



UN Peacebuilding Fund

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: JULY 2009 - 31 DECEMBER 2012

Submitted by:

Hassan Jalloh, Project Manager, UNDP
Hassan.jalloh@undp.org

Country and Thematic Area¹

**Sierra Leone
Democracy and Good Governance**

Programme No: PBF/SLE/A-7 INPBS

Project ID: 71608

PBF Office Atlas No: SLE10 00075936

Programme Title: Support to Independent National Public Broadcasting Service (INPBS)

Participating Organization(s):

UNDP

Implementing Partners:

- SLBC

Programme Budget (PBF): US\$ 1,650,000

Programme Duration (in months):

Start date²: July 2009

End date: 31st December 2012

- *Original end date*
- *Operational Closure Date³, if applicable:*

Budget Revisions/Extensions:

None

¹ E.g. Priority Area for the Peacebuilding Fund; Thematic Window for the Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F); etc.

² The start date is the date of the first transfer of funds from the MDTF Office as Administrative Agent.

³ All activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MDTF programme have been completed. Agencies to advise the MDTF Office.

NARRATIVE REPORT FORMAT

I. Purpose

Independent national broadcasting plays a significant role in peace consolidation and good governance. In March 2009, Sierra Leone was hit by the biggest scenes of violence since the end of the conflict in 2002 when supporters of the two main political parties clashed. The two parties denounced each other on their own partisan radio stations, further inflaming the political climate. The stations which played such a large part in the violence were suspended by Sierra Leone's regulation institution, the Independent Media Commission. All political parties then signed a Joint Communiqué brokered by the UN condemning partisan broadcasting and supporting an independent national broadcaster.

The Government of Sierra Leone recognized and embraced the concept that an independent broadcasting service better serves the objectives of peace building, good governance and progress than one which is controlled by partisan groups. Against this backdrop, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) was created by law in January 2010, replacing the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) and UN Radio, as the second independent public broadcaster in Africa. This is therefore a unique and unprecedented opportunity to consolidate a process that began with the establishment of UN Radio. It offers the opportunity to empower an information hungry public by creating SLBC, a broadcast institution which is truly independent and owned by the public through public funds.

Since its inception, the SLBC has received substantial financial and technical support from the UNDP/UNIPSIL as well as from other development partners. The UN continued to the SLBC was meant for the SLBC to establish itself as an independent public broadcaster that contributes to enhancing peace, reconciliation, democracy, human rights, development and empowerment of the people of Sierra Leone through high quality and impartial programmes, which are available nationwide to all sections of the population. This was to be achieved through initial financial and operational support, technical assistance, capacity building and sponsorship of development oriented programmes. Following are the key project outputs (2009 – December 2012):

- A law reflecting international standards of public service broadcasting and that promotes principles of independent and responsible journalism in support the development and promotion of democracy and social and economic development is passed by Parliament.
- Board of Directors is established, trained and operates in an independent and responsible manner
- The programming of SLBC is unbiased, neutral, balanced and covers the breath of the Sierra Leone
- A national coverage plan is created and near to national radio coverage provides the people of Sierra Leone access to SLBC programming.
- The SLBC has the resources it needs to provide regular and reliable programming, buildings, equipment, staff, skills and funding.
- Strengthened public service ethos through programming that informs, educates and entertains the people
- Operational support provided to SLBC to operate reliably, providing daily unbiased and independent news and current affairs programmes, relevant information and development programmes, and entertainment and sports programme coverage on radio
- Consistency of technical quality of SLBC output ensured and maximum reach among the total

- population achieved
- Strategic planning completed and implemented for coverage of the 2012 elections

II. Resources

PBF Funding for this project was received in two installments. An initial amount of US\$ 850,000 was received in July 2009 and after a budget revision in 2010, an additional US\$800,000 was received in respect of the same project amounting to a total of US\$1,650,000. At the end of 2011, the closing balance of the PBF allocation was \$287,941 with same reallocated for 2012 as shown in the ASL. This fund supported the SLBC to respond effectively to the broadcast of the 2012 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections.

III. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

The project was directly implemented (DIM) by UNDP Sierra Leone in consultation with the SLBC and other project partners. United Nations Integrated Peace building Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), with overall oversight responsibility for the project, provided the technical assistance and guidance to the SLBC on specific issues relating to the operations of independent national public broadcaster through the Media Management Advisor. UNDP was primarily responsible for procurement and fiduciary oversight and accountability.

The project worked closely with media development NGOs and organizations which had all offered assistance to the development of SLBC. Some of these organizations included: BBC/World Service Trust, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Journalists for Human Rights, and the Knight Foundation Fellowship programme (administered by the International Center for Journalists, ICFJ).

IV. Results

The main achievements include the following:

In its inception phase in 2009, the SLBC was legally established with the passage of legislation by Parliament and the signing of the bill by the President at the beginning of 2010. Previously, the public broadcaster, SLBS, was mostly controlled by the government of the day, while access by other parties was generally restricted. The establishment of the new SLBC was to ensure free access by all through the provision of unbiased, neutral and balanced programming that reaches the breath and length of Sierra Leone. Following the establishment of SLBC, the Chairman and a broad based Board of Trustees was constituted by the President and the representing organizations and eventually ratified by the Parliament. This was occasioned by the recruitment of the professional staff including the Director General, Deputy Director General and other departmental personnel. The SLBC was then officially launched on 27th April 2010 by the Secretary General of the UN.

Building on the earlier support which covered the provision of critically needed technical assistance, renovation of one floor of SLBS to prepare for the transfer of the UN Radio equipment, provision of critical equipment, payment of severance for the terminated staff, and support to the initial operations of SLBC including salary support to temporary SLBC staff during the transition period, the UN in 2010 provided additional funding through PBF and DaO. This second tranche of funding supported the following activities:

Financial Audit and Capacity Assessment – After about twelve months of operations, the SLBC Board of Management in consultation with the Ministry of Information and Communications requested a detailed strategic audit of the Corporation’s financial, administrative and technical management. Two types of audit 1) financial and management audit and 2) a capacity assessment of SLBC were undertaken. The outcome of both assessments articulated a number of recommendations, which informed the operations of the Corporation since 2010 to 2012.

Procurement of broadcast equipments – Essential equipment for broadcasting, production, electrical systems and office operations to a tune of \$310,000 were procured for the SLBC. The equipments greatly assisted SLBC’s efforts to achieve national broadcasting coverage as well as improving the quality of broadcast.



Handing Over of radio equipment to SLBC

Salary support to the staff - The project also provided financial support to cover salaries for temporary staff while recruitment of permanent staff continued. In total 600 temporary staff salaries were covered under this support for a period six months.

Improved Capacity of the Engineering Department for Maintenance

Maintaining national radio coverage is one of the crucial objectives of SLBC broadcast. The engineering department of SLBC with this funding support managed to quickly and proactively address technical challenges that confronted regional and relay radio stations. In an effort to enhance the monitoring capacity of the technical team, a vehicle was procured for the technical staff to respond to and monitor transmission signals, conduct routine maintenance, and respond to emergencies in area stations.

Provision of IT Consultancy - the project also provided indispensable IT support to the SLBC such as installation and maintenance of hardware, trouble shooting, internet connectivity, network maintenance, the installation and support of office automation including end user support and training, providing e-mail and performing other duties. In addition, the IT consultant and the head of digital studio of SLBC conducted an IT needs assessment of 6 regional stations and provided recommendations to improving their broadcasting operations through strengthened IT system.

Development of Local Area Network at SLBC – Internet connection had been a problem at SLBC due to poor IT infrastructure including cabling and lack of equipments such as server and anti-virus. The project supported the implementation of a comprehensive Structured Cabling Solution, and active network solution to define the local area network infrastructure (cables, faceplates, patch panels, outlets and frames, etc) necessary to build a uniform premises distribution system. Further, the project supported the installation and configuration of necessary hardware and software including anti-virus, firewall and storage. This process, supported by the IT Consultant, has enabled SLBC staff to use email and internet necessary to perform their daily functions such as communication and research.

Support production of programmes in relation to the 50th year anniversary of the Independence Day celebrations

The project provided technical and financial support to SLBC to produce the radio programmes during the 50th Independence Anniversary Celebration of Sierra Leone... Some of the contributions from SLBC included a series of historical programmes, interviews with individuals who witnessed the original independence celebrations, profiles of significant individuals from the last fifty years and a discussion of what the next fifty years may hold for the country. Each of the programmes was produced by five independent teams made up of journalists and producers and in five languages: English, Mende, Temne, Limba, and Krio. Although all programmes were broadly aimed at the general audience, they nonetheless fulfilled the public service remit of informing, educating and entertaining. And, in the case of *Independence Women*, the aim was to highlight role models for young girls and raise awareness amongst young boys and men about the significant role that women had played in the country's recent history.

As well as the 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations, the project supported the production of a drugs outreach programme targeting young people. *Seize the Chance* was collaboration between SLBC and the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development in Sierra Leone (FDID-SL). It was specifically made for the International Day of Drugs Awareness (June 26th) but designed so that multiple CDs could be produced and distributed as an outreach tool in drugs awareness programmes

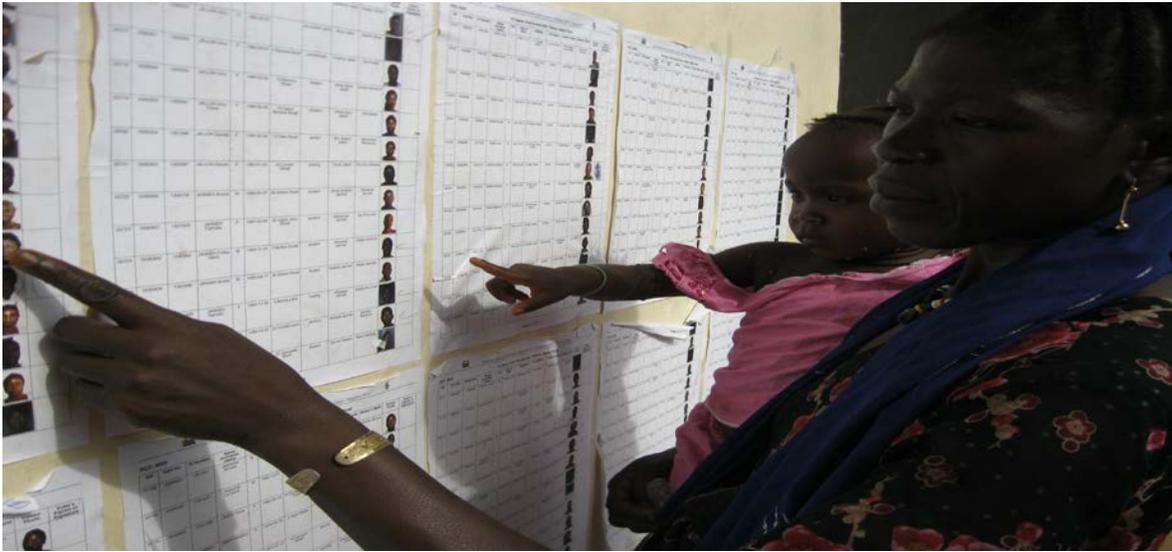
Support to the recruitment process for 167 core SLBC staff

Recruitment of competent and professional staff is an important step towards the establishment of an independent national public broadcaster that informs, educates, and entertains the people of Sierra Leone. Previously, the UNDP Human Resource consultant had supported the development of the HR policy and job descriptions of core SLBC staff. Following the appointment of the Director General and Deputy Director General in October 2010, 5 departmental directors (Directors of Media, HR and Administration, Finance, Engineering, and Marketing) were appointed to assume assignment during the first quarter of 2011. The project also supported the recruitment of additional staff for the SLBC. .

During 2011, due to SLBC's failure to implement the recommendations of the earlier audits (financial and non-financial) as well as those of the Presidential Task Force on the SLBC workers' perpetual strike actions, the UNDP and UNIPSIL were temporarily unable to continue engaging the SLBC and this brought the project to a temporary halt. However, after several consultative meetings and discussions between SLBC and UNDP/UNIPSIL, project implementation resumed with the under-mentioned achievements:

Execution of the recommendations of the 3 assessment reports: The three assessments (Presidential Task Force, KPMG Audit, and Non-Financial Management Audit) made concrete and specific recommendations. In order to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the mentioned reports, the UNDP/UNIPSIL had constantly engaged both Board of Trustees and Senior Management of SLBC. In one such engagements/meetings, the recommendations were proposed as bench-marks for the performance assessment/review of the SLBC. Several interactive meetings were held and three staff members from UNIPSIL were assigned to the SLBC to support the implementation of the recommendations. In an interim review of the bench-marks, it was indicated that some progress was been made by the SLBC. This among other things included documented evidence for prudent financial resource management, enhanced revenue collection, production of quality news programme, and considerable improvement in news room management.

Formulation and Implementation of SLBC Election Broadcasting Guidelines: Closely following these interactive sessions and meetings, the SLBC developed and presented a draft Elections Guidelines in addition to its existing Editorial Guidelines. With the support of the UN, the SLBC organized a two day workshop (28 -29th June 2012) during which the draft Elections Guidelines was presented and discussed by participants drawn from all political parties, relevant government organization including IMC, HRC, NEC; and civil society organizations like NEW etc. and media practitioners. The workshop commended the bold steps taken by the SLBC and further adopted the draft Elections Guidelines as amended. It further stipulated the establishment and operationalization of the SLBC Election Unit to champion the coverage and reporting on all political events/activities before, during and after the general elections. In addition, two 40 KVA generators were made available to SLBC to complement the fluctuating power supply and to ensure constant supply of power throughout the elections period both at the New England Headquarter offices and at Leicester Peak where the transmitters are located. Also an Election Unit was established with an office that was furnished, equipped and manned by qualified staff. To further enhance elections news gathering and reporting a total of eighty freelancer reporters were recruited and deployed in all districts around the country.



Coverage of

2012 voter education by SLBC



SLBC coverage of the 2012 biometric voter registration



Coverage of 2012 polling day by SLBC

Reactivation of the SLBC regional stations: During the run up to the November 17, 2012 general elections, the project supported the reactivation of all three regional radio stations in the north, south and east. As a result, the SLBC New England as well as the regional stations continued to deliver effectively providing currents affairs and entertainment programmes as well as electoral coverage information.

V. Future Work Plan (if applicable)

The project was operationally closed in December 2012 with no succeeding project developed to solicit further funding support.

VI. Performance Indicators (optional)⁴

⁴ E.g. for the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund and the MDG-F.