

FAST FACTS

Promoting Transparency in Sierra Leone's Judiciary



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Resilient nations.

Project Cluster
**Effective
and Inclusive
Democratic
Governance**

Duration
**July 2015 -
December 2017**

Budget
US \$1,500,000.

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Judiciary
Project
Document](#)

What we do

This project helps judiciary and justice chain institutions to develop bail and sentencing regulations, to ensure adequate guidance for the Judges, Magistrates and legal practitioners in the dispensation of justice. It also supports the introduction of electronic criminal case management in Sierra Leone, enabling the judiciary to track court cases.

How we do it

UNDP interventions promote transparency and uniformity within the courts by supporting the development, adoption and consistent application of bail and sentencing regulations by the Rules of the Court Committee.

Why we do it

Sierra Leone's detention centres are at full capacity. Accused persons wait for prolonged periods on pre-trial and remand detention. Many accused persons spend more time in prison before their trial than is ultimately required by the sentence, itself. Very little guidance has previously been available to Magistrates and Judges and therefore bail and sentencing have not been applied in a harmonized or transparent manner. This violates the principle of presumption of innocence, and denies inmates their basic human rights.

Challenges

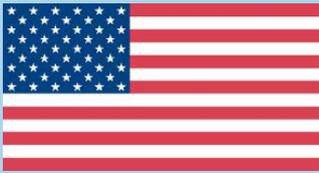
A general lack of access to jurisprudence has been a major impediment to Judges and Magistrates – as well as to Prosecution and Defense Lawyers. At the outset of this project, criminal case management systems were outdated and inefficient; and regulations for bail and sentencing did not exist.

Sustainable Development Goals

UNDP policy is guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a universal call to action, addressing the root causes of poverty while affecting positive changes for both people and planet. This project contributes directly to the achievement of:

SDG 16: Rule of law and human rights strengthened
SDG 5: Access of women to justice enhanced;
Cultural and social gender barriers in justice and security sector reform addressed

Donors



Achievements

Swifter, more transparent court case management

In 2017, in partnership with UNDP, Sierra Leone's judiciary launched its first-ever electronic court case management system. In addition to being low-cost, user-friendly, and solar-powered, case data is automatically uploaded to the Cloud, allowing the Chief Justice and senior management to monitor case progress. Within less than a year of its inception, the average waiting time for case hearings decreased from four years (in 2016) to less than one year. Piloted in three High Courts and three Magistrates Courts in Freetown and Makeni, the Justice App is now being expanded, incrementally, and will ultimately replace the old case management system. View a short film about the Justice App, [here](#).

Sentencing and bail regulations

Approved by the Rules of the Court Committee and signed by the Chief Justice in June 2017, new Bail Regulations are now binding to the Courts.

The new bail regulations set out clear guidance and conditions for bail and underline bail as a right. It ensures for protection of those more vulnerable in the criminal justice system in clearly stating that these groups of persons shall be granted bail and reiterates that both men and women can stand as sureties for accused persons.

Sentencing regulations are currently awaiting the approval of the Rules of the Court Committee, based on the passing of the revised Criminal Procedure Act 2017.

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice have committed to the presentation of both instruments to Parliament with the revised version of the Criminal Procedure Act that received Cabinet approval in December 2016.

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