INFORMATION, EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS (IEC)
CRC Sub-Committee Progress Report

2014
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Sub-committee of the Sierra Leone 1991 Constitution Review Committee was established to design and develop strategies for information, communication, and civic education for CRC and the public. Also, the committee will recommend channels through which the CRC will educate and inform the public on the process of constitutional review, consult and solicit their views and conduct public hearing on the review of the Constitution of Sierra Leone. During the period September – December 2014, the IEC Sub-committee consulted 14 institutions not only to garner their views and aspirations for the reviewed constitution but also to encourage them to develop position papers on what they want to see in the revised constitution.

The discussions have been very thought-provoking yet informative. A number of brilliant recommendations were proffered by the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) visited by the Sub-committee.

The Expert Engagements with Specialists on Information, Education and Communications significantly improved the knowledge, skills and engagement strategies of the Committee members.

MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

1. Morlai Conteh - Chairman
2. Memunatu Pratt
3. Marie Bob-Kande
4. Kabba Franklyn Bangura
5. Halimatu Deen
6. Elfrida Conteh
7. Chief Somano Kapen
8. Felix Koroma

Mohamed Farray Kargbo - Admin Asst.
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A meeting of the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) was held at the Conference Room of the IMC Secretariat on Friday September 12, 2014.

In his statement to the Commissioners, the Chairman of the IEC Sub-committee, Morlai Conteh stressed that the CRC was consulting key stakeholders in the country to garner their views and aspirations for the revised constitution. The IEC Subcommittee was charged with the responsibility of reviewing the Information, communication and Education clauses in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and examining the recommendations of the 2008 Peter Tucker’s Report and recommend changes that would contribute to national development in the sector.

In his response, the Executive Secretary of the Independent Media Commission, (IMC), JPK Lamin informed members that the Commission had already developed a position paper that has been sent to the CRC. He said prior to the establishment of the CRC, the IMC has been reviewing its Act with a view to bringing it up-to-date with developments that have taken place locally and internationally since the law was formulated.

In the interactive session that followed, the CRC subcommittee members and the IMC Commissioners spoke about the importance of information and communications regulations in the country with particular reference to the emerging new media and the threats it pose to national security and social cohesion. The advent of social media and the seeming difficulty in regulating it, especially when it transcends national boundaries and frontiers.

The Sub-committee encouraged IMC to continue to engage CRC whenever the need arises and asked them to fill in the Public Submission Forms relating to information and Communications.
IEC Sub-committee and IMC Commissioners

IEC Sub-committee and IMC Commissioners
Members of the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Subcommittee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) held consultations with the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM) not only to solicit their aspirations for the reviewed Constitution but also to solicit their cooperation in a national assignment of such magnitude.

The consultation which was done on Friday September 12, 2014 was part of the Western Area Stakeholders’ Consultations which were being done partly to engage key stakeholders during a difficult period in the country’s history but more importantly as part of an overall strategy to capture the thoughts of institutions for the revised document.

NATCOM’s Deputy Director General stated that they felt gratified to be consulted by the CRC to make fruitful contributions to the review process, noting that they were fully following developments as they unfold in that important process. “There are recommendations that we can make individually, but others we can’t until we discuss with line Ministries, Departments and Agencies.” Noted Senessie Kallon.

An integrated, comprehensive and well researched Position Paper would inevitably place the country’s only telecommunications regulatory body in a better stead to firmly regularize the information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure even if it would mean overhauling the systems. The interactive discussion between NATCOM and CRC was an eye-opener to the institution, not only does it arouse their interest in the process, it equally dispel fears that the contributions of institutions were not significant to the process.

The telecoms regulatory body which was born out of the National Telecommunications Act of 2006 was itself reviewing its act to bring it to terms with current technological advancements. They believed that nationalism and patriotism demands that they make meaningful contributions to the CRC.

NATCOM was established to regulate the telecoms sector, protect consumer interest and ensure fair competition among service providers.
IEC Sub-committee members pose with NATCOM Commissioners

IEC Members Consulting NATCOM
REPORT OF IEC SUB-COMMITTEE CONSULTATIONS WITH THE WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL (WAEC)

The atmosphere was gloomy for a gathering of that nature. The hardworking staff of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) was in attendance save for those who were ill-disposed or absent from work. If the large number of staff that turned up for the consultations does not signify the importance the Council attaches to the process, the presence of the Head of National Office does.

Sheriff Mohamed Sapateh welcomed the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Subcommittee at a time when, as he puts it, the country was at a standstill. The recognition of WAEC by a national institution charged with the responsibility of reviewing the country’s statute was a laudable venture, not because they were participating but because that was the first time they were being consulted for such processes.

As citizens, WAEC’s Head of National Office, Mr. Sapateh emphasized that they as citizens had a crucial role to play in the overall governance of the state even if they were at the tail end of the governance structure hierarchy.

The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Information, Education and Communications (IEC), Morlai Conteh thanked the Examination Council for the massive turn-out of staff noting that that was the most impressive gathering they had had since the start of the stakeholders consultations. “We are here to seek your views and aspirations for the revision of Sierra Leone’s Constitution, to hold frank discussions with you and to make a conscious effort to elicit information from you on what you want to see in the revised document.” The IEC Subcommittee Chair concluded.

CRC’s Head of Outreach, Mohamed Faray Kargbo admonished the WAEC to develop a Position Paper that would encompass their aspirations for the new Constitution, stressing that many other organizations had done same.

A good number of recommendations were discussed during the meeting including but not limited to the following:

The separation of the Ministry of Education, to form a Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and Ministry of Technical/Vocational and Tertiary Education. There should be a conscious effort to focus on early childhood education whilst simultaneously improving teacher training to meet the needs and demands of such.

The need to entrench the curriculum to discourage the introduction of policies that have the propensity to derail the educational system by successive governments citing the shift from 6334 to 6344.

The enactment of a Teaching Service Commission.
The introduction of a National Youth Scheme to cater for the large chunk of graduates that the Universities turn out without any hope of securing a job or placement in a work environment.

The Examination Council promised to develop and present a Position Paper to the CRC sooner than later which would encapsulate their wishes and aspirations for Sierra Leone in the reviewed Constitution.

The consultation which was held on Monday September 15, 2014 was very fruitful as a lot of recommendations were proffered to consideration by the CRC.
REPORT OF IEC SUB-COMMITTEE STAKEHOLDERS’ CONSULTATION IN THE WESTERN AREA - NCTVA MEETING

He perused through the documents much faster than the Committee had anticipated. The interest displayed by the Director of National Council for Technical/Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA) transcends the ordinary. The institution has not enjoyed similar patronage from previous review commissions, which was why they were pleased with the Consultations by the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC).

Mohamed A. Jalloh, an engineer of no mean standing, lamented the appalling state of the sciences in the country whilst appealing for free education for students offering the sciences and special incentives for science teachers. “The cost of education must be free at all levels for the next twenty years following the enactment of the reviewed constitution especially for medicine, agriculture and engineering.” Director Jalloh concluded.

“As Sierra Leoneans they have a right to contribute to the process.” Noted the IEC Sub-committee chair Morlai Conteh adding that the CRC desires frank discussions with all stakeholders whilst assuring that ‘nothing said in those meeting s would be used against the contributors.’
The National Council for Technical Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA) made a number of salient contributions for Constitutional change. These included but not limited to the following:

- Political rallies must be banned in Sierra Leone; alternative means of political campaigns must be sought.
- The revised constitution must clearly spell out the conditions of service for employees to cater for the imbalances in wages and salaries.
- The Ministry of Education must be split into Ministry of Basic Education and Ministry of Tertiary Education and Ministry of Vocational Education and Youths.
- An overhaul of the governance structure given the fact that the status quo has failed the nation. Four Vice Presidents must be appointed to supervise different line ministries in addition to four senior minister positions. Such ministers should have sound education, excellent character, professional experience partly gained at international level.
- The Constitution must safeguard the rights of women and girls against sexual harassment.
- Human Resource Development must be guaranteed by the revised constitution.

Such is the seriousness of their input into the reviewed document that, NCTVA is prepared to compile a comprehensive position paper that would encompass their wishes and aspirations for the revised national statute. The institution appealed to members of the Information, Education and Communications Subcommittee of the CRC to seize this opportunity to overhaul the educational needs of Sierra Leone noting that the supreme law safeguards the rights of citizens more than any other law.
NCTVA Staff making contributions during the consultation
A consultative meeting of the Information, Education and Communications Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) was held on Tuesday September 16, 2014 at the offices of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) in Freetown. Key management staff of SLBC was present for the meeting.

“The biggest thing that can happen to the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) in this review process of Sierra Leone’s Constitution is the enshrinement of SLBC into the revised constitution.”

These were the words of the Estate Manager of SLBC, Bamidele Bailey, to the Information, Education and Communications Sub-committee of the 1991 Sierra Leone Constitution Review Committee (CRC) during a stakeholder’s consultation held at the Corporation’s Conference Room on Tuesday September 16, 2014.

The enshrinement of SLBC into the Constitution was premised on the justification that successive governments could not easily dissolve the establishment to suit their convenience owing to the fact that it would have been guaranteed by statute.

Staff of SLBC lamented the absence of a clearly defined source of revenue generation in the Act that established their office noting that that poses a serious threat to the continued existence and independence of the institution. “If the Audit Service Sierra Leone could maintain its independence and objectivity, even though it is being funded by the Government, why not the SLBC.” They queried.

The visit of the Committee charged with the responsibility of reviewing the nation’s 23 year old Constitution, could not have been done at a more opportune time when the 4 year old Corporation was still staggering to gain a footing after its transformation from a Broadcasting Service to a Corporation.

The Estate Manager, Mr Bailey further noted the following: “There is a dire need to protect the assets and liabilities of the Corporation due to the seeming confusion that surrounds ownership of the property at Leicester Peak and other areas.”

No other institution could have better articulated the issues surrounding the review process than the Corporation, which was awarded the contract to implement the outreach strategy of the CRC did. SLBC’s Head of Administration and Finance, Mr. Sowa appealed to CRC to make recommendations that would contribute to the gross national happiness of the people, stressing that they were not making laws for themselves but the people of Sierra Leone who owned the sovereignty of the nation.
Members of the IEC Subcommittee led by the Chairman expressed satisfaction about the reception accorded the CRC whilst simultaneously assuring the SLBC that the reviewed constitution would undoubtedly reflect the mandate of Sierra Leoneans as the recommendations would be firmly rooted in the nationwide consultations. Morlai Conteh cited the ongoing stakeholders’ consultation as evidence to the fact that the CRC would not be reviewing the constitution in isolation but in consonance with the dictates of those who rightfully possess the power to do such.
A consultative meeting of the Information, Education and Communications Sub-committee was held on Tuesday September 16, 2014 at the Government Rokel Secondary School in Freetown.

The Chairman of the Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools, Western Area says the Government must think seriously about the inclusion of a representative of the Conference in the Review Committee of Sierra Leone’s 1991 Constitution.

Sylvester Meheux made the plea when the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Subcommittee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) consulted them at the Government Rokel Secondary School, on Tuesday September 16, 2014.

Whilst thanking the CRC for the visitations, Mr Meheux questioned the yardstick used for the selection of CRC members noting that they didn’t understand how such an indispensable sector like the Conference could be left out in the Review Committee. Not even the Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU) had a representative in the CRC.

The exclusion of their constituency in such a national encounter speaks volume about the seeming insignificance of their contributions to the task ahead but it was not too late to right the wrongs, noted one of the Principals. Despite their absence in the Constitutional Review Committee, the Conference promised to consult their members for an holistic Position to be presented to the CRC.

They made a number of suggestions which they thought were critical for the furtherance of education in the country which included but not limited to the following:

- The CRC must entrench the right to education.
- The Government must reintroduction the former system of education since the 6334 has contributed to the relegation of education in the country.
- Teachers must be recruited in a timely manner and the payment of their salaries done promptly.
- Priority should be given to basic education to cater for the needs of majority of the population.
- The elimination of the double shift system and the re-introduction of the single shift.
- Basic education must be made free and compulsory to give access to the less privileged children and low income families.
Members of the IEC Subcommittee of the CRC thanked the Conference and assured that once those concerns were documented in a Position Paper, the CRC would carefully analyze them and act accordingly.
REPORT OF IEC STAKEHOLDERS’ CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SIERRA LEONE UNION ON DISABILITY ISSUES (SLUDI)

A cross section of the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) has appealed for the creation of a Ministry of Disability Issues in the revised Constitution of Sierra Leone.

The Disability Rights Group, one of the most active in the country, stressed that the enactment of such a statute would inevitably reduce the indiscriminate discrimination and stigmatization against persons living with disability.

In an initial consultation with SLUDI by members of the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) at their Tower Hill offices in Freetown on Tuesday September 30, 2014, the Group also appealed for the enshrinement of the National Commission for Persons with Disability into the Constitution.

“The absence of the Disability Act in the Constitution leaves us at the mercy of the Powers that be, though it was created by Parliament, it can as well be dissolved by them. But a single clause in the Constitution guarantees us that the Commission is perpetual.” Noted SLUDI’s Secretary General, Mohamed Bangali Mansaray.

With over 20 years of activism, the umbrella Disability Rights Organization stood a better chance of articulating the wishes and aspirations of their constituents not least because they were going through similar experiences. Little wonder they unanimously agitated for the extension of the Free Health Care and free education to all Persons Living with Disability.

The destiny of 15% of the West African Nation’s 6 Million people hangs on a balance; their only hope is now firmly rooted in the outcome of the review process. The expectations of this vulnerable segment of society are high. Maybe higher than what their two representatives on the 80 persons CRC, Kabba Franklyn Bangura and Vandy Konneh, could deliver in a setting where votes determine decisions.

Their abysmal absence in Governance positions speaks volume about the level of marginalization that disabled people suffer. They lack any iota of confidence that the only visually impaired Cabinet Minister; Mustapha Bai Attilla might not lose his position soon. Their only representative in the legislative arm of Government during the 2007-2012 Electoral cycle, Julius Nye-Cuffie, was denied the ruling party symbol in the 2012 Parliamentary Elections resulting in zero representation in the House of Representatives. As the review process unfolds, “a secured way of avoiding a recurrence of that unfortunate scenario is the provision of 5 safe seats for People Living with Disability in the revised Constitution,” they told the CRC.

If any group of people saw the review of Sierra Leone’s 23 year old Supreme Law as an opportunity to overhaul their low socio-economic, political and cultural status, persons with disability are first among equals. Such is the desperation of their situation that their advocacy
drive for the legislation of a specific quota on employment for persons living with disability in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) including the private sector would not be limited to urban but rural areas as well.

No better institution could have adequately articulated the inadequacies of the visually impaired than the only Braille production institution in the Country, the Educational Centre for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ECBVI) pioneered by Thomas Allieu, himself a visually impaired person. An earlier consultation with them reinforced the issues already discussed. They couldn’t request for anything less than the funding of Special Needs Education including those for the visually impaired, sign language for the deaf and dumb and accessible educational facilities for the crippled.

The demands of the disability community were numerous to be quantified in a single report. Suffice it to say that the task ahead of the two disabled persons at the CRC is huge.
SLUDI Members pose with IEC sub-committee
The Executive of the National Union of Sierra Leone Students (NUSS) has appealed to the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) to make a constitutional provision for loan scheme facilities for university students in Sierra Leone.

In a consultative meeting with the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) sub-committee of the CRC at the Miatta Conference Centre on Wednesday October 29, 2014; the students justified their appeal on the grounds that a staggering number of students can’t access university education due to poverty.

Ibrahim Mansaray is the President of NUSS, he said “The constitutional provision should force the Government to provide employment for graduates to repay their loan on completion of their courses; this is what is done in most countries.”

The students are also requesting for free education at primary, secondary and vocational levels to accord more students the enviable opportunity of acquiring quality education. The establishment of a loan scheme for students in a country that is characterized by mass illiteracy
would considerably improve the socio-economic status of the downtrodden masses who continue to wallow in poverty.

Since the launch of the Constitutional Review Process in 2013, various interest groups have been advocating for the justiciability of some clauses dealing with the fundamental principles of state policy as provided for in the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No 6 of 1991. They argue that justifying the right to education was the best thing that might come out of the current review process of Sierra Leone. That was not all; they also want universal free education for primary, secondary and vocational students.

Improving the conditions of service of lecturers and teachers would serve as a motivating factor to boost their interest in the profession. Over the years, the conditions of service of teachers and lecturers in Sierra Leone had been appalling, resulting in the mass exodus of very good teachers from the profession. Results from the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in the recent past had not been encouraging forcing the Government to add another year to High School education.

The students didn’t limit their recommendations to educational issues alone. Other issues that they expressed concern over include the following:
Shifting the age requirements to contest the presidency from 40 to 35 years would give young people the opportunity to govern.

The State Proceedings Act forbids an individual from bringing an action against the State. “The need to amend that section cannot be overemphasized,” noted the President of NUSS.

The consultations were also done with the umbrella youth organization, National Youth Coalition (NYC).
The Sub-committee on Information, Education and Communications (IEC) of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) on 27th October, 2014 organized an expert engagement with members at the Miatta Conference Centre in Freetown.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Chief Technical Adviser to the CRC, Sanaullah Baloch revealed that the CRC has received between 30-32 position papers from various institutions. He informed that due to the Ebola outbreak and the subsequent state of public emergency, sub-committees working on different thematic areas could not hold public consultations nationwide.

He encouraged participants to identify pitfalls in the 1991 constitution relating to information and communications. Mr Baloch revealed that the CRC has received the position paper from the Independent Media Commission (IMC) and urged participants to examine other issues like privacy, human rights as well as the current and future needs of the country in the areas of ICTs by citing best practices from other countries.
Earlier, officially opening the ceremony, Executive Secretary of the CRC, Samuel Coker informed all that the workshop was an inclusive forum where various experts would share and exchange experiences with CRC members with a view to guiding them to make salient recommendations to CRC plenary for validation.

He further disclosed that the engagement would increase the capacity of members of the various sub-committees to better articulate the issues when the nationwide public consultations commence. Sooner or later.

The lead facilitator, Hindolo Tonya Musa, Lecturer in the Mass Communications Department at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone articulated that the forum was to identify lacunas in the Constitution, make recommendations to the CRC and raise public awareness for improvement. He also dilated on Sierra Leone’s information structure, technology, policy and benefits, the freedom of information law, the restructuring of public policy and the information superhighway.

According to Hindolo Tonya Musa, the legal and immigration departments have gone digital whilst highlighting the risks associated with the use of the internet including hacking, indecency, infringement into people’s privacy and so on. “Since Sierra Leone is part of the global village, its ICT laws must therefore be in line with global thinking.”

Other topics discussed included the dynamics in technology, digital migration from analog to digital. He cited the biometric registration for the 2007 and 2012 national elections and stressed
that Sierra Leone was now preparing for online voting as dictated by the demands of the internet age.
QUALITY EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE - THE NEED FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The Expert meeting with the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) was facilitated by the Vice Chancellor, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, Prof Sahr Gbamanja and was held on the 10th November, 2014 at the Conference Room of the CRC Secretariat in Freetown.

The distinguished educationist took the sub-committee through the following:

The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 enjoins the government to “direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal rights and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels by:

a. Ensuring that every citizen is given the opportunity to be educated to the best of his or her ability
b. Safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups such as children, women and the disabled in securing educational opportunities

c. Providing the necessary structure, finance and supportive facilities for education as and when practicable;

In realizing the educational objectives, the government has been supported by international agencies and partners and has been influenced by policy developments and programmes in education globally.


The Gbamanja Report, and the resultant Government White Paper were timely because of the need for Sierra Leone to position itself for meaningful and sustainable social, economic, political and cultural development of this country. Some of the recommendations for immediate implementation were:

1. Modification of the 6-3-3-4 System of Education to include a compulsory early childhood component, and extension by one (1) year of the duration of senior secondary school. The system now becomes 3+6+3+4+4 (3-6-3-4-4).
2. Establishment of a Teaching Service Commission, with a view of the Conditions of Service for teachers as a priority.


4. Criminalization of the practice of irregular admission of pupils into secondary schools

5. Banning of all access courses in tertiary institutions

6. Regulation of the opening of new schools (primary/secondary/community). The government has done its best in implementing some of these recommendations and this has yielded dividends as evidenced in the WASSCE of 2014. For the first time for over a decade, Sierra Leone did excellent in the WASSCE to the extent of having a candidate with one of the best results in West Africa.

The Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) should come up with policy to implement the recommendations in the White Paper 2010. This will no doubt move the education system forward and put it back to its rightful pedestal.
MINUTES OF THE CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The current Constitutional Review Process of Sierra Leone presents an unparalleled opportunity to comprehensively overhaul the information and communications infrastructure of Sierra Leone. The 23 year old National Statute was inaugurated at a time when Information and Communications Technology (ICT) was nothing to write home about in Africa.

In a consultative meeting with members of the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) on Wednesday November 26, 2014, officials of the Ministry of Information and Communications stated in no uncertain terms that the CRC must incorporate provisions relating to ICTs. They were convinced that the laws relating to information and communications were not only disjointed but uncoordinated as well. They therefore recommended the convergence of the ICT sectors through the constitutional review process.

The CRC was undertaking stakeholders’ consultations within the precincts of the Western Area to garner the views and aspirations of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) for possible incorporation into the reviewed Constitution, noted Marie Bob-Kandeh, CRC member of the IEC Sub-committee.
Whilst thanking the IEC Subcommittee, one of the Directors stressed that the Rights to Access Information Law must be incorporated into the revised constitution of Sierra Leone, firstly to protect it from unwarranted amendments but more importantly to safeguard the inalienable democratic principle of free speech. He informed all that plans were afoot to review the Telecommunications Act to meet the rapid improvements in technological advancements. Over the years, there has been a bias on information over communication so much that the communication aspect is completely overshadowed.

“Data protection laws are pivotal to the improvement of information and communications but they are seriously lacking.” noted the Information Ministry Officials. The rapid acceleration of technology coupled with the proliferation of electronic gadgets has exponentially increased cyber crimes to an extent that countries without the relevant legislative and regulatory framework were left at the mercy of cyber criminals.

Sierra Leone like many other West African countries is in the teething stages of ICTs, little wonder officials of MIC advocated for the introduction of ICTs in the school system. This they believed would solve the mammoth problems of technological illiteracy that has engulfed Sierra Leone’s population.
The authorities at the Information and Communications Ministry thought that the name of the ministry must be revised to include technology thereby completing the long awaited convergence as dictated by the ECOWAS protocol on ICTs.

Of common concern also were issues of the regulator being the one implementing projects, this they identified as a misnomer that must be regularized within the shortest possible time. The institution of penalties by the regulator would seriously improve the regulatory framework of the telecoms industry in the country, they noted. The Information officials during the consultations with the CRC also requested that the role be the Ministry of Information and Communications be clearly defined by statute to reduce or better still eliminate the ambiguities that surround its mandate.

Others contend that Sierra Leone needs a Ministry of ICT separate and distinct from the Information Ministry. “Structural adjustments must be made within the Ministry to restore clear lines of authority,” noted Dan Parkinson, Senior Information Officer at the Ministry.

The Information and Communications Ministry is expected to present a Position Paper to the Constitutional Review Committee that would encapsulate their wishes and aspirations for the revised Constitution of Sierra Leone.
A consultative meeting of the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Subcommittee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) was held on Monday December 1, 2014 at the Ministry’s Conference Room. The meeting started with individual silent prayers at 11 AM and was witnessed by a cross section of staff of the Ministry including the Deputy Minister of Youth Affairs, Madam Feremusu Konte.

Morrail Conteh, the Chairman of the IEC Subcommittee of the CRC giving an overview of the Consultations said that the CRC was consulting the Ministry of Youth Affairs to garner their views on what they want to see in the reviewed constitution of Sierra Leone. He stressed that the IEC subcommittee was gathering information on a lot of issues including but not limited to information, Education and Communications.

In her welcome statement, Deputy Minister of Youth Affairs, Madam Feremusu Konte said that they were very honoured to welcome the CRC to their ministry whilst stressing that they have a
pivotal role to play in the CR process of Sierra Leone. She stressed that everything in the Constitution has an impact on the youths of the country.

He encouraged staff of the Ministry to contribute to the process as if they were not in that room when the IEC sub-committee consulted them. They had the blessing to comment and the blessing to contribute so they must bring out the issues that would benefit future generations.

Madam Konte appealed to the youths to make inputs that would leave lasting impression on the minds of future generation. Nationalism and patriotism must be the key to making the review process a success.

WISHES AND ASPIRATIONS OF MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS

- Housing and shelter for government employees - Reduction in the rents
- Local Govt Act of 2004 is not in the Constitution, it must be enshrined in the constitution
- Sec 77k of the Constitution must be looked into very seriously for possible repeal from the Supreme document
- Youths and disabilities issues are not factored in the Constitution…Issues of youths, the disabled and children must be looked into very vigorously.
✓ Allocation of seats to persons with disability. Job opportunities for persons with disability in all the 3 organs of Governance

✓ Loan scheme for students in higher institutions of learning must be inaugurated-This must be done such that the students could pay back to Government in trenches- Special preference must be made for students in private institutions.

✓ Each govt must review contracts awarded to mining companies on assumption of office

✓ Employment of illiterate locals must be looked into, the protection of local labourers is key to the improvement of the working conditions of Sierra Leonean workers

✓ Africa Youth Day must be enshrined in the Constitution so that youths could showcase their talents

✓ Manufacturing industries must be created in Sierra Leone to create employment for people and to make the best use of Sierra Leone’s resources.

✓ National Youth Service Scheme must be made for graduates from Universities in the revised constitution of Sierra Leone to create employment for young graduates.

✓ People should serve Ministries, Departments and Agencies first before they are made Ministers and Deputy Ministers

✓ Unlimited term limits for the presidency-Elections must be conducted based on the popularity of the Presidents.

✓ The position of the Vice President must be removed and replaced with the Position of Prime Minister.

✓ The youths of any nation constitute a vital human resource base on whom the development of a country revolves. 20 % quota must be reserved for young persons in Sierra Leone.

✓ 35% of the budget must go towards youth activities.

✓ The Govt must make it mandatory for pregnant women to open account for their children-A revolving fund must be created by the Social Service, A very sound social welfare scheme must be developed.

✓ Teenagers who get impregnated should discontinue their schooling,
✓ HTC for Councillors and First Degrees for MPs-Requirements to contest in national elections and Masters for the Presidency

✓ Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) has generated to such an extent that cyber crimes have increased exponentially-The new constitution must criminalize cyber crimes.

✓ Legal Aid for people who cannot afford it.

✓ The laws which recognizes 5 years co-habit as a legal relationship must be reviewed to a lesser period because after 3 or 4 years, some men dissolve the relationships.

✓ Chieftaincy must be reduced to 10 years of one term and it must be open and not limited to ruling houses only.

✓ Price control be introduced into the Constitution-This must be done in such a way that traders cannot increase price indiscriminately.

✓ Regional Minister West must be included in the revised Constitution of Sierra Leone

The meeting ended with those recommendations and a promise that they would compile a comprehensive Position Paper that would be presented to the CRC later.
A consultative meeting of the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) was held on Wednesday December 3, 2014 at the Conference Room of the Ministry.

The Programme which started at 11PM was chaired by the Acting Chairperson of the IEC Sub-committee, Madam Memunatu Pratt.

She spoke about the strategies that the CRC has been using to capture the views and aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone. “The public Submission Form is just a guide to provoke the thoughts of the Ministry.” She emphasized.

“A sound educational policy is the desired goal of the current review process.” She concluded her introductory remarks.

Dr Kamara, the Chief Education Officer of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) Welcoming the CRC remarked that as a ministry, they respected the laws of the land that was why they didn’t joke with their Act.
He opined that the issues discussed were very relevant to the MEST adding that the Ministry was concerned about the youths that was why they were concentrating on the vocational sector. Working with the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA) was perhaps the best thing that has happened to them especially in the area of developing a youth village that would uplift the status of youths in the country. Not only would it make them marketable, it would lead to self-sufficiency as well.

Some of the issues discussed for consideration by the CRC included the following:

Need a strong statement to make sure that the facilities that would enhance learning would be guaranteed by the constitution. It is frustrating and demoralizing for youths to continue to operate without the requisite skills in ICTs.

The formulation of the Teaching Service Commission was almost complete, what remains to be done was its implementation.

University funding must be a key factor that the CRC should consider, facilities for students, lecturers, and the laboratories must be provided.

Science and Technology are critical for the development of the education sector in Sierra Leone. Funding must be provided for the upgrading of laboratories in schools and colleges.

- Private schools should start from the kindergarten level and develop later. People open schools without going through the laid down principles of the MEST.
• The Revision of the Education Act-the act should spell out the type of education that the country must operate on. So many meetings will yield unproductive results.
• The cry of E-Governance requires the inauguration of E-Learning-----If you want to defeat your enemies you must pay premium on Technology.
• The Budget into science and technology is nothing to write home about. 1% of the budget must go towards science and technology. The Government must therefore increase the budget on the education sector.
• Trust fund for education must be holistic starting from early childhood to tertiary.
• The Ministers of Education says science, technology and innovation. The Constitution must consider innovation very seriously. The trust fund for education should be at least 5%.
• It’s but very important for the fundamental law of the land to be reviewed. The penalties for not sending children to school must be stiffer. THE Constitution must make strong provisions on early childhood education. All Sierra Leonean children must be sent to school-the constitution must spell this out clearly.
• Counseling must be prioritized at all levels of the educational system. Try to transform innovation into production, and for that education is important because it is the engine of growth.
• The foreign policies of Sierra Leone must be strengthened in such a way that Sierra Leonean athletes or sports people who escape when they attend international conferences must be repatriated to the country again instead of being naturalized.
• Stiff penalties must be spelt out for land grabbers who encroach on the premises of educational institutions

They assured the CRC that they would present a Position Paper that would capture all that they desire in the revised constitution.
MINUTES OF EXPERT TRAINING ON COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FOR IEC SUBCOMMITTEE

An Expert Engagement with the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Subcommittee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) was held on Wednesday December 10, 2014 at 9AM at the Conference Room of the Secretariat.

"Intellectual property is the strongest pillar for national development," these were the words of Dr Isaac Palmer, Director of University Research and Development, University of Sierra Leone; to the Information, Education and Communications Sub-committee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC).

In a day’s Expert Training at the CRC Secretariat on Wednesday December 10, 2014, Dr Palmer stated that copyright laws, patent and trademark laws have been inaugurated but none of them functions well in Sierra Leone. He described copyright as the protection provided to the creators of original works of authorship.
The Paper, Intellectual Property (IP), A policy instrument for Constitutional Change couldn’t have been presented at a more opportune time when the IEC Subcommittee was holding consultative meetings with various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

Sierra Leone’s Copyright Act was passed in 2011 to safeguard and protect originality and creativity in the nation.

In her Opening remarks, Memunatu Pratt stated that the constitution must reflect the future aspirations of the nation. Copyright and Intellectual property rights are key areas that need consideration for the reviewed constitution of Sierra Leone.

Dr Isaac Palmer defined Constitution as a “blueprint of how a government should provide for the wellbeing of its people.”

Comparing how Sierra Leone has lagged behind, he said though Sierra Leone and Singapore had independence at the same time, the two could not be compared in development terms. He stressed that, as the strongest pillar for national development; Intellectual property need to be protected otherwise one might die in poverty.
Over the years, according to Dr Palmer, many researchers had made the assumption that intellectual property meant primarily patents and therefore it was of no direct relevance to them.

Copyright law, patents law and Trademark Law have been developed but they were still dysfunctional.

Copyrights could be defined as the protection provided to the creators of original works of authorship.

REGISTRATION-You don’t need to register copyright but patent must be registered.

It does not mean if someone had copyright in Sierra Leone, those rights are also protected in Liberia or any other country for that matter.

Not much is being done in the area of science and technology in Sierra Leone, that ministry must be transferred to a technical ministry like the Ministry of Energy and Power-Dr Isaac Palmer.

Prior to the start of the programme, CRC’s Executive Secretary, Samuel Coker dilated on the significance of the engagement with Dr Palmer stressing that Sierra Leone’s Constitution must reflect the development aspirations of the people.

The Facilitator convinced the CRC members that research was critical to the growth of the nation citing Ghana where 2% of their GDP goes towards research, as an example.

He said that ICTs could be registered as a patent and a copyright. The programmes had copyright, but the products produced from the programmes had patent.

International Copyright is a grey area for now. Somebody cannot infringe upon your copyright in Senegal and you bring an action against that person in Sierra Leone. The copyright laws in Sierra Leone are quite different from the laws in Senegal-Dr Isaac Palmer.

Sierra Leone is a signatory to The Banjul Protocol, the Harari Protocol, the Bern Convention, the Paris Convention, the Madrid Convention and many other global agreements and conventions.

Members of the IEC Sub-committee asked a lot of thought-provoking questions bordering on Copyright and Intellectual property rights (IPR). The session ended with some of those recommendations.
CRC-IEC Members making contributions during copyright Expert Meeting
MINUTES OF THE INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS (IEC) SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE CRC CONSULTATIONS WITH THE NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION (NAYCOM)

Opening:

The meeting, which was chaired by the Administrative Assistant to the IEC Subcommittee Mohamed Faray Kargbo started with Christian and Muslim prayers followed by individual introductions at 11AM prompt.

The consultations were held at NAYCOM’s conference Room on Thursday December 4, 2014. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Commissioner, Aminata Sillah-Bangura stated that the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) is an integral part of the Constitutional Review Process of Sierra Leone due to the fact that they had a representative in the CRC.

She stressed that had it not been for the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) that dawned on Sierra Leone 6 months back, they would have presented their Position Paper to the Committee. “With support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), we engaged the youths in the four regions of the nation. During those consultations, they catalogued their wishes and aspirations for the revised Constitution, these have been developed into a single document that would be presented to the CRC as the Position Paper of the NAYCOM.” The Deputy Commissioner said.
Among other things the meeting discussed the following for possible consideration by the CRC. Whilst the revised Constitution must guarantee the independence of the Independent Media Commission (IMC) the President must not appoint the Chairman and Commissioners of that institution.

Standards must be set in the journalism profession to put the country on very high pedestal in the area of media development. Strict criteria must be set for those aspiring to be editors of newspapers in Sierra Leone to reduce the large number of untrained and unqualified personnel that now parade as editors.

The meeting attracted key staff of the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM). The IEC members encouraged NAYCOM to document their aspirations for the new constitution and present it to the CRC as promised because Sierra Leone deserved a Constitution that would stand the test of time. The consultations ended with informal discussions on issues that were militating against the progress of Information, education and Communications in the country.
MINUTES OF THE IEC EXPERT TRAINING ON THE LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY CONTEXT OF THE MEDIA IN SIERRA LEONE

An Expert Engagement with the Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Subcommittee of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) was held on Monday December 15, 2014 at the CRC Secretariat, in Freetown.

The training was done on the topic, “The Legislative and Regulatory Context of the Media in Sierra Leone and was facilitated by Mass Communications Lecturer, Francis Sowa, who has been in the media field for over 13 years.

In his opening remarks, Executive Secretary, Samuel Coker said that the essence of the programme was to equip CRC members on various thematic issues that would aid their contribution during the plenary sessions.

Unfolding his PowerPoint Presentation, Facilitator, Francis Sowa informed all that over the years people have been craving for self-regulation adding that legality and morality played a critical role in the media industry in Sierra Leone.
He spoke about all the laws that have been used and still being used to regulate the media in Sierra Leone. Laws and codes regulate the media in Sierra Leone since 1862. The Newspaper Ordinance 1924 was the first law that was inaugurated to regulate the media in the country. Cap 111-115 of the laws of Sierra Leone 1960; Act No 32 of 1961; The Newspaper Act of 1980, the IMC Act of 2000 as amended in 2006/2007.

Cap 113 of the Laws of Sierra Leone 1960 deals with the Undesirable Publications Ordinance, Cap 114, the Undesirable Advertisement Ordinance; the Defamation Ordinance No 32 of 1961 deals entirely with Civil Defamation Law.

During the presentation, the Facilitator shared the view that the country need to review the civil defamation law and not to develop a new civil defamation statute.

The Law on Contempt of Court and Contempt of Parliament should be looked into very seriously by the CRC.

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act of 2000 was supposed to be the turning point for media regulation in Sierra Leone but the advent of technological advancement has crippled some of its provisions.

There are several provisions in the Child Rights Act that deal with media regulation because journalists are prohibited to publish the details of closed hearings. The Pharmacy Act also prohibits journalists from making some adverts.

He made the following observations about the laws relating to media regulation in Sierra Leone.
The Copyrights Act of 2011, the Sexual Offences Act of 2012; the Right to Access Information Act are laws that were recently passed by the Parliament of Sierra Leone.

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Code of Practice is both a code and a law of Sierra Leone.

Self-regulation – If the media should go into self-regulation, then the media institutions themselves must have their own code of ethics or code of conducts.

The Coroners and Justice Act in England repealed criminal defamation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report also recommends repeal of Criminal Defamation law in the law books.

The media should own up to its social responsibility theory.

New laws are enacted but old laws are not repealed.

Look at what obtains internationally in terms of developing regulations and laws dealing with Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).
The Facilitator concluded that there was need to consolidate all the media laws of the land and that the job of the CRC would pave the way for the development of Sierra Leone. The CRC IEC members expressed satisfaction and interacted with the Facilitator on a range of issues that needs attention.
Lecturer Francis Sowa doing a presentation at the IEC Expert Meeting