



Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL)

...fostering human rights through accountability

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Happy New Year, Partners!

Thanks to your immeasurable technical and financial support, we are pleased to inform you that we accomplished a number of critical milestones in 2021. As we begin a new year, I'd like to thank you, on behalf of the Board and staff of the Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law, for your extraordinary support to us over the years. The Covid-19 virus has had a significant impact on global economic and development programmes, including the work that organisations like ours do. During the past year, we continued to serve our communities by adapting to the many changes imposed on us by the Covid-19 virus. We are hopeful that 2022 will be much better in terms of our collective ability to respond to the virus and adapt to the emerging variants of the virus. Last year was an all-round good year for CARL in many respects, even though the organization grappled with many challenges. Thanks to our dedicated team at CARL and the immense support from you (our partners), we either accomplished or made significant progress on a number of organisational priorities for 2021. For instance, after years of advocacy, the Sierra Leone Police has finally ring-fenced a budget for the operations of FSU in 2022 (for the first time since the Unit was set up more than 20 years ago). This is expected to enhance the Unit's ability to deliver on their mandate of investigating and prosecuting sexual and gender-based crimes. We also made progress in our efforts to enhance compliance with Bail Regulations 2017 by, among other things, monitoring the adjudication of bail applications in criminal trials. We also collected and analysed data on just the adjudication of bail applications, but also on several aspects of criminal trials, thereby making us perhaps the single biggest repository of data on criminal trials in Sierra Leone at the level of the Magistrate Courts. Additionally, through our work with PARHA, we worked with partners to influence the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in prioritizing access to sexual and reproductive health services, including the need for a law on safe motherhood and maternal health. Consequently, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation has now approved/adopted a policy paper for the attention of Cabinet. Once the paper is approved by Cabinet, the process of drafting/reviewing the bill is expected to commence. We are pleased to note that steady progress has been on both the Ebola litigation and the decriminalization of petty offences projects. On the Ebola litigation project, the Government of Sierra Leone is currently negotiating an out-of-court settlement with the plaintiffs. The Office of the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice and the legal representatives of the Plaintiffs have reached a settlement agreement, but it is yet to be approved by Cabinet. We also continued our efforts towards a transparent, inclusive and accountable constitutional review process in



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Sierra Leone. A Whitepaper has been reportedly adopted by the Executive, but it is yet to be made public. As part of our human rights protection work, we produced a detailed and well-grounded report on the state of human rights in Covid19 response in Sierra Leone. The report chronicles a number of human rights violations by mainly security officers whilst enforcing emergency regulations, noting that there has been little effort to hold the alleged perpetrators to account. The report also discusses the social and economic impact of the pandemic on particularly women and poor communities, and how the government and its partners have been responding to it. We're grateful to all our partners, including OSIWA, Irish Embassy, UNDP, Amplify Change, and Trocaire. The challenges were many in 2021, but they did not stop us from delivering on most of our targets. We are very optimistic that 2022 will be much better, even as we are realistic that many challenges lie ahead. As we have demonstrated in the past, we will be prepared to confront challenges/setbacks as a team, confident in our collective abilities and determination to serve our communities. We will focus on our strengths as we continue to address any weaknesses at personnel and institutional levels. We will continue to be faithful to our revered values of team work, transparency and accountability, respect for human rights, dedication, commitment and pursuit of excellence, responsiveness, professionalism and comportment, among others.

This year, we will focus on strengthening the criminal justice system intensifying our advocacy for a new Criminal Procedure Act and better compliance with the Bail Regulations, 2017, among others. We will also continue our advocacy for a more inclusive and democratic constitution for Sierra Leone. As Sierra Leone prepares for elections in 2023, we will commence preparatory work on electoral justice with the view to ensuring that electoral disputes are resolved in transparent, expeditious and acceptable manner. We will need all of you – our revered partners – to provide the required accompaniment as well as technical and financial support to achieve our targets/goals for 2022.

On behalf of the Board and Management of CARL, I would like to wish you all a more successful, peaceful and productive New Year.

Thank you.

Executive Director, Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL)