

PROFILE OF DIRECTORATE OF BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOUR RELATIONS

The Directorate of Business and Human Rights and Labour Relations was established to accomplish the mandate of the Commission, of protecting and promoting respect for human rights within the operations of businesses in the country. It began as a Unit in 2015 and placed under the Directorate of Monitoring and Research and in April 2021 finally transformed into a full-blown Directorate with a Deputy Director as Head and supported by two other staff, a Senior Human Rights officer and an Assistant Human Rights Officer.

The specific objectives for the establishment of the Directorate are as follows:

1. to coordinate implementation of projects and trainings on BHR to government, CSOs and communities;
2. to facilitate collaboration between the Commission, MDAs, CSOs and other institutions that are directly linked with operations of corporate bodies for the successful implementation of rights-based approaches in their domain; and
3. to monitor, document and report on the human rights situation of businesses in the country with particular reference to their compliance with national and international legal frameworks on business operations.

It is however, important to note that BHR became one of the new areas of intervention by the Commission following increase in the activities of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the country since 2009. This resulted to several complaints of human rights abuses associated with the operations of companies being brought to the attention of the Commission.

This situation (of increase in the activities of Foreign Direct Investment in the country) was triggered by the adoption of the policy on 'Ease Of Doing Business' by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL). The period also coincided with the endorsement of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) by the UN Human Rights Council, in 2011 and thus creating a standard global framework to guide states and all categories of business enterprises regarding their compliance with human rights generally.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR ABDULAI YOLLAH BANGURA (MR.)

Qualification: Master's Degree in Governance and Leadership 2019 (IPAM), Postgraduate Diploma in Education 2000 (FBC), and Bachelor of Arts (General) 1999 (FBC), coupled with several in-service courses and professional trainings in Human Rights, Leadership, Project Planning and Management.

Experience: Mr. Bangura has served as Teacher, Lecturer and Human Rights Defender (24 years standing). He began as Coordinator of a Community-Based Human Rights Organization, United for the Protection of Human Rights (UPHR), Port Loko (2002 – 2008), where he spearheaded the construction of a Community Human Rights Public Reference Library in Port Loko in 2004, as well as establishing a Human Rights Clinic at the then Port Loko Teachers College in 2006.

Mr. Bangura worked with the UN Mission to Sierra Leone as National Human Rights Officer (2004 – 2007) with responsibility to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Port Loko and Kanbia districts.

In 2008, Mr. Bangura joined the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone as the first crop of Human Rights Officers recruited, where he rose through the ranks to Regional Human Rights Officer, Senior Regional Human Rights Officer (Northern Province 2009 -2015), Focal Person for Business and Human Rights (2015 – 2016), Head of Unit, Business and Human Rights (2016 – 2021), Deputy Director and Head, Directorate of Business and Human Rights and Labour Relations (2021- Date). Throughout this period as head of Business and Human Rights in the Commission, Mr. Bangura facilitated and/or contributed to the following achievements of the Directorate viz: a) development of Training Manual on BHR (2015); (b) undertaking two baseline surveys on the status of business and human rights in Sierra Leone (2017 and 2021); (c) organized the First Annual Conference on Business and Human Rights (2017) with the theme “Building a Culture of Human Rights within the Business Community in Sierra Leone”; (d) served as Secretary to the Steering Committee for Development of a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights for Sierra Leone (2018); (e) represented the Commission on the first two African Regional Forums on Business and Human Rights in Ghana and Ethiopia (2022 and 2023); (f) led engagement sessions with stakeholders leading to the production of the Draft National Policy on Business and Human Rights for Sierra Leone (2023).

Mr. Bangura has in many cases also served and continue to serve as resource person in all business and human rights capacity trainings conducted by the Commission both locally and internationally. In 2022, Mr. Bangura served as resource person during the training on how to develop NAPs for the National Steering Committee for the development of a NAP for Ghana.