AUDIT SERVICE
SIERRA LEONE

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE
REPORT 2023

MR ABDUL AZIZ
ACTING AUDITOR-GENERAL

Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAG-   Assistant Auditor-General

ACC -   Anti-Corruption Commission

ACCA-   Association of Chartered Certified Accountants

AFROSAI-   African Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions

AFROSAI-E- African Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions - English Speaking Countries

AG-   Auditor-General

AGD: Accountant General's Department

ASB   -   Audit Service Board

ASSL -   Audit Service Sierra Leone

CSO   -   Civil Society Organisation

DAG -   Deputy Auditor-General

ICT-   Information and Communications Technology

IDI-   INTOSAI Development Initiative

IEC-   Information, Education and Communications

INTOSAI-   International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions

ISSAI-   International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions

MDA-   Ministries, Department and Agencies

M&LA-   Ministries and Local Authorities

MoF-   Ministry of Finance

PAC-   Public Accounts Committee

PFM-   Public Financial Management

SAI-   Supreme Audit Institutions

Foreword

Section 31 of the Audit Service Act of 2014 provides that the Auditor-General submit an Annual Performance Report to Parliament and that the report be made public. As the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) of Sierra Leone, the onus is to ensure that the public understands the principles guiding our operations, the successes we have recorded and the challenges we face in carrying out our mandates.

The ASSL is a performance-driven institution; thus, the planning and allocation of resources revolve around carefully designing and selecting performance measurements. We hereby report on what we have done to implement the strategy together with the strategic outcomes achieved under the ASSL Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, which includes the timely submission of the Auditor-General's Annual Report of 2022 to Parliament, as enshrined in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

With support from the European Union, chief among the successes recorded in 2023 was capacity building, which was carried out through the conduct of various trainings and workshops for staff in order to empower them with the required modern auditing skills needed to perform in emerging audit areas such as Environmental Audit, Forensic Audit Investigations, Information System Audit and Performance and Quality Management System.

This report highlights the stakeholder engagements undertaken by the ASSL to inform citizens about our work and how they were involved in the pre-planning of our audit work. We believe these engagements will impact their perception of the work done by the institution.

In continuation of the stakeholder engagement, the ASSL, through the Accountable Governance for Basic Service Delivery project supported by the World Bank, held citizen engagement sessions in 10 communities across the country. The sessions gave the citizens the opportunity to take part in follow-up sessions of the 2021 audit and the pre-planning of the audit of their local councils for FY2022.

To demystify the audit process and enhance auditees' implementation of audit recommendations, the ASSL hosted several breakfast meetings with the management of various ministries, departments and agencies. During these meetings, exchanges were made by participating MDAs on the mechanisms that would ensure that auditees obtain value from the audit process, leading to increased implementation of audit recommendations.

The ASSL, like any other organisation, was faced with challenges; some of them have been reported in this Annual Performance Report, highlighting some mitigations towards them. For instance, delays in submitting documents by auditees, ineffective internet connectivity for our regional offices, delays or non-payment of audit fees, etc.

I want to commend all Audit Service staff and external stakeholders for their contributions towards the achievements made during the course of that year. The outputs highlighted in this report lend credence to your commitment to ensuring that the ASSL remains a vibrant accountability institution within the governance machinery of Sierra Leone.

I hereby present to you our Annual Performance Report of the ASSL for the year 2023.

Abdul Aziz

Acting Auditor General

Chapter 1

1.1 Background on the Audit Service Sierra Leone

The Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) is the Supreme Audit Institution of Sierra Leone. The Audit Act of 1962 originally established it as the Audit Department. It became the first audit institution to exist in the country. The nomenclature, "Audit Department" was later changed to "The Auditor-General's Department".

In 1996, Sierra Leone began its transformation to a democratic state by establishing fully functional institutions to aid good governance and the rule of law. The ASSL then considered that, as it serves its purpose and helps these institutions achieve full potentials; whilst at the same time responding to changes in its external environment; it should perform a "position audit" to identify what needs to be changed. The outcome of this exercise led to the setting up of the ASSL as a legal entity through an Act of Parliament in 1998; this led to the birth of what is today known as the "Audit Service Sierra Leone".

The transformation of the ASSL to a modern-day Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) followed this establishment. Afterwards, the Audit Service Act of 1998 was then repealed and replaced by the Audit Service Act, 2014.

Section 119, subsection 2 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone serves as the basis for the enactment of the ASSL Act and the Office of the Auditor-General. It states that: "The public accounts of Sierra Leone and all public offices, including the courts, the accounts of the central and local government administrations, of the universities and public institutions of like nature, any statutory corporation, company or other body or organisation established by an Act of Parliament or statutory instrument or otherwise set up partly or wholly out of Public Funds, shall be audited and reported on by or on behalf of the Auditor-General, and for that purpose, the Auditor-General shall have access to all books, records, returns and other documents relating or relevant to those accounts".

The ASSL is headed by the Auditor-General (AG) and assisted by four deputies. The headquarters is situated on the 12th Floor of the Freetown City Council Building, Wallace Johnson Street, Freetown. In addition to its other office at the 9th Floor of the Youyi Building, the ASSL has three regional offices in the provincial headquarter towns of Bo, Kenema and Makeni.

The mandate of the AG as prescribed by the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone is broad-based, and covers all aspects of government. It should be noted that the ASSL is unable to audit all institutions within a year as required. As a result, some audits are outsourced to private audit firms with the ASSL taking overall responsibility for their outcomes and reports to Parliament.

Our Mission

To independently ensure value-for-money from public funds in collaboration with external stakeholders, through a highly competent and motivated workforce of integrity.

Our Vision

To be a leading audit organisation promoting excellence and accountability in public institutions.

Our Core Values

The following ethical standards underpin the work of all staff members of the ASSL at all times:

1. *Professionalism* – We are competent and impartial, carrying out our work with care and adherence to ethical standards and best practices.

2. *Integrity* – We are straightforward and honest in all our professional and business relationships with due regard for confidentiality.

3. *People* – We respect and care for our team, and we have high regard for our stakeholders.

4. *Independence* – We are empowered by our constitutional mandate to deliver quality service without external influence.

5. *Objectivity* – We are unbiased and politically neutral, avoiding any actual or perceived conflict of interest in the work we do.

1.2 Who do we report to?

There are several laws, which guide the Audit Service Sierra Leone when it comes to who the ASSL is accountable to. Section119(4) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone states: "The Auditor-General shall, within twelve months of the end of the immediately preceding financial year, submit his report

to Parliament and shall in that report draw attention to any irregularities in the accounts audited and to any other matter which in his opinion ought to be brought to the notice of Parliament".

The AG reports to Parliament on the financial state of affairs of the nation in line with Section 119(4) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, which states: "The Auditor-General shall, within twelve months of the end of the immediately preceding financial year, submit his report to Parliament and shall in that report draw attention to any irregularities in the accounts audited and to any other matter which in his opinion ought to be brought to the notice of Parliament".

The ASSL also engages other stakeholders like MDAs, educational institutions, the media, civil society organisations, local ataya bases and the general public. This is done in line with the ASSL Strategic Plan 2021-2025 with specific objectives in mind for each engagement.

1.3 Stages of Audit

The ASSL is the Supreme Audit Institution of Sierra Leone, which according to section 119 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone is mandated to audit all government accounts. Being a SAI, the ASSL is obliged to belong to a global body of SAIs referred to as the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).

This body regulates the work of its member SAIs and provides guidelines and standards that SAIs are mandated to follow in the conduct of their SAI-specific responsibilities.

Generally, the auditing process is the same irrespective of the type of audit being undertaken. The guidelines applied by SAIs range from:

- ISSAI 1000-2999 for Financial Audits
- ISSAI 3000-3100 for Performance Audits
- ISSAI 4000-4200 for Compliance Audits

The generic audit process consists of the following stages:

1. The pre-engagement phase
2. The detailed planning phase
3. The audit execution phase
4. The audit completion and reporting phase

A synopsis of these stages is explained below for the understanding of our readers:

The Pre-Engagement Phase

The essence of the pre-engagement phase is to help the auditor determine that, the ethical requirements for audits are duly considered whilst at the same time, assessing the availability of resources needed to undertake audit exercises and to agree on the terms of engagement.

The Detailed Planning Phase

During the detailed planning phase of the audit, it is incumbent on auditors to first try to understand the client's operations. This is done through extensive risk assessment to determine the risks that may likely lead to misstatement, whether due to fraud or error in the financial statements. Once this is done, it then becomes the responsibility of the auditors to design an audit strategy, which addresses these risks or minimises their impact if they do occur. These procedures should be properly documented so that an independent reviewer can assess the sufficiency of the procedures in addressing the identified risks.

The Audit Execution Phase

At this stage of the audit, the auditor determines what would be examined based on the importance (materiality) of the item or transaction. This is what is referred to as sampling. This is followed by a thorough examination of selected items based on agreed procedures in the strategy, wherein the auditor is required to document work performed, whilst at the same time ensuring that sufficient and appropriate evidence is obtained in relation to the work done. The procedures followed should be properly documented so that it enables an independent auditor to follow these procedures and be able to reach the same logical conclusions reached unaided. Since the audit is not a witch-hunt, the auditor has a responsibility to communicate with the client all material omissions or deviations and any significant matters relating to the audit throughout the exercise, allowing the client to clarify and address a summary of findings of issues identified during the execution phase.

The Reporting Stage

This involves:

- the issuance of a Draft Management Letter to the client, with a 15-day deadline to respond to the findings and recommendations in the report;
- carrying out a verification exercise in response to the Draft Management Letter to determine whether the feedback proffered by the client's management are acceptable or not;
- issuance of a Final Management Letter detailing outstanding issues to be included in the AG's annual report; and

- the signing of the audited Financial Statement by the client and auditor, where financial statement audits are done.

The Follow-up Stage

During this stage, auditees are summoned to the public hearings of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament, to respond to any significant issues raised in the AG's annual report. The ASSL does follow-ups during subsequent audits to confirm whether audit recommendations have been implemented and compliance with the recommendations made; especially recommendations made by the PAC to the Executive on issues raised in the AG's annual report.

1.4 Why an Annual Performance Report?

Submission of an Annual Performance Report to Parliament is clearly stipulated in Section 30 (1) of the Audit Service Act 2014. This section states that the Auditor-General shall submit annually to Parliament a copy of an Annual Performance and Financial Report. The International Standards for Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs) also envisaged that information about SAIs should be readily accessible and their work processes, activities and products should be transparent. It further stressed the need for openness, visibility and regular interface with stakeholders. The Annual Performance Report of the ASSL is prepared in line with the principles of transparency and accountability as stipulated in the ASSL Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025. The report aims to meet accountability criteria by reporting on:

- The extent to which the ASSL has met its statutory obligations with regard to its mandate and reporting requirements'
- Evaluate and follow-up on the ASSL's performance as well as the impact of our audit work
- Efficiency in our use of public funds and the use of SAI's resources. The report also meets transparency parameters by providing reliable, clear and relevant public reporting on our mandate, activities, financial management, operations and performance. It therefore seeks to:
- Create awareness about the ASSL and inform stakeholders about our key results and achievements.

The purpose of this annual performance report is to provide stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, the media, auditees, donors and employees, with a clear and concise overview of its performance and operations. It is also an important tool for communicating with these stakeholders and building trust and credibility with them. This report will also help the ASSL to identify areas of improvement and opportunities that will enhance the institution to work in line with its mandate and promote transparency and accountability.

CHAPTER 2: INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

2.1 Organisational Structure

The organisational structure of the ASSL consists of several departments and units that work together to fulfill its mandate. The Audit Service is responsible for conducting Financial, Compliance, Performance and Information Systems audits of government institutions to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of public funds.

The functions of the ASSL include auditing government institutions to assess their financial management, performance, and compliance with laws and regulations. The institution also provides recommendations for improving governance, accountability, and transparency in the use of public funds. The ASSL plays a critical role in promoting good governance and the rule of law in Sierra Leone by holding government institutions accountable for their actions and decisions.

The ASSL is being overseen by an advisory board headed by the Board Chairman. The board comprises the Acting Auditor-General and three members.

The head of the ASSL is the Acting Auditor-General, who is assisted by three deputy Auditors General. The ASSL has its headquarters on the 11th and 12th Floor of the Freetown City Council Building, Wallace Johnson Street, in Freetown. In the southern region, the office is housed at the Old Treasury Building, Stock Road in Bo and the office is headed by an Assistant Auditor-General, (AAG). The office in the eastern region is at 44 Waahman Abu Road in Kenema; and is headed by a Principal Auditor. In the north, the regional office is located at No. 8 Vincent Kanu Road in Makeni, and is headed by an AAG. We also have various divisions in Freetown which are headed by various divisional heads.

Despite its broad mandate, the ASSL faces challenges in auditing all institutions within a year due to limited human resources and staff size. As a result, the audits of some public enterprises are outsourced to private audit firms, with the ASSL retaining overall responsibility for the outcomes from those reports. The institution continues to work towards strengthening its capacity and enhancing its effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate to promote accountability and transparency in government operations.

2.2 Key Stakeholders and Partners

Key stakeholders and partners of the Audit Service Sierra Leone include:

1. **Auditees:** These are the government entities, organisations, and individuals that are subject to audit by the Audit Service Sierra Leone. Auditees are required to provide access to their financial records and information to the Auditor-General and comply with any recommendations or findings made during the audit process.

2. **Media:** The media plays a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability in public finances. The Audit Service Sierra Leone often works closely with the media to disseminate audit reports and findings, raise awareness about public hearings on the AG's Reports and other activities of the SAI and also hold auditees accountable for their actions.

3. **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):** CSOs play a vital role in promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability in the public sector. The Audit Service Sierra Leone collaborates with CSOs to advocate for reform, monitor the implementation of audit recommendations, and engage with stakeholders to improve public financial management. The ASSL involves them in the pre-planning and follow up stages of the audit process.

4. **Donors:** Donor organisations provide financial and technical support to the Audit Service Sierra Leone to strengthen its capacity, improve audit processes, and enhance the quality of audit reports. Donors also play a key role in advocating for increased transparency and accountability in the public sector.

5. **African Organisation of English-speaking Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI-E):** It performs an enabling role in the region by sharing information with its members and supporting them in capacity building and better performance of their mandates. As a member of AFROSAI-E, the ASSL collaborates with other supreme audit institutions in the region to promote best practice, share information and experiences, and enhance the effectiveness of public sector auditing.

6. **INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI):** The IDI provides technical assistance, training, and capacity-building support to the ASSL to improve the quality and effectiveness of its audit processes. The IDI also assists in the implementation of international auditing standards and practices to enhance the credibility and independence of the Audit Service Sierra Leone.

2.3 Types Of Audit Conducted By The Assl

The core function of the ASSL is to audit the resources and financial transactions of government institutions and report to Parliament. In order to achieve this goal, we carry out the following types of audits:

Financial Audits: Financial audits are conducted to examine and evaluate the financial statements of an organisation to make sure that the financial records are a fair and accurate representation of the transactions they claim to represent. The financial audit is to provide reasonable assurance that financial statements are presented accurately and in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).

Compliance Audits: We conduct compliance audit as an independent evaluation to ascertain whether an organisation is complying with existing laws, rules and regulations or internal guidelines, such as corporate byelaws, controls and policies and procedures.

Performance Audits: Performance audits are conducted to show that resources that have been acquired are economically and efficiently utilised to provide adequate services to the citizens. It includes assessment of how resources are utilised in relation to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equity and environment. Performance audit involves an indepth analysis of specific issues relating to the audited entity's processes or functions.

Information System Audits: Information system audits are carried out to give assurance on the integrity, confidentiality and availability of the information technology (IT) systems and the data produced.

CHAPTER 3: PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

The ASSL is a performance-driven organisation. Planning and resource allocation revolve around the careful design and selection of key activities which focus on outcomes and attainment of its goals. This section gives a brief description of the various divisions and their achievements in 2023

3.1 Brief on various divisions

BO DIVISION

The ASSL, Southern Region Office is located at the Old Treasury Building, Stock Road, Bo City; the second largest city in Sierra Leone. The Southern Region comprises four districts: Bo, Bonthe (including Bonthe Sherbro Island), Moyamba and Pujehun.

The Division carries out the audit of local councils, MDAs, chiefdom councils, educational institutions etc. in the Southern Region.

The head of the Division ensures that the resources of the ASSL (human and otherwise) are managed in accordance with the ASSL's guiding principles, processes and procedures. The Division currently has 13 staff, nine of whom are technical, and the four are corporate staff. This Division is headed by an Assistant Auditor-General and it has one Principal Auditor, three Senior Auditors, four Auditors and four support staff.

	Summary of planned and completed activities for the year 2023.			
No	Institutions	No. of Audits Planned	No. of Audits Completed	No. of Incomplete Audits
	Assignments that Roll Over from 2022			
	Public Enterprises	0	2	0
	MDAs	0	3	0
	Schools	0	14	0
Totals		**0**	**19**	**0**
	2023 Assignments carried out			
1	Council Audits	6	6	0
2	Public Enterprises	1	3	0
3	MDAs	17	16	1
4	Poll Audits	0	2	0
5	Projects	2	2	0
6	Schools	15	15	0
7	Chiefdom Councils	12	0	12
Totals		**53**	**44**	**13**

Achievements
The division successfully completed 44 planned audits and 19 roll over audits from 2022.

Editorial Division

The Editorial Division is responsible for editing all audited reports and communication before they are published. The Division was established with the need for audited reports to be written and communicated in a simplified and user-friendly way. In line with this, all Management Letters are edited for them to better communicate audit findings. The Division has three Editors who are professionals in English and Mass Communication. Part of its responsibilities is to train auditors in the art of writing reports and executive summaries. Another major task of the Division is to fully participate in the writing and editing of the Auditor-General's Annual report.

Achievements
• Editing of Draft and Final Management Letters   • Editing of Verification Reports   • Editing of the 2022 Auditor-General's Annual Report   • Providing support to other divisions including Training and IEC Divisions

Finance Division

The Finance Division is housed at the head office of the Audit Service Sierra Leone located at the Freetown City Council Building. The division has a staff strength of eight personnel including the Procurement Officer. This division is responsible to ensure that all financial transactions and reports concerning the ASSL are done effectively, efficiently, and timely.

Achievements
As a division, we are proud of the recognition award received from management in respect of an Outstanding Contribution to Audit Service operations during the 2023 Financial year   The Other Charges allocation was received in full from the Ministry of Finance for the 2023 Financial year.

General Accounts

The General Accounts Division is primarily responsible for the audit of the public accounts of Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Finance, the Accountant-General Department and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.

It comprises two Principal Auditors, one Senior Auditor, nine Auditors, one Audit Assistants and One Administrative Assistant.

Summary of planned and completed activities for the year 2023.				
No	Institutions	No. of Audits Planned	No. of Audits Completed	No. of Incomplete Audits
1	MDA	4	4	0
2	General Purpose Financial Statement	1	1	0
3	Domestic Revenue Audits	1	1	0
Totals		6	6	0

Achievements
The Department was able to complete planned audits, and they formed part of the Auditor-General's Annual Report. The total includes the General Purpose Financial statements, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and the Accountant-General's Department.

Human Resources Division

The Human Resources Division is one of eight divisions under the Corporate Services. It is the unit responsible for managing all strategic and operational human resources matters. It is staffed with a manager, an officer and an administrative assistant. Our HR mission is to provide human resources advisory services to all divisions and to efficiently manage the process of recruiting, developing and retaining people of integrity and excellence.

Cross section of ASSL staff listening to a health talk on Mental Health

Achievements

Staff Wellness

The year 2023 saw a number of staff wellness initiatives introduced. We implemented a periodic basic health check for blood sugar and blood pressure. By this activity, we were able to identify and prevent potential health crises amongst staff members. We also introduced biweekly Zumba sessions, monthly health talks by professionals in their fields, and football activities. These events were replicated in all ASSL offices across the regions.

Recruitment

The first Legal Affairs Manager was recruited to establish a Legal Affairs Division. The Information Education Communication (IEC) Division was also expanded with the engagement of an IEC Officer.

Recognition Policy

A revised Reward and Recognition Policy was established, and it is expected to come into full effect in 2024.

Information Communication Technology Division

The Information Communication Technology (ICT) division plays a crucial role in managing the technological infrastructure, providing user support, ensuring data security, and enabling effective data analysis in ASSL. The division balances strategic planning with day-to-day operational support to ensure the ASSL's technological needs are met efficiently and effectively. The division has one ICT Manager as head of the division supported by three ICT Officers. These staff members have critical roles and responsibilities to ensure smooth operation and support of the technological needs. The division supports the ASSL with the following:

- Strategic Planning and Management
- Security Oversight
- Network and Server Management
- System Maintenance
- User Support
- Access Control
- Monitoring and Reporting
- Asset Management
- Software Support

Achievements
• The ASSL website was overhauled, and all content updated to reflect current technological trends. • The ICT Division collaborated with the Information Systems (IS) Audit Division to successfully conduct IT audits across all MDAs nationwide • An ICT staff member successfully completed Modules 1 and 2 of the Information Systems (IS) Audit Champions Program organized by AFROSAI-E • An ICT staff member successfully completed the Certify Information Systems Security (CISSP) training and passed the exam, which was sponsored by the World Bank. • An ICT staff member, along with colleagues from other Audit Service Institutions in Africa, trained staff at the Audit Service in Nigeria on conducting ICT self-assessments to determine the organization's readiness for automating the audit process.

Information, Education and Communications Division

The ASSL has an established Information Education and Communication (IEC) division that is responsible for effective stakeholder engagement and handles all internal and external communication of the organisation. It is mostly responsible for the achievement of the strategic outcomes in collaboration with other divisions.

The IEC division is responsible for publicising the activities of the ASSL and improving its visibility and public image. The IEC division has been able to provide ASSL's stakeholders with accurate, correct, clear, objective and complete information about the operations of the office, its mandate and statutory objectives. This division ensures that the ASSL is visible, accessible and accountable to its clients, other stakeholders and the public that it serves.

ASSL Public Education at an Ataya Base in Freetown

The division is headed by a senior IEC officer assisted by an IEC officer.

Achievements
The division actively involved citizens in the pre-planning of the audit of their local councils through the Accountable Governance for Basic Service Delivery Project. These engagements were held in eight chiefdoms in the regions and two communities in the Western Area Rural District. The division also held awareness raising sessions in various ataya bases in the country. A video of the mandate and the audit process was developed by the IEC division for stakeholder engagement programmes

Information Systems Audits Division

The Information Systems Audit Division is one of the recent divisions established by the ASSL and it is located at the 11th Floor of the Freetown City Council Building in Freetown. The division is responsible for conducting all information systems audits within the ASSL. It conducts stand-alone Information Systems Audits and supports financial and performance audits. It was created to examine the information systems security of various MDAs for which systems were reviewed to ensure rules, regulations, and international best practices were followed accordingly. As part of the process, data is obtained from the system, analysed, and verified for financial and compliance requirements.

The division is managed by a Principal Information Systems Auditor, assisted by a Senior Information Systems Auditor and an Information Systems Auditor.

Achievements		
We audited the Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS) at the Accountant General's Department. We further supported seven audits at Public Enterprises Division.		
Planned Activity Implementation		
	Audits Planned	Audits Delivered
MDAs (IFMIS) Stand-alone Audit	1	1
MDAs Supports Audits	8	6
TOTAL	**9**	**7**

Internal Audits Division

The Internal Audits Division evaluates the ASSL's corporate governance, internal controls and risk management and report deficiencies to the Internal Audit Committee and administratively to the Auditor General. The audits conducted are to ensure compliance with laws and regulations so that any deficiency might be reported and acted upon in a timely manner.

	Summary of planned and completed activities for the year 2023			
No	**Institutions**	**No. of Activities Planned**	**No. of Activities Completed**	**No. of Incomplete Activities**
1	Activities	10	10	0
Totals		**10**	**10**	**0**

Achievements
The division planned to undertake 10 activities and successfully completed them.
The head of the Division, Mr Marcus Jabbie attended an IDI Training on Risk Management in Pretoria, South Africa., followed by online follow-up trainings. The outcome of the Trainings was to develop a Risk Management Policy for the ASSL which has been accomplished.

Kenema Division

The Kenema Division is located at 44 Waaman Abu Road in Kenema City. It is responsible for auditing all MDAs, Local Councils, Universities, Schools, and projects in the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone (Kenema, Kailahun and Kono Districts). The division also supports the headquarters in achieving the annual operational plan.

The Division comprises eight technical staff members: one Principal Auditor (Divisional Head), three Senior Auditors, four Auditors, and four support staff.

	Summary of planned and completed activities for the year 2023			
No	**Institutions**	**No. of Audits Planned**	**No. of Audits Completed**	**No. of Incomplete Audits**
1	Council Audits	5	5	0
2	Public Enterprises	1	1	0
3	MDAs	21	17	4
4	Poll Audits	0	2	0
Totals		**27**	**25**	**4**

> **Achievements**
>
> The Kenema Division achieved 92.6% of its planned audits in 2023. Out of the 25 completed planned audits, 19 were included in the Auditor-General's annual report for 2022. Three staff members and the divisional head were sent to participate in the pool audits of two institutions.

Legal Affairs Division

The ASSL established a Legal Affairs Division in April 2023. The Division is manned by a Legal Affairs Manager who is a legal practitioner. The Division is charged with addressing all legal matters related to the technical and corporate matters relevant to the mandate of the Service.

As a new division, the Legal Affairs Manager was able to achieve the following tasks in 2023:

> **Achievements**
>
> - Proffered legal opinions/advice on requests from technical divisions
> - Reviewed contracts, policies as requested by the Corporate Division
> - Revised Study Bond Specimen
> - Developed concept note on Disallowance and Surcharge powers
> - Developed roadmap on the formulation of Audit Service Regulations
> - Study Tour to SAI Ghana to understudy the functions of its Legal Department and application of Disallowance & Surcharge

Makeni Division

The Makeni Division is located at 8 Dr. Vincent Kanu Road in Makeni. It is responsible for auditing all MDAs, local councils, universities, schools, and projects in the northern region of Sierra Leone (Bombali, Tonkolili, Koinadugu, Port Loko, Kambia, Karene, and Falaba districts) and supports headquarters in undertaking audits as per the ASSL's annual operational plan.

A cross section of staff of the Makeni division

1. **Summary of the planned activities/audits undertaken in 2023**

No.	Institutions	No. of Audits /activities Planned	No. of Audits/activities Completed	No. of Incomplete Audits/ activities
1	Council Audits	9	9	0
2	MDAs	13	10	3
3	Poll Audits	2	2	0
	Total Audits	**24**	**21**	**3**

Achievements
The division successfully completed 21 planned audits. Additionally, six staff were sent to participate in the poll audit of two agencies. Furthermore, Mr Abu Bakarr Bah and Mr Sahr Emmanuel Sandi from the division participated in the Forensic Audit Training held from 13th to 17th November, 2023 in Freetown.

Ministries & Local Authorities Division

The Ministries and Local Authorities (M&LA) Division is responsible to audit local councils, some projects and ministries with the exception of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and Ministry of Justice. The two ministries are audited by the General Accounts Division and the third, by the Specialised Audit Division respectively.

The M&LA Division also spearheads the audit of the extractive industries sector.
The Division has it main office in Freetown, Western Area, and representation in the regions – South (Bo), North-West (Makeni) and East (Kenema).

There is always close collaboration between the Western Area and the regional offices during the audit of ministries. A stand-alone compliance audit methodology is used in the audit of ministries, and a financial audit and stand-alone compliance audit methodologies in the audit of councils and projects. These two methodologies are implemented in accordance with the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions.

Acting AG with Staff of the M&LA Division

Summary of the planned activities/audits undertaken in 2023

No.	Institutions	No. of Audits /activities Planned	No. of Audits/activities Completed	No. of Incomplete Audits/ activities
1	Council Audits	2	2	0
2	MDAs	21	19	2
3	Projects	4	4	0
	Total Audits	**27**	**25**	**2**

Achievements

- A total of 25 audits were completed in the FY 2023. Of these, 23 audits were planned for, and four were unplanned.

- All 25 entities were reported in the Auditor-General's Annual Report for 2022.

For projects audited, we received resounding commendation from the international representatives for GAVI and IFAD funded projects.

Performance Audit Division

The Performance Audit Division is established to undertake value-for-money audits.

Performance auditing carried out by ASSL, like any other Supreme Audit Institution, is an independent, objective and reliable examination of whether government undertakings, programmes, systems, activities or organisations are performing in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, environment and whether there is room for improvement.

We use area watching as a primary basis for conducting performance auditing. The objective of the area watch is to gain an understanding on the general operations of the entity, identify weaknesses of public concern in order to make a decision for an audit to be undertaken. We also use regularity audit reports to identify potential areas for performance audit investigation.

The sector assessments are later compiled into an Overall Risk Assessment, where selected possible performance audit topics in different sectors are presented and prioritised. Depending on the results of the assessments, we determine whether the areas are auditable or not considering the materiality, availability of information, potential for change, issues of public interest.

The Division has since its inception produced about 32 reports which have been submitted to Parliament.

The division has 13 staff, and is supervised by the Deputy Auditor-General, Specialised Audits.

During the Operational Planning meeting in November 2022, the division planned to undertake four audits. These were as follows:

1. The utilisation and monitoring of tied grants
2. Management of the distribution of water
3. Management of forest harvesting
4. Implementation of Wetland Conservation

Two of the planned audit were transformed into training audits. The Management of Forest Harvesting and the Implementation of Wetland Conservation. These warranted their planned date to be deferred to 2023.

In addition, in 2023, AFROSAI-E initiated three coordinated audit in order to assess the implementation of the Sustainable Development goals. These include SDG 2.3, 4.5 and 14.2. This ignited the following audit topics:

1. Access to education for special needs children
2. Government effort towards achieving Food Sufficiency by 2023 and impact of climate change on Agriculture (SDG 2.3)
3. Implementation of Wetland Conservation (14.2)

By the end of the year, the Utilization and Monitoring of Tied Grants and the Management of the Distribution of Water were at the execution stage.

Performance Auditors on assignment

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) division was established in 2007 and stationed in the House of Parliament to serve as a liaison between the House of Parliament and ASSL and also to give technical support to Members of Parliament on the Auditor General's Annual Report.

The Division is supervised by the Ag. DAG SA and has a principal auditor, a senior auditor, an auditor, an admin assistant and a messenger.

Achievements
- Holding of Pre-hearing and public hearing with MPs on the Auditor-General's Annual Report   - Facilitating the compilation of the Auditor-General's Annual Report   - Giving in-depth presentation to the Parliamentary PAC on the content of the Annual Audit Report   - Maintaining the ASSL's database of audit recommendations. This is updated as and when management letters are received at the divisions

The table below shows an analysis of the database created by the division in 2023

ANALYSIS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

FY 2021 (Audited in the Year 2022)

Summary Analysis of Database as per Final Management Letter

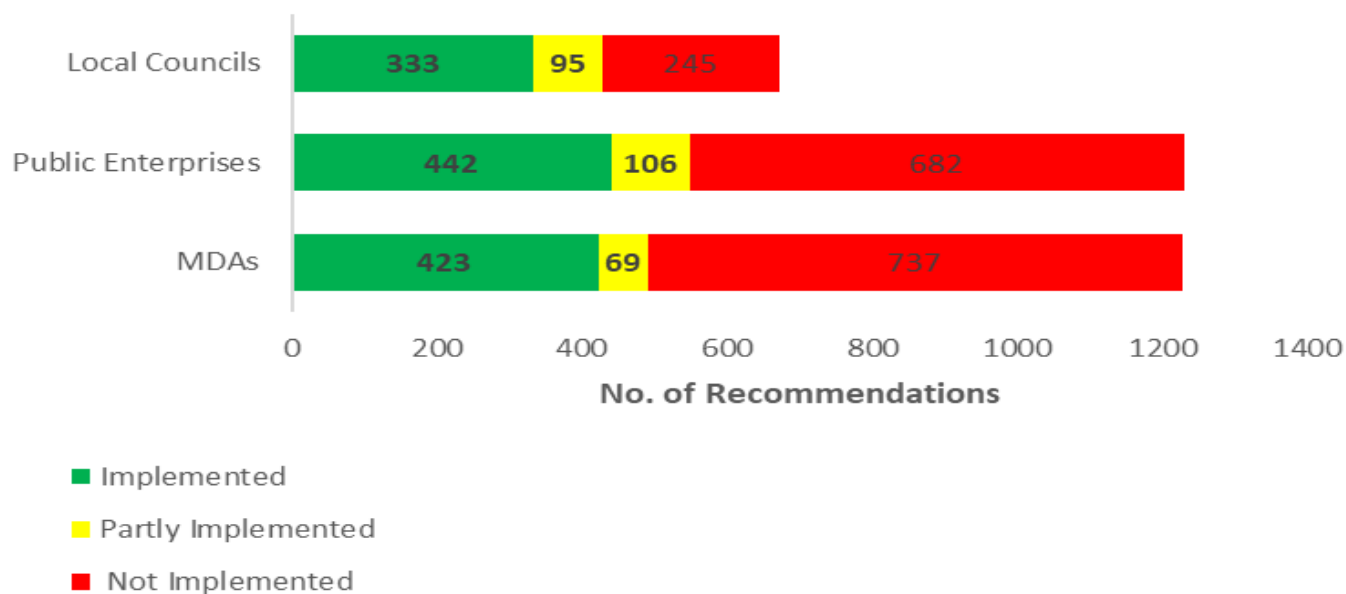| FY 2021					
No	Type of MDA	Total	Implemented	Partly Implemented	Not Implemented
1	MDAs	1,229	423	69	737
2	Public Enterprises	1,230	442	106	682
3	Local Councils	673	333	95	245
Total		3,132	1198	270	1664

FY 2022 (Audited in the Year 2023)

Summary Analysis of Database as per Final Management Letter

FY 2022					
No	Type of MDA	Total	Implemented	Partly Implemented	Not Implemented
1	MDAs	1267	323	102	842
2	Public Enterprises	1571	521	116	934
3	Local Councils	1128	393	93	642

Charts Presentation

FY 2021

	Implemented	Partly Implemented	Not Implemented
Local Councils	333	95	245
Public Enterprises	442	106	682
MDAs	423	69	737

No. of Recommendations

■ Implemented
■ Partly Implemented
■ Not Implemented

FY 2022

	Implemented	Partly Implemented	Not Implemented
Local Councils	393	93	642
Public Enterprises	521	116	934
MDAs	323	102	842

No. of Recommendations

■ Implemented
■ Partly Implemented
■ Not Implemented

Public Enterprises Division

The Division is responsible for auditing all state-owned enterprises, agencies of government, and donor-funded projects. The Division also monitors all outsourced audits given to external audit firms to audit on behalf of ASSL. The Division is headed by a Principal Auditor and has 15 technical staff and an administrative assistant.

Achievements				
No	Institutions	No. of Audits Planned	No. of Audits Completed	No. of Incomplete Audits
1	Public Enterprises	22	20	2
2	Project	7	7	0
Totals		29	27	2

Achievements
The division successfully completed 27 planned audit

Quality Assurance Division

The Quality Assurance Division (QAD) is a new division charged with the responsibility of conducting yearly Quality Assurance Reviews on the work of the ASSL, in line with the approved Quality Assurance Policy. The reviews are limited to individual audit engagements conducted by the divisions and assignments conducted on behalf of other divisions in the pool of assignments.

The Division is housed on the 11th Floor of the Freetown City Council Building and is headed by a principal auditor and assisted by a principal auditor.

Special Administrative Division

The Special Administrative Division (previously known as the Registry Division) has two broad mandates: Registry and Facilities management. The Office Manager and Facilities Officer are the key personnel, supported by a number of other staff.

The Administrative and support staff of this division are responsible for the receipt, registration and dispatch of all incoming and outgoing mails and documents; and the circulation of internal memos and other official documents. They also have a responsibility for archiving all ASSL records and documents.

Facilities Management handles the repair and maintenance of vehicles, motorcycles, generators and other equipment, coordinates the movement of vehicles, maintains the various offices and essential facilities, facilitates the supply and use of fuel and oversees the cost analysis involved in the maintenance of vehicles and motor bikes. They ensure and manage all utility bills, insurances, licenses and agreements with supplier and contractors.

Specialised Audits Division

The Specialised Audits division is responsible for auditing all departments and verifying pension and gratuity payments. It is headed by a principal auditor and comprises two senior auditors, nine auditors and four audit assistants.

No	Institutions	No. of Audits Planned	No. of Audits Completed	No. of Incomplete Audits
Summary of planned and completed activities for the year 2023.				
1	MDAs	18	15	3
Totals		18	15	3

Achievements
The Department was able to complete 14 audits that formed part of the Auditor-General's Annual Report. The total includes the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Technical and Higher Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Fisheries, and the Guma Valley Water Company.

Training, Research and Development Division

The Training, Research and Development Division is responsible for capacity building, and contributes immensely to institutional development. The Training Manager is the Divisional Head supported by two senior auditors. The division is supervised by the Deputy Auditor-General Finance and Cooperate Services.

The Division conducts needs assessment to identify training needs; design training kit/material to address skills gap; conduct annual audit refresher training; source trainers as may be necessary if the required skill/knowledge is not available within the ASSL; collaborate with other Institutions/ donor partners to deliver trainings; participate in the coordination of donor support; mentoring of staff.

The Division also develops and regularly updates audit tools for audit purposes; Organise Annual Planning meeting, design templates for presentations; drafts annual operational plan; staff of the Unit perform the function of Monitoring, Evaluation Reporting and Learning (MERL) in the monitoring and implementation of work plans.

Capacity building is very key to the work of ASSL. Every year the ASSL through the training division empowers its staff to participate in various trainings. The Training division facilitated capacity building for 55 staff who attended 25 international trainings in 2023.

Achievements
Updated the FAM & CAM and organize Refresher Trainings
Supported to Local Councils' Audits
Mid-Year Operational Plan Review workshop
Mid Term Performance Report
Developed a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
Reviewed the ASSL Training Policy
Completion of AFROSAI- E Institutional Capacity Building Frame work (ICBF)

3.2 Challenges and Mitigation

The ASSL like any other organisation is faced with challenges, some of which have been summarised below, as well as the means we have strategised to work around them.

NO.	CHALLENGES	MITIGATION
1	**Accommodation** Getting our own building to house all of our staff in Freetown has been a big challenge as we are occupying offices owned by clients we audit.	In order to ensure that our independence remains intact, we have made it a priority to always meet our financial obligations relating to any accommodation occupied by the ASSL, belonging to our clients. Government has also recommended the construction of our headquarters building in Freetown.
2	**Public Perception** Managing the public's perception of the ASSL is a major challenge. It has become glaringly clear that a vast majority of people are not aware of ASSL's mandate. In terms of its reporting period, people are either confused about when the Auditor-General's report is due or they misconstrue the ASSL's position when it comes to accountability.	To minimise misinformation, we have intensified our engagements with various stakeholders and regularly publish press statements on key issues relating to the ASSL in various newspapers, radio or social media outlets. We also organise radio discussion programmes or take part as studio guests in popular radio programmes around the country. This is done to reduce misinformation andincrease general understanding and public confidence in our work.

3	**Poor Internet Connectivity for Provincial Offices** The IT infrastructure outside Freetown and the headquarter towns is challenging. The internet connectivity is a big problem in the provinces, especially when our staff leave their offices for fieldwork outside these headquarter towns. This makes it difficult to electronically connect with the office.	The ASSL has done all it could within its means to provide connectivity between provincial offices and HQ. It also provided wireless dongles for working outside duty station, but these have proven ineffective.
4	**Weak collaboration between provincial offices and headquarters.**	This is a challenge that causes delay in the work of auditors. The need for collaboration among the auditors in Freetown and region has been topical in most divisional heads meeting with management. Divisional heads have been advised to audit certain MDAs in Freetown and region at the same time and to share experience and concerns.
5	**Delay in payment of audit fees** Some of the clients failed to pay or delay in paying audit fees and this has caused delay in our work. Some of our audits are being out-sourced and we need the fees to negotiate with some of the audit firms. The delay in paying audit fees always causes delay in out sourcing or conducting the audit.	Most clients delay to pay audit fees to us and that has led to no audit or late commencement of the audit. This has led to these institutions not being featured in the AG's annual report. We normally send constant reminders, encouraging them to pay their audit fees.
6	**Delay in disbursement of funds from Ministry of Finance** We expect to get our approved funds from the Ministry of Finance but every year, we encounter delay and this has hindered our work.	The ASSL submits its budget to the Ministry of Finance for its operations. Despite the approval of the budget by the Ministry of Finance, we experience delay in the disbursement of funds. In order for this delay not to continue, the ASSL had lobbied to send its budget directly to Parliament and for the budget to be disbursed to the ASSL without delay. This has been enshrined in the Audit Service Amendment Act, 2023.
7 ▪	Delays caused by auditees in providing relevant information and access to key personnel. Some auditees failed to submit documents to auditors during the audit and this has caused unnecessary delay in the audit work. This also affects the audit of certain MDAs as more time is spent on institutions that delay in submitting documents.	Auditees either failed or delay in submitting information to the auditors and this has cause hindrance to the audit. This issue has always been reported in the AG's annual report. Breakfast meetings has also been held with MDAs during which the Acting AG has appealed to them for timely submission of information and documents to the auditors.

8	**Non-submission or late submission of financial statements /documents.** The law stipulates that public enterprises must submit their financial statements for the previous financial statement to the Auditor General by 31 st March every year. We have seen public enterprises failing to do so.	The Non submission or late submission greatly affects our work schedule and in most cases we have to alter our plans to fit into the statements at hand. In order to get financial statement from clients, we compile a lists of defaulters and publish it in various newspapers and this has led to more submission of FS to us though late in most cases.
9	**Non-Implementation of Audit Recommendations.** One of the strategic outcomes in the ASSL Strategic Plan 2021 -2025 is the implementation of audit recommendations. However, the ASSL has realized that the implementation rate of its recommendations is very low.	We have held several engagements with auditees, CSOs, media and parliament on the need for timely implementation of audit recommendations. Some of these engagements have been held during the audit process, workshops, meetings etc

CHAPTER 4: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
4.1 ASSL ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder engagement is very key to the work of a supreme audit institution. INTOSAI P12 emphasises on the value and benefits of Supreme Audit Institutions – making a difference to the lives of citizens. Principle 6 of INTOSAI P12 focuses on communicating effectively with stakeholders. It deals with the extent to which a Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) can to make a difference in the lives of citizens depends on the SAI.

The ASSL considers stakeholder engagement as one of the important pillars of a credible and proactive supreme audit institution. It is a key instrument in enhancing judicious and transparent supervision of public resources. Principle 6 of INTOSAI-P12 encourages us to respond adequately to the expectations of our stakeholders in a timely manner. We engaged with the following key stakeholders:

1. ASSL Staff
2. Auditees
3. Parliament
4. Civil Society Organisations
5. Media
6. Citizen

STAFF

D41 Various trainings and workshops were held with staff of the ASSL in order to capacitate them and keep them on track with emerging issues and audit methodologies.

The Acting Auditor-General held a meeting with the technical female staff of the ASSL encouraging them to be committed to their jobs and take advantage of emerging audit areas like Information Systems Audits, Environmental Audits, Extractive Industry Audits and Procurement audit. During the meeting, all the female technical staff were given the opportunity to give updates on their personal developments within the ASSL and their academic work.

Media

The Media is very significant to the work of the ASSL. It helps to raise awareness of the work of the institution. When the Auditor-General's Annual Report 2021 was submitted to Parliament, we published a press release in various media outlets including radio, newspapers and social media. We also conducted a media engagement immediately the Auditor-General's Annual Report 2021 was tabled in Parliament targeting reporters from the print and broadcasting media. The purpose of this particular engagement was to raise awareness of the work of the ASSL and the various reports produced by the ASSL including the AG's report submitted and tabled in Parliament. We also got responses and evaluated our relationship with the media and how to improve on our work. They requested for regular and timely engagements with journalists in Freetown and the regions.

Auditees

Management of the ASSL held breakfast meetings with heads of MDAs, Accounting Officers, and other key personnel relevant to the audit process. During these meetings, the Acting Auditor-General and team discussed the outstanding issues and got updates from them regarding the implementation of the audit recommendations as presented in the 2021 annual audit reports of these institutions. They also discussed the roadmap for the 2022 audits. During these engagements, we unpacked the audit process, important areas to focus on during audit and received feedback on previous engagements with our Office including areas of improvement. The representatives from the various MDAs invited, gave feed on the work done by the auditors and promised to address the outstanding issues in the 2021 Auditor-General's Report and fully cooperate with the auditors during next audits.

Civil Society Organisations

The ASSL organised sessions with CSOs in Freetown and the regional headquarter towns to brief them on issues relating to the 2021 Auditor-General's Annual Report and the operations of the institution. We gave an overview of the procedures involved in putting together the Auditor-General's Annual Report, emphasizing on some of the key highlights in the Report. They were informed about the crucial role in helping the public understand the contents of the Auditor-General's Report. Various concerns and suggestions were made by the CSOs and media practitioners during the engagement.

Citizens

The ASSL through the Accountable Governance for Basic Service Delivery project conducted citizens engagement sessions in 10 communities across the country.

The sessions gave the citizens the opportunity to take part in follow-up sessions of the 2021 audit and the pre-planning of the audit of FY2022 of their local councils. The citizens' engagement sessions were done in the following chiefdoms and communities:

1. Maforki and Marampa chiefdoms, Port Loko District
2. Bombali Shebora and Gbanti chiefdoms, Bombali District
3. Nongowa and Small Bo chiefdoms, Kenema District
4. Kakua chiefdom, Bo District
5. Kaiyamba chiefdom, Moyamba District
6. Hill Top community and Waterloo, Western Area Rural District

The objective of the citizens engagement is to support the ASSL in the audit process (pre-planning and follow-up stages), and facilitate a citizens' engagement dialogue, focusing on the following:

1) Gathering background information and relevant documentation that relates to citizens' engagement;
2) manage and facilitate citizens' engagement sessions in local councils;
3) collate and synthesise stakeholders' inputs into coherent reports;
4) raising awareness on the outcome of the report relating to the various councils; and
5) improving the ASSL's visibility and public image.

CHAPTER 5: HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

5.1 Breakfast Meetings with MDAs

The ASSL held breakfast meetings with key MDAs at its headquarters in Freetown. The meetings were held to get updates from them regarding the implementation of audit recommendations in the 2021 Auditor-General's Report and the roadmap for the 2022 audit, which is set to commence this January.

On Tuesday 10th January 2023, The ASSL hosted the Accountant General's Department, the Sierra Leone Police and the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education, Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, NASSIT and few other MDAs were hosted by the ASSL between 10th – 25th January, 2023.

Breakfast meeting with MDAs

5.2 ASSL Engagement with Civil Society on the Auditor General's Annual Report

The Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) on Friday 20th January, 2023 engaged civil society organisations and media practitioners at its headquarters in Freetown. The session was organised to brief them on issues relating to the 2021 Auditor-General's Report and the operations of the institution.

5.3 ASSL Trains Auditors on Environmental Audits

Thirty participants from the Performance and Financial Audit divisions within the ASSL benefitted from a five-day Environmental Audit training organised by the African Organisation of English-speaking Supreme Audit Institution (AFROAI-E). The training was done at the Freetown City Council Building from 23rd - 27th January, 2023.

The objective of the training was for participants to produce an impact-driven environment audit report. The training encompassed four days of in-house presentations on environmental audits taking into consideration performance, financial and compliance audit aspects. The team also embarked on a day of visitation to various sites with potential environmental problems including the Kingtom dumpsite and the coastal site at Hamilton. This was done to broaden the knowledge base and experience of participants.

Participants during the Environmental Audit training

5.4. Audit Service Held Citizens Engagements in Chiefdoms

As part of the World Bank's support to the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) through the Accountable Governance for Basic Service Delivery, the ASSL engaged stakeholders in Maforki Chiefdom in the Port Loko District in a session that allowed them to participate in the follow-up of the 2021 audit, and pre-planning for the 2022 audit of 10 local councils in the Port Loko, Bombali, Bo, Kenema, Moyamba and Western Area Rural districts.

The sessions were held at the chiefdom level from 18th April to 2nd May, 2023. In attendance were key stakeholders including paramount chiefs, chiefdom speakers, section chiefs, town chiefs, civil society activists, trade union leaders and other stakeholders in the chiefdoms.

Citizen Engagement in Maforki Chiefdom

5.5 Audit Service Organised Forensic Audit Training for Auditors

The Audit Service Sierra Leone, with support from the European Union (EU) organised a four-day Forensic Audit Training for twenty-one auditors from 14th to 17th November, 2023 at its head office on the 11th Floor of the Freetown City Council Building in Freetown.

The primary objective of the training was to equip the auditors with the requisite skills needed to investigate, detect and document financial fraud, misconduct, and irregularities across Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The training provided the participants with specialised techniques to uncover hidden financial malpractices and fraudulent activities that would have otherwise remained undetected.

Participants during the Forensic Audit Training

5.6 REPORTS SUBMITTED IN 2023

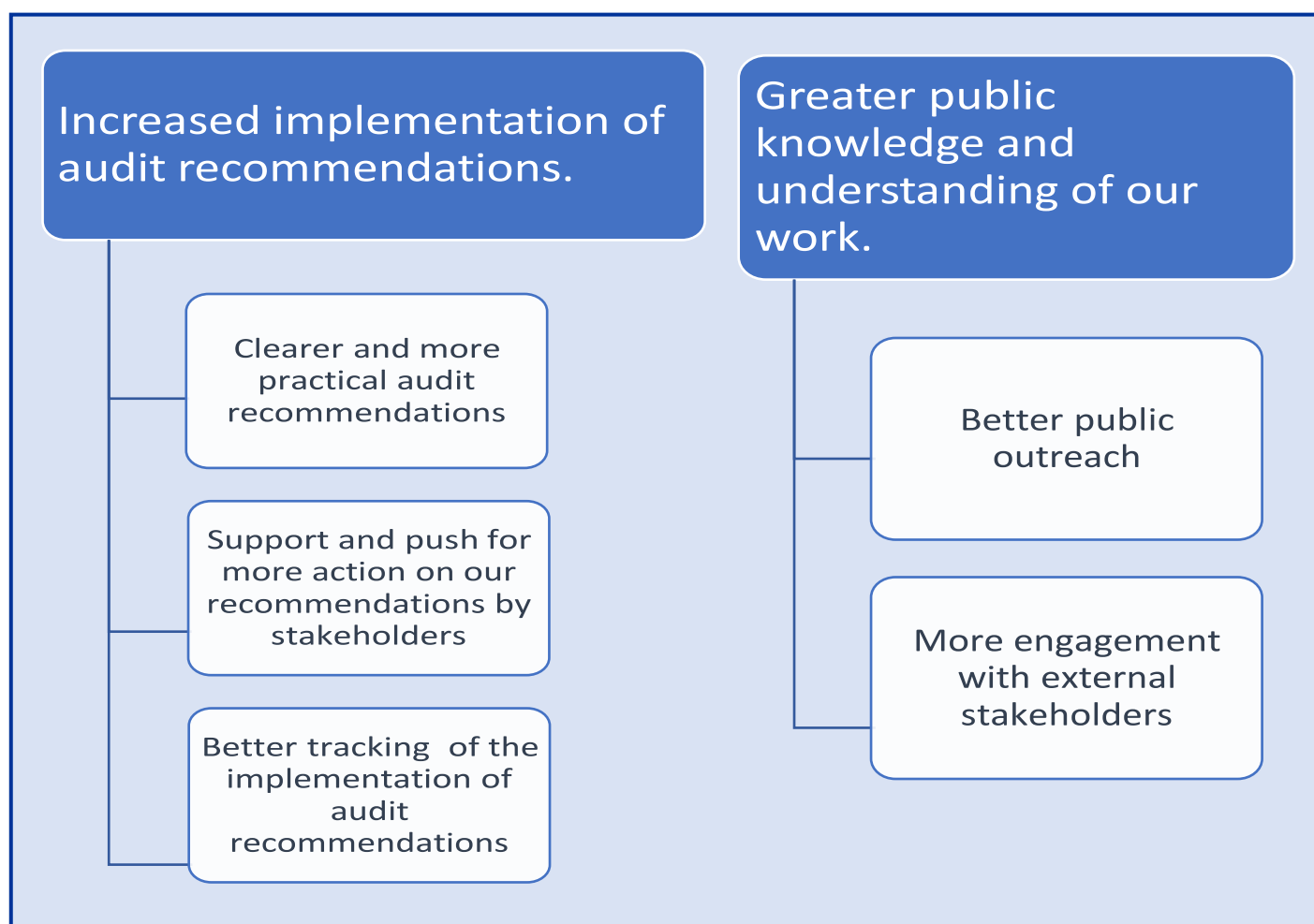| NO.	REPORT	DATE SUBMITTED
1	The Reports on the Audit of the National Covid-19 Emergency Response Centre 2021 And 2022	6th June, 2023
2	Auditor-General's Annual Report 2022	14th December, 2023

CHAPTER 6: HIGHLIGHTS OF PERFORMANCE ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN

6.1 ASSL's Strategic Outcomes

The ASSL is a performance-driven organisation, and the planning and allocation of resources revolve around the careful design and selection of performance measurements. These performance measures relate to the ASSL Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 which focuses on two strategic outcomes. These are increased implementation of audit recommendations and Greater Public Knowledge and Understanding of our work. This report will take a look at the strategic outcomes and the outputs indicated for 2023.

- To be a leading audit organisation promoting excellence and accountability in public institutions.

Vision

- To independently ensure value for money from public funds in collaboration with external stakeholders, through a highly competent and motivated workforce of integrity.

Mission

Increased implementation of audit recommendations.

- Clearer and more practical audit recommendations
- Support and push for more action on our recommendations by stakeholders
- Better tracking of the implementation of audit recommendations

Greater public knowledge and understanding of our work.

- Better public outreach
- More engagement with external stakeholders

6.2 What Has Been Done to Implement the Strategy

In 2016, we set ourselves targets that we want to achieve as an Institution. Every year, we had painstakingly measured our achievements, identified our challenges and made use of opportunities to improve our achievements and better our challenges. This summary tells the whole story of our dream for the ASSL. Where we have realised them fully, we celebrate; where we have fallen short, we continue to press on. The objectives that were achieved will be clearly seen; for those that are still work-in-progress, we will indicate a clear pathway through the table below, how we hope to pursue them, which we believe, will become a reality in our 2021-2025 Strategy. In brief, we achieved 24 objectives, which accounted for 65% of all objectives set; 11 objectives (30%) consisted of objectives not achieved and two objectives (5%) are work-in-progress. Details on the status of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 is provided in the table below.

What Needs to be Done to Implement Our Strategy

Our stakeholders' consultations revealed that some changes must be made if we were to have the desired impact from our work. We have identified key capacities that need to be strengthened for these changes to happen and make us deliver the outputs we seek.

1. **Develop a System of Tracking and Reporting on Compliance with Audit Recommendations**

We have limited resources to track progress made by auditees on the implementation of the recommendations we make every year. Yet, we want to make it easier for the PAC, the CSOs and other accountability bodies to support our efforts by monitoring compliance. We will use our knowledge to catalogue our findings and recommendations in such a way that it provides meaningful insights to the issues that need attention and action for good governance to happen. A system of this nature is already in place and is being handled by our PAC division. An up-to-date tracking database system that ranks public institutions based on their level of adoption/implementation of audit recommendations should however be a useful tool to recognise success, and penalise defaulting entities. We will classify the recommendations into three categories - immediate, mid-term and long term, so MDAs can be ranked on how best they implement the immediate recommendations as compared to one another.

Comment

The PAC division has been classifying the implementation of audit recommendation in a bid to make it easier for external stakeholders to get adequate information and knowledge on the recommendations implemented by MDAs. The PAC division has an up-to-date tracking database system and will soon rank them based on their level of implementation. We have not categorised these recommendations into immediate, mid-term and long term, where MDAs are ranked on the implementation of the immediate recommendations compared to other MDAs.

2. Strengthen Auditing Skills and Quality Control

We want to make our recommendations simple, clear and achievable but we will not compromise the principles and standards of auditing. Our team should be able to make the best judgement and proffer appropriate recommendations. To achieve this, we will conduct a series of training on the ISSAIs to improve their understanding of the standards, especially those that relate to risk-based auditing and reporting. Such training will improve on the overall quality and efficiency of our work. We will increase quality control and supervision of our audit processes to make the exercise more effective.

Comment

During our annual operational planning sessions and the drafting of the ASSL Strategic Plan 2021-2025, we realized that some recommendations were not clear and achievable. Therefore, in a bid to make our recommendations simple, ASSL staff have benefitted from local and international trainings to capacitate them on issuing recommendations that are simple, clear and achievable.

3. Develop Information Systems Audit Capabilities

Our work is expanding and becoming more complex. The expectations from our audit clients and stakeholders demand that we conduct information systems and forensic audits. Developing our IS audit capabilities will ensure that we understand and make reasonable judgment on the systems we audit. An Information Systems Audit division has recently been set up to strengthen its capacity with sufficient personnel and training. This will help us deliver high quality and actionable recommendations drawn from government institutions' information systems.

Comment

Our staff have been capacitated in trainings that empower them to undertake information systems and forensic audits. The information systems audit division was established in 2021. The division has three staff and is being headed by a principal auditor. It was created to examine the information systems from which data is obtained for financial, compliance and performance audits. It conducts stand-alone IT audits. It also supports financial and performance auditors in their audits. Our staff have attended various workshops and seminars on Information Systems Audit organised by AFROSAI-E in South Africa.

An EU-supported consultant was in the office for 30 days to support the Information Systems audits
In November 2023, the ASSL with support from the European Union had 21 of its auditors trained on forensic audits to equip them with the required skills to unearth financial fraud, corruption, misconduct, and other irregularities within public entities.

4. Establish an Audit Management Information System

A computerised way of carrying out audits will increase efficiency and improve the quality of our work. More staff time will then be available to handle the increasing scope of work. Our findings and recommendations will also be documented in a more organised manner, making it easier to produce reports that will support the work of Parliament in the tracking of recommendations.

Comment

An Audit Management Information System has not been established but the process is on-going and we hope to see come into existence before the end of this strategic plan.

5. Improve Communications Capabilities

Our information and communication activities have been commendable. Our reports are being referenced in many quarters where accountability is discussed. There has been conflicting understanding of our work and our role as a supreme audit institution. For this reason, therefore, the public, stakeholders and the institutions we audit require newer and better ways of educating and engaging them on how we work and the outcome of our activities.

We will therefore need to broaden our knowledge and ability to reach out to our various connections in a productive way. We have to understand what channels to use, how to use them and who is responsible. A holistic approach to engaging all stakeholders need to be understood and adopted. As such, we will develop our skills to engage on social media, draft better and clearer reports, dialogue with auditees, engage the PAC and CSOs. We will strengthen our Information, Education and Communications Division by providing more human and financial resources to facilitate the increased media engagement.

Comment

We have increased the SAI's engagement with stakeholders in a bid to reach out to a wider audience. We have developed skills in ensuring that more people are well informed about our work. We produce press releases and public notices on issues relating to our work and published them on various newspapers and social media channels. We have an updated website and Facebook page which we constantly use as a means of disseminating information to the public.
In a bid to maintain a cordial and improved relationship with the PAC in Parliament, we conduct training workshops for them to get detailed knowledge on the work of the Auditor-General and the issues in the reports. We also organised regular meetings with CSOs and the media in a bid to foster the working relationship with them.
We have strengthened the IEC division by recruiting an IEC Officer to work with the Senior IEC Officer in a bid to improve in the SAI's engagement with stakeholders.

6. **Increase Efficiency**

The ASSL is not financially independent and relies on the central government for subvention. Austerity measures have been put in place and this has affected our ability to make available the resources needed to do our work. We will advocate for more and timely funding from the Ministry of Finance for human resources development, information systems upgrade, increased mobility, and better office facilities. We will also advocate for our budget to be submitted directly to, and approved by Parliament. It is important to enable us to strengthen our internal systems and structure. We need to be able to recruit more staff and retain them within a system that recognises performance, supports career growth, considers gender and diversity. Our scope of work is getting larger, extending to emergencies, special requests from stakeholders and emerging fields of audits. More human resources will help us take over our outsourced audits and raise funds from audit fees. We shall review our organisational structure and determine the staff establishment. As our work becomes more diverse and complex, there will be need for more training. Our in-house training capabilities will have to be enhanced. Much investment has been made in our IT systems and we will continue to do more to take advantage of the values of emerging technologies.

Comment

The ASSL has been advocating for more and timely funding from the Ministry of Finance for the running of its office. The office has succeeded in advocating for its budget to be submitted directly to Parliament as enshrined in section 28 sub section 1 of the Audit Service Amendment Act, 2023. We have recruited more staff which has made us take over some of our outsourced audits. More staff are pursuing various academic courses relating to their field of work in the office.

We have reviewed the ASSL's organizational structure to reflect our current arrangement and with a view to improve our efficiency. We have invested a lot on the IT systems and took advantage of the emerging technologies

CHAPTER 7: MEASURING PERFORMANCE

In 2020, we set ourselves targets of what we want to achieve as an Institution in the 2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan. Every year since 2021, we had meticulously measured our achievements, identified our challenges and made use of opportunities to improve our achievements and better our challenges.

This table below tells the whole story of our achievements for 2023 indicating where we have realised them fully and where we have fallen short. The objectives that were achieved are clearly seen and those that are still work-in-progress, we indicate them clearly

Details on the status of the indicators Strategic Plan for 2023 provided in the table below:

7.1 Measuring Performance 2023

Priority	Indicators	2023	COMMENT
OUTCOMES			
Increased implementation of audit recommendations.	Reduction in repeated findings.	Baseline - 6%.	1,237 recommendations were implemented in 2023 as compared to 1,198 in 2022 which shows an increase in the implementation of audit recommendations
Greater public awareness and understanding of our work.	Increased number of constructive feedbacks from auditees, the public and other stakeholders.	Baseline - 6%.	We did more awareness raising on activities of the ASSL by conducting more radio programmes and taking the ASSL to local communities in the various chiefdoms and communities.
OUTPUTS			
Make clearer and more implementable audit recommendations.	Increased number of management responses addressing audit recommendations.	Baseline +10%.	There was an increase in number of management responses addressing audit recommendations. 1,237 recommendations implemented in 2023; which shows an increase from 1,198 in 2022.
Support and push stakeholders to act on our recommendations.	a) Increased action on the AGs report by the PAC. b) Ministry of Finance withholding budget allocation for defaulting MDAs. c) Percentage of recommendations followed up by the ACC.	Make a proposal to establish a sub-committee of the PAC to work on audit recommendation (sub-committee can have an agreed. action plan with MDAs). • Engage the Judiciary on disallowances and surcharges.	a) Even though we had few challenges during 2023 with respect to the PAC hearings, efforts are being on the way for a proper collaboration on following up on the recommendations of the PAC together with ASSL. b) The ASSL has developed a roadmap that aims at putting together a regulation that will support the implementation of the disallowance and surcharge powers in the PFM Act.
Better tracking of the implementation of audit recommendations.	Reports on the implementation of recommendations.	Produce a report recognising auditees who have not been compliant.	We were unable to produce a report recognising auditees who have not been compliant in the implementation of audit recommendations. However, we have been able to establish a database for all recommendations. The 2019 Annual Report of the Auditor General has been used as a baseline.

Better public outreach.	Increased public engagements.	• Update the ASSL website to link to social media accounts and to track usage • Make transcript of PAC hearings available on the ASSL website and social media platforms.	In 2023, the ASSL extended its public engagement with stakeholders by involving citizens to participate in the pre-planning of the audits of their local councils. This was done in eight chiefdoms in the regions and two communities in Western Area. This led to a better public outreach and an increased in public engagements. We held 10 citizen engagements, 15 radio discussion programmes, three CSOs engagements and one media session with journalists. We also held engagements with the media and CSOs in Freetown. We took part in various radio discussion programmes in Freetown and regions. We updated the website and linked the ASSL Facebook page to the website We made transcript of a PAC hearing and posted it on the website.
More engagement with external stakeholders.	Increased number of stakeholder meetings and conferences held.	• Develop a framework for involving other stakeholders such as CSOs at the planning phase of audits as part of the citizen participatory audit approach. •	We held more engagements with external stakeholders like CSOs, media, and auditees. We held 10 citizens' engagements, 10 breakfast meetings with auditees, two media engagements and three CSOs engagements We develop a framework through the support of the Accountable Governance for Basic Service Delivery project and successfully involved CSOs, media and local authorities in the pre-planning phase of the audits as part of citizen participatory approach. It was done in eight chiefdoms in the region and two communities in Western Area.

Priority	Indicators		
		2023	**Comments**
CAPACITIES			
Develop a system of tracking and reporting on compliance with audit recommendations.	Percentage of audit recommendations tracked.	Conduct follow-up audits to ascertain the extent to which audit recommendations have been implemented.	The ASSL has developed a system of tracking and reporting on compliance with audit recommendations and the Public Accounts Committee division is primarily responsible to collect the updates and maintain the database. The Principal Auditor and team has been updating the database of audit findings and recommendations. However, we have not yet done a follow-up audit to ascertain the extent to which audit recommendations have been implemented. This will be done before the expiration of the strategy

Enhance knowledge and understanding of auditing standards.	• Good feedback from QA reviews • Average score in the ICBF domain on audit standards & methodology.	• Improve on ICBF score.	There have been fluctuations in the ICBF scores in relation to audit standards and methodology. This has been mainly due to changes in the key standards which requires additional trainings for staff in the application of the standards. From 2022 - 2023, the average ICBF score is 2.5
Develop Information Systems audit capabilities.	Number of IS audits conducted.	Conduct two IS Audit.	We conducted one stand-alone IS Audit
Establish an Audit Management Information System.	Full implementation of AMIS.	Roll out of the software.	We were unable to acquire an AMIS audit software
Improve Communications Capabilities.	Average Score in the ICBF domain on communication & stakeholder engagement.	• Improve on ICBF Score	There was a slight decline in the score from 2022 – 2023. The average score is 2.73. This is also a strong indication that the SAI is taking steps to fully involve stakeholders at every stage of its activities .
Increase Efficiency.	Average Score in the ICBF domain on organisation and management.	Engage external stakeholders to push for ASSL's budget to be submitted directly to and approved by parliament. • Establish a reward and recognition system. • Improve on ICBF score	The ASSL was able to engage with external stakeholders to push for ASSL's budget to be submitted directly to Parliament by entrenching it in section 28, sub section 1 of the Audit Service Amendment Act, 2023. A revised Reward and Recognition Policy was formulated, and is expected to come into effect in 2024. The average score is 2.84. This shows a significant increase in this domain.

Budget vs actual January to 31st December 2023

Activities	Budget	Jan - Dec 23	Variance	Explanation
Income				
1700 · Audit Fees (Income)	2,587,350	5,322,649	2,735,299	Collection of older debts, sanction such as withholding audited accounts until payments made was introduced
1715 · GOSL- Other Charges	12,500,000	12,500,000	-	
1750 · GOSL-Salaries	53,960,033	47,227,083	(6,732,949)	Some staff left during the year that we had already budgeted for the whole year and so were not paid and were not replaced. Half payment of salary to one suspended staff than budgeted, 15% increment not paid to the two suspended Management. Two new positions we had budgeted to recruit at the start of 2023 were recruited in April (Legal Affairs Manager) and September (IEC Officer) 2023.
Total Income	69,047,383	65,049,733	(3,997,650)	
Expense				
2202 · Audit Fees	150,000	127,650	22,350	Fee relating to 2022 was not paid during the year
2203 · Transfer to CRF	666,500	929,274	262,774	The reason for the favourable variance are as a result of the following: collection of older debts, sanctions such as withholding audited accounts until payments were made was introduced
2205 · Bonus	2,162,688	1,696,670	466,018	Some staff left during the year that we had already budgeted for and so were not paid. Bonus not paid to the two suspended Management staff. Pro-rated bonus paid to two new positions recruited in April (Legal Affairs Manager) and September (IEC Officer)of 2023
2208 · Directors Allowances	384,000	317,000	67,000	The position of one member was vacant since 2022 and thus no allowance was paid
2209 · Gratuity	1,923,807	411,130	1,512,677	Less staff turnover than anticipated
2211 · Local Travelling	1,928,909	1,805,000	123,909	Some administrative travels were not carried-out as the timing coincides with the general election
2212 · Overseas Travelling	996,000	2,008,499	(1,012,499)	The variance due to the volatile exchange rate in the country as both DSA and air tickets are paid in United States Dollars, and more staff participation in meets and workshops than anticipated.
2213 · Overseas Training	1,281,000	3,476,381	(2,195,381)	The variance due to the volatile exchange rate in the country as both DSA and air tickets are paid in United States Dollars, and more capacity building attended than anticipated.

Account	Budget	Actual	Variance	Explanation
2220 · Leave allowance	4,933,084	3,973,092	959,992	Some staff left during the year that we had already budgeted for the whole year so pro-rated leave payments were made. Leave Allowance not paid to two suspended staff than budgeted. Two new positions we had budgeted to recruit at the start of 2023 were recruited in April (Legal Affairs Manager) and September (IEC Officer) of 2023 and so Leave Allowances were not paid
2221 · Electricity	474,000	349,411	124,589	Outstanding bill for FCC are yet to be presented by FCC for payment and the fourth quarter bill for various offices were not presented for payment by the service providers
2222 · Water Charges	44,400	28,213	16,187	Outstanding bill for FCC were not presented for payment
2223 · Telephone & other Communication	964,492	760,464	204,028	The favourable variance is a result of costs such as Windows 10 Professional, and PDF software were not purchased as budgeted
2224 · Life Assurance Policy	39,000	41,975	(2,975)	The Company registered for GST in 2023 and so 15% was charged in their invoice which resulted in the adverse variance
2226 · Medical Allowances	315,000	291,596	23,404	Some staff left during the year so pro-rated Medical Allowances were made. Two new positions we had budgeted to recruit at the start of 2023 were recruited in April and September of 2023 and so pro-rated Medical Allowances were not paid
2228 · NASSIT (10%)	2,595,226	2,387,554	207,671	Some staff left during the year that we had already budgeted for the whole year and so were not paid and were not replaced. Half payment of salary to one suspended staff than budgeted, 15% increment not paid to the two suspended Management. Two new positions we had budgeted to recruit at the start of 2023 were recruited in April (Legal Affairs Manager) and September (IEC Officer) 2023.
2230 · Overtime	72,000	40,519	31,481	Less overtime payment than budgeted due to a reduction in the number of overtime worked by drivers and messengers
2231 · Rent and Rates	1,066,500	1,520,143	(453,643)	Balance rent for FCC 2021 and annual rent for 2022 amounting to Le1.3m was not paid in 2022 as dictated by the contract as certain conditions in the agreement were not met by FCC. However, these outstanding amounts were paid in 2023 having fulfilled the outstanding conditions
				Some staff left during the year that we had already budgeted for the whole