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A STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SIERRA LEONE

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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Information and Communications oversees and provides policy direction and guidance on Information Communication Technology (ICT) issues in Sierra Leone.

The Telecommunications Act of 2006 and its subsequent amendment is the current legal framework that governs the ICT sector. The Act established the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM) as the body charged with the regulation of telecommunications services. The Commission, among other things, provides for the licensing and regulation of telecommunications operators and for the promotion of universal access to basic telecommunication services.¹

There is the National ICT Policy that provides guidance in the creation of an enabling environment for ICT development.

The Agenda for Prosperity also contains policy objectives on ICTs. It notes that the objective of the sector is to ensure that Sierra Leone is fully integrated into the global village, with affordable rates for mobile phone usage and internet connectivity.²

Notwithstanding the aforementioned policies, the ICT sector in Sierra Leone is still in its infancy. The sector is yet to fully decentralise its services. ICT services are mostly provided in the Capital and district headquarters. There are still questions on the provision of reliable, efficient and effective internet facilities that will contribute to the proper utilisation of ICTs across the country.

In its bid to improve access to internet services, the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone (GoSL) received a Project Credit from the International Development Agency (IDA) for the West Africa Regional Communication Infrastructure Program (WARCIP) – Sierra Leone Project for the purpose of providing an internet broadband link to the rest of the world, via a submarine fibre cable along the West Coast of Africa to Europe within the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable Construction and Maintenance Agreement Framework.³ Again, the benefits to be provided by the facility are yet to be fully realised as the project is being implemented.

The protection of data is ensured by NATCOM (which supervises telecoms operators), while issues of cyber crimes are dealt with by both NATCOM and the Sierra Leone Police Cyber Crime Prevention Unit.

There was no provision of data on the number of persons with Facebook and Twitter accounts in Sierra Leone as at the time of the study. NATCOM, the regulator, specifically makes reference to figures on the number of people with mobile phones registered by GSM/CDMA operators.

Social media is mostly used by the young people in Sierra Leone. This is evident in the high number of young people with particularly Facebook and Whatsapp.

¹ Section 9, Telecommunications Act, 2006

² Sierra Leone's Third Generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2013 – 2018) under Pillar Four , International Competiveness, p. 98

³ <http://www.sierraexpressmedia.com/archives/33763>

The mostly used social media Sierra Leone are Facebook, Whatsapp, Viber and to some extent Twitter.

There are over one hundred local media (newspapers, radio and television stations) registered with the Independent Media Commission (IMC), the autonomous body charged with the regulation of mass media institutions.

The CSOs that participated in the study neither indicated training on the use of social media nor made reference to existing initiatives on the use of social media for CSOs. There are, however, ad hoc and hands-on training on ICTs in general. There are also general discussions by CSOs on how they can better use social media.

The researcher did not come across specific studies on the use of social media in Sierra Leone.



METHODOLOGY FOR CSOS SELECTION: CRITERIA, SIZE AND ACTIONS

The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were selected in line with the overall criteria of the regional studies.

The study targeted twenty-five (25) local and national CSOs⁴ have a certain volume of activities that warrant communication and advocacy actions, involved in the area of human rights and governance, and at least ten that are active in the area of women's rights and governance or have a major part of their programme devoted to women's activities.

The sixteen national CSOs were Mano River Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Prisons Watch Sierra Leone, Women's Forum Sierra Leone, Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL), National Youth Coalition (NYC), Health for All Coalition- Sierra Leone, Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Centre for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA), Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD), 50/50 GROUP of Sierra Leone, Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL), Civil Society Movement Sierra Leone (CSM-SL), Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI), Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI), Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR) and Green Scenery. All the national CSOs undertake various specific projects and programmes on human rights, governance and women's rights and/or as components in almost all projects implemented.

Owing to the fact that at least a third of the CSOs should be based outside the capital, a total of nine local CSOs were selected from the three other regions of Sierra Leone. They are: Action for Community Development and Good Governance (ACODESL), People's Rights, Integrity and Dignity Empowerment Agency- Sierra Leone (PRIDE-SL), Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES) in Bo, Southern Region; Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone (East), Movement for the Restoration of Democracy and Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development in Kenema, Eastern Region, and the Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF), Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC) and Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFRAD) in Makeni, Northern Region. The local CSOs mostly implement programmes in communities in their localities. They also undertake programmes and advocate on human rights, governance and women's rights projects.

Mano River Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Women's Forum Sierra Leone, 50/50 GROUP of Sierra Leone, Health for All Coalition- Sierra Leone, Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES), Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFRAD), and Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) are active in the field of women's rights and governance

⁴ See Annex for the List of Selected CSOs

CSOS AND COMMUNICATION

1. STATE OF INTERNET CONNECTIVITY OF CSOS

All of the twenty-five civil society organisations (CSOs) selected for the study have internet connectivity. This is despite the fact that the state of internet connectivity is very unpredictable. The provision of reliable internet facility is hampered even with the launch of the fibre optic cable. But all the CSOs at least have access to some sort of internet from one of the numerous Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

2. AVAILABLE TOOLS

All the CSOs used computers as the main tool to access the internet. In addition, some of them use Tablets, Smartphones and Telephones to access the internet.

Table 1: Tools used by CSOs to access the internet

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	TOOLS
1.	Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES)	Computers, Smartphone
2.	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone	Computers, Telephone
3.	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues	Computers, Smartphone
4.	Civil Society Movement-Sierra Leone (East)	Computers, Telephone
5.	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy	Computers
6.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	Computers
7.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	Computers, Telephone
8.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	Computers
9.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	Computers, Tablets, Smartphone, Telephone
10.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	Computers, Tablets, Smartphone, Telephone
11.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	Computers, Smartphone, Telephone
12.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	Computers, Smartphone
13.	50/50 Group Sierra Leone	Computers
14.	Action for Community Development and Good Governance	Computers
15.	Prison Watch Sierra Leone	Computers, Tablets
16.	Green Scenery	Computers

17.	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR)	Computers
18.	Mano River Women's Peace Network-Sierra Leone (MARWOPNET SL)	Computers
19.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	Computers
20.	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	Computers, Tablets, Smartphone
21.	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	Computers
22.	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	Computers, Smartphone
23.	Peoples' Rights Integrity and Dignity Empowerment Agency-Sierra Leone (PRIDE-SL)	Computers
24.	Society for Democratic Initiatives	Computers
25.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	Computers

3. ORGANISATION OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN CSOS

The study reveals that eight (8) out of the twenty –five (25) CSOs have a 'Head of Communications', that is, 32% of the sample for the study. For organisations without a head of communications, the 'Management' is mainly in-charge of communication. Only two organisations have 'A volunteer' in-charge of communication, while one has 'A project head' in-charge of communication.

Table 2- Portfolio for Communication

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	HEAD OF COMMUNICATION	OTHERS IN-CHARGE OF COMMUNICATION
1.	Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES)	NO	Management
2.	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone	NO	Management
3.	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues	YES	
4.	Civil Society Movement-Sierra Leone (East)	NO	Management
5.	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy	NO	Management
6.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	NO	Management
7.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	NO	Management
8.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	YES	

9.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	YES	
10.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	NO	Management
11.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	YES	
12.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	NO	Management
13.	50/50 Group Sierra Leone	YES	
14.	Action for Community Development and Good Governance	NO	A volunteer
15.	Prison Watch Sierra Leone	NO	Management
16.	GREEN SCENERY	NO	Management
17.	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR)	NO	Management
18.	Mano River Women's Peace Network-Sierra Leone (MARWOPNET SL)	NO	A volunteer
19.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	YES	
20.	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	NO	Management
21.	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	NO	Management
22.	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	NO	A Project Head
23.	Peoples' Rights Integrity and Dignity Empowerment Agency-Sierra Leone (PRIDE-SL)	NO	Management
24.	Society for Democratic Initiatives	YES	
25.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	YES	



4. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

According to the study, nine (9) out of the twenty-five (25) CSOs have 'Communication Strategy', which represents 36% of the respondents.

INCLUSION OF ICTS IN COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Even with the nine (9) CSOs that have communication strategies, only seven (7) indicated that they have Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) as part of their communication strategies. That represents only 28% of CSOs whose communication strategies included ICTs.

Table 3- Communication strategy and inclusion of ICTs

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	AVAILABILITY OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	INCLUSION OF ICTS
1.	Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES)	NO	
2.	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone	NO	
3.	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues	NO	
4.	Civil Society Movement-Sierra Leone (East)	NO	
5.	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy	NO	
6.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	YES	NO
7.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	NO	
8.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	NO	
9.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	YES	YES
10.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	YES	YES
11.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	YES	YES
12.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	NO	
13.	50/50 Group Sierra Leone	NO	
14.	Action for Community Development and Good Governance	NO	
15.	Prison Watch Sierra Leone	NO	
16.	GREEN SCENERY	NO	
17.	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR)	NO	

18.	Mano River Women's Peace Network-Sierra Leone (MARWOPNET SL)	NO	
19.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	YES	NO
20.	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	YES	YES
21.	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	YES	YES
22.	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	NO	
23.	Peoples' Rights Integrity and Dignity Empowerment Agency-Sierra Leone (PRIDE-SL)	YES	YES
24.	Society for Democratic Initiatives	NO	
25.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	YES	YES

5. COMMUNICATION ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY CSOS IN GENERAL AND SOME PROMINENT CSOS IN PARTICULAR

Generally, there is a thin line between the communication activities undertaken by small and prominent CSOs. All of them are engaged in similar communication activities which include:

- Organising an event,
- Organising a press conference
- Educating beneficiaries,
- Disseminating information to other organisations,
- Disseminating resources produced by other organisations
- Soliciting donors
- Networking with other organisations
- Recruiting employees

In addition, the more prominent national CSOs like Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone, Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL), Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD), Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Sierra Leone, Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI), Green Scenery, 50/50 Group Sierra Leone, Prisons Watch Sierra Leone and Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone undertake the following:

- Launching alerts
- Participating in international events
- Uniting and mobilising a community
- Disseminating resources (publications, videos) produced by the organisation,

- Disseminating opinion
- Sensitising policy makers,
- Publishing studies, reports,
- Publishing newsletters,
- Producing videos,
- Participatory Video and GIS/GPS
- Claiming thematic or geographical expertise

6. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CSOS IN CAPITAL CITIES AND THOSE IN PROVINCES

The CSOs in the capital, Freetown appear to have bigger operations and projects than those in the provinces. They are better organised in terms of staffing, logistics and resources. They undertake and implement national programmes. The CSOs in the provinces mainly operate within their localities and the immediate environs. They have lesser resources and logistics. In fact some of them are given grants to implement components of bigger projects implemented by national CSOs.

The CSOs in the capital have access to better ICTs and internet facilities and more networking opportunities. The ones in the provinces suffer from reliable internet connectivity. The Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have their headquarters and technical facilities stationed in the capital where there are more commercial and business interests.

7. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CSOS IN GENERAL AND THOSE INVOLVED IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

While most of the CSOs have projects and programmes dealing with women issues, the following CSOs, Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Women's Forum Sierra Leone, 50/50 Group of Sierra Leone, Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES), Health for All Coalition- Sierra Leone and Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFRAD) are specifically working on women's rights.

The CSOs working on women's rights mainly deal with issues involving the health and education of women and girls, sexual exploitation, governance and human rights. With the exception of WAVES, all of them have both websites and social media. The operations of these CSOs are national, with the exception of WOFRAD which mainly operates in the Northern Region. The CSOs appeared to have specific sources of funding and other logistics provided by the government, national and other international organisations (like UNDP, UN Women, Action Aid International UNFPA and UNICEF among others), supporting programmes relating to women and girls. However, the funding and logistics are inadequate as the CSOs are encountering serious funding challenges in embarking on projects that will better improve the lives of women and girls.

CSOS AND S OSC ET LES SITES INTERNET

1. AVAILABILITY OF WEBSITES

The CSOs were asked to indicate the availability or not of their websites. Those with websites did and stated their websites addresses. After checks online, the following CSOs were found to have operational websites (see table below). Thirteen (13) out of the twenty-five (25) CSOs have websites, representing 52% of the respondents.

There were issues about CSOs that have pages in other websites. However, the object of the study was to ascertain the website of the specific CSO and not the partnership they had with other organisations providing them pages in their websites.

In particular, two organisations, Mano River Peace Network and Women's Forum Sierra Leone websites' are part of bigger websites hosting sister organisations in other countries. For the Women's Forum website address given by the organisation, the online check found one website operated by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), a programme of the International Civil Society Action Movement (ICAN), which has a link to Women Forum Sierra Leone.



As at the 4th of June 2014, there was a statement that "the site was in the process of transitioning to a new website."

There was no website for the National Youth Coalition as at the time of the study.

The website of Society for Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI) was also not operational as at the time of the study. The website was being upgraded.

For Prison's Watch Sierra Leone, as at the time of the online check on the 13th June, 2014, there was a statement that read "Site Still under construction."

Table 4- CSOs with websites

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	WEBSITE ADDRESSES
1.	Mano River Women's Peace Network River (MARWOPNET)	www.marwopnet.org Created in 2004
2.	Prisons Watch Sierra Leone	http://www.prisonwatchsl.org/ Created in 2011 "Site Still under construction."
3.	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	The organisation gave its address as www.womensforumsil.org - Created in 2007. But what appears online is http://www.gnwp.org/members/womens-forum- It has a link to social media.
4.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	http://healthforallcoalition.org Created in 2010
5.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	http://www.slccg.org Created in 2004 It has a link to social media
6.	Network Movement for Justice and Development	http://www.nmjd.org/home/ Created in 2002
7.	50/50 GROUP Sierra Leone	http://fiftyfiftysierraleone.org/ Created in 2013 It has a link to social media
8.	Centre for Accountability & Rule of Law (CARL)	http://www.carl-sl.org/home/ Created in 2006
9.	Society for Democratic Initiatives	www.sfdi-sl.org Created in 2009
10	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights	http://www.nmdhr.org/ Created in 2012
11	Green Scenery	http://www.greenscenery.org/ First created in 2004 and reconstructed in 2010.
12	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	http://silnorf.org/ Created in 2011 It has a link to social media
13	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFRAD)	www.wofhrad.wordpress.com http://wofhrad.wordpress.com/ February 26, 2014 Created in 2013



2. CSOs WITHOUT WEBSITES AND THE REASONS

Twelve (12) out of the twenty-five (25) of the CSOs did not have websites. That is 48% of the CSOs sampled. Lack of training and poor internet connections are major reasons indicated by the CSOs as to why they were not on social media.

Table 5- CSOs without websites and reasons

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	AVAILABILITY OF INTERNET	REASON (S)
1.	Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES)	NO	Working on the establishment of the site
2.	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone	NO	Lack of training, Lack of equipment
3.	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues	NO	Poor internet connection
4.	Civil Society Movement-Sierra Leone (East)	NO	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment
5.	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy	NO	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment
6.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	NO	But it is part of a network with a website. The address is www.silnorf.org
7.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	NO	
8.	Action for Community Development and Good Governance	NO	CSOs is part of a website comprising other partners working on Integrated Public Financial Management Reform Project
9.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	NO	Person assigned to this task, Lack of training
10.	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	NO	Lack of training, Poor internet connection
11.	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	NO	Do not have the conducive environment
12.	Peoples' Rights Integrity and Dignity Empowerment Agency-Sierra Leone (PRIDE-SL)	NO	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment

3. SPECIAL FEATURES (TECHNICAL, USER-FRIENDLY)

The technical facilities of most of the CSOs' websites are basic. Most of them mainly contain texts and few pictures and graphics. Few of them have sound and videos. But most of the sites are user-friendly. They are easy to navigate as they contain mostly information about the organisations.

4. TECHNOLOGY/CMS USED FOR CREATION OF WEBSITES

The technology/CMS used to create websites are as follows:

- Four (4) of the CSOs' websites were created with HTML
- Two (2) by WordPress
- Two (2) by Joomla
- One (1) with HTML and WordPress

One CSO said it did not know how the website was created, while 3 did not indicate how they were created.

5. HOW WERE THE WEBSITES CREATED?

The majority of the websites, nine (9) out of (13) were created 'Externally', that is 69.2%. Three (3) of them were created 'Internally', 23% and one indicated 'Don't know', that is 7.69%. **PERSON IN CHARGE**

There is a mix bag of people in-charge of the websites. Out of the 13 CSOs, 'Management' is in charge of the websites of six (6), representing 46%. Four (4) of them are managed by an 'External consultant', accounting for 30.7%, one by a 'Project Head', 7.6% and one by an ICT Officer, 7.6% and one CSO indicated 'Don't know', 7.6%.

6. UPDATING WEBSITES

Three (3) of the CSOs indicated that their websites are updated 'Yearly', two (2), 'Quarterly', two (2) 'Once a month', one (1) 'Once a week', one (1), 'Once a day', one (1) 'Once a month, one (1) 'Several times a day', one (1) 'Once a week', one 'Don't know' and one (1) stated that it is 'Updated irregularly- at anything there is important material to be disseminated.'

Table 6- How websites were created, who created them, update and person in-charge

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	HOW WAS IT CREATED	WHO CREATED THE SITE	How often is it updated?	WHO IS IN CHARGE
1.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	Wordpress	Internally, by computer specialists	Once a day	A Project Head
2.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	HTML, Wordpress	Externally	Once a month	Management
3.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	Joomla	Internally, by computer specialists	Updated irregularly- at anything there is important material to be disseminated	ICT Officer
4.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	HTML	Externally	Yearly	An external consultant
5.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	HTML	Externally	Several times a day	Management
6.	50/50 Group Sierra Leone		Externally	Quarterly	An external consultant
7.	Prison Watch Sierra Leone		Externally	Quarterly	Management
8.	GREEN SCENERY	Joomla	Externally	Once a month	Management
9.	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR)	HTML	Internally	Several times a week	Management
10.	Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET S.L)	Do not know	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know
11.	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	Wordpress	Externally	Yearly	Management
12.	Society for Democratic Initiatives	HTML	Externally	Once a week	External Consultant
13.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)		Externally	Yearly	External Consultant



7. CONTENT OF THE SITES

The contents of the sites are texts, photos and videos. Majority of the websites mostly contained texts and detailing the background to the organisations, their activities and programmes. Only about two of the websites have sounds and videos.

8. INFORMATION ON THE SITES

The contents are mainly the Agenda of the organisation, Photos, Videos, News from the organisation, News from other organisations, Publications e.g newsletters and research reports, Recruitment, Information monitoring

9. OBSTACLES TO THE PRESENCE OF CSOS ONLINE

The lack of training, lack of equipment and poor internet connections are the predominant obstacles to the presence of CSOs online.

Table 7- Obstacles to CSOs not having websites

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	OBSTACLES
1.	Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES)	Working on the establishment of the site
2.	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone	Lack of training, Lack of equipment
3.	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues	Poor internet connection
4.	Civil Society Movement-Sierra Leone (East)	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment
5.	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment
6.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	CSO is part of a network where its activities are in the website. The address is www.silnorf.org
7.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	
8.	Action for Community Development and Good Governance	CSOs is part of a website comprising other partners working on Integrated Public Financial Management Reform Project
9.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	Person assigned to this task, Lack of training
10.	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	Lack of training, Poor internet connection
11.	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	Do not have the conducive environment
12.	Peoples' Rights Integrity and Dignity Empowerment Agency-Sierra Leone (PRIDE-SL)	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment

10. ASSESSMENT FOR THE SITES

The results of the assessments were informed by an online study conducted by the researcher. The CSOs' websites were assessed by the referencing of organisation (search by the name of the organisation and search by work themes and geographical area), usability of the sites, how easy to navigate and the logical presentation, the sites' aesthetics, legibility of content, information and contents of the sites.

Table 8- Assessments of CSOs websites (criteria and ratings)

CRITERIA		
Referencing of organisation (search by the name of the organisation, search by work themes and geographical area)		
Usability of the site (Is it easy to navigate? Is the presentation logical?)		
Aesthetics of the site		
Updating of the site		
Legibility of content		
Content (Does the content correspond to what is on the questionnaire? What is the content of the site? What is available on it? Is there anything else besides text?)		
Frequency of visitors (ask the site administrator)		
RATING		
Social media on a scale of 1 to 5 corresponding to:		
1: Very good		
2: Good		
3: Fair		
4: Average		
5: Very average to zero		
NO	ORGANISATION	RATING WEB SITES
1.	Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET)	3
2.	Prisons Watch Sierra Leone	4
3.	Women's Forum	2
4.	Health for All Coalition	3
5.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	2
6.	Network Movement for Justice and Development	3
7.	50/50 GROUP of Sierra Leone	3

8.	Centre for Accountability & Rule of Law (CARL)	2
9.	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights	2
10.	Green Scenery	2
11.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	3
12.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFRAD)	4

11. LINKS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

The websites of the following CSOs have links to social media.

Campaign for Good Governance

governance in Sierra Leone. Leaders of the pro-democracy movement formed CGG in 1996 after the first multi-party elections in three decades.

CGG works with key partners including international NGOs and government agencies such as the Police to effectively deliver programs; and belongs to several associations and research communities. This strong network and a long history of successful campaigns have given CGG an excellent reputation as one of Sierra Leone's finest NGOs.

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Campaign for Good Governance is a registered Sierra Leone, National, Non-Government Organisation.

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Get in Touch
11A Old Railway Line, Tengbeh Town, Freetown, Sierra Leone
232-22-235626 / cgg@slcgg.org

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Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food

SILNoRF

- Home
- Who we are
- What we do
- Why it matters
- Mission & Vision
- Organogram SILNoRF
- Staff
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- International Partners
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Our Work

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What we do

Presently, SILNoRF is working with 20 communities in the blue marked districts in northern Sierra Leone.

In 2008 the government of Sierra Leone launched the "Agenda for Change" and declared that agricultural development and food security were the "foundation of the country's economic development and poverty reduction" strategy. Agricultural activities in the country, primarily smallholder farming, represent 70% of all employment in Sierra Leone. Research has shown that more than 500,000 hectares have recently been acquired by foreign investors. Some 20 large investors are currently present in Sierra Leone, such as Swiss Addax Bioenergy, which is producing bio-ethanol for export to Europe.

SILNoRF has raised concerns about land deals involving such foreign investors, arguing that such deals are going through without the informed prior consent or participation of affected land users or the provision of compensation. Moreover, the way such land is being used is threatening farming livelihoods, drying up water resources, producing food insecurity and violating labour rights. Most of the foreign investors making major land deals in Sierra Leone to date are European or Asian corporations or investment funds. Their focus is on producing commodities for export, not food for the people.

SILNoRF was founded to raise awareness of threats to the right to food and work and to improve the situation of affected land users, especially in our current operational area, where the Swiss company Addax Bioenergy has leased 50,000 hectares of arable land.

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CSOS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Twelve (13) out of the twenty-five (25) CSOs indicated that they were on social media. That is 52% of the CSOs sampled. But even among the thirteen, the online check did not show evidence of three (3) of the Facebook pages for three CSOs. The online check showed the Facebook page of one CSO which indicated that it was not on social media. The Facebook page of one CSO could only open under the 'Search' column of an existing Facebook page.

Table 9- CSOs on Social Media

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	RESPONSES
1.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	YES
2.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	YES
3.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	YES
4.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	YES
5.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	YES
6.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	YES (Facebook page seen, but only when the CSOs name was typed under the 'Search' menu of another Facebook that was already opened.
7.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	YES
8.	50/50 Group of Sierra Leone	YES
9.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	YES
10	Society for Democratic Initiatives	YES (the researcher found a Facebook bearing the organisation's name online that appeared to be under construction.
11	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	YES (The organisation indicated that it has a Facebook page, but the page was not seen online as at the time the researcher conducted the final online check on the 13 th of June 2014)
12	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	YES- (The organisation indicated that it has a Facebook page, but the page was not seen online as at the time the researcher conducted the final online check on the 13 th of June 2014)
13	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	YES (The organisation indicated that it was 'partially' on social media (Facebook page), but the page was

not seen as at the time the online check conducted on the 13th of June 2014).

1. SOCIAL MEDIA USED BY CSOS

The following social media are listed by the CSOs as the ones they utilised (see table below) and verified by the researcher online. The most predominant of the social media utilised is Facebook, followed by Twitter. Only two organisations listed Whatsapp and one indicated Zorpia. There are three CSOs whose Facebook pages were not seen online, while one was discovered for one CSO that indicated that it had no Facebook page. The other social media listed on the questionnaire were not indicated by any of the CSOs studied.

Table 10- Social media used by CSOs

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	Google +	Others
1.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Community-Action-for-Human-SecurityCAHSec/470197153097416	Yes		Whatsapp
2.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Womens-Forum-for-Human-Rights-and-Democracy/381990721931991			Whatsapp
3.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	https://www.facebook.com/HealthForAllCoalitionSL	HFAC Sierra Leone@HFACSL		
4.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Network-Movement-for-Justice-and-Development/1420024068209682			
5.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	Facebook page was seen, but there was no content displayed.	CGG Sierra Leone@CGGSierraLeo		

			ne		
6.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	https://www.facebook.com/pages/National-Youth-Coalition			
7.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Centre-for-Coordination-of-Youth-Activities-CCYA/204117279742429			
8.	50/50 Group Sierra Leone	HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PAGES/FIFTY-FIFTY-GROUP-SIERRA-LEONE/157159802877	50/50SierraLeone@5050Sierraleone		
9.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	Facebook page not seen			Zorpia
10	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Centre-for-Coordination-of-Youth-Activities-CCYA/204117279742429			
11	Society for Democratic Initiatives	https://www.facebook.com/pages/society-for-democratic-initiatives-sierra-leone/2335896901243			
12	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Silnorf/258927244221105			
13	Civil Society Movement-Sierra Leone	Facepage not seen		Yes	
14	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	Facepage not seen			



2. PERSON IN-CHARGE

Out of the thirteen (13) CSOs, nine (9) (64.2%) indicated that that 'Management' is in-charge of the Facebook page, one (1) (7.14%) indicated 'ICT Officer', one (1) (7.14%), one (1) (7.14%) 'Secretary' and one (1) (7.14%) 'External Consultant'.

Table 11- Person in-charge of Facebook

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	Responsible person
1.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	Management
2.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	Management
3.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	Management
4.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	ICT Officer
5.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	Management
6.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	Management
7.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	Management
8.	50/50 Group Sierra Leone	A volunteer
9.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	Management
10.	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	Management
11.	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	A secretary
12.	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	Management
13.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	An external consultant

3. PURPOSE OF FACEBOOK

- Disseminating information to other organisations
- Disseminating resources (publications, videos) produced by the organisation
- Disseminating resources produced by other organisations
- Sensitising policy makers
- Disseminating opinions
- Networking with other organisations
- Participating in international events

- Publishing studies, reports, Producing videos
- Publishing newsletters
- Uniting and mobilising a community

4. OBSTACLES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The CSOs listed low/poor internet connect, lack of training and person assigned to this task as the key factors facing the development of their social media sites.

Table 12- Obstacles to development of social media

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	Obstacles
1.	Community Action for Human Security (CAHSEC)	Poor internet connection
2.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFHRAD)	Poor internet connection
3.	Health for All Coalition Sierra Leone	Person assigned to this task, Lack of training, Poor internet connection
4.	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	Poor internet connection
5.	Campaign for Good Governance (CGG)	Person assigned to this task, Poor internet connection
6.	National Youth Coalition (NYC)	Person assigned to this task, Poor internet connection
7.	Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL)	Poor internet connection
8.	50/50 Group Sierra Leone	Lack of time
9.	Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development	Lack of training, Poor internet connection
10.	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)	Poor internet connection
11.	Civil Society Movement- Sierra Leone	Lack of training
12.	Women's Forum Sierra Leone	Lack of time, Person assigned to this task, Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Tools poorly suited to the objectives of the organisation
13.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	Low internet connection

5. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING SOCIAL MEDIA - FACEBOOK

Table: 13- Assessment of social media (criteria and ratings)

CRITERIA		
<p>If it is a profile: number of friends</p> <p>If it is a page: number of fans</p> <p>Updates?</p> <p>What forms of content?</p> <p>What type of content?</p> <p>Are there comments on the information?</p> <p>Is the information shared by other organisations/individuals?</p> <p>Does the page share information with other organisations?</p> <p>What uses?</p>		
RATING		
<p>social media on a scale of 1 to 5 corresponding to:</p> <p>1: Very good</p> <p>2: Good</p> <p>3: Fair</p> <p>4: Average</p> <p>5: Very average to zero</p>		
NO	ORGANISATION	SOCIAL MEDIA FACEBOOK
1.	National Youth Coalition	5
2.	Health for All Coalition- Sierra Leone	4
3.	Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities	4
4.	Network Movement for Justice and Development	5
5.	50/50 GROUP of Sierra Leone	4
6.	Center for Accountability & Rule of Law (CARL)	4
7.	Society for Democratic Initiatives	5
8.	Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food (SILNORF)	4
9.	Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy (WOFRAD)	5
10.	Community Action for Human Security	5

From the online study, the following pieces of information were captured.⁵

The *National Youth Coalition's* Facebook page opened after the CSOs name was placed in the search column of another Facebook page that was already opened.

As at the time of the study, the CSO had 30 fans. There were no updates. The page only contained pictures of the members. The only content was the picture of the fans.

- a. *The Health for All Coalition had 210 Likes, 8 friends and 8 fans. Its Facebook page had a link to Twitter.*



The latest update of the page was on the 27th January 2014. The contents were on the work of the organisation: campaigns on maternal and infant mortality.

- b. *The Centre for the Coordination of Youth Activities had 55 friends in its profile and 548 'Likes.'* The page was last updated on the 6th of June 2014. The contents were texts and photos on the activities and programmes undertaken by CCYA. There was at least one comment on the work the CSO was doing in improving the lives of the youth.
- c. *The Network Movement for Justice and Development's* page only had 1 'Likes' with no friend. The page appeared to be under construction. There was nothing much on the page.
- d. The Facebook page of the *50/50 GROUP of Sierra Leone* has 11 friends and 421 'Likes'. The last update appeared to have been done in 2013. The contents were mainly on the work of the organisation and some of its partners.
- e. The *Centre for Accountability & Rule of Law* Facebook page had 20 friends and 104 'Likes'. The latest update was in March 2014.
- f. There was a page bearing the name *Society for Democratic Initiatives*. It had no friends, but had 1 'Likes'. There was no update and the page appeared to be under construction.

⁵ See the print screens of the CSOs as at the time of the online check on the 13th June, 2014

- g. The *Sierra Leone Network on the Rights to Food* had 11 friends and 54 'Likes'. It was last updated in 2013.
- h. The *Community Action for Human Security* had no friends, but had 1 'Likes'. The page appeared to be under construction.
- i. The *Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy* had no friends, but 5 'Likes'. The page appeared to be under construction.

Generally, all the CSOs with Facebook pages and profiles are not doing much with them. They seldom update them with the plethora of activities and programmes they implement. There is not much on using the platform for dissemination of information on what they do, raising issues for discourse on national issues and generating feedbacks on what they do.

6. TWITTER

Four out of the twenty-five CSOs indicated that they have Twitter.⁶ The use of Twitter is still not popular among the CSOs and the citizenry. Even those who use it are grappling with the challenge of connecting with other organisations and their personnel.

The *Health for All Coalition- Sierra Leone* for example has 107 'Followers'. The page is updated regularly with content that is predominantly about the work of the organisation. The forms of content are mostly texts and photos. There are numerous comments on the information disseminated by the organisation. The CSOs information is shared by other organisations/individuals. The page shares information with other organisations.

Campaign for Good Governance's Twitter page has 25 'Followers'. It is updated regularly and the content is also predominantly about the work of the organisation.

The forms of content are mainly texts and photos and there are comments on the information. The information is shared by other organisations/individuals and the page shares information with other organisations.

The *50/50 Group of Sierra Leone* has 26 'Followers.' The content is also about the work of the organisation with the content mainly texts and photos. There are numerous comments on the information disseminated by the organisation. The information is shared by other organisations/individuals and the page shares information with other organisations.

7. RERUNNING TWITTER'S INFORMATION ON THE MEDIA

The researcher did not find evidence of local media rerunning the CSOs' information contained in their Twitter.

8. LINKS WITH TRADITIONAL MEDIA

There was no link with any traditional media. In fact few traditional media have operational social

⁶ See appendix on screen prints of CSOs with Twitter

media sites.

9. REASONS FOR CSOS NOT USING SOCIAL MEDIA

The lack of training, poor internet connection and lack of equipment are the major reasons pointed out by CSOs as to why they were not on social media. The reasons cut across almost all the CSOs.

Table 14- Reasons for CSOs not on social media

NO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	WHY CSO NOT ON SOCIAL MEDIA
1.	Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVES)	Lack of training, Lack of equipment
	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone	Lack of training, Lack of equipment
2.	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment
3.	Civil Society Movement-Sierra Leone (East)	Poor internet connection
4.	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy	Lack of training, Poor internet connection
5.	Action for Community Development and Good Governance	Lack of training
6.	Prison Watch Sierra Leone	Lack of training, Lack of interest, Too much exposure of the organisation (sensitive information)
7.	Green Scenery	Person assigned to this task
8.	Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR)	Person assigned to this task, Lack of training, Lack of equipment
9.	Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET S.L)	Lack of training, Lack of interest, Poor internet connection
10.	Peoples' Rights Integrity and Dignity Empowerment Agency-Sierra Leone (PRIDE-SL)	Lack of training, Poor internet connection, Lack of equipment

10. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CSOS IN THE PROVINCES AND THOSE IN CAPITAL CITIES

The CSOs in the capital city have more access to better internet connections than those in the provinces. This is because most of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are in the City. There is also the issue of cost in terms of paying for internet services. The CSOs in the city have bigger operations and budgets that can accommodate the cost for payment of internet services. But even in cases where CSOs in the provinces can afford to pay for such services, there is often the question of the reliability, speed and consistency of the internet connections. Even the telecoms operators which provide internet services cannot effectively do so in the provinces as compared to the city. The CSOs in the city make more use of social media than those in the provinces. This is clear from the list of the CSOs surveyed.

11. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CSOS IN CHARGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GENERAL AND THOSE INVOLVED IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The research did not realise any significant difference on the use of social media by CSOs involved in women's rights and those involved in human rights issues.

SUCCESS STORIES ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

50/50 GROUP OF SIERRA LEONE

The 50/50 Group of Sierra Leone campaigns for more women in politics and public life through training and advocacy. The organisation is using social media to promote one of its latest programmes on empowering women to participate in Sierra Leone's Constitutional Review process.

The social media has helped in disseminating information on the constitutional review process and putting out press releases and training activities. The social media had helped to share the information widely.

The organisation said its 'Bring back the girls campaign' was also successful on the social media. The campaign came in the wake of Boko Haram's abduction of the over two hundred school girls in Nigeria. The organisation used the social media and other local media to call for support from other women groups and CSOs to participate in a protest march to the Nigerian High Commission in Sierra Leone. The turnout was successful.

WOMEN'S FORUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY (WOFRAD)

The organisation is based in Makeni, Northern Sierra Leone. It advocates the promotion and protection of human rights and justice, democracy and good governance. According to the organisation, the creation of its website (Wordpress) has helped them to reach the wider public. The organisation noted that through its website, they have been able to disseminate information about the activities of the organisation both nationally and internationally. The website has also helped them to create a link between VSO from the international citizens' services in UK and staff of the organisation and this relationship is very effective.

CENTRE FOR THE COORDINATION OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES (CCYA)

The Centre for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) is a platform for the coordination of the activities and programmes of young people. The organisation has used the social media to engage the youth on the ongoing Constitutional Review Process (CRC). The social media have provided a meeting point for the youth to indicate what they would like to see in the country's new constitution. The task of getting the views of the youth had been greatly aided by the organisation's use of its Facebook page.

During the country's 2012 Parliamentary and Parliamentary elections, the organisation used social media to advocate the need for a peaceful and non-violent election. Several peace and non-violence messages were posted on social media with responses from the youth condemning all forms of violence.

GREEN SCENERY

Before March 2013, Green Scenery engaged seriously with publishing research and information gathered from its work on large scale land acquisition. These reports were published both in local tabloids and on the organisation's website. As pioneers of this initiative the organization calved out a niche resulting in high generation of interest by the public, media houses and the international community leading to frequent visits to the organisation's website.

After March 2013, Green Scenery lost a key member of staff with the knowledge of updating the site. This has reduced its ability to put on site very pertinent research and other information on the sector and others.

CONCLUSION

AREAS TO IMPROVE CSO ACCESS TO ICTS IN GENERAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN PARTICULAR

The major area to improve the CSOs access to ICTs and social media is the provision of the very facilities all over the country. This is because one of the main obstacles to CSOs having websites and social media, updating and effectively utilising them is 'low/poor internet connection.' In other words, the CSO inadequate use of websites and social media is to a large extent tied to the provision of reliable, affordable and efficient ICTs. In short, internet connectivity and affordability pose a serious challenge to CSOs accessing ICTs in general and social media in particular. The national distribution of ICT facilities leaves much to be desired particularly beyond the capital, Freetown and other district headquarter towns.

The lack of affordable connectivity and bandwidth is therefore the primary obstacle to utilising ICTs. The country seems to have acknowledged this problem. According to the 'Agenda for Prosperity' a national document setting out the national development aspirations, the country is now connected to the global ICT network, through the existence of four mobile telephone companies, several internet service providers, and quite recently the landing of an ACE fibre optic cable. The document notes that "the sector is constrained by inadequate ICT infrastructure, which has resulted in slow and high cost of internet connectivity, as well as a high cost of mobile telephone services" (p. 98).

Lack of consistent and affordable electricity is another major challenge to CSOs accessing internet facilities and using social media services. The power supply from the national grid is still rather erratic. CSOs are left with the option of spending huge amount of resources for purchasing generators and fuelling them. In the absence of electricity, the CSOs will be unable to utilise ICTs and internet services even in cases where they would have paid the required subscriptions for the internet services. The situation is more serious in almost all regions and districts out of the Capital where electricity supply is provided on a piecemeal basis.

The lack of continuous and up to date training in ICTS generally and social media in particular is also key to improving CSOs access to the efficient and effective use of ICTs and social media. This is manifested in the increased number of inexperienced computer users and lack of trained officers providing technical support.

1. POTENTIALS THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED

The potentials to be developed include:

Seeming political will- the government has made a number of public statements on improving the ICT sector. "When I took over governance of this country in 2007, my Government identified Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a major tool we will need to employ to ensure national development... My Government, view access to ICTs, telecommunication network services and functional postal services in both urban and rural areas as a sine qua non for effective functioning of governance. That is why we are encouraging the expansion of ICT ingenuity, GSM companies and internet provision. With support from the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, we have landed fibre optics and are constructing part of our national backbone through the

ECOWAN project that will connect Liberia and Guinea through a 660km network system. My Government will soon sign an agreement with the Chinese Government to complete the final phase of the National Backbone connecting the whole country.”⁷

The willingness of all the CSOs to use social media- almost all the CSOs that participated in the study indicated that social media have (or could) have an impact on the activities of their organisations. They further indicated that social media could be ‘very useful and ‘useful’ to their operations.

Access to the internet- all the CSOs surveyed (100%) have access to the internet. All of them access the internet via a computer. At present, access to the internet is guaranteed at least with one computer and a modem, but more so with the availability of Smart Phones and other mobile phones that can provide quick access to the internet. Again, most of the heads of the CSOs have Tablets or iPads that they use to access the internet.

Availability of websites for some CSOs- this will mainly require a possible reconstruction/upgrading the technical facilities of some of the CSOs’ websites, as more than half of the CSOs surveyed already have internet sites.

Developing CSOs staff knowledge on uploading websites- some of the CSOs have staff with basic knowledge of how to manage and upload websites. They may require advanced training in the areas of uploading files and contents produced by the organisations.

Existence of Facebook pages/profiles of CSOs- the study reveals that at least half of the CSOs already have Facebook pages and/or profiles. However, most of them are either not regularly updated or are still being constructed. The opportunity here is to develop those existing pages and teach the CSOs how to effectively make use of Facebook in disseminating information and generating feedback on their operations and other important national issues.

Developing the expertise of the staff of the CSOs- all the CSOs indicated that their members of staff use social media privately. While some of them may have acquired basic knowledge, by way of training in using social media, others have had coaching and individual tutorials on the use of social media.

2. OPPORTUNITIES SOCIAL MEDIA PROVIDE FOR CSOs

The CSOs as well as the researchers noted the following opportunities that social media will provide CSOs:

- Increased visibility- this is by far the greatest opportunity that will be created by the use of social media. It will enable the CSOs to be part of the virtual community which is the single most important national and global platform.

⁷ (Keynote Address Delivered by His Excellency Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma President of the Republic of Sierra Leone on the opening ceremony of “The 7th Connecting Rural Communities (Crc) Africa Forum” in Freetown from the 20th to 22nd June 2012, <http://www.thissierraleone.com/sierra-leone-president-koromas-keynote-address-the-7th-connecting-rural-communities-crc-africa-forum-2012/>)

- Timely dissemination of information– less than ten percent of the CSOs engage in can be found on social media. An effective use of the social media can help CSOs to showcase what they do both nationally and internationally.
- Promoting effective networking- in this era of global village, social media provides an effective arena for networking with other organisations and CSOs. Such networking may provide additional support in the form of capacity, logistics and funding.
- Reducing official procedures and costs- social media can be used to stimulate debates, gather quick data and share reports without going through stringent official procedures.
- Promoting openness; enhances participation and creates room to learn best practices.
- Creates a stage for engagement and consultation
- Organising an event including press conferences,
- Educating beneficiaries,
- Disseminating resources (publications, videos etc) produced by the organisation,
- Sensitising policy makers,
- Launching alerts,
- Disseminating opinions,
- Recruiting members (newsletter subscribers, web site subscribers, mailing list subscribers)
- Soliciting donors,
- Uniting and mobilising a community.

3. SPECIFIC TRAINING NEEDS

The CSOs need training in the following areas:

- Uploading websites
- Creating, updating and retrieving information on Facebook
- Designing short messages that will stimulate debates and generate responses on social media.
- Creating and Updating Twitter
- Using other social media

4. PROVISION OF ICT TRAININGS

Trainings on ICTs are provided locally. There are a plethora of institutions offering training in ICTS as full time, part-time and hands-on courses. They include:

- Institute of Public Administration (Information Technology Unit)
- Njala University (Information and Technology Unit)
- ICT Training Complex

- Silicom Pro
- BANKTEC
- Tiwai Memory Master
- Milton Margai College of Administration and Technology
- African Information Technology Holdings (AITH)

5. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, this study reveals that the degree of penetration and use of social media by CSOs is low. The CSOs are yet to fully realise and utilise the need for effective and efficient use of social media. Even CSOs with social media do not tend to use them frequently. The use of the social media is mostly limited to situations where the CSOs undertake major programmes and activities. The results of the two major social media tested in the study ‘Facebook and Twitter’ show snail pace at which they are appreciated and utilised. For example, almost half of the CSOs were not on Facebook, while only four (4) out of twenty-five (25) (16%) with ‘Twitter’ accounts. This is despite the fact that all of the CSOs indicated that they have access to internet connections. They however pointed that lack of training, equipment and poor internet facility were inhibiting their utilisation of social media.

If the country’s Agenda for Prosperity’ is anything to go by, the objective of the sector on ICTs is to ensure that Sierra Leone is fully integrated into the global village, with affordable rates for mobile phone usage and internet connectivity. The Government intends to commercialize the ACE submarine fibre optic infrastructure and services, create an ICT Centre of Excellence for ICT professionals that will include training facilities and create multi-purpose telecentres in parts of the country and establish an ICT Village.⁸

Time is needed to ascertain when and how the above plans materialise. What stands at present is that the use of ICTs and social media by institutions in general and CSOs in particular is still in its infancy.

Avec le financement de l’Union Européenne



⁸ The Agenda for Prosperity-Road Map to Middle Income Status (Sierra Leone’s Third Generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2013 – 2018), Pillar 4 - International Competiveness, p. 98)

