



STORY OF CHANGE:
**CONTRIBUTION OF UK SIERRA
LEONE PRO BONO NETWORK
IN IMPROVING RULE OF LAW**



ABOUT ADVOCATES FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Advocates for International Development (A4ID), founded in 2006, is a global charity that believes the law can and should be used more effectively to advance fair and sustainable development. A4ID aims to inspire and enable lawyers to join the global fight to eradicate poverty by advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through A4ID, the world's top lawyers provide free legal support to organisations, working to advance human dignity, equality and justice. Its work has so far impacted in over 130 countries.

A4ID's Rule of Law Expertise (ROLE UK) Programme is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. It supports partnerships to provide pro bono legal and judicial expertise with the aim to strengthen the rule of law in official development assistance (ODA)-eligible countries. The Programme's Knowledge Hub provides the pro bono legal sector with access to targeted and relevant information to inform and improve their technical assistance in development contexts.

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We are grateful to the contributions from the UK Sierra Leone Pro Bono Network members and stakeholders in Sierra Leone including AdvocAid,

the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Bar Association, amongst others.

We thank independent evaluator Olivia Kaye for researching and drafting this story of change for A4ID.

COVER PAGE: *UK Sierra Leone Pro bono Network training programme, March 2022*

BACKGROUND

STORIES OF CHANGE

Stories of Change are a tool used to explore and present the change that has occurred as a result of an intervention or project. These are

often used to provide context and narrative, supplementing quantitative indicators, and to communicate changes in knowledge, behaviours, attitudes, and practices that are not readily available in quantitative metrics.

“Stories of Change can capture any moment along the results chain and do not need to focus on impact level results. It is extremely important to recognise that impact is not linear, it takes time and that it may be several years before the relevance of some work is fully recognised / absorbed, or for changes to take place in bureaucratic, social, and economic systems. Impact level results rely on many external factors that are often outside the control of the programme, and therefore attribution or contribution to impact may be hard to measure, or impact may never be achieved. We can therefore use stories of change to demonstrate that we are moving towards or contributing to this impact therefore illustrating positive change towards impact level results, even if impact level results cannot be measured.”

– Bailey, H. (2015). *‘The trouble of illustrating ‘impact’*, *Stories of Change*. INTRAC

A4ID has been producing Stories of Change to highlight the contribution of its ROLE UK Programme in improving laws, policies,

systems, and practices that contribute to overall improvements in rule of law in ODA-eligible countries.

Stories of Change usually focus on a specific outcome and work backwards to understand the contribution that an intervention or group of interventions made to the observed change by tracking changes in the Theory of Change (ToC). However, the ROLE UK Programme's partnerships-based approach means that there are a large number of outcomes to which the Programme's interventions can credibly claim to have contributed to, but limited evidence of the extent of the contribution. For example, A4ID's [Story of Change on the abolition of the death penalty in Malawi](#) explores the contribution that the Programme supported partnership made in the positive outcome (death penalty abolition), though it does not explore external factors unrelated to the Programme that may also have contributed to this outcome, such as other programmes advocating for death penalty abolition, and wider socio-political factors.

The subject for these Stories of Change are purposively selected to capture stories:

- Which have not already been told through existing stories of change;
- In which there is/are clear and observable changes to laws, policies, systems, and practices; and
- In which stakeholders are confident that the Programme contributed to this/these changes.

This Story of Change highlights how the work of the UK Sierra Leone Pro Bono Network (UKSLPBN) has contributed to strengthening the capacity, opportunity, and motivation of legal institutions in Sierra Leone to improve laws, policies, systems, and practices.



Legal stakeholders participating in workshop on Implementing Abolishment of the Death Penalty, November 2022

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

RECENT HISTORY OF SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone became an independent nation in 1961, and had a one party rule until 1991, when the Liberian-supported Revolutionary United Front (RUF) intervened in an effort to overthrow the Sierra Leonean government. This triggered a decade-long civil war in which 50,000 Sierra Leoneans were killed. The signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999 saw the beginning of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the subsequent intervention of the British Government to keep the peace agreement once the UN Mission started to fail. The civil war finally ended in 2002 but had ravaged Sierra Leone and left it with severely weakened institutions and rule of law.

Since 2002, Sierra Leone has had three peaceful and democratic transfers of power and has also made considerable progress in the promotion and protection of rule of law. Whilst it is undoubtable that significant progress has been made, institutional capacity and corruption remain key challenges. These issues are particularly acute as the country has limited financial resources

available and, due to corruption, there is limited appetite to address rule of law challenges.

To this day, Sierra Leone remains one of the world's least developed countries. Although, poverty rates have declined significantly from 54.7% in 2011 to 43% in 2018, more than 3.3 million Sierra Leoneans still live on less than USD1.9 per day. Similarly, the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index ranks Sierra Leone 108th out of 139 countries, scoring below the regional average on corruption, regulatory enforcement, and criminal justice.

BACKGROUND TO UKSLPBN

It is within this context that the UKSLPBN was founded in 2014. The Network was initially set up in 2012 as the Bar Council Sierra Leone Special Interest Group following a request for assistance from the Sierra Leone Bar Association to the General Council of the Bar of England and Wales. In 2014, following work undertaken by the Bar Council group, pro bono legal professionals came together to form the UKSLPBN as an umbrella network for UK judges, legal professionals, and organisations providing

pro bono legal assistance in Sierra Leone.

Since then, the Network has evolved into an independent and multidisciplinary group of over 200 legal and judicial professionals. The UKSLPBN acts as a hub to coordinate all requests for legal technical assistance and support from Sierra Leone, and matches them with thematic and judicial experts from the UK who are interested in providing pro bono support. As the breadth and depth of the Network's support has expanded over the years, the centralised nature helps to ensure that all activities are coordinated through one entity, so there is coherence across different activities and clarity of how activities

targeting different themes and institutions within the legal and judicial sectors can fit together and complement each other. The Network also involves other experts like police officers and forensic accountants, as required.

It is this breadth that makes the UKSLPBN unique among the partnerships funded by the Programme. The majority of the partnerships funded are between UK pro bono providers and recipient organisations in an ODA-eligible country focusing on a single thematic area. The UKSLPBN works with multiple institutions and thematic areas, in an effort to build institutional capacity to support and uphold the rule of law.



Legal stakeholders participating in workshop on Implementing Abolishment of the Death Penalty, November 2022

HIGHLIGHTING UKSLPBN'S ADVOCACY AND IMPACT ON THE GROUND

This section explores the activities, outputs, and outcomes from some of the UKSLPBN's work supported between 2019- 2023. It is important to note that the majority of the Programme's monitoring and evaluation work is conducted at the activity level. The Programme collects data from surveys, post-activity interviews, and training assessments. Notably, the data collection is limited to the direct beneficiaries who come into contact with the activities supported by the Programme and therefore the data is not available on the broader outcomes from the Network's other areas of work.

Therefore, the following areas of work have been identified which have clear outcomes and reliable information which can establish the Network's contribution through support of the Programme.

ADVOCACY FOR ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

The UKSLPBN was involved as part of a broad coalition of organisations advocating for the abolition of the death penalty in Sierra Leone.

The death penalty was a very politically charged and a contentious issue in Sierra Leone. A stakeholder described this dynamic as *"for years people in government have shied away from it [death penalty abolition] and used it as a political tool"*. Initially, there was resistance to abolition within the government due to a fear that the death penalty was an effective deterrent, and its removal would result in lawlessness or the government being perceived as weak. The UKSLPBN mapped stakeholders, identified key influencers (such as the Bar Association and leading individual lawyers), and developed an influencing strategy to work with a range of organisations to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. The Network played an important role in mobilising local actors and supporting the identification of local stakeholders.

In an interview, a member of AdvocAid, one of the key organisations advocating for abolition, described the importance of the UKSLPBN in understanding the landscape of actors working on death penalty abolition, and how

to conduct effective outreach and advocacy.

“As a newcomer to Sierra Leone, it was really useful having UKSLPBN there and having their perspective, that kind of institutional memory – what had been done before, what had worked, what relationships were like, the people we were trying to influence.” These efforts were ultimately successful, with the Sierra Leonean Parliament voting unanimously to abolish the death penalty in July 2021. In his speech announcing the abolition coming into effect, President Julius Bio thanked “citizens, members of Parliament, development partners and rights groups that have steadfastly stood with us to make history”.

Whilst tracking contribution to law and policy outcomes is challenging, from stakeholders interviewed, it is evident that the UKSLPBN made a valuable contribution to this outcome. This contribution was through the Network’s understanding of the political context, the organisational landscape, and its institutional knowledge of previous efforts that had been deployed. It is important to note that work in this area has also been conducted by the European Union, UNDP, and the Death Penalty Project, among others. Whilst we cannot assess UKSLPBN’s exact attribution to the abolition of the death penalty in Sierra Leone, we can be reasonably confident that they played an important role as part of the coalition that strongly contributed to this significant outcome.

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ADVOCAID STAKEHOLDER

CAPACITY-BUILDING SUPPORT TO THE ANTI- CORRUPTION COMMISSION

Another focus of the UKSLPBN during this time period was on strengthening the capacity of the Anti-Corruption Commission to fulfil their mandate of combatting corruption in

Sierra Leone. The country has a long history of entrenched corruption and strong political and economic patronage networks. The 2018 Afrobarometer found that, compared to the previous survey in 2012, citizens reported lower levels of trust in the president, local government, councillors, the National Revenue Authority, the ruling party and the army.

The UKSLPBN supported the strengthening of anti-corruption efforts by working with several institutions responsible for combatting corruption. Anti-corruption law is extremely complex and specialised, and therefore required highly specialised pro bono expertise to be able to deliver training and support that is both relevant and useful to government bodies in Sierra Leone.

The UKSLPBN provided a lot of targeted support to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). Its experts (including law firm Akin Gump) worked closely with the ACC to help develop a proposed non-prosecution policy and procedure to provide a blueprint for discussions related to the ACC's non-conviction-based asset recovery regime. The ACC Commissioner thanked the UKSLPBN for their support, noting that whilst *"most times the decision to prosecute has been centred around the Commissioner but now with this policy ACC prosecutors will have such a decision"*.

The Network also worked with the judiciary to strengthen their ability to hear corruption cases. UKSLPBN worked with local partners who identified the prosecution of corruption cases as a challenge, observing that the ACC initially found the manner in which investigators investigated cases challenging, which resulted in barriers in getting cases to court and getting successful convictions. The training of judges in anti-corruption law was vital in understanding

the components of anti-corruption. It provided the opportunity for corruption investigators and judges to be trained and have clear positions on contentious aspects, such as bail for individuals accused of corruption. A stakeholder observed that this work had provided political cover and helped 'good apples' in the judiciary to be more powerful voices in hearing and convicting corruption cases. This training is now mandatory for all incoming judges and is delivered through a

more sustainable ‘training the trainer model’. The UKSLPBN worked with the Sierra Leone judiciary to develop practice directions and sentencing guidelines for corruption prosecutions.

The UKSLPBN also targeted investigators and prosecutors with specialised training sessions on how to effectively investigate and prosecute cases involving alleged corruption. As noted above, this type of law is highly specialised and required niche expertise to develop the curricula and lead the training sessions. One of the organisations mobilised was the UK’s Metropolitan Police, who shared insights and techniques they use to investigate corruption. A stakeholder from the ACC commented that changes he has observed include *“investigations*

yielding more results” and a *“higher conviction rate that has increased over the last few years”*. He speculated that *“training was an important factor in this change, alongside the provision of additional resources”*.

As discussed under the death penalty abolition example, it is difficult to assess the exact extent to which the UKSLPBN can claim attribution for these observed changes based on limited evidence. However, the observation of the ACC representative that the quality of investigations has improved over the past few years, and that the conviction rate for corruption offences has increased during the same period, is a significant change to which the Network can credibly claimed to have contributed.



Legal stakeholders participating in the Anti-Corruption Training, March 2022

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

The UKSLPBN has made a concerted effort to ensure that all training sessions and activities conducted are sustainable. Whilst the strong similarities between the UK and Sierra Leonean legal systems has made it relatively easy for UK experts to understand the Sierra Leonean legal system, the Network also made a concerted effort to ensure UK experts were conscious of the structures and cultural differences. Where possible, the Network has used UK experts with previous knowledge and understanding of Sierra Leone, and/or paired UK experts with Sierra Leonean lawyers who are able to translate that knowledge into contextually relevant examples in an effort to ensure that the training sessions were high quality, relevant, and sustainable.

The UKSLPBN's focus on strengthening the capacity of Sierra Leone's institutions supports sustainable change. The Network's interventions contribute to changes in target institutions' capability, opportunity, and motivation, which in turn can contribute to lasting behaviour-change towards improved laws, policies, systems, and behaviours.

However, when considering the sustainability of the UKSLPBN's work, it is important to consider the sustainability of the Network itself. Since its inception, the UKSLPBN has been operating as an extremely small organisation which relies primarily on one individual, its part-time country director in Sierra Leone, to manage its day-to-day operations. The Network has been operating for about a decade and only needs funding for its in-country expenses, as all substantive work is undertaken by UK legal and judicial experts pro bono. Therefore, unlike other organisations supported by the Programme, the UKSLPBN does not have any administrative expenses or overheads. The Network is heavily dependent on the Programme for about ~80-90% of the funding of its in-country activities. Whilst the Network is exceptionally well-connected and would likely be able to access funding from other sources, its reliance on the Programme for such a large proportion of its funding does raise sustainability concerns should the Programme shut down.

LESSONS LEARNED

This Story of Change highlights the effectiveness of the Network's activities in recent years. The success of the Network in delivering these activities as well as its legacy of in-country impact, demonstrate the following lessons:

- A network-based approach to deploy pro bono legal support can be used to successfully strengthen rule of law across a wide range of thematic areas in one single country;
- Cross-jurisdictional knowledge exchange, made possible through pro bono legal support, has proven to be important in contributing to positive changes in laws, policies, systems, and practices;
- Leveraging the contacts and networks of one umbrella organisation within a target country can act as a multiplier of impact, by ensuring activities are relevant, are targeted to the actors in the rule of law space, and can be deployed to complement other in-country activities.



UKSLPBN team (L- R): Momo Turay (UKSLPBN Director), Nancy Williams (Barrister - Member, UKSLPBN), Llyodette Bai-Marrow (Lawyer - Anti-Corruption Project Lead, UKSLPBN), Chris Weigold (Police Adviser - Member, UKSLPBN). Anti-corruption Training Session, March 2022

ANNEX

NOTES

This Story of Change was developed as part of a wider evaluation of the ROLE UK Programme supported partnership with UKSLPBN, conducted by independent evaluator Olivia Kaye. Surveys were conducted with key stakeholders as part of this evaluation and documentation relating to this work was also reviewed and considered. Olivia triangulated this information with desk-based research on political, social, and economic contexts operating in Sierra Leone. Before publication, the A4ID team conducted a quality assurance review of the Story of Change as drafted by Olivia.

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