the superior courts, contributing to more timely adjudication and a reduction in case backlogs.

63. Judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms have been strengthened to improve access to justice in family law matters. For example, the Legal Aid Board provides guidance and mediation for spouses, including compensation mechanisms. The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the Legal Aid Board implement Alternative Dispute Resolution (for family disputes, diverting cases from the formal court structure. The Judiciary has introduced fast-track case reviews, dismissing prolonged minor cases to reduce backlog.

H. Right to privacy, marriage and family life

Recommendations 143.107–143.115, 143.247–143.249, 143.250–143.253, 143.261, 143.263–143.269

64. The Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 enshrines key protections for privacy and family life. Section 22 guarantees the privacy of home and property, while Section 13(h) affirms recognition of the family. Section 8(3)(f) mandates protection for the aged, the young, and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, Chapter II and Section 15(c) establish respect for private and family life as a constitutional principle. Collectively, these provisions respond directly to UPR recommendations on strengthening constitutional safeguards for privacy and family rights.

65. Sierra Leone operates a pluralistic legal system that recognises Christian, Civil, Mohammedan, and Customary marriages. This framework is governed by key statutes, including the Christian Marriage Act Cap. 95 of 1960, the Mohamedan Marriage Act Cap. 96 of 1960, the Civil Marriage Act Cap.97 of 1960, and the Matrimonial Causes Act Cap. 102 of 1960]. The Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, No. 1 of 2009 further ensures formal recognition and regulation of customary unions.

66. On 2 July 2024, Sierra Leone enacted the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2024, marking a significant advance in the protection of the rights of girls and other vulnerable groups. The Act criminalises marriage under the age of 18 in all circumstances and across all legal systems – civil, customary, and religious – thereby harmonising previously inconsistent legal regimes. It establishes stringent penalties, including a minimum of 15 years' imprisonment or a fine of not less than NLe 50,000, or both, for offences relating to child marriage. The Act further criminalises the facilitation, promotion, conduct, or attendance of child marriage ceremonies, cohabitation with a minor, and aiding or abetting such practices, including by parents and other responsible persons. It also provides for annulment of child marriages, compensation for victims, and mandates relevant ministries to ensure access to safe shelters, counselling, and support services for affected girls.

67. These reforms form part of a broader legislative framework aimed at strengthening the protection of women and children and aligning domestic law with international human rights standards. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022 and the Child Rights Act 2025 reinforce safeguards against child, early, and forced marriages. The National Land Commission Act 2022 and the Customary Land Rights Act 2022 represent transformative reforms to ensure equitable access to land and property rights. Collectively, these legislative measures prohibit child labour, early marriage, and sexual violence against children, and contribute to Sierra Leone's fulfilment of obligations under relevant international human rights, labour, and child protection instruments.

68. The work of the National Civil Registration Authority is central to the implementation of UPR recommendations relating to universal birth registration. In its Provisional Annual Report on Vital Events for the year ending 31 December 2025, the Authority recorded a total of 306,057 live births nationwide, comprising 149,968 males (49%) and 156,089 females (51%).

69. Key institutions supporting family, gender, and children's rights include the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, National Commission for Children, Legal Aid Board, FSU, and the Judiciary. Policy frameworks such as the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and the National Male Involvement in Gender-

Based Violence Policy further strengthen compliance and mainstream gender equality and family protections. Ongoing sensitisation campaigns, community engagements, and radio discussions continue to raise awareness on marriage rights, domestic violence, and gender equality.

I. Right to religion and freedom of expression

Recommendations 143.53, 143.107–143.115

70. The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone guarantees freedom of religion (Section 24) and freedom of expression (Section 15), allowing individuals to hold beliefs, change them, and practise freely. Sierra Leone is characterised by strong religious harmony and tolerance, with Muslims, Christians, and adherents of other faiths coexisting peacefully.

71. Media practitioners, human rights defenders, opposition politicians, and civil society activists enjoy freedom of expression. The repeal of the 1965 criminal libel law from the Public Order Act has significantly widened the space for exercising this right. Recent efforts by the Government to further guarantee freedom of expression include the development of a National Media and Information Policy, a National Records and Archives Policy, and a National Civic Education Strategy – all of which are relevant to information access, media standards, and public awareness of rights to information and expression.

72. The enjoyment of qualified rights carries responsibilities, including the application of criminal sanctions considered reasonable, necessary, and appropriate in a democratic society. The Cyber Security and Crime Act, No. 7 of 2021 serves as an effective tool to prohibit, prevent, detect, prosecute, and punish cybercrimes, while preventing the abusive use of computer systems. For victims of cyber-stalking and cyberbullying, the Act provides important protections. Its provisions criminalise communication or repeated conduct directed at a specific person with intent to coerce, intimidate, harass, or cause emotional distress. The Act has been invoked particularly in cases involving threats or harassment online, including concerns about its chilling effect on public-facing women.

J. Women’s empowerment and political participation

Recommendations 143.207, 143.216, 143.227, 143.232, 143.235, 143.236, 143.238, 143.239, 143.240–143.246, 143.266, 143.267

73. The Government has undertaken significant legislative, policy, and institutional reforms to advance women’s empowerment and promote gender equality in governance and public life. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Act, No. 23 of 2022 establishes a mandatory minimum quota of 30 per cent representation for women in elective and appointive public positions. The Act consolidates national gender commitments by incorporating the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy (2020) into its statutory framework, thereby strengthening enforceability and accountability. The Government has also leveraged the Political Parties Act, No. 25 of 2022 to enhance women’s participation within political party structures.

74. In support of women’s political participation, the Public Elections Act, No. 17 of 2022 introduces a gender-sensitive candidate nomination requirement, mandating that political parties include at least one woman among every three candidates presented for elections. This framework responds directly to international and UPR recommendations on addressing structural barriers to women’s political inclusion. The impact of these reforms is evident in increased female representation across all branches of government. Following the 2023 general elections, women now occupy 41 out of 135 seats in Parliament, representing an increase from approximately 14.5% to 30.4% – a historic milestone in women’s parliamentary representation in Sierra Leone.

75. At the executive level, greater gender diversity has been achieved following the re-election of His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio in 2023, with women constituting 41% of Cabinet and high-level appointments, exceeding the statutory 30% benchmark. Women currently hold key ministerial portfolios, including Social Welfare; Gender and

Children’s Affairs; Tourism and Cultural Affairs; Fisheries and Marine Resources; Technical and Higher Education; Water Resources and Sanitation; and Sports, reflecting meaningful participation in decision-making at the highest levels of government.

76. Within the judiciary, several women have been appointed to senior positions in the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, and Magistrates Court, contributing to enhanced gender balance in the administration of justice. At the local government level, women continue to make significant gains, including the re-election of a female Mayor of the Freetown City Council. Nationwide, 157 women were elected as councillors out of a total of 467 in the 2023 elections, demonstrating increased women’s participation and leadership at the community level. This indicates 34% women in the local councils.

77. The institutionalisation of Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) through the GEWE Act, 2022 represents a major advancement in ensuring that public resources address gender-specific priorities. MDAs are now required to integrate gender considerations into their budgetary planning and implementation processes.

78. Women’s empowerment has also been strengthened within the security sector. The Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP III, 2024–2029) places renewed emphasis on women’s leadership, participation, and protection in line with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. This has resulted in increased female representation and leadership within the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), the Sierra Leone Police, and other security sector institutions. The 9th battalion of the RSLAF is being headed by a senior female military officer. Similarly, there are 3 female Assistant Inspector Generals of the SLP and the first female Deputy Director General of the Sierra Leone Correctional Service (SLCS).

79. These legislative, institutional, and policy measures demonstrate the Government’s sustained commitment to women’s empowerment and gender equality. While challenges remain, the enactment and implementation of the GEWE Act, together with measurable gains in political participation, governance, budgeting, and the security sector, represent significant progress towards inclusive governance and the fulfilment of national, regional, and international human rights obligations.

K. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

Recommendations 143.127–143.140, 143.250–143.251, 143.259, 143.261

80. GoSL adopted the National Social Protection Strategy (2022–2026), anchored in a life-course approach designed to address the needs of children, youth, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable households. This strategy directly responds to calls for comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable social protection frameworks, with emphasis on resilience, equity, and integration with national development priorities.

81. The National Social Security and Insurance Trust continues to provide pensions, disability and survivor benefits. However, coverage gaps persist, particularly for informal sector workers who remain largely excluded. Work is underway to design innovative contributory schemes tailored to informal and rural workers, with the aim of achieving universal coverage and inclusivity. Pilot initiatives are exploring flexible contribution models for informal workers, thereby extending social security to all categories of workers.

82. Successive national budgets have sought to improve benefit adequacy and the sustainability of social protection. Future reforms will require expanded fiscal space and stronger donor alignment. Outreach programmes, mobile payment systems, and community-based targeting are being piloted to ensure equitable access across geographic regions, thereby expanding coverage to underserved communities. Efforts are also being made to extend social protection services to rural areas, addressing historical urban bias.

L. Right to health

Recommendations 143.57, 143.85, 143.127–143.128, 143.130, 143.137–143.138, 143.140–143.155, 143.199, 143.235, 143.248–143.253, 143.255–143.267, 143.271, 143.273

83. GoSL welcomes the increased number of health-related recommendations – more than any other thematic cluster – from United Nations Member States. This reflects a shared recognition of the need to strengthen health systems and improve health outcomes for all Sierra Leoneans.

84. Since 2021, the Government has undertaken wide-ranging legislative, policy, and institutional reforms to advance the right to health, promote gender equality, and strengthen protection for women, children, and other vulnerable groups, in line with international human rights obligations and accepted UPR recommendations. In compliance with the GEWE Act 2022, the Ministry of Health has established gender units, designated gender focal persons, and operationalised a dedicated Gender Desk to ensure that gender considerations are systematically integrated into health policies, programmes, and service delivery. These efforts are supported by evidence-based initiatives, including a gender barrier analysis conducted with UNICEF, which identified structural and socio-cultural barriers to equitable access and informed corrective interventions.

85. The Government has significantly expanded access to healthcare services nationwide. The health system now comprises over 1,600 health facilities, with approximately 85% of the population living within five kilometres of a facility, thereby bringing essential services closer to rural communities and vulnerable populations.

86. To promote equity and standardisation of care, an Essential Health Benefits Package has been developed, defining priority services available across levels of care. In parallel, the establishment of the Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance Secretariat represents a critical step toward reducing out-of-pocket costs for pregnant women and strengthening sustainable health financing, although full operationalisation remains ongoing. Institutional responsibility for sanitation has been transferred to the Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation, enabling the Ministry of Health to focus on infection prevention and control within health facilities, while strengthening inter-ministerial collaboration to improve access to safe drinking water and overall public health outcomes.

87. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and Health have been progressively prioritised within national development planning and public expenditure. This commitment is reflected in the 2026 national budget, framed around a “pro-people” growth agenda, which provides increased allocations to expand access to essential services and improve the well-being of poor, elderly, and vulnerable populations. Supporting frameworks include the National WASH Strategic Plan 2025-2035, the reviewed National WASH Policy (validated and awaiting launch), the Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act 2025, the Water Security and WASH Access Improvement Project, and a Community-Level Operation and Maintenance Strategy (validated and launched in 2025 to enhance sustainability of WASH services).

88. Public health governance has been reinforced through the establishment of the National Public Health Agency, which leads disease surveillance, emergency preparedness, and evidence-based interventions. Health security and system resilience have been further strengthened through the implementation and ongoing review of the National Action Plan for Health Security, focusing on emergency preparedness, disease surveillance, and a One Health approach.

89. GoSL continues to advance Universal Health Coverage through a patient-centred, life-course approach prioritising strong primary healthcare, system integration, and digital transformation. Key milestones include:

- Enactment of the Public Health Act, No. 17 of 2023, providing a legal framework for public health standards and regulation of sanitation and water.

- Implementation of the National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2021-2025, guiding integrated service delivery, health financing, and sector coordination.
- Adoption of the Digital Health Roadmap 2024-2026, setting out a three-year plan for digitising health services, strengthening health information systems, and improving continuity of care.

90. International cooperation has expanded significantly through memoranda of understanding with universities, organisations, and institutions globally, including a landmark bilateral health partnership with the United States Government and the development of the Sierra Leone National Health Compact. These partnerships support financing, workforce development, infrastructure strengthening, and health security. Priority investments include the establishment of specialised units such as the Biomedical Unit, modernisation of major facilities including Connaught Hospital, enhanced training programmes, a healthcare electrification initiative, and deployment of digital innovations such as the PReSTrack application to strengthen maternal and child health services. As of June 2025, 40 public health facilities (including major hospitals and primary healthcare units) have been commissioned with uninterrupted renewable energy, improving service delivery, safety, and quality of care.

91. Progress has been recorded across maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health. Adolescent-friendly health services have been expanded, including within schools, to improve access to sexual and reproductive health information and care. Special Care Baby Units have been established nationwide to address neonatal complications. At the community level, trained Community Health Workers provide integrated management of newborn and childhood illnesses in hard-to-reach areas. Preventive interventions have been scaled up, including the introduction of cervical cancer vaccination for girls aged 10–19 years and the rollout of cervical cancer screening services for early diagnosis and treatment.

92. The Free Health Care Initiative continues to support access to essential services for pregnant women, children under 5 and lactating mothers. The health workforce has been strengthened through the recruitment of over 3,000 health workers and the engagement of more than 8,000 community health workers with stipend support. Rehabilitation centres for persons affected by drug abuse have been established, alongside coordinated drug control measures involving relevant ministries, departments, and agencies. Maternal mortality has declined substantially, reflecting expanded access to services and improved interventions. Access to contraceptives has improved, with a contraceptive prevalence rate of 29%, contributing to better reproductive health outcomes.

93. Efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) within the health sector have been strengthened through the establishment of gender structures within the Ministry of Health, regular training of health workers, social workers, and law enforcement personnel, and close collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. One-stop centres have been established in seven districts to provide integrated medical, psychosocial, and legal services for survivors of SGBV.

94. Women's leadership within the Ministry of Health has increased significantly, particularly in programme management and director-level positions, reflecting progress toward gender balance in decision-making. Nonetheless, women remain underrepresented in some senior clinical and district leadership roles, including positions of medical superintendents and District Medical Officers. Targeted measures are being pursued to address these gaps. Overall, while substantial progress has been made in expanding access to health services, strengthening gender responsiveness, improving WASH outcomes, and advancing maternal, child, and adolescent health, persistent structural and systemic challenges require sustained investment, policy reform, and effective implementation to fully realise the right to health for all Sierra Leoneans.

M. Right to education and promotion of human rights education

Recommendations 143.139, 143.140, 143.155, 143.171

95. GoSL commitment remains 22% of its national budget to education as a national priority, recognising it as fundamental to advancing the human right to education and supporting the human capital development of Sierra Leoneans.

96. In March 2021, the Government adopted the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, GoSL in collaboration with civil society stakeholders. The policy seeks to remove infrastructural, systemic, and attitudinal barriers to learning, with particular emphasis on pregnant girls and young mothers, children with disabilities, children from the poorest households, and learners in rural and underserved communities. This marked a decisive shift toward inclusive education and non-discrimination in access to schooling. These initiatives were given statutory force through the enactment of the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act, No. 23 of 2023. Section 19 of the Act guarantees the right of pregnant girls, parenting learners, children from poor households, and those from rural and underserved areas to access, remain in, and complete school without discrimination, and to enjoy all facilities provided within educational institutions nationwide.

97. The Government's Education Sector Plan 2022–2026 further operationalises education initiatives and commitments by affirming that every child, regardless of circumstance, should have the opportunity to access and complete quality education and demonstrate proficiency in foundational skills, particularly literacy and numeracy. Implementation of the Free Quality School Education Programme has continued throughout the reporting period, building on reforms introduced in 2018.

98. Public investment in education has remained strong, with the sector consistently receiving over 20 per cent of the national budget since 2021. Budget execution has also improved, with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education achieving a 92 per cent execution rate in the 2023/2024 fiscal year, compared to 78 per cent in 2019. Teacher recruitment, deployment, and management have been strengthened through reforms led by the Teaching Service Commission. Nationwide assessments of teacher records were completed, leading to recommendations for improved motivation and benefits, while a new deployment protocol prioritised disadvantaged districts. For the 2024/2025 academic year, more than half of newly recruited teachers, including early childhood educators, were assigned to the ten most disadvantaged districts.

99. Curriculum and teaching quality have also improved. Since 2023, the Government has developed and validated a Grade 1 Numeracy Instructional Package, including learner workbooks and structured teacher guides, and trained over 12,000 in-service teachers in their use. In addition, the Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge, launched in 2022 with government leadership and partner support, is addressing learning loss and improving outcomes for over 134,000 children aged 6 to 12 across 325 government schools nationwide.

100. Learning environments have been enhanced through targeted infrastructure investments. In July 2025, the Government launched a USD 2 million national furniture provision project to supply more than 14,700 sets of desks and chairs to primary and secondary schools, technical institutions, and universities across thirteen districts, improving safety, dignity, and learning conditions.

N. Improve implementation of the UPR recommendations

Recommendation 143.26

101. The GoSL has established the NRM to coordinate the implementation, monitoring, reporting, and follow-up of recommendations arising from obligations under international and regional human rights instruments, including the ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CRC, CAT, and the UPR mechanism. Established in November 2021, the NRM is supported by a Permanent Secretariat housed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC), which serves as the lead ministry and works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and other relevant MDAs. This institutional framework enhances

inter-ministerial coordination, stakeholder consultation, continuity in reporting, and systematic information management.

102. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and representatives of civil society organisations participate in the NRM as technical observers, contributing to transparency and inclusiveness. The Government expresses its appreciation to the UPR Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for the technical support provided during the second cycle implementation period and looks forward to continued engagement and cooperation during the implementation of recommendations arising from the fourth UPR cycle.

103. HRCSL plays a central monitoring role and has developed tracking tools to assess compliance with accepted recommendations. The Commission and civil society organisations continue to contribute through alternative or shadow reports, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability.

V. Status of implementation of voluntary pledges

104. The Government remains committed to fulfilling its pledge to align laws applicable to children aged 14 or under involved in sexual offences with international standards. A statutory review following the 2021 assessment identified inconsistencies between the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2019 and other legislation on the age of majority, notwithstanding the recent enactment of the Child Rights Act 2025, which clearly establishes the age of majority as 18 years. In response, the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice has commissioned a comprehensive legal and statutory review. A consortium of consultants has been appointed to undertake this work, and progress will be reported accordingly.

105. In the interim, the Child Rights Act 2025 (section 47) has reinstated the principle of *doli incapax* in Sierra Leonean law, presuming that children aged 10 to 14 lack criminal capacity. The Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice applies prosecutorial discretion not to charge or pursue prosecution against children aged 14 or below. Instead, such children are diverted from formal judicial proceedings in accordance with the *National Framework for the Diversion of Children in Conflict with the Law in Sierra Leone*. Section 49 of the Child Rights Act 2025 provides statutory backing for this diversion approach, which seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of formal criminal justice processes while promoting alternative, rehabilitative responses.

106. Information on the progress of the constitutional review process has been provided in Sections III, A and IV, B above. As part of preparations for the next phase, the Government published a draft *Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2025* in the Supplement to the Sierra Leone Gazette, Vol. CLXVI, No. 103, dated 24 December 2025. The Government's ambition is to conclude the constitutional review process through a referendum during the 2028 general elections, by including a referendum question on the ballot to finalise constitutional amendments.

107. Regarding the third pledge on the death penalty, the Government is pleased to report that this pledge has been fully achieved through the abolition of the death penalty by an Act of Parliament and Executive approval by His Excellency the President.

VI. Key national priorities, initiatives and commitments

108. The Government's key national priorities, initiatives, and commitments are articulated in the *Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2024–2030*, which constitutes the country's principal development framework and the second edition following the 2019–2023 plan. The MTNDP is anchored in the Government's Big Five Game Changers, which provide strategic direction toward the national vision of becoming an inclusive, resilient, and green middle-income country by 2039. These priorities focus on food security and agricultural transformation, human capital development, youth employment, technology and

infrastructure development, and the transformation of public service architecture to ensure efficiency, professionalism, and effective service delivery.

109. The Government recognises the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and development and accordingly treats the MTNDP as both a development strategy and a human right-enabling framework. The effective implementation of the *Big Five Game Changers* is intended to directly advance the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under Agenda 2030. In this regard, the Government considers its engagement with international human rights instruments and mechanisms, including the UPR, as integral to measuring progress in the implementation of the MTNDP and the realisation of the right to development.

110. To strengthen transparency, accountability, and evidence-based monitoring of the implementation of national priorities, the Government launched the Sierra Leone National Development Tracker on 1 December 2025. This digital platform enables systematic tracking of progress across the Big Five Game Changers and related enablers under the MTNDP 2024-2030. The Government welcomes continued collaboration with development partners to further enhance this tool.

111. The Government continues to modernise governance, public administration, and service delivery systems in support of human rights and inclusive development. Measures undertaken include the operationalisation of the online *Unified Permit Platform* from 1 January 2026, which digitises the processing of residence and work permit applications and enhances efficiency, accessibility, and transparency in immigration and labour management.

112. The Government remains committed to strengthening MDAs with human rights mandates through improved financing, improved legal, policy, and institutional frameworks, and expanded space to enable them to carry out human rights work. Nationwide sensitisation and training initiatives led by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, the National Commission for Democracy, and civil society organisations, in collaboration with other state institutions and partners, have focused on schools, communities, peace clubs, and public service institutions. Particular attention has been given to ensuring that girls, minority groups, and other learners are informed of their rights. These efforts underscore the Government's commitment to a people-centred, rights-based approach to national development.

VII. Challenges and constraints

113. Notwithstanding ongoing reforms, the Government acknowledges persistent challenges and constraints that continue to affect the full enjoyment of human rights. Conditions in police custody facilities and detention centres within the Sierra Leone Correctional Service remain inadequate, with overcrowding posing a serious concern across police and prison estates. In certain facilities, infrastructure and living conditions fall below acceptable standards, underscoring the urgent need for sustained investment to improve detention conditions in line with human rights norms. The Government recognises that addressing these challenges is essential to safeguarding the dignity and rights of persons deprived of liberty and therefore welcomes technical and financial assistance from development partners.

114. Significant constraints also remain within the health sector, particularly in primary healthcare delivery and maternal health services. Gaps in staffing, deployment, and regulation continue to undermine service quality, continuity, and accountability, while weaknesses in clinical care, referral systems, and emergency obstetric and newborn care readiness contribute to preventable complications. Persistent shortages of essential medicines and medical supplies further affect service delivery. Despite the Free Health Care framework, out-of-pocket payments by beneficiaries of the scheme continue to be reported, and delays in the full operationalisation of the national social health insurance scheme have limited progress towards equitable access to healthcare.

115. Although maternal mortality has declined in recent years, current rates remain high at 354 per 100,000 live births, well above the SDG target of less than 70 per 100,000 live births

by 2030. Preventable obstetric causes persist due to delayed care-seeking, health system constraints, and broader social and economic determinants of health. Child mortality remains a major concern, with under-five mortality at 94 per 1,000 live births, indicating the need for more targeted and sustained child health interventions. High rates of adolescent pregnancy, low contraceptive uptake among adolescents, limited availability of youth-friendly services, and barriers to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services continue to expose girls and young women to heightened health risks. Unsafe abortion and limited access to post-abortion care remain contributors to maternal morbidity and mortality, highlighting the need for continued legislative and policy reforms in reproductive health.

116. While progress has been made in advancing gender equality within the health sector, including increased representation of women in senior management and programme leadership positions within the Ministry of Health, disparities persist in key clinical leadership roles such as medical superintendents and District Medical Officers. The Government remains committed to addressing these gaps while continuing to strengthen gender equality and expand access to quality healthcare for all. The Government acknowledges that disparity in gender representation persists across the wider socio-economic and political ecosystems but notes the achievement of 30% representation of women in elective and appointive positions within the political sphere. The Government welcomes partnerships to address gaps in gender underrepresentation across society.

117. Efforts to eliminate child, early, and forced marriages continue to face implementation challenges, particularly due to entrenched cultural practices and poverty in some communities. In response, the Government, through the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, has intensified community outreach, public education, and enforcement initiatives. The Government calls on the international community and development partners to support these institutions, alongside civil society organisations and other ministries, departments, and agencies, in sustaining and expanding these interventions.

118. Despite notable progress in justice sector reform, challenges remain in the administration of justice. Concerns persist regarding democratic governance, the effectiveness of checks and balances, perceptions of politicisation in anti-corruption efforts, and weaknesses in public financial management, as highlighted in the 2022 audit report. While the recruitment and promotion of judicial officers have improved access to justice, the Government acknowledges the need for continued reforms to address systemic constraints and ensure the effective protection of human rights.

119. In light of these challenges, the Government reiterates its call for support from development partners, philanthropists, and other stakeholders to complement national efforts to reduce overcrowding in custody and detention facilities, improve healthcare delivery and education outcomes for all Sierra Leoneans, in line with national and international human rights commitments.

120. As in previous cycles, the current reporting cycle was constrained by limited availability of implementation data, largely due to staff attrition and inadequate resources for the NRM Secretariat. OHCHR and other development partners' technical and financial support to the NRM through the introduction of a digital information management system, such as OHCHR's National Recommendations Tracking Database, could strengthen coordination, implementation, reporting, and follow-up.
