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**1. Introduction**

The civil war which started in 1991 officially and finally ended in 2002, with complete destruction of the entire sociocultural, economic and political fabrics of the people of Sierra Leone. Of course, the post war development drive and aspirations were geared towards reconstruction and institutionalization of peace and security, good governance, human rights and basic service delivery in education, health, agriculture and food security and infrastructure.

Indeed, there were little or no efforts to generate data on civil registration of vital statistics and events of citizens and non-citizens which could have enhanced and supported the overall development of the socio-cultural, economic and political sectors. This was indeed a missing link in the overall development approach of nations emerging after such crisis as civil wars.

To however get a clear understanding of the above assertion; let us quickly and concisely define civil registration which, for the purpose of this work, is referred to as ***“the system by which a government records (in a continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal manner) the occurrences and characteristics of events and incidents related to its citizens and non-citizens, as provided by and in accordance with an established legal framework.”***

The purpose of civil registration therefore is to create a data base and/or source of civil events and vital statistics based on its citizenry’s social and demographic characteristics of Sierra Leone. Complete coverage, accuracy and timelines of civil registration are essential for quality vital statistics to create legal documents that are used to establish and protect the civil rights of individuals through the issuance of Multipurpose National Identity Cards to all citizens and non-citizens in Sierra Leone.

Unfortunately, over the years civil registration process in Sierra Leone was left in the hands of several government ministries, departments, agencies including commissions and authorities and other non-state institutions. This situation made civil registration process complex, uncoordinated, incoherent, fragmented, confusing, ineffective and deprived governments of much needed data that could have been used for better planning of development initiatives. Above all, the data base maintained by some of these institutions lacked common set of standards and most times susceptible to multiple registrations and multiple identities within and across systems.

In line with international best practices, and since 2013, there has been a paradigm shift in the civil registration process that gave rise to collaborative efforts by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), donors and other development partners to promulgate the National Civil Registration Act of 2016 (NCR Act) which established the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) and an Integrated Civil Registration System (INCRS).

Generally, the NCR Act will guide the conduct and operations of the NCRA which in turn will create the INCRS. According to the Act, the mandate of the NCRA is to develop and maintain an accurate electronic database of the population of Sierra Leone; issue National Identification Numbers to all citizens and residents; provide accurate information about civil status events such as births, adoptions, marriages, divorces and deaths.

In addition, the NRCA will assist the Government in the definition of strategic rules, general policies for civil registration and vital statistics; maintain the INCRS for vital statistics at chiefdom, district, regional and national levels. As per the NCR Act, all civil registration including birth, death, marriage, divorce, annulment, and adoption immediately fell under the purview of the NCRA.

As a new development, very little public awareness exist about the NCR Act, NCRA and INCRS at national, regional, district and chiefdom levels in Sierra Leone.

**2. Statement of Purpose and Scope OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

This section will entreat the purpose and scope of the NCRA Communications Strategy and what it is hoped to achieve. Note that this aspect should act as a reference point for those using it.

**I. Purpose of the Communication Strategy**

The overall purpose of the NCRA Communications Strategy is ***“aimed at supporting all activities for both internal and external communications of the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) in Sierra Leone.”*** Basically, it will ensure that the entire citizenry, including non-citizens are aware of the existence and importance of the NCR Act, NCRA, INCRS and the entire civil registration process in Sierra Leone.

This will be achieved through engaging key stakeholders and the general public in information sharing sessions; making sure that citizens and non-citizens properly understand the NCR Act and comply with its provisions. It will also include increased visibility of the mandate, operations and messages of NCRA and how the INCRS works at national, regional, district and chiefdom levels. In achieving the above, the NCRA’s Communication Strategy shall have an all-inclusive approach as follows:

* Focus and direct all institutional information, education, communications and public relations efforts that will garner support for NCRA’s programmes, projects and other activities across all cadres of the Sierra Leonean society.
* Help to identify, manage and ensure that organisational and communication goals are aligned with societal values and norms; and build relationships with those on whom the organisation depends on to achieve its overall goals.
* Give technical backstopping aimed at increased NCRA’s employee visibility for improved service delivery.
* Promote positive image building among civil registration stakeholders to provide the basis for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NCRA’s programmes, projects and activities at all levels.
* Coordinate frequent and effective communications flow among NCRA’s key stakeholders including government functionaries, Donors/Development partners, traditional leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media (local and international), NCRA staff and the entire citizenry (including non-citizens) through technical meetings, workshops and community outreach programmes.
* Provide the mechanisms for building community consensus and heighten public cooperation, participation and ownership of the entire civil registration exercise at national, regional, district and chiefdom levels.
* Help to design information, education and communication materials/tools with NCRA messages that will enable its staff to understand their roles in providing improved service delivery and respond to issues arising from the civil registration processes to the general public.
* Support the generation of first-hand, reliable and evidenced-based information and knowledge management emchanism to guide informed decision-making on the day-to-day operations of the NCRA.
* Creates feedback mechanism to address stakeholders’ concerns, make clarifications, engage and involve the public on issues bordering NCRA’s operations, civil registration processes and communications through trailed programme activities.

On a whole, the NCRA Communication Strategy is a blend of both internal and external communications; and a way to help NCRA officials and key stakeholders think about how to talk to the right people about the right things at the right time and in the right way.

**II. NCRA Communication Scope of the Strategy**

The scope of the Strategy will include:

* Enhancing that the NCRA communication goals are aligned with the Authority’s vision, values and norms.

* Making sure that all NCRA communications (internal and external) and public relations efforts clear and well understood.
* Ensuring that all actions and activities that will increase and promote public visibility and positive public image and reputation of the NCRA are done professionally.
* Supporting the development of information/communication materials/tools that will enable NCRA staff to understand their roles and communicate effectively, and respond to issues arising from the civil registration processes; and
* Promoting the development of mechanisms that will generate first-hand, reliable and evidenced-based information and feedback mechanisms.

**3. ConteXts, Situation Analysis and Findings**

### This section presents the contexts and situation analysis within which the NCRA will operate to achieve its mandate, and findings. Thus, a brief discussion on the political, economic, socio-cultural, and technology, as well as the SWOT and Competitors analysis on the NCRA are imperative.

**I. Contexts**

**a. Political Context:** The political situation of Sierra Leone since the end of the civil war in 2002 has steadily progressed. Governance and building state-institutions and processes have gradually been enhanced. Also the restoration of the rule of law, improved service delivery and citizens’ participation in governance has enhanced voice and accountability.

A recent index such as the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance indicates that the country improved in ranking from 48th (2011) to 30th in 2015 out of 54. This indicated that the country has maintained performance in terms of voice and accountability and political stability in recent years. However, major challenges continued in the areas of government effectiveness in service delivery.

The country has since conducted four democratic elections and will in March 2018 conduct its fifth Parliamentary and Presidential elections. This election will mark a critical transition as it is the end of the two terms tenure of President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, engendering a high stake for succession. Within all these political success stories, the country is however classified as a ‘fragile state’ based on several assessments, including the Multilateral Development Banks in 2012. There is therefore the need to carefully assess and manage the country‘s transition.

Like most African countries, Sierra Leone has porous borders with its neighbours, thus creating unchecked human movements across border points on a daily basis. Most often than not, the illegal immigrants enter Sierra Leone through unofficial entry points and stay in the country unknowingly to the authorities. Such situation has potential security and legal implications which warranted the government and its partners to put in place a proper civil status registration.

The security sector shows slow response time, and there is perceived increase in crime rates, including transnational crime. The judiciary exhibits limited access to justice and poor service delivery. As a check, it is now mandatory for citizens and non-citizens living in Sierra Leone to possess certain legal documents that will ascertain their civil status, hence the NCRA.

**b. Economic Context:** Sierra Leone fought hard to recover from the dents of the civil war; and it is also recovering from the impacts of the Ebola epidemic as it grew from 21.1% during the Ebola period to 43% in 2016. The country introduced austerity measures in the 2017 budget, and it is clearly moving towards a more restrictive trade regime by introducing new tariffs. According to IMF, the country has a nominal GDP projected at SLL 22.69 trillion in 2016 and it is the 154th economy in the world and 38th in Africa. These indicators offered significant business opportunities.

The economy is heavily driven by agriculture and mineral extraction especially in areas like fisheries, crops, iron ore, diamond, bauxite and rutile. The mining sector has been projected to contribute up to 30% to the GDP in 2017, while agriculture including forestry and fisheries experienced decline from 52% in 2011 to an estimated 42% in 2013. However, there is an ongoing oil exploration though its commercial viability even though that is not expected in the near future.

Another contribution to the economy is the service sector which had a 28% share of the GDP in 2013. Leading in the sector are banking, retail, transport, tourism and mobile communication. Only 2% of the economy is derived from the manufacturing industry led mainly by cement production and small scale consumer products.

Sierra Leone’s improvement in Sustainable Economic Opportunity according to the Mo Ibrahim Index 2016 is marginal, reflecting diverging sub-category trends. For this reason, Sierra Leone is classed as the most deteriorated country in Africa in terms of its infrastructure. There has been a decrease in the poverty rates from 66% in 2003 to 52.9% in 2011, but this has especially reflected only in the urban settings.

Since the end of the war, the country has shown tremendous strides in its economic indicators moving 10 places upwards in the UNDP Development Index. Despite these improvements, there are significant challenges in the economic development characterized by its continued fragile status.

**c. Sociocultural Context:** Socio-culturally, illiteracy rate of the general populace is still high which limits self-development of individuals and their participation in the overall development of society especially in the rural communities. Illiteracy negatively affects individuals’ daily and future lives because they have the inability to understand societal issues and this lowers the level of community involvement and participation in many national projects. Interestingly, the Sierra Leonean society easily assimilates foreigners and over the years, many foreigners are posing as citizens with documents like voter Identity Cards, passports, birth certificates etc which some citizens do not have.

The country has a youth population with more than 60% of them below the age of 25 years. A large proportion of the youth population has limited access to education or vocational skill levels. Youth unemployment has been estimated to stand at over 70%.

Also, language barrier cripples all efforts to effectively disseminate official messages and information on national programmes and projects especially at rural level. For instance, some rural residents especially in the not easy to go rural communities cannot speak and/or understand krio and/or English which happen to be the main mediums to disseminate majority of the public messages and information on national development. This means that most of the communications tools written in English/krio would not be read and understood by the majority of the rural people.

Such situation has the tendency to create room for wrong perceptions, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of national development messages to the public. This shall be better addressed through massive public education campaigns, outreaches and engagement in other information sharing sessions specifically focusing on community leaders and civil society organizations.

On gender equality, various laws have been passed to protect and promote gender equality and rights of women and children. Notwithstanding these, disparities still exist which makes it possible to rank Sierra Leone 139 out of 148 countries in the 2013 Human Development Report on gender inequality index. Indeed, women have made strides to attain gender equality in key decision-making positions including occupying about 13% of parliamentary seats. Also, an affirmative action bill allocating 30% of leadership positions to women is pending a constitutional review. The Government has prioritized gender issues in its Agenda for Prosperity (A4P) by having a dedicated pillar for gender and women’s empowerment, as well as mainstreaming these themes in the other pillars.

Rough terrains especially in the rural and some urban settings shall pose a threat to national development activities. It is true that Sierra Leone has very rough interior terrains that are not easily accessible especially in the raining season, and this state of affair has gradually kept such rural communities out of touch with main stream socioeconomic and political trends in the country. Putting the necessary structures in place at national, regional, district and chiefdom levels will provide access to the rural population.

As indicated above, the civil registration is not a new phenomenon but some socio-cultural practices and traditions have always supported the non-practice of it in Sierra Leone. For instance, it is a taboo in some settings to ask parents/elderly about age, sexual habit, family structures etc. With time the average Sierra Leonean became unaware of the importance of civil registration and therefore hardly register marriages, births, deaths, divorce, adoptions, legal changes of names and other vital and civil status events related to citizens and residents.

Since the end of the war in 2002, the Sierra Leone Press has experienced remarkable improvement both in terms of structural-functionalism, professionalism and coverage. At the moment, there are more than 60 local media houses (print and electronics including radio, television and internet) sparsely distributed nationwide.

### Freetown which is the capital housed nearly 80 % of the Press (newspapers, radio and television stations), and there is no district without one or more community radio stations, mobile companies, internet facilities and/or newspaper reporters to enhance effective information flow. Thus, positive media relations will support NCRA communications to influence public perception about the civil registration programme in Sierra Leone.

As the media landscape continues to evolve radically, many realities will be taken into consideration in deciding the use of channels- the situation which makes it difficult to get mass audience with traditional media. People are under increasing pressure for their time as they fight for survival, and the internet explosion and emergence of new media for more realistic communications.

Each channel should have a specific role to play in achieving the overall objective of the Authority. However, the local media landscape still has some challenges and weaknesses like harassments, bad and misinformed reportage especially in the new and social media world.

**d. Technology Context:** Since the end of the civil war, there has been a lot of progress in laying lay the basis for technological advancement in Sierra Leone. Increase and permanent electricity supply is therefore key in this direction and government in this regard took proactive measures to fast-track and completed the first phase of the Bumbuna Electricity Dam in 2009. This effort was supported by a lot of thermal electricity plants in the provincial headquarter cities to provide constant and reliable electricity to supply to promote personal and businesses ventures in these areas.

The effects has been good as there are fleets of internet providers and telecommunication operators providing essential services in terms of internet and other cellular communication facilities in almost every district headquarter towns and some rural areas. Due to the proliferation of internet and smart phones, users enjoying internet and social media facilities and people can now communicate fast and well with their loved ones, relatives and business partners in and out of Sierra Leone.

However, there are a lot of technological challenges facing Sierra Leone as a modern nation. Even with Bumbuna Electricity Hydro Electricity Dam, the country cannot assure the people especially the business class with serious and constant electricity supply and infrastructure to house any modern technological projects and programmes. For instance apart from some parts of Freetown and the provincial headquarter cities of Makeni, Bo and Kenema, almost all the other district headquarters towns and their rural environs lacked the necessary electricity infrastructure to kick-start genuine development in their respective spheres of influence.

This will pose a serious challenge to the full implementation and realization of the importance of civil registration process in Sierra Leone which is nearly 100 percent electricity dependent. At the moment, the country lacks the technological infrastructural base to house and support the INCRS at chiefdom, district and national levels and the lack of such infrastructure, skills and sufficient funding to procure and hire skilled personnel and equipment pose a challenge to the country.

In other words, there is no proper and constant electricity supply which shall serve as a major indicator for a successful technological infrastructural build-up as demanded by the INCRS at all levels; and there is also inadequate trained and qualified staff to man and move the highly technological INCRS. As a highly sophisticated technological system, NCRA needs to provide generators and other necessary civil registration gadgets and software packages on civil registration process, with highly trained and qualified staff to man and move the highly technological INCRS at all levels. Hence, the need for effective and careful planning at all stages of the process.

**II. Situation Analysis**

### a. Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis: The SWOT Analysis identifies the forces that are likely to influence the NCRA communication strategy and its implementation. Knowing these elements can help the Authority to communicate more effectively. The following analysis is in line with the SWOT analysis of the draft Five Years Strategic Plan of NCRA. See table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| i. Relatively strong political will and support  ii. Presence of legal mandate and framework  iii. Goodwill from development and donor partners  iv. Existing IT infrastructure  v. Presence of regional and district/ structures  vi. Existence of civil society organization and local media outlets  vii. Informed key stakeholders about the issues of civil registration | i. As a new organisation there is limited experience in delivery of its mandate  ii. Resource constraints  iii. Dependency on donor and external support  iv. Presence in rural and remote communities is absence  v. Weak capacities in human resource  vi. Logistical and operational limitations  vii. Weak communications and public relations infrastructure  viii. Low knowledge of the importance of civil registration and other vital statistics, NCR Acts and system |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| I. Existence of state structures for registration of vital events  ii. No national competitor in verifiable electronic  iii. Technical support to be provided by willing development partners  iv. Collaboration of MDAs  v. Existence of potential private sector clients and partner’s such as banks, mobile communications and entities  vi. Use of volunteer communications committees at chiefdom, district, regional and national level. | i. Political transition and fragility of the state  ii. Traditional and cultural practices to data collection and identification  iii. Hacking of data base and IT infrastructure  iv. The intensity of resources needed and the weakness to mobilise resources  v. High level of illiteracy  vi. Low NCRA presence at chiefdom level  vii. Low registration of vital statistics events |

**b. Competitors Analysis:** Basically, the Communication Strategy engaged all potential institutions including NGOs (both national and international) in the generation of civil registration of vital statistics/ events in order to identify areas of collaboration. Interestingly, the NCR Act has given the Authority a supra-national Authority over all other stakeholders engaged with the national civil registration processes.

### III. Implications of the findings from the contexts and situation analysis

**a. Communication Strategy build on the existing positive levels of understanding:** The findings indicate some positive knowledge and attitudes that can provide a good platform on which NCRA can build. The most important of these is the need for all citizens and non-citizens to register with the civil registration process in Sierra Leone; stakeholders knowledge about the NCRA mandate, NCRA Act and INCRS; and partners’ feel that there is hope for the positive public acceptance of civil registration process.

**b. Correct misperception and close knowledge gaps:** The findings point out some fundamental problems that need to be addressed. These include the low levels of public knowledge about the NCRA especially in the rural settings, as well as the role of the media in promoting the implementation of the civil registration process.

**c. Focus on key stakeholder concerns and fears:** Communication should be strategic in the sense that it should address the major stakeholders’ concerns and fears. When preparing messages, the strategy should take into account the very strong stakeholders’ sense of entitlement about the right to easily access regular information and messages put forward by NCRA.

**d. Tailor communication to the specific needs of each group:** The findings indicate that although there are some common information needs, there are also significant differences in the concerns of the various stakeholder groups. They have different media usage and preference patterns which need to be taken into account. When planning communication activities it is important that all wordings of communication outputs is written in the briefest, clearest and simplest terms which avoid technical terminologies as far as possible.

**e. Focus on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Media Opinion drivers:**  The strategy has a proactive approach for increasing knowledge on the civil registration among media managers and leveraging the media as a partner in the coverage of the NCRA programmes. CSOs and media should work together to vocalize the concerns of the public on civil registration process. Proactive outreach efforts geared toward establishing and maintaining dialogue with CSOs is therefore critical to the success of the communication strategy.

**f. Need to strengthen public participation mechanism:** It is clear that information dissemination is important, but not sufficient for NCRA to succeed. The NCRA needs to build or strengthen two-way consultation and participation structures such as stakeholders’ forums and networks of communication committees at all levels. Thus, public participation and consultation is a relationship building exercise that is critical to the success of the civil registration process and this needs to become a permanent modus oparandi for the NCRA Team. Official channels for feedback will also be provided by strengthening civil registration structures at all levels.

**g. Build communication within NCRA:** There appears to be a definite need to audit the communication capacity of the institution against the requirement for reform and post-reform periods. Internal communication capacity must then be built to close the identified gaps, which include raising implementation support and financial resources from various partners.

**4. State of NCRA Communications**

The information on the state of NCRA’s communication is gathered from a range of formal and informal sources including the NCRA staff, internal and external conversations especially with UNDP, PwC, media and other relevant actors. Addressing these issues is what shapes the goal, objectives and priorities in this strategy.

**I. Name, Brand and Reputation**

* Although civil registration has been practiced for long, but the NCRA’s name and brand are new. Its recent flagship activity of mass registration has however a relative name recognition. At the same time, the challenges it faced during the mass registration is not likely to negatively impact on the Authority;
* Low capacity to impact on the NCRA’s ability to build a really strong identity to attract and retain public cooperation, clients, staff and partners;
* Weak structure to align with other related national policies such on security, social and human services;
* The NCRA has no coherent commercial/public relations/marketing strategy for organizational growth.

**II.** **Internal Communications**

* There is no effective internal communication protocol within the NCRA;
* Private emails are used for official communication;
* There is no intranet communication protocol;
* No professional networks exist across the NCRA;
* Regular easy access to NCRA related news remains challenging for all staff;
* Variable approaches to internal communications within departments/units not in place.

**III. Public Information and Online Presence**

* Though there is a public information, education, communication and outreach unit stationed at the headquarters, Wallace-Johnson Street, Freetown but it lacks the necessary personnel, gadgets and equipment to functionally set a stage for effective communications connectivity between NCRA and its internal and external publics within the NCR System at all levels. Apart from headquarters office, there are no well-equipped communications and outreach preparedness offices at regional, district and chiefdom levels to disseminate civil registration messages and information. This responsibility is presently handled by the NCRA Regional/District Coordination Teams. The communication and outreach Units need serious improvement and capacity building;
* There is no website for the NCRA. It must be noted that website is the gateway for both internal and external public to know about the NCRA and without it will pose very serious challenges in the dissemination efforts of the institution. This means there will be limited social media reach and some platforms not maintained. As it is at the moment, there is a Facebook page with no content, stories and updates. There is no Twitter and the whatsapp group established for staff involved in the mass registrations conducted in April to June 2017 is now ineffective.
* Existence of varying quality and availability of public information leaflets across services with mixed use for latest branding will be a recipe for inconsistent message flow to the public.

**IV. Stakeholder Communications**

* There exists forum or working group that attract the participation of donor and development. However, there is no stakeholder engagement plan or strategy in place and this has led to limited coordinated communications with stakeholders.
* Thus, there is urgent need to hire and house trained and qualified communications specialists; possibly in all districts to man both internal and external communications. Such persons should be professionally qualified and provided with the necessary gadgets and enabling atmosphere for proactive service delivery of their functions.

**5. NCRA Communications Goal, Objectives and Strategies**

The communications goal, objectives and strategies are developed in line with NCRA’s vision statement - *“To become an organization of excellence by successfully issuing National Identification Number through a foremost civil registration system.”* Its core values and one of the key strategic initiatives is to *“undertake information, education and communication programme”* as provided for in the five-year strategic plan of the organization.

**I. Communication Goal**

In light of the above, the NCRA Communications Strategic Goal is to brand and enhance the reputation and public image of NCRA as “the sole national institution” by reaching all citizens and residents for quality, effective and efficient registration of civil and vital events in Sierra Leone.

**II. Communication Objectives**

a. Raise increased awareness, improved knowledge and build support for the overall civil registration process among the different facets of the public.

b. Establish and ensure regular communication with key stakeholders including government agencies, donor and development partners, private sector, the media and civil society organizations.

c. Develop and disseminate public relations, outreaches, public awareness and marketing materials with NCRA messages.

d. Develop clear and consistent messages to be delivered in “one clear voice” on the mandate and operations of the NCRA.

e. Develop and operationalize an effective internal communication protocol that will improve and integrate effective communication at all levels of the NCRA.

The above objectives are designed to influence key stakeholders in decision-making positions and public to support the civil registration rogrammes at all levels during the civil registration process.

**III. Communication Strategies**

**a. Internal Communications and Staff Engagement:** Internal communication will create increase knowledge, build support for and address new and existing concerns among NCRA staff.

* Establish induction/or boarding process for new NCRA staff and consultants.
* Design and start implementing civil registration process to enhance internal communication to understand the structures/systems/procedures/departments/units to all staff within the NCRA.
* Support to professional networks within the NCRA and develop effective areas on the intranet for information sharing.
* Establish an official functional email account for all staff.
* Develop an intranet system and ensure all relevant staff are trained and have access to the system. The intranet should have an “interactive” functionality.
* Clarify future options for e-forms developed on old site.
* Review options and develop business case for a mobile to complement other internal communications channels.
* Provide professional training of communication and outreach officers in new media,

IT and public relations for NCRA officials*.*

**b. Reputation Building and Branding:** To capacitate and support the NCRA to fulfill its mandate.

* Embed in recruitment with updated information and brand guidance for job adverts and associated induction material.
* Develop an NCRA’s strategic narrative and produce for internal and external stakeholders in a useable concise format.
* Develop and regularly update NCRA website.
* Develop a marketing/commercial plan for the NCRA.
* Design and produce internal bulletin/newsletter, brochures, flyers, banners and other IEC materials for routine communication to other key external stakeholders.
* Implement review and next steps action plans to embed new brand across all internal and external channels.

**c. Public Information and Online Presence:** Public participation mechanism to provide NCRA with a platform to engage opinion leaders and the general public.

* Ensure that requirements of accessible public information standard for the NCRA are in place.
* Review and audit existing public information materials to identify outdated content and branding.
* Develop templates and style guides for all NCRA public information materials.
* Establish the managed printing contract with the Government printing press or other local printing houses to ensure consistency and efficiency for printed public information.
* Develop a functional NCRA website and keep it regularly updated.
* Develop social media platforms such as Facebook, whatsapp, twitter, and linkedIn to focus on reputation building, recruitment and supporting appropriate staff to engage with social media for information dissemination.
* Maintain routine process for review and refresh of potent information.

**d. Stakeholders’ Communications on Transition to Permanent NCRA:** Capacity strengthening of NCRA key stakeholders/partner in the implementation of the strategy and to motivate key stakeholders including the general public to adopt positive civil registration implementation practices.

* Identify and analyse key stakeholders’ needs, interests and allegiances for effective stakeholder engagement.
* A range of face to face channels to be put in place between the NCRA and key external stakeholders.
* Centrally coordinated stakeholders‘communications to include quarterly meetings; monthly bulletin and ad-hoc emails of key developments and announcements.

**6. Identify and Profile the Audiences**

This section will identify and list all NCRA’s audiences (both internal and external) who are important to the success of the NCRA and ways to reach them. Note that target audiences should be identified in terms of methods of receiving information and barriers to hearing and believing/accepting the information.

**i. Internal Audiences**:The internal audiences will encompass those involved in the planning of the Authority’s initiatives such as the NCRA Board/ Management and General Staff. It also includes NCRA’s key stakeholders like the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Registrar of Births and Deaths, National Election Commission, Statistics of Sierra Leone, Office of the Administrator and Registrar General, Ministry of Health and Sanitation and Ministry of Social Welfare. Internal communications strategic approach will therefore keep all the planning team members abreast with what each other are doing in the implementation of the civil registration processes.

**External Audience:** The external audiences are those/ anyone who hasn’t been involved but who needs to be.  This might be the people who will benefit from NCRA’s initiatives but who have not yet been involved.  It also includes those who might be opposed and/or critical to NCRA’s efforts. This category includes:

* ***Government:*** The Presidency (President and Vice President), Cabinet ministers, Parliamentarians, Judiciary and MDAs including commissions /Authorities,
* ***Local Authorities/* government**s**:** District and City Councils; Paramount Chiefs and Tribal Authorities including Headmen/village heads as in Western Area
* ***Politicians:*** Key politicians outside of the legislature, judiciary, executive who have potentials to influence public opinion, policy formulation and implementation.
* ***Civil and Non-governmental Organizations:*** Civil Society Organizations (CSO); Women’s groups; youth groups; SLANGO; Local and International NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
* ***Educational Institutions:*** Colleges/universities including technical and vocational institution, secondary/primary/pre-primary schools
* **Trade Unions/Associations:** Students Unions (national/internal); Teachers Unions; Drivers Unions; Motorbike Riders Association, Sierra Leone Labour Congress etc
* **Persons with Disabilities:** Associations of the deaf, cripples, blind, dumb, polio, amputees, beggars, insane, prostitutes, Ebola survivors and other vulnerable persons.
* ***Media:*** Sate and public owned print and electronic media (radio, television and internet.
* **Business Sector:** Banks, business enterprises, mining companies, lottery houses, telecommunication companies, transport companies etc
* ***Donors and Development Partners:*** UN agencies; DFID, USAID, European Union; World Bank; African Development Bank; Embassies and High Commissions; International project staff; multi-lateral and regional agencies in Sierra Leone.
* **General Public:** The general public including farmers, unemployed, religious organizations, hospitals/clinics, business enterprises, senior citizens, urban dwellers, rural dwellers other Nationals in Sierra Leone (non-citizens and citizens in the diaspora etc

In essence, the NCRA Communication Strategy captures every citizens and non-citizens irrespective of sex, religion, ethnicity, political, economic and socio-cultural affiliations within Sierra Leone. The Strategy will therefore allow the customization of strategic messages befitting the different groups and personalities across all sectors of life.

The Strategy will enable these different groups to take part in dialogues and give them the opportunity to share experiences, lessons learnt and play crucial role in influencing public opinions. The aim is to participate and claim ownership of NCRA’s activities in all communities in Sierra Leone.

Target audience have been selected based on the overall objectives and specific strategies of the communication and visibility strategy.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Audience**  **Segment** | **Sub segments** | **Rationales** |
| **Internal**  **NCRA staff** | NCRA staff including district offices. | NCRA staff are primary implementers of the civil registration process. They are the frontline ambassadors in articulating the vision of the civil registration process. They need to be fully informed and supportive of the civil registration process. |
| **General public/ Media** | Various sectors of the general public including the media at national, regional, district and chiefdom levels. | Each of these groups has been chosen because they have particular perception and need to be addressed through tailored messages and appropriate channels to create awareness of the public |
| **Opinion leaders** | Members of Parliament, Local authorities/ Paramount Chiefs, District/City Councils, Civil society organizations, Trade Unions, business organizations, women’s and touth groups. | The strategy relies on using opinion leaders as channels to convey information and to influence groups of people.  Opinion leaders are credible representative for NCRA’s messages to their respective communities and act as spokespeople that represent the views of the groups they influence. They are ideal to involve when seeking feedback information.  Policy dialogue with these stakeholders is important for influencing decisions regarding civil registration process.    A dialogue with key decision-makers supported by evidence-based proposals is required to achieve the objectives of the Strategy in pursuing the support and implementation of the civil registration. |
| **Implementing Partners** | NCRA Management, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Registrar of Births and Deaths, National Election Commission, Statistics Sierra Leone, Office of the Administrator and Registrar General, Ministry of Health and Sanitation, and Ministry of Social Welfare | Civil registration will not be successful without the help of several other organizations who also play direct or indirect roles in the programmes generally and as communicators to key audiences in particular.  Partnering with other organizations will help leverage outreach, particularly if they are mobilized to add key elements of the reforms and positive behaviours change to their agendas. |

**I. Formation of Key Messages**

By definition, messages are a set of statements that NCRA team should agree upon as conveying the key information for the Authority’s initiative. They must detail and support ideas and data that might be used in printed materials or other forms of communication.

NCRA Team may develop slogans based on them; develop sets of talking points that members of the team will use in making presentations. Note that messages easily become the basis for radio and print outlets, the genesis for posters, and may suggest topics for fact sheets, drop-in articles, and even letters to the editor or newspaper editorials.

Consider that both the channel (the conduit for sending the message to the chosen target audience) and the purposeof communicating institutional information influence message design. Information may be designed to convey new facts, alter attitudes, change behaviour, or encourage participation in decision-making.

Some of these purposes overlap; often they are progressive. That is, for persuasion to work, the public must first receive information, then understand, believe, agree and act upon it. Regardless of the purpose, messages must be developed with consideration of the desired outcome. The NCRA team should breakdown NCRA’s objectives into relevant messages for each of those audiences. Start with the audiences that are the highest priority. Remember that messages should be relevant and appropriate to the audience.

NCRA might want to speak to staff and key stakeholders including donors and the public in much more forthright language than would be used for local authorities or other funders. For continuity across the messages, it is important that all stakeholders understand what kind of organization is NCRA so that the messaging needs always link back to the key organizational goal, objectives, beliefs and core values. It is also important to note that all NCRA messages should impart a clear and uniform image of the Authority’s vision, long-term corporate planning and annual objectives.

Clearly defined the subject matter to communicate to publics/stakeholder groups; Identify the main messages to get across, points to consider and overarching corporate policy issues (e.g. operations, cooperation arrangements and alliances, sustainable development, results) at all levels.

Formulate messages relating to the issues to communicate (bearing in mind NCRA’s objectives, stakeholders and core messages) including group perceptions, contents to communicate to targeted audiences, information/messages NCRA want the audiences to remember at the end, and the attitudes or behavioural patterns should the communications activities promote in order to help NCRA achieve its objectives. Formulate messages for the respective dialogue groups based on the corporate messages and strategy. In summary, NCRA’s messaging should:

* Show the importance, urgency, or magnitude of the issue;
* Show the relevance of the issue;
* a “face” on the issue;
* Be tied to specific audience values, beliefs, or interests of the audience;
* Reflect an understanding of what would motivate the audience to think, feel, or act;
* Be culturally relevant and sensitive;
* Be Memorable; and
* Reflect an understanding of what would motivate the audience to think, feel, or act.

### II. Factors that help determine public acceptance

**a.** **Clarity—**Messages must clearly convey information to assure the public’s understanding and to limit the changes for misunderstanding or inappropriate action. Clear messages contain as few technical/scientific/bureaucratic terms as possible, and eliminate information that the audience does not need in order to make necessary decisions (such as unnecessarily detailed explanations). Readability tests can help determine the reading level required to understand drafted material and help writers to be conscientious about the selection of words and phrases.

**b. Consistency:** In an ideal world, there would be specific consensus on the meaning of new findings, and all messages on a particular topic would be consistent. Unfortunately, consistency is sometimes elusive. Experts tend to interpret new data differently, making consensus among government, industry and public interest groups difficult.

**c.** **Main points:** The main points should be stressed, repeated and never hidden within less strategically important information.

**d. Tone and appeal:** A message should be reassuring, alarming, challenging and straightforward, depending upon the desired impact and the target audience. Messages should also be truthful, honest and as complete as possible.

**e.** **Credibility:** The spokesperson and source of the information should be believable and trustworthy.

**f. Public need:** For a message to break through, the “information clutter” of society messages should be based on what the target audience perceives as most important to them, what they want to know and not what is most important or most interesting to the originating agency. Prior to final production, messages should be pretested with the target audiences (and in some cases with channel “gatekeepers”) to assure public understanding and other intended responses.

The Communication Strategy matrix summarises the key aspects of each specific strategy. Its integrates all aspect of the Strategy indicating logical link between the audiences, key message themes, methodology, channels and tools, expected outcomes and implementing partners. Key message themes are based on the objectives for the communication of each audience and the findings from the situation analysis. The channels recommended are based on the data covering media usage in Sierra Leone. The Strategy matches audiences with specific channels depending on accessibility of channel to the specific audiences.

**Strategy One: Internal Communication Programme to increase knowledge on civil registration to build support of the civil registration process among NCRA staff**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Audience** | **Key Message Themes** | **Methodologies** | **Channels** | **Outcome Indicators** |
| **NCRA Headquarter and district staff** | Benefits and opportunities created by NCRA  Implication of NCRA on civil registration  Expectation from institutions.  Role and mandate of NCRA.  Value of good management of NCRA services for the nation and private businesses. | Reach NCRA staff through established and informal communication system within each organization on the civil registration process.  Utilize team briefing methods to communicate with staff through institutional hierarchy.  Quarterly debriefing meeting of key NCRA staff.  Orientation and training of key NCRA staff in the dissemination campaigns of the civil registration process. | Staff briefing kits e.g. factsheets on civil registration process and NCRA’s activities.  Production and distribution of quarterly ready-friendly newsletters, bulletin etc on the progress of NCRA/civil registration process.  Develop and distribution of IEC materials among NCRA and other key institutional staff.  Team briefing sessions at headquarters, district and chiefdom levels.  Display pictorials and informative materials on notice baords at board headquarters and district levels.  Adequately inform staff about special events with symbolic activities. | Informed NCRA and other key institutional staff about NCRA.  Increased knowledge and support for the civil registration among NCRA staff/key stakeholders |

**Strategy Two: Branded, multimedia and public information campaigns to increase knowledge and generate support for the civil registration**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Audience** | **Key Message Themes** | **Methodologies** | **Channels** | **Outcome Indicators** |
| All citizens and non-citizens at all levels  Media executives, editors, reporters | Benefits of the civil registration to the public.  Improve NCRA service delivery through better governance of the civil registration programme.  Value of good management of NCRA services at all levels.  Debriefing of media practitioners on civil registration process.  Positive contributions to effect civil registration implementation.  Progress made and challenges made faced in the implementing of the civil registration process.  Benefits of the civil registration and vital events, focusing on the success stories learnt locally and internationally.  Importance of the civil registration to national development.  Benefits, roles and responsibilities of different institutions. | Raise awareness at all levels through a 12 month branded multimedia campaigns delivered by utilizing both paid for advertisement and earned media.  Reinforce campaigns messages by mobilizing NCRA and other related bodies to disseminate information materials within their reach.  Trainings of media persons  Press conferences and editorial briefings  Distribution of well processed NCRA media kits  NCRA media outlets  Media programmes (radio and television) | Series of print, advertorial in local tabloids.  Radio programmes  IEC materials  Television programmes  Print media and other publications  Community meetings/ outreaches.  Media kits  Case studies on civil registration  News item/ articles  Newsletters  Radio and television programmes.  Media tours nationwide | Increased level of awareness on civil registration of the public  Increased of knowledge of public on civil registration.  Increased knowledge on civil registration implementation among media practitioners  Increased media coverage |

**Strategy Three: Establishing public participation mechanism that will provide the NCRA and other key institutions with a platform to engage opinion leaders as NCRA partners and advocate for good implementation practices of the civil registration process.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Audience** | **Key Message Themes** | **Methodologies** | **Channels** | **Outcome Indicators** |
| Opinion leaders at national. Regional, district and chiefdom levels in state and non-state organizations | Contribution of NCRA to civil registration process.  Invitation to support the civil registration process and NCRA communication and visibility campaigns at national, regional, district and chiefdom levels.  Implore different initiatives being undertake communities and service providers to promote better understanding of the civil registration process. | Disseminate information to opinion leaders through focal points within their organization on civil registration.  Implementation processes and needs within their communities.  Establish NCRA forum at national, regional, district and chiefdom levels to engage opinion leaders and promote public participation in Freetown and all 16 districts.  Encourage opinion leaders to mobilize their respective communities to support the civil registration process through excellent leadership.  Facilitate opinion leaders to reach out their communities with civil registration issues by providing communication support through, for example, town/village hall meetings on civil registration.  Information sharing sessions on civil registration process at all levels | Briefing materials.  Information sharing sessions and meetings.  NCRA publications like quarterly Newsletters etc.  Leadership awards mobilization at all levels. | Discussions of opinion leaders are increasingly based on correct knowledge of the civil registration process.  Increased in knowledge of the civil registration among policy and decision-makers.  Functional public participation mechanism established.  Consensus building and stakeholders concerns addressed through public participation mechanism.  Increased in number of community and civil society initiatives in civl registration forums and related bodies. |

**Strategy Four: Capacity Strengthening of NCRA Key Stakeholders to Manage and Implement the Communication Strategy**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Audience** | **Key Message Themes** | **Methodologies** | **Channels** | **Outcome Indicators** |
| NCRA Management, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Registrar of Births and Deaths, National Election Commission, Statistics Sierra Leone, Office of the Administrator and Registrar General, Ministry of Health and Sanitation, and Ministry of Social Welfare | Implications and expectations of the civil registration process  Mandate of NCRA  Value of good management NCRA services for the nation and private businesses | Orientate/ debriefing of staff of key partners  Set up communication function to manage strategy implementation NCRA to provide technical assistance and build capacity of partners  Develop communication plan appropriate for partners  Engage partners in monitoring and evaluation exercises  Create communication committees to provide coherent and guidance on civil registration process at all levels. | Information sharing sessions, workshops and seminars  Field visits/ familiarization tours  NCRA website | Increased number of institutions that have integrated civil registration process as a strategic component of their operation.  Increased communication capacity on civil registration within the structures of partner institutions |

### III. Communication Barriers

There are some envisaged b[arriers](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/barriers-communication.html) to effectively communicate NCRA’s information and messages:

a. Retardation or distortion of the intention of NCRA’s information and messages. This may result in undesirable misunderstanding and misrepresentation like filtering, selective perception, information overload, emotions, language, silence, communication apprehension, gender differences and political correctness.

## b. Lack of expressing "appropriate knowledge" which occurs when a person uses ambiguous or complex words to describe a situation or environment that is not understood by the recipient.

## c. Physical barriers are often due to the nature of the environment, especially in hard to go areas.

## d. System design faults refer to problems with the structures or systems in place in an organization.

## e. Attitudinal barriers come about as a result of problems with staff in an organization.

f. Ambiguity of words/phrases means words sounding the same but having different meaning can convey a different meaning altogether.

g. Individual linguistic ability- The use of [jargon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jargon), difficult or inappropriate words in communication can prevent the recipients from understanding the message.

h. Physiological barriers may result from individuals' personal discomfort, caused for example by ill health, poor eyesight or hearing difficulties.

i. Bypassing-these happens when the communicators (sender and the receiver) do not attach the same symbolic meanings to their words.

j. Technological multi-tasking and absorbency- with a rapid increase in technologically-driven communication in the past several decades, individuals are increasingly faced with condensed communication in the form of e-mail, text, and social updates.

k. Fear of being criticized-this is a major factor that prevents good communication. If we exercise simple practices to improve our communication skill, we can become effective communicators.

l. Gender barriers- most communicators whether aware or not, often have a set agenda. This is very notable among the different genders.

To overcome the above barriers, there is need to always use an all-inclusive approach in message formation and pretesting before such messages are released to the public.

### IV. Communications Tools

**a. Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Materials:** The strategy will produce Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Materials to carry NCRA’s key messages to its audiences. This will be achieved through consultative meetings with NCRA staff, partners and media practitioners. Depending on the target group, there are different IEC materials available to bring the relevant messages across to target audiences.

The production of high-quality IEC materials with inscribed NCRA messages are important tools for reaching reporters, donors, policy makers, and others in the target audience. These include posters, banners, flyers, brochures, factsheets, calendars, T-shirts and caps, and stickers (NCRA vehicles, office displays etc)

**b. Edutainment Documentaries:** There are other communications tools in the strategy developed for different purposes. These include social media informative materials, print material (manuals, handbook, factsheets, newsletters, reports, press releases etc), PowerPoint presentation, photos / films / video documentaries, press kit, biographies on spokespeople and Authority heads, copies of newspaper articles, jingles, short radio/television dramas/skits and videos, slides, overheads and computer presentations.

Generally, IEC materials and edutainment documentaries should be consistent, easy-to-recognize and understand. It is also appropriate to develop beneficiaries/ stakeholders’ list for distribution; backed by media programmes (radio announcement in English/krio/local languages, radio discussions-phone-in programmes etc) informing the public about their availability at NCRA regional, district and chiefdom offices.

**c. Knowledge Management:** It is important key information, lessons learnt and tactics knowledge gained in the process of developing and implementing the communication strategy which are recorded in a systematic way and shared with partners so that their value is not lost. Internally, the role of the knowledge management component for communication activities within the NCRA would be to:

* Develop and implement a contact database that includes the details of all key stakeholders that may need to be contacted in the future. This could use simple and inexpensive software such as the MS word package and could be maintained in-house.
* Prepare and present quarterly report on communication strategic activities to senior management committee within NCRA. This could help to ensure that the NCRA leadership remain abreast with the implementation of the communication and civil registration processes to provide direction of future efforts.
* Information and experiences could be shared through established Communication Coordination Committees at all levels to keep the knowledge alive and growing overtime; and regular report releases to the media for dissemination to the public.

**8. Communication Channels and Equipment**

This section entails how NCRA passes it messages across to target audiences through well-selected channels. The choice will depend on what NCRA want to achieve, the level and type of messages NCRA wants to communicate to audience. Below are some communication channels and tools appropriate for communicating with NCRA’s audiences.

**I. Communication Channels**

**a. Media:** The media have an important role to play in bridging NCRA’s communication mechanisms; the platform for interaction and exchange of ideas between the NCRA and its target audiences, including key partners and the general public. NCRA will regularly engage the media on almost all its external communication and other media related programmes to help in the dissemination of its messages at national and international levels. The following are the most appropriate media for reaching and/or collecting feedback from target audiences (electronic and print).

**i. Electronic Media:** The electronic media tools will include television, radio and internet.

* ***Television:*** The NCRA will collaborate with the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC-TV), Star TV, African Young Voices (AYV) TV and other international television outlets (Aljazera/CNN etc) to prepare, produce and transmit news bulletins, documentaries and advertorials including interviews and debates with key public figures to support the NCRA’s mandate. Particularly Members of Parliament, councillors, Paramount Chiefs, Civil Society Organizations, other state and non-state actors will be targeted to explain about the relevance of civil registration process and development in their constituencies.
* ***Radio:*** Radio remains the most popular, viable, accessible and cost -effective means of communication for urban and rural people in Sierra Leone. It overcomes barriers of distance, illiteracy and language diversity better than any other media. This channel will be used to create dialogue with listeners and amongst listeners themselves to actively contribute to the radio programmes on the issues of civil registration process.

SLBC, Citizen, Star, AYV, 98.1 Radio Democracy, Eagle Radio, Culture Radio and other community radio stations in Freetown and the 16 district headquarter towns will relay broadcasts on the NCRA’s programmes. Radio programmes such as the Breakfast TV programme, phone-in discussions and other public service announcements (notices, jingles, supra etc) will be aired on popular radio stations. Where necessary, there will be the creation of district/chiefdom listeners clubs on civil registration process.

* ***Website and Internet:*** This media is the gateway to national and international interactions and discussions. NCRA will therefore design and launch its official website where publicity materials, photos, messages and other important information will be deposited, subject to the approval of the Board and Management. Other special social media pages/linkages like twitter, facebook, YouTube, whatsapp, LinkedIn, imo, viber, etc will be created to enhance the dissemination of quality messages on civil registration.

**II. Print Media:** The print media is an important outlet to disseminate public information in Sierra Leone. Thus NCRA will make effective use of the different types to inform the public on a daily basis about its mandates and progammes on civil registration. Below are some of the print media sectors the NCRA will utilize:

* ***Newspaper and Private Publications:*** Eventful news, features articles and human interest stories about civil registration and NCRA’s programmes should be published in both international and local newspapers and other private publication outlets. The NCRA will work closely with the journalists and publishers to produce civil registration content and informative materials for the public. Further engagement of the print media will involve regular press conferences, public announcements and media capacity building to accurately report on the civil registration programmes.

**III. Traditional Channels/Methods:** NCRA will use a lot of other traditional channels/methods to reach the public with civil registration messages. Few among these are:

* ***NCRA’s Publications:*** The NCRA shall develop and produce newsletters, brochures, flyers, factsheets, handbills etc with key information and messages on civil registration.
* **Learning Institutional Campaigns:** The NCRA will engage in massive education, information and entertainment campaigns in the schools, universities/ colleges and other learning institutions with the aim of explaining NCRA’s mandate, NCR Act and INCRS to students/pupils, lecturers/teachers and other institutional authorities/staff. This group has the capacity to disseminate NCRA’s messages and information to their respective compatriots, families, parents and peers.

This campaign will also include the organization of essays, poetry, poster, debates/symposia and quiz competitions, public talks at institutional levels. This will be followed by an Annual National Programme at all levels with certification and prize giving processes for best performers on the civil registration competitions in Sierra Leone.

* **Public gatherings, meetings and seminars/workshops:** The NCRA will engage and coordinate a lot of town/ community hall meetings, market, workshops and outreaches to educate the public about the NCRA’s mandates and programmes. This will make it possible for NCRA to interface with the public and constantly keep them updated on the Authority’s activities, achievements and challenges at all levels.
* **Edutainment Programmes:** The Strategy will involve the production of well-focused and processed video documentaries on civil registration programme and activities. This will capture speeches by NCRA key actors, jingles and radio drama series on key messages on the civil registration activities, success and challenges. These video documentaries will be played in markets, football fields and other public places nationwide.
* **Town Criers and Interpreters:** Where appropriate, NCRA will field in local town criers and interpreters to disseminate important civil registration and vital statistics messages especially in hard to go rural communities. This aspect will engage competent teachers, youths and people who can speak their local languages, fluent in English/krio and know the terrains well.
* **Others:** Pertinent messages and informative materials about NCRA and civil registration process will be distributed to and/or pasted on walls of community centres, recreational playing fields, public buildings, malls, vocational and language training centres, libraries, supermarkets, night clubs, offices, parks, mobile phones booths for public attention.

The table below outlines the proposed channels the NCRA will use to communicate with the target audiences/stakeholders, the public and media. Two-way communications channels which bring information to the public and stakeholders from the NCRA are very essential. The table includes some of the channels through which NCRA should hear the views of stakeholders and the public. However, the details of how NCRA collects feedback from the public and stakeholders and utilise the information to improve its work and operation should be covered in future engagement strategies/plans.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Channel** | **Summary** | **Audience** | | **Responsible person/team** |
| **Face to face** | | | | |
| Public events | Events tailored to specific topics and themes and occasions such as town hall meetings, launching of programmes | Public, interest groups, civil society, communities | | Communications Unit and regional and district offices. |
| External groups / committees/working groups | Wide range of established forums – detail provided in external/stakeholder engagement plan/strategy Quarterly Board meetings. | Stakeholders/private sector groups, donor partners and line government MDAs | | Board/management/technical and professional staff and Outreach/communication Unit |
| Board meetings | Quarterly Board meetings. | Commissioners | | Various |
| Staff/meetings and events | Variety of events ranging from management meetings, workshops, retreats across the NCRA | Internal | | Various |
| **Online / digital** | | | | |
| NCRA website | The main NCRA website hosting information, news, updates and key publications of the NCRA. | All external and internal | | Communications and IT Units |
| NCRA e-mail account | Though some staff indicated they have NCRA account, this is presently underutilized All relevant should be mandated and encouraged to use NCRA account when doing official communication | Internal and external | | Communications, IT and HR Units |
| NCRA Intranet | for internal sharing of information with use of interactive elements to encourage staff participation and networking. | Internal | | Communication and IT Units |
| Twitter,  Facebook, WhatsApp etc | Corporate accounts on key platforms plus a number of individual and service managed accounts promoting the work of the Trust. | All external | | Communication and IT Units |
| Multimedia production/videos | Some development of digital promotional information e.g. video clips on certain processes of the Authority. | All external | | Communication Unit |
| **Channel** | | **Summary** | **Audience** | **Responsible person/team** | |
| **Print/Written/ newspaper** | | | | | |
| News and press statements and releases | | Wide range of information including news items, supplementary adverts, vacancy announcements op-ed, articles, media releases sent to newspaper houses for publication | All external | Communications Unit | |
| Newsletters and bulletins | | Quarterly printed newsletter for members and wider stakeholders | All external | Communication Unit | |
| Annual reports | | Formal publication | All external | Board, Management and Communication Unit | |
| Audited financial reports | | Formal publication | All external | Board, Finance and Management | |
| Technical papers and published strategies | | Routine publication of official documents – hosted on website. | All external | Various | |
| Directors and Chairman briefings | | Monthly briefing to support Director and other senior managers during team and Board meetings. | Internal | Communication Unit | |
| Email news and updates | | Daily or weekly news email to all staff | Internal | Communications Unit | |
| **Electronic media/radio/televisions** | | | | | |
| Adverts/promotional jingles/theme song/ short drama/ public announcements | | A wide range of information developed by NCRA for services, developments and updates on the work of the Authority. | All external | Various | |
| NCRA thematic discussions/programmes | | Regular/weekly radio programmes on either radio and or television | All external | Communication and relevant Units | |
| Discussion on annual report | | Formal NCRA publication | All external | Management, Finance and Communication Units | |
| Discussion on audited report | | Formal NCRA publication | All external | Management, Finance and Communication Units | |
| News / media releases | | A mixture of website announcements and formal press releases sent direct to radio, television stations for coverage | All external | Communication Unit | |

**2. Equipment:** The Strategy is ambitious and to properly deliver the planned activities requires strong NCRA Management’s drive and support in equipping the National and, District Communications and Outreach Units which will need the following eequipment: video cameras and accessories; digital cameras and accessories; public address systems with amplifiers and outdoor speakers; laptops; slide projectors; megaphone speakers; video projectors; flip-charts and standers; video sets, screens and accessories; printers (three in one: coloured photocopy, print and scan) etc.

**9. Implementation Plan**

This section looks at NCRA work plans which spell out assignments and important tasks for each major activity or event and try to review overall quarterly plans. In this regard, there should be clear cut activities to undertake within a specific timeframe; timelines, calendars of events and priorities; assign responsibilities to lead and support staff, giving each a list of specific tasks; review progress and enforce or revise deadlines; and hold people responsible for completing work and reassign tasks as needed. Note that apart from the gadgets, all communication and outreach activities are cross-cutting and cannot be relegated to a particular year but can occur in almost every year within the time frame depending on the need. Below are major tasks slated for the five (5) years implementation:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Activity** | **Result** | **Time line** | **Responsible Person/Team** |
| Internal Communications and Staff Engagement | Establish induction/or boarding process for new NCRA staff and consultants.  Design and start implementing the incorporation of understanding the structures/systems/procedures/ departments/units to all staff within the NCRA    Support to professional networks within the NCRA and develop effective areas on the intranet to support information sharing and professional networking.    Establish an official email account for all staff; Develop an intranet system and ensure all relevant staff are trained and have access to the system. The intranet should have a “interactive” functionality; Clarify future options for e-forms developed on old site.    Review options and develop business case for a mobile and regional/district and rural staff app to complement other internal communications channels. | Internal communications protocols and system established and implemented. | Ongoing | Communications, Human Resource Units and IT |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | | **Activity** | **Result** | **Time line** | **Responsible Person/Team** |
| Reputation Building and Branding | | Embed in recruitment updated information and brand guidance for job adverts, announcements and associated induction materials.    Develop an NCRA’s strategic narrative and produce for internal and external stakeholders in a useable concise format.    Develop and regularly update NCRA website.    Develop a marketing/commercial plan for the NCRA.    Support to corporate and operations units in the development of templates of tenders for service retention and new bids to ensure quality and consistency across all adverts and bid.    Design and produce internal bulletin/newsletter, brochures, flyers, banners and other IEC materials for routine communication to other key external stakeholders.    Implement review and next steps action plans to embed new brand across all internal and external channels. | | NCRA public image built | Ongoing | Communications and IT Unit |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Activity** | **Result** | **Time line** | **Responsible Person/Team** |
| Public Information and Online Presence | Ensure requirements of accessible public information standard for the NCRA are in place.    Review and audit existing public information materials to identify outdated content and branding.    Develop templates and style guides for all NCRA public information materials. Establish the managed printing contract with the Government printing press or other local printing houses to ensure consistency and efficiency for printed public information.    Develop a functional NCRA website and keep it regularly updated. Develop social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and LinkedIn focused on reputation building, recruitment and supporting appropriate staff to engage with social media for information dissemination.    Maintain routine process for review and refresh of patient information. | Public awareness and online presence of the NCRA enhanced | All years | Communications, IT Units and regional and districts offices |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Activity** | **Result** | **Time line** | **Responsible Person/Team** |
| Stakeholders’ Communications on Transition to Permanent NCRA. | Identify and analyse key stakeholders ‘needs, interests and allegiances for effective stakeholder engagement.    Establish a range of face to face channels with key external stakeholders.    Establish and coordinate centralised stakeholder communications to include quarterly meetings; monthly bulletin and ad-hoc emails on key developments and announcements. | Stakeholders’ Communications on Transition to Permanent NCRA enhanced. | 2018 through 2019 | External relations, communications Unit and Management |

In the spirit of all-inclusiveness, the strategy shall also operate communications committee systems at all levels as explained below:

**a. The National Communications Committee (NCC):** The NCC shall lead policy guide and direction on issues related to communications/ public relations and publicity campaigns and activities during NCRA’s programme implementation at all level. NCC will vet and approve all public engagement proposed by the District Communications and Outreach Officers through their respective coordinators. The NCC shall compose of all NCRA top Management including the National Communications and Outreach Officer, and shall be headed by the Director General. The NCC reports directly to the NCRA Board.

**b. The Regional Communications Committee (RCC):** The RCC shall provide technical communications and outreach supports and advice the NCC on the engagement and dissemination of information on civil registration within its regional jurisdiction. The RCC shall manage, coordinate and organize information sharing sessions and campaigns, conferences and public meetings. The RCC shall compose of the NCRA Regional Heads, District Coordinators and Communication and Outreach District Officers under his/her jurisdiction. The RCC shall report directly to the NCC through the National Communications and Outreach Officer at the NCRA headquarters in Freetown.

**c. The District Communications Committee (DCC):** The DCC shall provide technical communications supports and advice to the RCC on the engagement and dissemination of information on civil registration at District level. The DCC shall manage, coordinate and organize information sharing sessions and campaigns, conferences and public meetings, and create volunteer communications committee at chiefdoms level. The DCC shall compose of the NCRA District Coordinators, Communications and Outreach Officers and other key staff. The DCC shall report directly to the RCC of their respective regions.

**d. The Chiefdom Communications Committee (CCC):** The CCC shall provide technical communications supports and advice to the DCC on community engage and dissemination of information on civil registration at Chiefdom level. The CCC will manage, coordinate and organize information sharing sessions and public meetings at chiefdoms level. The CCC shall compose of the host Paramount Chief as the chair, Chiefdom Clerk as the Secretary, Section Chiefs and 2 youths (1 male/1 female). The CCC shall report directly to the DCC.

**10. Who’s Responsible/Staffing**

It is imperative that there are other groups, organizations or businesses which would aid NCRA’s in achieving its mandate by providing funds, expertise or other resources. Thus, there is pressing need for the NCRA to develop partnerships with such institutions like government functionaries, private businesses, civil society organizations, non-government organizations (national and internal) and other local organizations during its operation. However, there are some practical steps to follow that will focus NCRA’s energies and resources where they will be most effective.

In this regard, the Authority will directly and strongly work with institutions like the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Registrar of Births and Deaths, National Election Commission, Statistics of Sierra Leone, Office of the Administrator and Registrar General, Ministry of Health and Sanitation and Ministry of Social Welfare. Note that the NCRA is leaving its doors opened for partnerships with any organization (s) that will add value to achieving its legal mandate.

**12. Monitoring and Evaluation**

No strategic communications plan is complete without an in-built monitoring and evaluation outlook as a way to check accountability and make improvements over time. Major evaluation activities might include analyzing media content and monitoring certain developments such as shifts in public opinion, policy changes, increased membership and organizational participation and improved institutional capacity. NCRA needs to know whether it has succeeded and met outlined objectives, evaluation of success, performance indicators and evaluating measures, challenges and solutions to make work better.

Every activity in the strategic operations will be closely monitored and evaluated to determine successes and failures. In the event of failures, the activities and messages will be redesigned and disseminated. In this regard, there shall be monthly, quarterly and annual reports on the Strategy to the Authority; NCRA’s bi-annual assessment meeting on communications and outreach on civil registration process, annual media tours and press conference. This will provide quality control and reasonable delivery of service.

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of this communications strategy will be critical to the successful implementation of the activities as it will help the NCRA determine progress toward achieving set goals and objectives. However, focus will be placed on indicators and leaving the full plan that will include tools, persons to monitor and frequency of data collection. In light of the above, the following indicators can be used to develop the full M&E plan:

* Proportion of Sierra Leoneans and residents that believe that the registration of vital and civil events is relevant and useful for national development.
* Number of Sierra Leoneans and resident who actually register these events.
* Number of television and radio spots aired on TV and radio related to NCRA service delivery and mandate
* Number of stakeholders engaged with the NCRA.
* Number of corporate clients and MDAs making use of the services of NCRA.
* Level of NCRA presence online and on social media
* Quality of NCRA online and social media presence
* Proportion of Sierra Leoneans and residents using national ID cards.

**13. Conclusion**

For this strategy to succeed, all civil registration institutions have to buy into the importance and value of communication in implementation process. Another rather critical obvious criterion for success is that adequate financial resources are required to be committed for the implementation of the Strategy. This means that it is important that the benefits of civil registration processes are communicated to people, rather than a lot of unnecessary details about the programme. The talk and action of success of the civil registration implementation and improved service delivery have to be in harmony. It would seriously be counterproductive to over promise/estimate/expect as this would risk the credibility of the reform and jeopardize public support and participation.

In summary, the Communications Strategy will create the forum for professionally measure, management and demonstration of results during the implementation of the NCRA programmes on civil registration; make increase visibility on all the pogrammes, project and other activities; coordinate stakeholders’ information sharing sessions; communicate core messages regarding the NCRA, NCR Act and INCRS to ensure reliable data management on civil registration. See attached Summary Budget and Resources:

**13. SUMMARY Budget and Resources**

NCRA’s communications plan needs to spell out how resources will be allocated, including staff time, budgets, computers, software, equipment, databases, in-house and contract services and volunteer help. This is a budget from 2018 - 2022.

**SUMMARY BUDGET**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activities** | **Summary** | **Budget** |
| Internal Communications and Staff Engagement | Covering all activities for the internal communications and Staff Engagement and all other activities not envisaged (See work plan) | **$. 800,000.00** |
| Reputation Building and Branding | Covering all activities for the Reputation Building and Branding and all other activities not envisaged (See work plan) | **$. 400,000.00** |
| Public Information and Online Presence | Covering all activities for the Public Information and Online Presence and all other activities not envisaged (See work plan) | **$. 500,000.00** |
| Stakeholders’ Communications on Transition to Permanent NCRA | Covering all activities for the Stakeholders’ Communications on Transition to Permanent NCRA and all other activities not envisaged (See work plan) | **$. 300,000.00** |
| Administrative Cost |  | **$. 200,000.00** |
| **GRAND TOTAL** |  | **$.2,200,000.00** |