



## Engagement with Stakeholders for a National Policy on Business and Human Rights

With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Irish Aid, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone has concluded a nationwide stakeholder engagement on the development of a National Policy on Business and Human Rights.



The BHR policy seeks to provide a framework guide for all relevant government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in responding to business and human rights issues in the country, and to also show the linkage between and among the roles and operations of the relevant MDAs to enhance coherence and consistency.



The engagement in Bo for the southeast, Makeni for the north/northwest and in Freetown aims at getting the inputs of key stakeholders to develop a strong policy that will stand the test of time.



Participants were drawn from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, National Investment Board, Sierra Leone Labour Congress, Network Movement for Justice and Development, Office of the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, NAMATI, Ministries of Planning and Economic Development, Mines and Mineral Resources and Lands and Country Planning, National Public Procurement Authority (NPPA), Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce and Sierra Leone Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA), among others.

Issues raised during the discussions include underpayment of workers, not explaining land lease agreements to community people, communication gap between communities and companies, the use of state authorities to violate the rights of citizens when they attempt to protest, and sexual harassment.



Chairperson of HRCSL, Patricia Narsu Ndanema said the Commission received several complaints from people working in the corporate world, hence the establishment of the Business and Human Rights Directorate in 2021 to handle issues of human rights concerns. She stated that the National Policy on Business and Human Rights would ensure that measures are taken to prevent human rights abuses in the business and corporate sectors.

Madam Ndanema explained in detail the sexual offenses act of 2012 as amended in 2019 and noted that sexual harassment is also commonly reported in business entities.



Representing the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, Mulku Sulaiman Tarawalie welcomed the move by the Commission and UNDP to have a National Policy on



Business and Human Rights and urged that the views of participants form part of the final document.

Deputy Director and Head of Business and Human Rights Directorate, Abdulai Yollah Bangura encouraged participants to give their inputs so that the Policy will address all of the concerns raised. He said that businesses must respect human rights if they are to be accepted by the community people and that the policy would lead to the development of a national action plan which would eventually culminate into an Act of Parliament.

The Consultant, Sorie Sengbeh Marah Esq. congratulated the participants for their contributions to the document, and described their inputs as laudable. He promised to deliver a draft policy that reflects the views of stakeholders across the country.

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