

Media Reform Coordinating Group-Sierra Leone (MRCG-SL)



NEWSLETTER



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**We've Come a Long Way, We've
Got a
Long Way to go**

Statement from MRCG Chairman, Francis Sowa

This edition of the newsletter covers the first part of the 2019 year under my leadership of the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG). The year under review had been hectic for the MRCG in terms of developing, reviewing, revisiting and reprogramming our activities contained in the Annual Work Plan (AWP) for 2019.

We have been able to implement all the activities outlined in the AWP. They included:

- Mentoring and Coaching on SDGs/Production of Stories on SDGs
- Developing and Implementing a Framework for Revenue Generation, Resource Mobilization, Sustainability and Accountability
- Supporting the Development/Review of Strategic Plans of MRGC and its Constituent Bodies
- Supporting MRCG Visibility and Web Presence
- Training MRCG Staff in Resource Mobilization, Result-Based Management Tools, Networking and Communication

The previous Media Development Strategy that spanned from 2014–2018 had only four objectives and it made tremendous achievements in all areas, but needed much more improvement for better service delivery. After a thorough review of the old Strategy, it was unanimously agreed by Board members and other media stakeholders that the MRCG should continue with its strategic objectives in pursuing the media reform agenda in the country. Gender was added as a new component in the reform agenda so that the welfare of female journalists can be pivotal in all media development programmes as the reform process progresses.

We will end our activities with the annual Board Retreat of the MRCG during which the implementation of activities in the AWP 2019 and the new Media Development Strategy, 2020–2024 will be discussed for the repositioning of MRCG. The MRCG has already started outlined its proposed activities for 2020 and is poised to seek the necessary funding to implement them.

Let me use this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank the UNDP for providing the funds used to implement the programmes and activities of MRCG. We continue to look forward to fulfilling the key priorities and objectives of the MRCG in the first phase of the Media Development Strategy which will end in 2019. Thanks and appreciation to the Board and Secretariat staff for the supports and commitments to the work of the MRCG.

**“If we don't
believe in
freedom of
expression for
people we
despise, then
we don't
believe in it at
all.” –Noam
Chomsky**

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MRCG/SLRU 2019 FELLOWSHIP AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME



As specialized reporting is a practice that has waned over the years in Sierra Leone journalism, the Media Reform Coordinating Group in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU) pioneered the 2019 Mentoring and Coaching Programme which is an ongoing media reform agenda in Sierra Leone with support from UNDP to improve journalism and enhance reporters' capacity on professional reportage on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The MRCG recognises media education and training as key elements in promoting excellence and professionalism and the mentorship programme is a direct response to addressing professional gap in Sierra Leone journalism. The Mentorship programme was informed by a "Training Needs Assessment" held on May 16 2019. And on May 21 2019, a Mentorship training was conducted for the ten qualified reporters on identifying key thematic areas on the SDGs.

"The Mentorship programme is meant to educate the public on the SDGs, and the role of journalists is to help popularize these goals," said Dr Francis Sowa.

"The Mentoring programme is geared towards capacitating journalist on how to go about doing professional stories focusing on the SDGs," explained Lamrana Bah, President of Reporters Union.

The Mentoring catered for ten mentees (reporters) to do two stories on two different SDGs with five mentors (media experts/veteran journalists) to guide and supervise their work. Submitted stories included nine newspapers publications, nine radio programmes and two for television programmes. The stories were published on local newspapers, online blogs and newspapers and broadcast on radio and television respectively.

MRCG DEVELOPED THREE BANKABLE PROPOSALS



As parts of its sustainability drive, the Media Reform Coordinating Group and constituent bodies met and developed three proposals with the intention of finding prospective donors to fund the sustainability of MRCG and its constituent bodies.

The Chairman, Dr Francis Sowa in a brainstorming meeting held in May explained that the proposals were geared towards ensuring sustainability of the MRCG and its constituent bodies for years to come. Dr Sowa noted that 2019 has been a challenging year for the MRCG and that members need to think about project ideas or proposals so as to be able to effect media projects in the coming years.

From the brainstorming meeting held in May to discuss project ideas which the MRCG and

constituent bodies were to focus and work on in the next three or so years, galaxies of ideas were suggested by representatives of the various constituent bodies to be developed into bankable proposals. From the various suggested area, only three were selected and developed into full blown project proposals.

On 25th June, 2019 at a validation meeting, the three (3) Draft Bankable Proposals were presented to MRCG constituent bodies for deliberations. The three bankable proposals were validated by participants present before it was finally produced into a document by the consultant.

MRCG CONDUCTED BASELINE STUDY ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIX COASTAL COMMUNITIES



The Media Reform Coordinating Group with support from UNDP conducted a baseline study from the 5th to 9th June 2019 to ascertain the level of understanding of people on climate change in six coastal communities by collecting primary data and capturing images and videos that clearly show the status of climate change issues in these communities. The targeted communities that are said to be prone to climate change disasters include: Lakka, Hamilton, Tombo, Conakry Dee, Shenge and Turtle Island.

The baseline study solicited information on the knowledge of people on climate change, causes,

effects and what they have done to salvage the situation, and what should government or other partners do to help solve the problems. The audio-visual crew captured images and recorded videos on climate change activities that were developed into videos and a documentary to show the vivid nature of climate change.

MRCG Chairman, Dr Francis Sowa said the priority was to come up with methods to minimize risk people around coastal areas face on climate change and ways to adapt to it. He explained that communication strategies would be developed by the MRCG to send out awareness messages to those communities through stickers, fliers, posters, t-shirts and video documentaries using data from the baseline study.

From the baseline study, many of the respondents pointed at sand mining, stone mining, cutting of mangroves/trees, bush burning, illegal fishing, banking of water along coastal lines as core activities causing climate change in their communities. The effects, according to the many have been flooding, less rains, low fish catch at sea, change in seasonal rains and high temperature.

MRCG STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING

In an effort to capacitate the Media Reform Coordinating Group and its constituent bodies, the MRCG held a capacity building training workshop for Secretariat staff and staff members of its constituent bodies. These include the Independent Radio Network (IRN), the Independent Media Commission (IMC) and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ). The training typically focused on revenue generation; networking, communication and resource mobilization; introduction to proposal writing; and result based management tools and reporting.

Mr Hassan Jalloh, the lead facilitator, said the workshop was geared towards building up the capacity of staff and developing the human resource of the various constituent bodies of the MRCG for sustainable media development in Sierra Leone.

Staffs were exposed to various means of mobilizing resources like fund raising, donation boxes, collecting in kind contribution, volunteers, donors and income from project.

A thorough explanation on project proposal writing and key steps in the development of concept notes was covered and staff were encouraged to develop concept notes on project ideas they have for their institutions.

The need for result based management reporting was explained to staff pointing the essence of having a tool to monitor and manage activities implemented to be able to track and assess the effectiveness of programs and activities.

MRCG-SL HOSTED PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS RAISING IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES



The Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) carried out Public Engagement on Climate Change Awareness Raising in the four coastal communities from the 28th-30th June, 2019. These four coastal communities include: Lakka, Hamilton, Tombo and Conakry Dee Communities respectively. The MRCG showcased video documentaries on the threat and consequences of climate change activities captured in the six different communities during the baseline studies.

James Harvey, Project Officer of MRCG said the communities were chosen because of their vulnerability to the threat of climate change and hence the need for sensitization. He explained the causes, effects, damages caused and the need for measures to be put in place to reduce the risk and avert potential disaster of climate change.

The baseline study rise to the need for more Public Education on Climate Change. The four communities

(WhatsApp group) in the different communities who

are to take the lead in the campaign on climate change in their communities.

Some of these communities had already instituted bylaws against activities causing climate change and those that had not were encouraged to do the same.

In support of information gathered during the baseline studies, communities pointed at illegal fishing, sand and stone mining, cutting of trees/mangroves and banking of water along coastal lines as contributing factors to climate change disaster they face, but however said some of those activities are their sources of livelihood.

From the documentaries showcased, the following were recommendations made by community members:

- Government to pass policies on stone and sand mining and to empower community heads in the fight against climate change activities by setting up community monitoring teams.
- Government and partners to create alternative livelihood by establishing training centres for youths to learn skills.
- Communities to change their attitudes towards sand mining, deforestation, stone mining and the cutting of mangroves.
- Community members to plant trees after cutting them and allow sands to replenish after mining.
- To use teachers in creating awareness on climate change and for it to be included in schools and universities curriculums.
- Government or agencies to help construct jetties in disaster prone communities along the coast.
- Communities to take ownership in the fight and find solutions instead of waiting for external forces.