



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

COUNTRY REPORT BY SIERRA LEONE

on

**Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome
of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)**

Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

June 2014

Table of Contents

Section	Page No.
Table of Contents -----	i
Acronyms -----	ii
Preface -----	v
Section I -----	1
Section II -----	11
Women and Poverty -----	11
Women and Land Rights -----	12
Education and Training of Women -----	13
Women and Health -----	16
Violence Against Women -----	18
Women and Armed Conflict -----	21
Women and the Economy -----	23
Women in Power and Decision Making -----	25
Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women -----	28
Human Rights of Women -----	31
Women and the Media -----	34
Women and the Environment -----	36
The Girl Child -----	37
Section III -----	40
Section IV -----	41
Annexes -----	43

Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
A4P	Agenda for Prosperity
BDPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EFA	Education for All
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FP	Family Planning
FSU	Family Support Unit
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation /Cutting
FHHs	Female Headed Households
FHCI	Free Health Care Initiative
FP	Focal Points
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDO	Gender Designated Officer
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate

GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
HRC	Human Rights Commission
IMC	Independent Media Commission
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LGSC	Local Government Service Commission
MARWOPNET	Mano River Union Women's Peace Network
MEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MHHs	Male Headed Households
MRU	Mano River Union
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NAC-GBV	National Committee on Gender Based Violence
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NGSP	National Gender Strategic Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations

PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategies
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SiLNAP	Sierra Leone Nation Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VSV	Victims of Sexual Violence
WB	World Bank

Preface

The Government of Sierra Leone under the leadership of His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma is committed to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in Sierra Leone. The government and people of Sierra Leone continue to make steady progress in the advancement of women and girls as highlighted in the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other international and regional human rights instruments including CEDAW.

Government has demonstrated such commitments through the development of policies, plans and promulgation of legislations for the protection, welfare and advancement of women and girls in Sierra Leone. In 2000, the Ministry developed the twin policies namely: National Policy on the Advancement of Women and the National Gender Mainstreaming Policy. As a way of commitment of the advancement of women as well, the government of Sierra Leone signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on the 21st September and 11th November 1988 respectively. In 2007, a landmark legislation of the "Gender Justice Laws" namely: Domestic Violence Act; Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act; Devolution of Estates Act and the Sexual Offences Act 2012. To support the full implementation of these legislations, the government developed national action plans including the National Gender Strategic Plan (2010-2013); the new Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs Strategic Plan (2013-2018) which is yet to be launched, Sierra Leone National Action on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (2010-2014); National Action Plan on GBV (2012) and National Referral Protocol on GBV (2012) - among others.

With the visionary leadership of the President Ernest Bai Koroma, the government of Sierra Leone developed and officially launched the Agenda for Prosperity using two prong approaches: mainstreaming gender and in the entire document whilst having Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment pillar. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Pillar has four main clusters including governance, violence against women and girls, education and economic empowerment of women. The government of Sierra Leone has been widely acclaimed for such a remarkable approach and the model is been discussed as the best practice for the post 2015 agenda and the SDGs.

The Government of Sierra Leone is mindful of its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and has taken concrete steps in addressing the various critical areas of concern. The report has attempted to respond the issues highlighted in the guidelines for the country reviews and taking cognizance of the consultations especially among the various line Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

Alhaji Hon. Moijue E. Kaikai

**Minister of social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
Sierra Leone.**

SECTION I

Building on the performance of the Gender Desk which was established in 1993, a Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs was created in 1996, with the aim of promoting women's advancement and empowerment in accordance with the BDPfA. It was merged with the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1998 and renamed the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA). The Gender Directorate of the MSWGCA is the national machinery responsible for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and monitoring and implementation of the BDPfA. Three Regional Gender Desk Officers were deployed with logistics to ensure coordination, monitoring and supervising gender mainstreaming and other programming initiatives with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Local Councils, and NGOs/CBOs. The setting up of the MSWGCA, as the national gender machinery for the promotion of the gender agenda, is considered as a major step in efforts aimed at enhancing women's empowerment. A Gender Advisor is situated at State House to advise the President of Sierra Leone on gender and women's issues. These and other initiatives have established the institutional framework for the promotion of gender equality.

A number of policies and laws have been developed to fully promote gender equality and women's advancement as part of the implementation of the BDPfA. This is a major achievement for MSWGCA, which took the lead in developing two national policies: the National Policy on the Advancement of Women; and the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming adopted in 2000 to guide the Government's gender equality project. These were reinforced by the National Gender Strategic Plan (2010-2013), and the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SILNAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; and UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence, adopted and launched in 2009 and 2010 respectively. The MSWGA was also instrumental in establishing a Gender Pillar within the Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018) Sierra Leone's Third generation of Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Gender Pillar articulates the way forward for gender equality and women's empowerment in all of critical areas of concern within the BDPfA.

To date, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has enacted various laws to ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children, such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2005), the Sierra Leone Citizenship Amendment Act (2006), the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Act (2007); and the three Gender Acts (2007) on domestic violence, customary marriages and divorces and the devolution of estates; the Child Rights Act (2007), and the Sexual Offences Act (2012). The enactment of these laws has set the pace for the full implementation of the BDPfA; however the implementation has been fraught with challenges. Notwithstanding, these "Gender Acts" have contributed to the progressive move towards Constitutional Reform. The GoSL through the Agenda for Prosperity has initiated actions for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment including policy and legislative reforms. . The 'twin policies' namely National Policy on the Advancement of Women and the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming are currently being reviewed and collapsed into one National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy.

The Gender Equality Bill, 2011 drafted as a private member Bill spearheaded by the Sierra Leone Female Parliamentary Caucus was not enacted into law before the closure of the last Parliament. In the course of the campaign for the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in 2011, the current president, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma promised the women that a Gender Equality Act would be passed to give the women a minimum 30% quota for Parliamentary Seats and executive appointments. The contents of the Bill however turned out to be inconsistent with certain provisions of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 including Section 56(1) of the Constitution which gives the President discretionary authority to appoint Ministers and Deputy Ministers. Accordingly, there was need for some provisions of the 1991 Constitution to be amended so as to make them consistent with the provisions of The Gender Equality Bill. It is hoped that the current Constitutional review Process will look into this issues.

In appointive positions in Sierra Leone, the Commissioner General of the National Revenue Authority, Administrator and Registrar General, Director General of the Sierra Leone Roads Authority, Solicitor General, Auditor General, the Chief Justice, Brigadier General, Chairperson for Environmental Protection Agency, Head of Electoral Commission and several more as chairpersons of various parastatals. This is considered as one of the greatest achievements since the adoption of the BDPfA. The participation of women in appointive political ministerial positions is higher than in elective positions.

Since the BDPfA, Sierra Leone has had four national elections, in 1996, 2002 and 2007 and 2012. The 2012 presidential elections were a breakthrough for women's political participation. For the first time in the history of presidential elections in Sierra Leone, a woman was selected as the running mate of the SLPP flag bearer (the SLPP is the oldest political party in the country). Four other females were also chosen as running mates by other political parties. Although women form half of the voters it does not reflect in electoral outcomes for women. There was a high national turnout of voters- 87.3 per cent with more females than males registering to vote. Only 65 women were nominated to contest for Parliament and they represent 11 per cent of candidates. This mirrors the same figure as 2007. Out of the 65 women nominated as candidates only 16 were elected to Parliament. This falls short of the 13.7 per cent who were in the Parliament of 2007 and the 30 per cent recommended in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). At the executive level, nine women have been appointed as ministers, although only two have cabinet rank; seven women are deputies in key ministries like Finance, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, which traditionally are occupied by men. Also, one of them is a Minister of State in the Vice President's Office.

Elections for local councils were also conducted in 2012 and citizens elected their councillors and mayors or chairmen. Women were elected as 16.7 percent of mayors, 7 percent of chairpersons, 66.7 per cent of deputy majors, and 19.1 percent of councillors. The local council elections held in 2012 noted an infinitesimal rise, as merely two additional women were elected. This does not reflect a positive change in women's representation at the local level. However, there are individual cases of a drastic rise in the number of women elected to office at local council level. For example in Kailahun, the number of elected female councillors increased from 3 to 12, and the district Koinadugu increased its number of female councillors from 6 in 2008 to

8 women representatives. The role model is the Makeni City Council, where the Mayor and Deputy are women, and 7 out of the 15 councillors are also women.

Government continue to make some steady progress in the area of governance the number of Presidential Appointees (cabinet ministers, Deputy Ministers and Ambassadors) has increased. If you analyse the women in decision-making especially in key Parastals as Directors, you can see that in the day to day running of State Institutions there has been a significant number of female appointed including the “Generals Club” (Auditor General, Commissioner General of the National Revenue Authority, Solicitor General, Administrator and Registrar General, Brigadier General etc) and also within the Presidency. In comparison, Sierra Leone is not performing badly against the global trend on women in decision-making which is approximately 20%. Female representation in Parliament is more or less constant hovering at about 14 percent. In the local councils, there has been much improvement in terms of the number of female Mayors/Chairpersons or the Deputy Mayors/Chairpersons elected (18%). Furthermore, there are positive signs as more women were elected to chair very important sector committees in local councils. These landmark outcomes would have been inconceivable two decades ago thanks to the BDPfA.

Since the adoption of the BDPfA and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, Sierra Leone has made important strides in expanding opportunities for women and girls. However, challenges still remain. Two major interrelated challenges to the achievement of Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment and the successful implementation of the BDPfA include low level of education among women and girls and deeply rooted patriarchal customs and traditions. The practice in rural societies within Sierra Leone, where most people live below the poverty line, is usually to favour education of boys at the expense of girls. Such male preferences have led to huge disparities in educational enrolment and attainment for men and women. Another issue is the women’s allegiance to their respective political parties. In a context where there are limited numbers of women qualified to hold decision-making positions, it is challenging to attain the 30% within an administration. Unless this issue is addressed to allow capable women to serve the Government of the day, the country would continue to face challenges in certain countries including Sierra Leone in achieving the minimum 30% quota for women in Governance. In the provinces, the establishment and location of schools have also had serious implications for educational enrolment and attainment. Where schools are inaccessible due to long distances, parents and guardians may be discourage to invest in their children or wards’ education. Most parents and guardians decided against sending their children or ward to schools located outside the communities. This has affected the enrolment and attendance of girls more than boys, contributing to the particularly low level of education for women in the provinces.

Women are eligible to be candidates for elected positions on the same terms as men. However, for Paramount Chieftaincy positions, traditional and cultural practices pose barriers for women in certain parts of the country. Nomination for such positions is not under the purview of political parties but purely the ruling houses. At the moment tangible measures have not been put in place or adopted to increase the number of women standing as candidates under the political party’s ticket. In addition tribal customs and practices on property rights differ throughout the country. In the North and Western Areas women can own land in their own rights whereas in the South and Eastern areas, women can only have access to land through their male relatives.

Another major challenge is that the MSWGCA has not been effective in carrying out its mandate, because of high senior staff turnover and the weak human-resource and institutional capacity. This is in spite of the various institutional and human-capacity training and the financial and material support received from partners. It is currently staffed by 9 of the 36 senior staff that are needed for it to effectively carry out its mandate. Six are in Freetown and the other three are at the provincial headquarter towns. As a result, the ministry is constantly in need of technical and financial resources to enable it engage effectively with its various partners.

The ministry's problems have been compounded by low budgetary allocations from the national budget. Unlike other social sectors like health and education, whose share of the national budget ranged between 4.1% to 9.6% and 11% to 19.4 respectively in 2005-2010, the MSWGCA's annual budgetary allocation has been a dismal 0.2 % to 0.7% of the national budget and 1.1% and 2.7% of the sectoral allocation. Due to its poor financial and technical capacities, and in spite of its inter-ministerial mandate, the MSWGCA is one of the weakest and least influential institutions on the national political scene.

Although all MDAs are expected to have Gender Designated Officers (GDOs) or Focal Points (FPs) to follow up on the government's mainstreaming agenda, only a few (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Tourism and Culture); have designated GDOs/FPs. In the past the GDOs were usually junior administrative-level personnel with little or no technical and managerial capacity to effectively function and/or engage with their respective management teams in promoting the government's agenda. However, in 2013 the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs organised a training workshop for senior level personnel of the Ministries/Department/Agencies. Also, given that gender is mainstreamed in all the pillars of the Agenda for Prosperity, MDAs are obliged to establish functional GDOs/FPs to ensure the effective gender mainstreaming of their programmes and activities.

The Government of Sierra Leone through the Human Resource Management Office and the Public Service Commission has recruited a total of ninety five senior professional staff in a bid to strengthen the Institutional and technical capacity of the Ministry. The professional staff will be given some orientation on the mandate of the Ministry.

Sierra Leone has embraced the Beijing Declaration by making progress in establishing relevant legal framework in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The Constitution of Sierra Leone (1991, amended 2001) provides for equal rights for men and women. However, in **Section 27(4) (d)**, the Constitution nullifies much of the promise of the equality provision in Section 27 (3). The exceptions in **Section 27(4) (d)**, in effect allows for discrimination in areas that mostly affect women. Consequently, most of the significant laws that are discriminatory against women still apply, rendering the equality provision in Section 15 seriously inconsistent and unproductive. There is an ongoing Constitutional Review Process which ends in March, 2015. As part of its strategies, the new Constitutional Review Commission plans to work closely with civil society groups and Non-Governmental Organisations including

UN Agencies and other women's Organisation to ensure that women's voices are heard on gender equality clauses which do not promote gender equality are repealed from the Constitution.

Women constitute 22.5 percent of the Constitutional Review Committee. They would actively contribute to the deliberations to ensure that the amended Constitution provides an adequate blueprint for achieving social cohesion, good governance, application of human rights, including women's rights and afford equal opportunities to Sierra Leonean women, men, girls, and boys as outlined in the BPF. During the Constitution Review process in the period 2006 to 2008 women recommended that the discriminatory provisions against women in Section 27(4d & 4e) of the 1991 Constitution should be expunged and others such as that relating to citizenship be amended. The recommendation on 27 (4d) featured in the Committee's report to Government. It is now evident that the 2008 report of the previous Committee will form part of the background documents in the work programme of this 2013 Committee. Women's organizations/groups and mixed gender human rights activists expect that the recommendation for the removal of Section 27 sub-sections 4d & 4e will be upheld in 2015 and its outcome reported to government. This report will however be subjected to a referendum after passage in Parliament thus affording the people themselves a final say on their issues.

The enactment of the Local Government Act, No. 1 of 2004, which by Section 95 (2) (c), on the composition of Ward Committees, requires that at least fifty percent of the other members besides the Councillor and Paramount Chief of a Ward, should be women. It provides that a Ward Committee shall comprise "not more than ten other persons, at least, five of whom shall be women, resident in that ward and elected by the ward residents in public meeting". A ward is the smallest political and administrative unit in a Chiefdom represented by a Councillor in a District Council of the Local Government. This is a very positive legislative measure as it affects the rural women who are generally and heavily marginalized in their participation in political decisions that affects them.

Another significant legislative break through is the passage of the Chieftaincy Act No. 10 of 2009. Section 8 makes women eligible to contest for and become Paramount Chiefs. This is a significant development because the chieftaincy, particularly paramount chieftaincy in the Northern and some part of the Eastern Provinces, was a no go area for women. By this law, women are now eligible to contest for and become paramount chiefs anywhere in Sierra Leone. Further and by subsection (1) (b) candidates can now trace their lineage from both the paternal (male) and maternal (female) descent. Before the passage of this act, rules regarding chieftaincy was customary and patrilineal.

Progressive as Section 8 of the Chieftaincy Act, 2009 may appear to be, the proviso contained in subsection (1) (b) of Section 8 of same and the provisions of Section 72 (3) of the 1991 Constitution strengthens the status of customary law and usage as far as Chieftaincy is concerned and therefore women may be lawfully disqualified from contesting for paramount chieftaincy if the customary law of the chiefdom so determines.

In 2007 the Government enacted the Domestic Violence Act, the Devolution of Estates Act, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act and the Child Rights Act. All of these Acts have been specifically tailored to address issues of violence, discrimination and abuse against women and girls as recommended in the BDPfA. The Sexual Offences Act 2012 consolidates all other previous provided Acts aims at eliminating the rates of sexual offences through increasing criminal penalties; the challenge lies in the implementation. The Sexual offences Act heralded the setting up of the Saturday courts to facilitate the timely prosecution of sexual offences. However, the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Bill, which went to Parliament at about the same time as the Sexual Offences Bill, is still pending.

Customary and traditional norms in the country continue to constitute a serious and central obstacle barring women from accessing rights and contributing meaningfully to the progress of the implementation of the BDPfA. Apart from a few areas of progress there is huge gender disparities in social, economic and political spheres as a result of customary practices which obstruct women's effective and gainful engagement. Women's effective and systematic participation is yet to become institutionalised.

The Anti-Human Trafficking Act was enacted in 2005. The Act gives legal basis to prosecute offenders. Section 2 (1) of the Act creates the offence of trafficking in person whilst Section 2 (2) and (3) defines what trafficking means. The National Task Force on Trafficking in Person was established in November 2006. Its primary purpose was to coordinate the implementation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, with focus on the enforcement of the law against trafficking, rendering assistance to victims of trafficking, prevention initiatives geared to improving the economic wellbeing, and opportunity for potential victims, and to increase public awareness of the causes and consequences of trafficking.

An Anti-Trafficking Sub-Committee on Migrant Workers was set up in August 2013. The Sub-Committee is chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security with other representatives from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Sierra Leone Police and Immigration Department. Their responsibility is to monitor indicators or evidences of trafficking during and after the process of recruiting persons, many of women are young women recruited as house maids, in Sierra Leone to work abroad, as well as during periods covering the contracts of foreigners recruited from abroad to work in industries or service-based businesses in the country.

The Ministry has been part of the national advocacy machinery to get adequate Budgetary allocations to support gender equality and women's empowerment. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development continues to strive for better allocations. There was an increase in budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Health for the first time ever to support the Presidential Initiative to end Teenage Pregnancy for the first time.

Sierra Leone has made some strides to address the issues of sexual and gender-based violence since the adoption of the BDPfA. A National Committee on Gender-Based Violence (NaC-GBV) has been established comprising of government institutions, UN System, International and Civil Society Organizations and National Non-governmental Organizations including traditional

and religious leaders as well as community leaders working on the prevention and response to issues of gender-based violence across the country. To this end, a NaC-GBV Secretariat has been set up within the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs with a designated Coordinator. The National Committee meets monthly and the meetings are chaired by the Hon. Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs with the Assistant Inspector General of Police for crime serving as co-chair. This is a mechanism that facilitates dialogue between the Government and monitor issues of violence against women as prescribed in the BDPfA. There is a national Platform for state and non-state actors to meet and work jointly on the Presidential Initiative to end Teenage Pregnancy

Child Welfare Committees have been established at chiefdom, district and regional levels to sensitize the communities about disadvantages of forced and early marriages including other harmful traditional practices in their communities. Child focused organizations mostly civil society organizations have established Child Rights Coalition (CRC) working in close collaboration with the district, regional and national protection committees to undertake awareness raising campaigns on child protection issues. Massive sensitization and awareness raising is ongoing throughout the country to completely eradicate child marriage and child betrothal. At the same time the MSWGCA has decentralized its functions to district levels where CSOs are core members of the Directorate of Gender at these devolved areas.

Office of the Gender Adviser to the President

His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma historically appointed a Gender Adviser to the Presidency (GAP) in April 2012. The Adviser is a core member of the President's Advisory Council that meets weekly with the President to brief him on relevant national issues. The primary role of the Adviser is to provide technical advice to the President and his Government on issues relating to gender and women's issues. As a result, the GAP works with all relevant Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Development Partners, Civil Society, Traditional and Religious Leaders to support Government's national and international priorities and obligations. Considering the challenges faced by the MSWGCA, the appointment of the Gender Adviser sent a very strong political statement nationally and internationally that the President is committed to improving the status of gender issues by highlighting it as a national priority agenda.

This office of the GAP was established during the development of the Third Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper III (PRSP) commonly known as the Agenda for Prosperity (A4P). In the A4P document, a two-prong approach to have Gender as a standalone pillar as well as mainstreaming across all other pillars is maintained. Today, this initiative has become a best practice attracting numerous accolades both nationally and internationally; receiving invitations to share the process for other countries within the African Union to adopt. The GAP in close collaboration with the MSWGCA and technical support from Development partners ensured that gender is mainstreamed across all other pillars in the A4P.

The President's leadership and political support on gender issues has shown that gender issues should not be perceived as the sole responsibility of the Gender Ministry, but that complimentary structures could be created to effectively support the Ministry in to effectively implement their core mandate. The Office of the Gender Adviser to the President with budgetary allocation and

clear roles and responsibilities is another best practice for Sierra Leone that could be adopted by other countries to promote gender equality and the empowerment for women.

District Budget Oversight Committees

The government of Sierra Leone established the District Budget Oversight Committees which constitute mainly of non-state actors to monitor government budgeting and expenditure trends put in place by the various MDAs. This is to ensure that the civil societies and are part of the governance and promoting service delivery to the people of Sierra Leone.

Open Government Initiative (OGI)

The concept of the Open Government Initiative was proposed by His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma 2008. Good governance and dialogue may be impeded by the blight of corruption which disrupts free flow of information, undermines accountability and transparency for decisions and discourages greater participation in the decision making process.

The Open Government Initiative is designed to play a crucial role in the good governance of a democratic society by ensuring transparency and accountability, promoting participation and the rule of law through dialogue between the government and the citizens of this country. Since its inception in 2008, the Open Government Initiative is working with Civil Society Organizations and the media in facilitating dialogue between the citizens of this country and their Government. The Open Government Initiative partners with local Civil Society Organizations in the areas of sensitization and mobilization to enhance the impact of its activities to the Sierra Leone society.

The Open Government Initiative conducts two town hall meetings engaging the three arms of government and local councils in dialogue with communities throughout the country. The Open Government Initiative has a weekly radio/television discussion program 'Have Your Say In Governance' where brings heads of Ministries, Para-statal are invited to educate, discuss and answer questions on current governance issues with a representative from the Civil Society. The Open Government Initiative holds intermittent Consultative meetings with the Government, Civil Society Organizations, Media Houses and stake holders to review its activities, highlight challenges and reflect on the lessons learnt, and to map the way forward.

The Open Government Initiative through dialogue between Members of Parliament and Councilors improved dialogue between them and their constituencies and wards, judiciary court training for Justice of the Peace, gender-based violence and juvenile justice among others to ensure awareness raising between right holders and duty bearers. The OGI is cognizant of the fact that without free flow of information and dialogue democracy cannot prevail and development remains unattainable. The open Government Initiative is committed to the promotion of free flow of information and citizen participation in governance through dialogue with the government. The OGI is headed by a strong female in the person of Madam Khadija Sesay

Since the restoration of peace in Sierra Leone all stakeholders have joined in the recovery and peace building efforts, especially with the active support of development partners as evidenced in the compact with the UN Peace Building Commission (PBC). Various initiatives/programmes were established and funded under the Peace Building Fund (PBF) to ensure that the hard-won peace is nurtured and maintained, and that Sierra Leone would not relapse into war. Even where there have been hot spots of political violence that posed threats to the safety and security of persons, especially women and girls serious responses were made to diffuse and prevent conflicts through relevant strategies/actions including dialogue, mediation and reconciliation. A number of representatives of women's organizations like Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), National Organization of Women Sierra Leone (NOW-SL), Women's Forum and Gender Empowerment Movement have been trained by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNOWA on negotiation and mediation techniques. Women's Participation in negotiations is being recognized but the level has not increased much. The progress is slight. The UNWOMEN in partnership with ECOWAS including the UN office in West Africa (UNOWA) have conducted a three phased training programme in West Africa to strengthen the capacity of women peacebuilders as negotiators and to build a community of practice. UN Women has also supported a 4 year project on Gender Responsive budgeting jointly with UNCDF. This has resulted in dedicated budgetary allocations to districts. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) is replicating this programme at a national level in 2014.

Although Sierra Leone has made significant socio-economic achievements in recent years, the Country is unlikely to meet all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The country is doing well on Goal 6 on combating HIV/AIDS. According to government reports, there is also the potential to meet Goals 2, 4, and 5 on universal primary education child mortality and maternal mortality, with the application of sustained efforts at the same level of operations. Gender parity in education has improved. Great effort has been made to narrow wide disparities in the enrolment between boys and girls. In 2003, the gender parity gap reduced for primary education. Of the number of children enrolled in primary school, 58 percent were boys and 42 percent were girls. Combining both primary and secondary schools, 63 percent of those enrolled were boys and 37 percent were girls. Gender parity index gross intake ratio for primary in 2012 is 1,000 according to the World Bank data. Such dramatic increase in the attendance of girls was the result of an affirmative action that provides support for the education of the girl child. Primary education school fees for all children were abolished in 2001 and in 2003, full support was provided for all girls entering the Junior Secondary School in the Eastern and Northern Regions because these regions were recording low numbers in attendance. Although gender parity has been reached in primary education, gender disparity still persists in secondary and tertiary education. The reasons include early marriage and teenage pregnancy, a school environment that is not conducive to learning (inadequate physical infrastructure and gender insensitive teaching-learning processes), cultural and religious biases, and a low number of female teachers. The Presidential Initiative to end teenage Pregnancy is one of the significant national responses in this area. Efforts such as free girl child education, national strategy for the reduction of teenage pregnancy, improving on the quality and accessibility of education continue to ensure effective retention and completion of primary and secondary school by girls.

Since the end of the war Sierra Leone has placed poverty reduction high on its development agenda and has developed three poverty reduction strategies (PRSP 2005-2007), Agenda for Change (2008-2012), Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018)). The first two PRSP had social protection and gender issues incorporated into the document. The Agenda for Prosperity has a total of eight pillars with a standalone gender pillar as well as gender mainstreamed into the entire document in a bid to address critical areas of the BDPfA.

Sierra Leonean women have not been able to achieve more equitable political representation at different levels of government to respond or meet goal three. The number of women holding political offices has been fluctuating with an increasing trend. The number of women in appointive positions is steadily increasing as a result of the H.E the President Ernest Bai Koroma's commitment to Gender Equality. It is hoped that the Affirmative Action Bill which calls for a minimum 30 per cent quota for women in decision making positions will be enacted by the end of the 2014.

In 2000, the maternal mortality ratio was 1,800 per 100,000 births, the world's highest. Sierra Leone's 2008 Demographic and Health Survey indicated maternal mortality had dropped dramatically to 857 per 100,000 births. However according to WHO (2013) Sierra Leone's maternal mortality rate has risen to 1100 per 100,000 births. Even with the introduction of the free healthcare initiative in 2010 by the Government of Sierra Leone (which provides free healthcare services to pregnant women and lactating mothers), the possibility of achieving the MDG target of 450 by 2015 still remains a considerable challenge. Noting that teenage pregnancies contribute 30-40% of maternal deaths, the Presidential Initiative to end Teenage Pregnancy will undoubtedly lower the current maternal mortality rates by 2015.

SECTION II

Background

This section looks at the twelve (12) critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It reviews progress, challenges and recommendations on each of the critical areas within the period under review.

Women and Poverty

Situational Analysis

The BDPfA notes that women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in decision making processes.

In 2011 according to Sierra Leone Household Survey 52.9 per cent of the population is poor as compared to 66.4 percent in 2003. Using these poverty lines, the urban poverty rate was substantially lower than the rural poverty rate, and has also showed a sharper decline over this time period. Rural poverty was 66.1 percent in 2011, compared with 78.7 percent in 2003. Urban poverty was 31.2 percent in 2011, a decline from 46.9 percent in 2003, despite an increase in poverty in the country's largest metropolitan area, Freetown, from 13.6 to 20.7 percent.

Female headed households comprised 17.5 percent of total households in 2003 and 25.8 percent in 2011. In 2003, there was not a significant difference in poverty levels between the two groups, with 61.3 percent of male headed household and 59.8 percent of female headed households living below the poverty line. By 2011, however, the difference was significant, 47.5 and 43.8 percent of households respectively. Disaggregation by rural/urban status shows, however, that female-headed households in urban areas are doing about the same, with approximately one-quarter of both groups of households being poor. In rural areas, female headed households are doing better than male-headed households, with 61.4 percent of male headed households below the poverty line compared to 57.1 percent of female headed-households.

Highlights of Achievements

National Development Planning Processes

Since the end of the war Sierra Leone has placed poverty reduction high on its development agenda and has developed three poverty reduction strategies (PRSP 2005-2007), Agenda for Change (2008-2012), Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018)). The first two PRSPs had social protection and gender issues incorporated into the document. The Agenda for Prosperity has a separate gender pillar as well as gender mainstreamed into the entire document in a bid to address critical areas of the BDPfA.

Women and Land Rights

Highlight of achievements

The Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment has developed a draft National Lands Policy. A coalition of civil society organisations collaborated with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs to ensure that the draft Land Policy is engendered. Additionally the Agenda for Prosperity has also put in place concrete strategies to address women's access and control over productive resources especially gender sensitive land reforms including the under mentioned:

- Institute reforms in relation to regulation that govern the way in which land ownership rights and obligations are determined.
- Ensure and promote participation of local communities and relevant stakeholders in planning, design and implementation processes, with special emphasis on gender equality.
- Developing a comprehensive land use policy, especially for agriculture.
- Developing and enacting an integrated legal framework that ensures that women have equal rights with men in terms of land ownership. The framework will also address land market issues; the land register must be modernized with a committed political support and extensive informed public debate.
- Developing a single National Land Register Institution for all parcels in the Country using modern IT register technologies and a GPS parcel number system.

Challenges

Studies reveal that two main land tenure systems exist in the country: one based on customary laws and traditions as in most rural communities in the provinces and the other based on statutory freehold as it is in the Western Area and commercial centres of provincial headquarter towns. In the customary tenure system, access to land is determined by the traditional authorities especially chiefs and family heads who have the powers to allocate land. However especially in traditional setting, the opinion of women in such allocation is hardly observed as they rarely hold such decision making leadership positions. Although this traditional means of allocating land may vary from one locality to another, across the board, the notions do not accord women the right to own or inherit land. The leasehold tenure system is based on English law that was inherited at independence and has provision for an individual to own land privately with Title Deeds and such land maybe sold, rented or transferred. However, because of poor administration of land and the prevalence of male egoism within most family circles, both land tenure systems tend to marginalize women in cases of inheritance.

The government of Sierra Leone in 2007 enacted the Devolution of Estates Act. However this legislation does not include family, chieftaincy and community properties which make it extremely difficult for women especially those in the rural areas to inherit such properties as land in the rural settings is regarded as community property. Most of the women find themselves in the informal sector and predominantly in the agricultural sector. Unfortunately, the poor

especially women are perceived to have inadequate and unsecured ownership to this asset which reduces their ability to substantially improve their socio-economic development.

Recommendations for Action

The Government is seeking to address the following:

- Eliminate harmful practices and discrimination against rural women and address customs and traditions which justify and perpetuate them;
- Pay special attention to the needs of women and ensure that they participate in decision-making processes at the community level and in development planning, and that have equal access to basic services and infrastructures and economic opportunities, including income-generating projects and credit facilities;
- Ensure that all discriminatory customary law is repealed or amended and brought into full compliance as regards land ownership and women's right to inheritance and
- Expedite its efforts in adopting the proposed Land Policy and address the adverse effects of land acquisitions and long-term leases on women, and ensure that they are involved in the negotiations of land lease agreements and that their livelihoods are not negatively affected by such agreements.
- There harmonise legislation and have consistency in all laws both customary and legislative.

Education and training of women

An analytical report on the 1985 census confirmed that in 1985, 91.5 per cent of all females in the country aged five (5) years and older were regarded as illiterate. While the average level of illiteracy in the whole country for females exceeded 90 per cent in all the districts, Kambia and Koinadugu were the worst at 97 per cent. The illiteracy level for females in the western area was the lowest at 67 per cent. The 1985 report also confirmed that out of a total of 1.32 million of females aged five (5) and older, 1.02 million and 0.01 had completed primary and secondary school respectively.

High levels of illiteracy have had implications at a political level, where women and women's issues have generally been relegated to the back burner. There was always a great lack of awareness of the need of women to participate in issues affecting their lives, even among the women themselves. It was therefore relatively easy for successive governments before the war to ignore issues affecting women and girls. The low level of female participation in formal education has had negative consequences in terms of economic viability, politics, health and social welfare level for women.

The mismatch between the supply of tertiary educational skills and labour-market demands (for mining, agriculture and other priority areas) will be addressed in the country PRSP III. Clearly, the technical skills needed to meet the demands of the mining, agriculture; road building and physical infrastructure sectors are inadequate. Government will therefore revamp TVET and skills training through a new accreditation and competency framework, providing more relevant courses and programmes, new apprenticeship schemes, and greater public-private partnerships.

At the same time, efforts will be made to attract women to train for technical jobs that are presently dominated by men. Alternative funding mechanisms for students in higher education, including loan schemes, would be explored, and grants targeted transparently to the most needy students.

Efforts to improve the literacy rate amongst adults will be intensified, through provision of adequate adult literacy and civic education programmes. Programmes will especially target women.

Building women's human capital regardless of current educational status yields economic returns nationally. This is being shown by the Barefoot Women Solar Engineers Initiative, which was established in 2010 with the aim of supporting Government's rural electrification project, and is a best practice for empowering illiterate women in rural communities. The Government's Solar Training College is managed by 12 illiterate community women who benefitted from a six-month solar training programme in Telonia, India. These women came together to form the Barefoot Women Solar Engineer Association of Sierra Leone; they manage the affairs of the college and serve as its tutors. The college's overall aim is to provide rural electrification based on solar energy throughout Sierra Leone.

The college also aims to train 15,000 rural unemployed and unemployable men, women and youth in income-generation, micro-enterprise activities, in order to create and sustain the demand for their products in rural communities.

Highlights of Achievements

Chapter II, Section 9(1) and 9(2) (a) of the 1991 Constitution provides for gender equality in education and outlines state directives that secure women's rights to equitable access to and benefit from education. **17.2 Education Act 2004.**

To further concretize this constitutional guarantee, an Education Act was passed by Parliament to serve as the linchpin of efforts to achieve the numerous policies and initiatives including the global Education for All (EFA) targets by 2015 and the BDPfA. The Act makes Basic Education compulsory and stipulates punitive measures for deterrents and reaffirms the specific concerns of the Education For All (EFA) goals 4 and 5 to increasing enrolment and eliminating gender disparity in education for girls and women.

Policy Instruments/Measures

Non – Formal Primary Education Programme (NPFE)

In 1992, the government in close collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning (MODEP) established the Non- Formal Education Programme. The initiative included gender sensitive measures targeting school age girls, of 14 years and above, in peri-urban communities and remote villages with little or no formal schools. Features and incentives included free tuition, placement/enrolment in schools with close proximity to pupils' homes, flexible and shorter school hours. These encouraged communities to release girls who are typically engaged in household chores and street hawking, to attend these less conventional schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommended strongly for girls who

become pregnant to go back to school once they deliver safely. This recommendation is implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology coupled with provisions enshrined in the Education Act 2004. Additionally the Sexual Offences Act 2012 has criminalized sexual activity with children below the age of 18 years which will also contribute to the retention of children especially girls in schools.

National Education Policy (NEP) 1995

To consolidate on the gains of the Non Formal Education (NFE), a new education policy was adopted in 1995. The thrust of the policy introduced a nine year “Basic Education System” which allowed for a wider range of subjects to broaden options for accessing tertiary education either along the polytechnic or university stream. Cognizant of the existing drive to achieving gender parity and meeting the education needs of all, the policy outlined the under-stated gender objectives:

- To increase enrolment, retention and graduation rates at all levels, projecting a minimum graduation target of 70% for girls at Basic Education level and the achievement of 30% female literacy by 2000.
- To take necessary action to promote cultural, social and attitudinal change in favour of female advancement through education. Steady progress towards attaining these targets are being achieved as highlighted in subsequent sections of the report.

The formal school system comprises of pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior/tech-voc school levels. However, pre-primary enrolment starts at an average age of three years and continue for a three-year period. Children are normally enrolled at primary level at age six which is sufficient enough to cope with the curriculum of primary education in Sierra Leone. At an average age of 11 years, children are expected to have completed the primary level and enroll into the junior secondary school where they are due to spend another three years before writing the Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE) and graduate to the senior secondary school (SSS) level.

Challenges

Cultural and economic factors are also cited as contributing factors to the low level education of girls and women. The economic crisis that Sierra Leone experienced in the 1980s meant that as resources became scarce and priorities were set, most families chose to educate their males rather than their girls and women. This preference is common in many African societies, where families believe that by educating their boys they will support their own kin, whereas educating their girls they will benefit the families those girls marry into.

Girls in Sierra Leone face barriers to education, including high rates of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, extra fees and sexual exploitation. Girls living in rural areas face a particularly elevated risk of child marriage. There is gender disparity in secondary education. A significant number of children are out of school for reasons ascribed to poverty, inadequate facilities, school environments that are not ideal for learning, including (sexual) abuse, and inadequate parental

care. Orphaned children and those not living with their biological parents are at a greater risk of missing out on education.

The historical prevalence of early and forced marriage in Sierra Leone has also played a role in the decisions of parents on whether to educate their girl children or withdraw them from school, further compounding the illiteracy level of women. The high illiteracy rate among women in Sierra Leone before the war has greatly disadvantaged them, particularly in the public arena. Women have been greatly unable to participate fully in many sectors of public life and therefore have not mustered enough power to change lives and social status of women.

In addition, in the provinces, the establishment and location of schools have been far from the neediest rural communities resulting in long distances to be covered by children from their homes to school approximately 5 kilometres. This has discouraged parents and guardians from sending their children and wards to school. Such reluctance appears to have affected the enrolment and attendance of girls more than boys, which has contributed to the particularly low level of women in the provinces.

Recommendations for Action

- Intensify programmes of improvement to the educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and raise awareness of the importance of education as a human right and a basis for the empowerment of women; Conduct public education on the three “Gender Acts” including the Sexual Offences Act and ensure its implementation and enforcement.
- Build the capacity of the Local Councils to ensure equal access for women and girls to all levels of education and retain more girls in school, and intensify its efforts in reducing geographical disparities in access to education;
- Ensure that sexual abuse and harassment in school are adequately addressed and punished, and effectively implement the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy (2013) as well as the Teachers Code of Ethics, and remove all barriers to school attendance by pregnant girls and young mothers;
- Integrate age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights into school curricula, including comprehensive sex education for adolescent girls and boys covering responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Women and Health

Women have long experienced unequal access to basic health services as well as unequal opportunities for the protection, promotion and maintenance of health. In the face of this plight, the Pan African Women’s Association (PAWA) Sierra Leone used the platform for International Women’s Day in 1992, to advocate about the hardships women were enduring under the structural Adjustment Programmes. They cited the limited access to health care facilities as well as the exorbitant costs attached to what little health care was available.

The persistently high Maternal Mortality rate was due also to the low percentage of births attended to by skilled personnel, the lack of policies to guide the delivery of obstetric care and the absence of a reproductive policy. There were very few well-equipped Maternity Units and blood banks in the country which most pregnant women cannot afford. Other contributing problems include paucity of trained staff, poor conditions of service and the high exodus of qualified practitioners.

Despite the inadequacies in the Sierra Leone 1991 Constitution in addressing the health of women per se, the government and its partners have, over the years, embarked upon a number of efforts to provide women with necessary health services with varying success.

Highlights of Achievements

The National Health Policy formulated in 2002 addresses Governments key concerns. The Policy notes the need to treat its citizens with particular vulnerability resulting from gender, poverty, conflict and specific health problems. Among the national priority health problems identified in the policy are: unsatisfactory reproductive health, especially Maternal Mortality and other health concerns including Sexually-Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV/AIDS and nutrition-related diseases.

At the moment the government is very supportive of maternal health and welfare issues. There is a strong political commitment supported by substantial bi-lateral and multi-lateral donor assistance. A “reduction of Maternal Mortality Association” comprising medical professionals and a “Maternal and Child Health Project” are in place. Increasing access to health facilities for women and girls such as through national budgetary allocations through Gender Responsive Planning supported by UN Women yielded noteworthy models which should be replicated nationally.

According to the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), the Maternal Mortality Ratio and Infant Mortality Rate of Sierra Leone in 2008 stood at 857/100,000 live births and 89/1000 respectively. The Child Mortality Rate was 140/1000 live births [DHS 2008] and one quarter of all under-five deaths occurred during the neonatal period. Even though no recent DHS has been conducted to assess progress in mortality, successive Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) conducted in 2005 and 2010 show that infant mortality has reduced from 170/1000 live births to 128/1,000 live births and child mortality reduced from 286/1000 live births to 217/1000 live births, respectively. There has been significant reduction in maternal mortality ratio from 1800/100,000 live births in 2001(Joint WB, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO Report) and 1,300/100,000 live births (MICS 2005) to 857/100,000 live births (DHS 2008). The causes of child mortality are primarily malaria, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, and malnutrition. Overall, malaria accounts for 50% of all under-five hospital consultations and 41% of all under-five deaths. A high adolescent fertility rate, 122 per 1000, and high early child bearing rate of 38%, together add to health risks for adolescent mothers and their babies. Although remarkable progress has been made in reducing morbidity and mortality, Sierra Leone has high infant- and under-5 mortality rates, and low life expectancy, compared to many countries in the sub-region such as Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire.

In addressing infant, under-five and maternal mortality, the Government will: Strengthen and expand the Free Health Care initiatives; Improve adolescence and young people's reproductive health and rights, including implementing laws and policies, and a youth friendly environment; Improve child health by scaling-up Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses (IMNCI); Provide food and nutrition security services, focusing on women and children from conception to 2-years (see Nutrition services, below); Build capacity of health service providers and ensure provision of appropriate services for victims of GBV; Ensure enforcement and implementation of free medical examination and treatment, as per the Domestic Violence Act 2007 and Sexual Offences Act 2012; Provide therapeutic services for all cases of unsafe abortion; review and enact the abortion law; Ensure male support in female health care; Strengthen community outreach and participation to elicit positive behavioural change amongst men and women at all levels; improve coordination at all levels ensuring all actors are working from approved protocols; increase program integration.

Challenges

Due to early and forced marriages young girls start child bearing as children and are exposed to risks and complications arising out of early pregnancy and child birth. Coupled with high illiteracy and inadequate health infrastructure these women and girls do not access adequate health care for themselves in such circumstances.

Traditional practices such as venerating women because of their childbearing capabilities and encouraging them to increase the number of children they bear, tend to put their health at risk while satisfying societal norms. Negative traditional and cultural practices have also prohibited women from enjoying sexual and reproductive rights.

Recommendations for Action

- Government to sustain the free health care initiative for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. This can be up scaled into a policy and legislation for implementation by successive governments
- Scale up community wellness initiative programme currently implemented by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs with support from UNFPA, UNICEF UN Women among others to contribute to the reduction of maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, advocacy for gender equality and awareness raising on the Gender Justice Laws (Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009; Domestic Violence Act 2007; Devolution of Estates Act 2007; Sexual Offences Act 2012).

Violence Against Women

Women and girls became particular targets of gender based violence during the civil conflict in Sierra Leone. They suffered abduction and exploitation at the hands of the various warring factions. They were raped, forced into sexual slavery and endured acts of gross sexual violence. They were taken from their homes and villages by force. Refusal to comply with the demands of their captors often met with death. For those fortunate enough to escape, there followed displacement and separation from families. Humanitarian workers meant to offer them respite

and protection, also violated their rights. Women and girls were compelled to barter their bodies in order to survive and access aid to which they were rightfully entitled. Girls as young as twelve (12) years were forced to pay for aid with sex to secure assistance for their families. Statistics pertaining to the numbers of women affected by the conflict in Sierra Leone remain a huge concern. In 2003, Human Rights Watch published a report in which they stated that as many as 275,000 women and girls may have been sexually violated during the war (TRC Report Vol. 3B page 86). The incidence of domestic and gender-based violence received prominence in the aftermath of the war especially during hearings presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Family support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police was set up in 2003 to specifically handle cases of rape, other sexual offences and domestic violence. Currently there exist Thirty four (34) Family Support Units throughout the country. However, Officials at the FSU stated that in most cases families prefer to solve the issue at home and only in the cases of death are cases prosecuted. However, a supportive environment has been created for the efforts to address domestic violence by They are specially trained in the collection of necessary evidence for prosecution of such crimes and handling of victims of such abuses. Branches of this Unit have been opened in all police stations in the headquarter towns. Family Support Unit Personnel benefited from series of trainings on gender and Human Rights organized by the UN Country Team and there are plans for further trainings to build their capacity.

The TRC found that women and girls were subjected to systemic abuse during the conflict, such as torture, rape, sexual abuse, sexual slavery, trafficking, enslavement, abductions, amputations, forced pregnancy, forced labour, and detention. The TRC noted that due to discrimination, women suffer from low socio-economic status. This affects women's personal security, inhibits their access to and participation in public decision-making bodies, and is a barrier to viable economic activities. Many of these practices remain after the civil war. Women and girls continue to suffer gender based violence even today. The policy as well as programme responsiveness by Government in this area are a good indication of political commitment.

Highlights of Achievements

Sierra Leone has ratified CEDAW, "the Women's Bill of rights". However there is slow implementation of CEDAW and the gender justice laws, resulting in under-reporting of violence. VAWG, particularly sexual violence, remains a major challenge. One in six women report being raped or sexually assaulted in their lifetime. Nearly 70% are attacked by someone they know. Research has shown that most women do not report their rapes to police, so the actual number of women raped may be much higher. Progressively the country is moving in the right direction with political will from the highest office in the land. More effort is required at programme and service delivery level to make the policies become beneficial on a daily basis.

Sierra Leone became one the first countries in the Continent (3rd in West Africa) to develop a National Action Plan to implement UNSCRs 1325 and 1820. The Sierra Leone National Action Plan affirms that effective steps to prevent and respond to acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of peace and security. It focuses on core areas of

reducing violence against women and girls: Prevention of conflict including violence against women and children; Protection, empowerment of victims and vulnerable persons especially women and girls; Prosecute, punish perpetrators effectively and safeguard women and girls' human rights to protection during and post-conflict, as well as rehabilitate victims and survivors of sexual gender based violence.

The Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs developed the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence in 2012. To strengthen the prevention and response mechanisms to end violence against women and girls government has created a mechanism in the Agenda for Prosperity to include interventions like: increase prevention and response mechanisms to ensure violence against women and girls is reduced by at least 5% and response increased by at least 10%; implement gender justice laws and strengthen access to legal protection for women and girls, in partnership with non-governmental organizations and development partners; enhance knowledge and skills of the judiciary and the security forces to respond to VAWG; programmes will be initiated to ensure that community-level prevention and response agents, particularly men, boys, school heads, and traditional/cultural and religious leaders, have a better understanding of and attitudes towards VAWG and its implications, and respond adequately to VAWG; roll out the National Action Plan on GBV and strengthen GBV referral protocol linkages; enactment of law against underage initiation rites of passage for girls; reduce underage initiation rites of passage of children as commitment to Universal Periodic Review; strengthen accountability for gender equality through monitoring and reporting on international and national instruments, with CSO engagement. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs will shortly table before Parliament the Maputo Protocol for Parliamentary review and subsequent ratification. This will further reinforce government's commitments and responsiveness to gender related issues.

The Sierra Leone Police has made remarkable progress in handling violence against women issues including but not limited to the following: development of a Standard Operating Procedures and other tools for investigation of sexual and domestic violence cases; training of 450 police personnel from general duty and Family Support Unit on procedures and processes for the investigation of sexual and domestic violence; case management guidelines developed for investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence cases and outreach programmes to educate communities on laws relating to sexual and domestic violence laws; in 2008 SLP developed the twin policies (gender mainstreaming and Sexual Exploitation and Harassment); establishment of gender Directorate within the SLP which is headed by an Assistant Inspector General of Police; key player in the establishment of Women in Security Sector Sierra Leone (WISS-SL) comprising of Police, Military, National Fire Force, Prisons Services and other private security entities and the establishment of local police partnership boards in communities among others.

Challenges

The formal justice institutions, such as the FSU based in the Sierra Leone Police, have displayed weak capacity to provide redress for VAWG survivors. This is largely due to inaccessibility to the majority of women and girls, leading to impunity for sexual violence related crimes. VAWG Cases are either resolved or under review by the police; few are charged to Court, and very few of those are successfully prosecuted. Community level mechanisms, such as traditional dispute

resolution mechanisms, have the potential to bridge the gap in justice service provision, but require more awareness on rights of women and girls. Furthermore, there has been little engagement of men and boys as agents of change. These gaps offer opportunities for more progressive action.

The Sexual Offences Act 2012 and the Domestic Violence 2007 has stated that victims of sexual and domestic violence shall receive free medical examination, treatment and certificate but this is yet to be actualized for the vulnerable women and girls. There is also lack of police officers in some of the remote areas to handle violence against women issues since these are criminal matters. Currently the country lacks to a great extent safe homes for victims/survivors of sexual and domestic violence much as the government has built two and working on the modalities to get them operationalized.

Recommendations for Action

Implement the strategies outlined in the Agenda for Prosperity especially under the violence against women and girls cluster in pillar 8 which will form the key interventions;

- To increase prevention and response mechanisms to ensure violence against women and girls is reduced by at least 5% and response increased by at least 10%.
- Implement gender justice laws and strengthen access to legal protection for women and girls, in partnership with non-governmental organizations and development partners.
- Enhance knowledge and skills of the judiciary and the security forces to respond to VAWG.
- Programmes will be initiated to ensure that community-level prevention and response agents, particularly men, boys, school heads, and traditional/cultural and religious leaders, have a better understanding of and attitudes towards VAWG and its implications, and respond adequately to VAWG.
- Roll out the National Action Plan on GBV and strengthen GBV referral protocol linkages.
- Roll out guidelines to the Local Councils in the Northern and Western Regions
- Enactment of law against underage initiation rites of passage for girls; reduce underage initiation rites of passage of children as commitment to Universal Periodic Review.
- Strengthen accountability for gender equality through monitoring and reporting on international and national instruments, with CSO engagement.
- Provide victim support for domestic and sexual violence

Women and Armed Conflict

Statistics pertaining to the number of women affected by the conflict in Sierra Leone was a huge concern. In 2003, Human Rights Watch published a report in which they stated that as many as 275,000 women and girls may have been sexually violated during the War.

While peace has returned to the country, many of the wounds still remain open. Women and girls still bear the scars, both physically and psychologically. Many have borne children from their horrific experiences. Many women are shunned and punished by members of a society who

refuse to acknowledge that it is their failures that led to this conflict and their failure to protect women and girls that has led to the plight in which they find themselves today. Women who were violated throughout the conflict are ostracized from society for giving birth to children of “rebels.”

Highlights of Achievements

To address this untoward state of affairs, the government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with Civil Society and the UN Agencies developed and officially launched the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP) on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (2010-2013). The SiLNAP has five pillars including participation, protection, prevention, prosecution and coordination. The Security Sector (Office of the National Security, Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, Sierra Leone Police, Sierra Leone Prisons Services, Sierra Leone Fire Force and private security services) apparatus played critical role in its development.

In 2010 the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) NACSA/UNWomen/Victim of Sexual Violence’s (VSVs) Project provided training based on the prioritized needs of the female survivors war. Beneficiaries received skills, a micro grant and a tool kit worth after training of 3-6 depending on the cause. This was meant to assist women in starting over, through engagement in meaningful and productive activities. There has been no progress in terms of training the remaining victims of sexual violence since the phase wise trainings ended in 2012, due to the challenge of mobilizing additional funds. In 2011 the UN Women funded a beneficiary impact assessment of the first phase of the VSV Project. Most of the beneficiaries found the training programme empowering and are gainfully using the livelihood skills acquired and that it has helped to increase their self-esteem. This programme model should be up-scaled and replicated.

The National and Regional Steering Committees for the full implementation of the SiLNAP established.

Challenges

- Lack of sufficient funds to fully implement the reparations programme undertaken by NaCSA
- Inadequate financing of the full implementation of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 and its active institutionalization of the Steering Committee in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs.

Recommendations for Action

- Setting up of full-fledged follow-up committee to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the TRC especially those dealing with reparations of female war victims.
- Ensure that widows can enjoy their rights to property and to inheritance without restrictions, including by implementing the Devolution of Estates Act No. 21 and

adopting measures to modify social and cultural patterns that perpetuate women's inferiority and impede their access to property and inheritance; and,

- Ensure that all potential beneficiaries of war reparation, especially women victims of conflict-related sexual violence, are adequately compensated without further delay
- The Human Rights Commission and NACSA amongst others should be strengthened in moving forward these recommendations.
- To make the National and Regional Steering Committee for implementation functional

Women and the Economy

Before the war women constituted the majority of the rural labour force. They made vital contributions to the economy. They have always played a substantial role in the subsistence of the family. Women provided more than 60 per cent of farm labour for food production. While men had greater access to ownership and control of cash crop production, women were engaged in subsistence farming and provided the labour force for cash crop production. A micro-finance demand survey, undertaken in 2008, revealed that 90% of households were not served by any formal, semi-formal or informal lending institutions or groups.

The Government and its partners have been focusing on access to financial services has the potential for enhancing women's economic, social and political empowerment, transforming power relations between women and men. Giving women access to working capital and training helps mobilize their productive capacity to alleviate poverty and maximize economic output. In Sierra Leone women have shown potential to be bankable. They are taking more advantage of access to microfinance services than men. There is still however a large percentage of women excluded from financial services provision, especially in the rural areas: men tend to have more access than women in commercial bank "big" borrowing.

Women make up 80% of the clients in the microfinance industry, mostly aged between 18 and 60 years. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) offer both individual and group loans. The number of clients covered by the nine MFIs in August 2012 was estimated at 78,000, approximately 75% of whom were women. The demand for microfinance services in Sierra Leone is estimated at 160,000 potential clients. Four of the ten commercial banks have downscaled to provide financial services to low income persons. There are nine MFIs and NGOs implementing best practice microfinance procedures. Many of the women that chose not to access the services did so because they felt costs were prohibitive: interest rates too high, or cash collateral exorbitant. The women engaged in business, whether or not they had access to alternate sources of financial services, were using Rotating Saving and Credit associations, "osusu", as a means of augmenting their income. For many women, 'osusu' activities, with terms unique to the various groups served, was their only means of access to financial services. The village savings and loan association methodology is tried and tested, and has been implemented successfully in remote and deprived target groups: it allows women's groups to engage in savings and loan activities utilizing their own resources. There exist about 1,000 cooperatives in Sierra Leone.

Highlight of Achievements

The appointment of deputy ministers to key ministries, such as agriculture, is significant because according to The African Development Bank¹ women comprise the majority of the agricultural sector, where they engage in subsistence farming and marketing of produce. Finance is another powerful position as it is this ministry that draws up and allocates the national budget and would be responsible for any future developments in gender responsive budgeting.

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Sierra Leone economy. It contributes 40 to 50% of GDP, about 10% of exports, and provides employment to approximately two-thirds of the population. Whilst agricultural growth has significant poverty reduction effects, the sector is characterised largely by smallholders, practising mainly subsistence agriculture. In recent years, efforts have been made to introduce mechanised farming practices, through provision of tractors, power tillers and other agricultural tools to farming communities.

Over 400 Agricultural Business Centres (ABCs) have been established under the Smallholder Commercialisation Programme and provided with appropriate support to enhance agricultural productivity and promote value addition. Access to market and to credit are severe constraints: to ease them 907 kilometres of feeder roads have been rehabilitated, linking 96 ABCs to production and market centres; 3,071 hectares of inland valley swamps have been rehabilitated to facilitate multi-cropping farming practices; while with support from IFAD, over 50 Financial Services Associations (FSAs) have been established in rural areas to increase farmers' access to credit.

Challenges

Women have traditionally engaged in low-income activities such as petty trading. A labour force Survey conducted in 1988 and 1989 revealed that 69 per cent of petty traders were women, whereas 86 per cent and 67 per cent of men were service personnel and professional/technical workers respectively. While many worked as traders, women did not record substantial growth in their economic activities as a result of inadequate skills, low educational status, low economic power and access to credit facilities. The disparity between the economic status of women and men has often resulted in economic dependency by women. In many instances, men exploit this dependency to consolidate control over women, thus further perpetuating their poverty.

Recommendations for Action

- Promote women's economic empowerment through establishment of women's empowerment fund, expanded business training programmes, strengthening other sources of finance, and support for regional and national business associations.
- Access to new and renewable energy for women to increase the number of women adopting clean cooking fuel and household energy; support existing initiatives such as the Bare Foot Women Solar Energy College. A plant will be established for production and training on energy-saving stoves.
- Policies, regulations and practices will be reviewed and adopted to address gender barriers to business development and growth for women entrepreneurs.

¹African Development Bank Publication, Sierra Leone Gender Profile, 2011

- Development of financial literacy training modules for training women entrepreneurs, including training for various sources of finance (Women's Fund, micro-credit, cooperatives).
- Promote social corporate responsibility through public-private partnership to enhance women's access to finance and capacity building.
- Promote learning and best practices through regional integration for women-led businesses.

Women in Power and Decision-Making

In 1996, Women were very instrumental in the transition phase from military rule to a democratic civilian rule in what was known as Bintumani I, II and III with the theme "Peace before elections or elections before peace". This all important meeting, chaired by an eminent woman, led to the conduct of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 1996 and subsequent handing over of power to the democratically elected government by the military in the same year. During the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections there was a female Presidential aspirant who withdrew her candidature just before the polls. Two female Cabinet Ministers were appointed in a Cabinet of 25, and 2 Deputy Ministers out of 20 constituting 8 per cent and 10 per cent female appointees respectively. The 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, the first after 20 years of one party dictatorship and military rule, saw women winning five out of the eighty Parliamentary seats, indicative of 6.25 per cent female representation.

In 2000 the 50/50 Group was established with a mission to increase the level of female participation in government and to ensure gender parity in all walks of life. Since then it has been involved in the training of women politicians. They also lobbied the political parties for the reservation of a certain percentage of political seats for women during the 2004 local government elections.

The Presidential and Parliamentary elections of 2002, also had a female Presidential candidate, and in the Cabinet of 21 Ministers appointed thereafter, 3 female Ministers representing 14.3 per cent while Deputy Cabinet Ministers increased to 30 per cent. By the Parliamentary elections, women won 18 out of the available 124 parliamentary seats which translate to 14.5 per cent representation. The Deputy Speaker of Parliament was a woman.

For the Local Government elections of May 2004, of the 19 Councils, only one woman was serving as chairperson while 2 are serving Deputy Chairpersons. Out of 149 paramount chieftaincy positions, 11 are women representing 7.4 per cent. As earlier discussed, the Ward Development Committees (WDCs) have a 50-50 gender composition.

Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) has been established and charged with the responsibility of recruiting staff in the Local Councils. The commission comprise eight (8) members, three (3) of whom are women. The LGSC is expected to ensure gender parity in recruitment processes.

Highlights of Achievements

To enhance women's participation in decision-making, **Section 95 (2c) of the Local Government Act 2004** provides that within every District, the Ward Development Committees i.e. the level closest to the community pursues a statutory 50/50 gender balance affirmative policy. This has created an unprecedented opportunity for accommodating women's views and voices in public policy formulation to ensure that women's priorities and concerns are equitably reflected in local planning. This initiative is expected to help dispel myths surrounding women's participation on an equal basis with men. It is expected to serve as grooming ground for women leaders and showcase the added value of women's participation in public and political life to overall development.

On November 2012, Sierra Leoneans went to the polls to elect a President, Members of Parliament, Mayors/Chairpersons and Local Councillors. This was the third election since the end of the civil war and the first election to be solely led by the National Electoral Commission (NEC); international partners had in previous elections given tremendous technical and other support to NEC.

Ten political parties and nine Presidential candidates contested the elections. None of the ten political parties was headed by a woman and no woman contested the Presidency. The 2012 presidential elections were a breakthrough for women's political participation. For the first time in the history of presidential elections in Sierra Leone, a woman was selected as the running mate of the SLPP flag bearer (the SLPP is the oldest political party in the country). Four other females were also chosen as running mates by other political parties.

There was a high national turnout of voters- 87.3 percent with more females than males registering to vote. Only 65 women were nominated to contest for parliament and they represent 11 percent of candidates. This mirrors the same figure as 2007. Out of the 65 women nominated as candidates only 16 were elected to Parliament. This falls short of the 13.7 percent who were in the parliament of 2007 and the 30 percent recommended by the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). The high number of women registered as voters does not automatically result in women elected to the posts.

Compared to 2002 little progress has been made. In the Legislature, women's representation is on the decrease since 2002 and 2007 when 18 and 16 women were elected respectively out of a required number of 124 Parliamentarians. In the 2012 elections the number of women elected was again 16. The type of voting system employed in the 2007 and 2012 elections, "First Past the Post", did not favour women, especially in the absence of an official policy on affirmative action. Women have to depend on the goodwill of the party symbols committee which is predominantly male dominated.

In spite of a drop in the number of elected female Members of Parliament (MPs), the 2012 General Elections resulted in three women candidates for parliament gaining the highest number of votes cast in national elections. Two of these women won in two constituencies in the Northern region, which traditionally does not elect women as chiefs and does not encourage women to hold decision making positions.

At the executive level, nine women have been appointed as ministers, although only two have cabinet rank in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS), and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). The other seven women are deputies in key ministries like Finance, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, which traditionally are occupied by men. Another female is a Minister of State in the Vice President's Office. The participation of women to appointive political ministerial positions is higher than in elective positions because of President Dr. Ernest Koroma's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The appointment of deputy ministers to key ministries, such as agriculture, is significant because according to The African Development Bank² women comprise the majority of the agricultural sector, where they engage in subsistence farming and marketing of produce. Finance is another powerful position as it is this ministry that draws up and allocates the national budget and would be responsible for any future developments in gender responsive budgeting.

Elections for local councils were also conducted in 2012 and citizens elected their councilors and mayors or chairmen. Mayors were elected for Freetown, Bo City, Kenema City, Koidu City, Makeni City and Bonthe Municipality. Women were elected as 16.7 percent of mayors, 7 percent of chairpersons, 66.7 percent of deputy majors, and 19.1 percent of councilors.

The local council elections held in 2012 noted an infinitesimal rise, as merely two additional women were elected. This does not reflect a positive change in women's representation at the local level. However, there are individual cases of a rise in the number of women elected to office at local council level. For example in Kailahun, the number of elected female councilors increased from 3 to 12, and the district Koinadugu increased its number of female councilors from 6 in 2008 to 8 women representatives. In Bo, Moyamba and Pujehun districts, there were drops in the number of female councilors elected. The role model is the Makeni City Council, where the Mayor and Deputy are women, and 7 out of the 15 councilors are also women.

The Chairperson of National Electoral Commission (NEC) is a woman, and 40 percent of the Commissioners are also women. This is the first time in the history of the country that a woman is heading this institution which was previously deemed a male purview due to the violence associated with elections in the past. Also, the elections of 2012 were the first to be solely Sierra Leonean led.

The number of women in the Judiciary is increasing following the appointment of a female Chief Justice. In the Supreme Court, out of five judges, two of them are women. In the Court of Appeal, out of six judges, three are women. In the High Court, out of ten judges, four of them are women.

Challenges

Several reasons have been given for the decrease in the number of female parliamentarians. Firstly, there is no statute/law which requires political parties to give a quota of their party symbols to female candidates; hence parties did not pursue a policy of affirmative action in the award of party symbols to capable and competent women to run for elective seats. This was in spite of their promises to adopt affirmative action in the award of symbols to women. Secondly, political parties did not give financial assistance to female candidates so that they can run

²African Development Bank Publication, Sierra Leone Gender Profile, 2011

effective campaigns. Women's low levels of education, low self-esteem regarding political positions and discriminatory traditional beliefs regarding women's ability to head decision-making bodies were barriers that prevented them from running effective campaigns and winning. Additionally, in some instances, women candidates were sent to constituencies where their party had a weak presence.

Only 8.5 percent of women are top managers in the public sector and 20 percent in the diplomatic service and boards of parastatals. The National Gender Strategic Plan, 2010-2013 attributes this to the structural discrimination which women face in law and in practice; the pervasive beliefs surrounding women's roles in decision making, coupled with their multiple roles as wives mothers, family caregivers and employees.

Paramount Chiefs are the traditional rulers in districts where this institution exists. The Western Area does not have this form of leadership. Paramount Chiefs in each district elect one of their peers to represent them in Parliament and they occupy 12 seats. However, in the Northern region and parts of the Eastern region women are debarred from holding this office. In regions that have female Paramount Chiefs, no woman was elected by her peer paramount chiefs to represent a district in parliament. The elections failed to enhance women's representation and are a microcosm of what obtains at all levels of governance.

Recommendations for Action

- Government to develop a comprehensive policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy
- Government to enact into law Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill to include the minimum 30% quota for women in governance at all levels as one of the flagship projects in the Agenda for Prosperity
- Development Partners support women veering for leadership positions through capacity building, mentoring, coaching and material support for campaigns
- Use the current Constitutional Review process to support women's participation in elective and appointive positions.

Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women

In 1988, a Women's Bureau was established in the Ministry of Social Welfare and Rural Development which coincided with the year Sierra Leone signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination against Women. Going forward, in 1993, a Gender Desk was established in the office of the chairman and head of state of the National Provisional Ruling Council to advise government on modalities for mainstreaming gender, promoting the advancement of women and coordinating gender and development activities at large.

Building on the performance of the Gender Desk, a Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs was created in 1996, with the aim of promoting women's advancement and empowerment in accordance with the CEDAW and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the rights of women in Africa.

Highlights of Achievements

Following the military interregnum in 1998, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs was merged with the then Ministry of Social Welfare to form the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs is the National Machinery for promoting gender equality, gender mainstreaming and monitoring of the implementation of CEDAW. The Ministry through the Minister, reports to the Executive arm (Cabinet) during Cabinet briefings. Cabinet in turn reports to Parliament. The Ministry also reports to the public and external actors such as the UN.

The specific mandate of the Gender and Children's Affairs Division includes: coordinating activities that are related to the integration of gender and children's issues into mainstream national and sectoral development plans and programmes; addressing relevant issues in policies, practice and law for improving the lives of women and children; promoting the recognition, at the highest levels in society, of the full value of the social, political and economic contribution of women in national development and; advocating for issues of child survival, development, protection and participation to be placed at the top of the national agenda. Key achievements include the following:

- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs has made tremendous effort in meeting its International, Regional and National Commitments to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The government submitted its combined initial, 2nd -5th Periodic Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to the Committee of Experts on CEDAW in 2006. On the 19th February 2014, the government of Sierra Leone defended and had constructive dialogue with the Committee of Experts on CEDAW for the 7th Periodic CEDAW report.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs developed and adopted the twin policies on the Advancement of Women and Gender Mainstreaming in 2000. There was high level of cooperation from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the drafting of the policies. Non Governmental Organizations were involved at every stage of the formulation.
- The Ministry organised women's consultative meeting relating to human rights abuses in 2003 which ended as a women's law reform agenda. This consultative meeting culminated in the drafting of the "Gender Justice Bills
- The Ministry has undergone a functional management review which has set up five directorates including the Gender Affairs Directorate. The Gender Directorate is staffed by permanent government employees which include at professional level, a Director, Deputy Director, Assistant Directors, Senior Social Services Officers and Social Services Officers. There are in total nineteen (19) Councils in the country and the Ministry has devolved its functions, staff and resources to the Local Councils to ensure implementation of social welfare, gender and children affairs issues.

- In 2007 the Ministry spearheaded the landmark legislation of 3 “Gender Acts” namely the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009; Domestic Violence Act 2007; Devolution of Estates Act 2007
- In 2012, the Ministry provided leadership for the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act 2012
- Development of plans and protocols including National Gender Strategic Plan 2010-2013; Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820; National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence; National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence among others.
- Submitted country report on the AU Heads of State Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

Challenges

Gender programmes are largely funded from the National Budget. The ministry immediately after the conflict was consistently receiving less than 1 per cent of the national budget for the fiscal year but the goalpost has changed over the last two years in an upward trend of above 1 percent. Support is also provided by multi-lateral organizations including UN agencies and Non-governmental organizations.

There are Gender Focal Point/ Persons in all Line Ministries but most times they are middle level Administrative staff who cannot influence decisions. This situation is further heightened by the weak collaboration between the National Machinery and the Gender Focal Point Persons in the Line Ministries. To address this issue, the Ministry in 2013 trained 84 senior level personnel including forty two Ministries/Departments and Agencies.

Recommendation for Action

The National Policy on Advancement of Women provides a conducive environment which will allow women to improve their status and participation; integrated guidelines for evaluating the activities of government departments/institutions, donor agencies and NGOs that are engaged in implementing CEDAW. The goals of the policy on the Advancement of Women are as follows:

- To fully integrate women in development process, to empower them, enhance their capabilities as agents of economic .social and political development and in this way ensure the full development of human resources for national development
- To achieve national awareness and respect for women’s rights as citizens and as agents and beneficiaries of development
- To ensure that all forms of discrimination against women and abuse of women are eliminated
- To ensure the elimination of attitudinal , cultural , traditional, legal and religious constraints to greater recognition of and respect for and respect for the improvement of the status and situation of women

- To ensure that ingrained legal, cultural, religious, political, customary and economic practices that present obstacles to the advancement of the status of women are removed.

The policy sets out an implementation strategy which involves the establishment of structures within the MSWGCA and all other ministries, institutions and organizations of civil society. These structures (focal points) are to ensure the incorporation of women's issues, concerns and needs into the plans and programmes of their respective ministries, institutions and organizations. They are to monitor and evaluate the activities, programmes and projects of the various ministries, institutions and organizations with a view to ensuring that women benefits from these activities, programmes and projects.

Gender Mainstreaming Policy - the overall goal of the Gender Mainstreaming policy is to incorporate a gender perspective in all legislative measures, policies, programmes and projects. Its aim is to provide for policy makers and other actors in the development field, reference guidelines for identifying and addressing gender concerns, particularly when taking decisions to address imbalances which arise from existing inequalities; to promote equal access to and control over economically significant resources and benefits, to ensure the participation of both women and men in all stages of development.

Implementation strategy involves among other things, promoting appropriate education, sensitization and creation of awareness on the responsibility of all concerned parties in each sector to address the specific gender concerns within the sector.

In the Agenda for Prosperity, government has thought it wise to ensure that twin policies are merged into a comprehensive National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy. The draft of the policy is currently available and next steps leading to the validation, adoption and official launch of the policy will follow soonest. Additionally the policy will provide the framework for the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill including the minimum 30% quota for women in governance at all levels.

As a long term strategy, the Ministry has a five (5) year strategic plan of action (2002-2007) for the advancement of women incorporating CEDAW and the BPFA. However, weak capacity, coupled with inadequate financial and human resources and competing government priorities, has further undermined the implementation of the five (5) year plan of Action and other programmes of the Ministry. In addition, the Ministry has done very little in making the plan of action public. The lack of data disaggregated by sex in many areas is another factor inhibiting the effective performance of the Gender national machinery. There is weakness in generating and collection of sex disaggregated data from sectoral ministries and Statistics Sierra Leone.

Human Rights of Women

Achievements

In article 15 of the Constitution protection of fundamental human rights is afforded regardless of sex; however, the same cannot be said for the rest of the Constitution i.e. section 27 (4) (d). Statutes have been enacted to rescue this blatant discrimination against women in the form of

what is popularly referred to as the three Gender Acts: Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007; The Devolution of Estate Act 2007; Domestic Violence Act 2007

In addition to these, the Sexual Offences Bill has been enacted by Parliament and the Matrimonial Clauses Bill and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill awaits submission to Cabinet. These Acts and Bills have all been promulgated/drafted in part fulfilment of the domestication of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as mandated in Section 40 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

At the same time, several policies aimed at further empowering women have been developed. The National Gender Strategic Plan was developed and launched on 3 June 2010 by His Excellency the President and is currently under review so as to further strengthen the provisions within it and support implementation. The document has six priority areas including: Capacity Building, Management and Oversight; Women Participation in Governance; Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights; Women Empowerment; Research, Documentation and Information Communication and Technology; and Gender Budgeting and Accountability.

Further, a National Action Plan on United Nation Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 which has five pillars: Participation; Prevention; Protection; Prosecution; and Coordination was launched by His Excellency, the President, on 8 June 2010.

In accordance with its obligation to the treaty body, the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children Affairs (MSWGCA) submitted its combined initial, second - fifth periodic reports under CEDAW to the United Nations Committee of Experts on CEDAW in May 2007. The Ministry has recently submitted its sixth periodic report to the CEDAW Committee.

Sierra Leone's reparations program was launched in January 2009; seven years after the war ended and nearly five after the TRC issued its report. The state's obligation to provide reparations to victims of human rights violations derives both from international law and domestic sources, in that reference is made to such an obligation in the LPA as well as in the TRC's recommendations. The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), the agency implementing the reparations program, has registered and verified 27,992 victims across the country in all categories including children, amputees, and others wounded in the fighting, war widows, and victims of sexual violence. In December 2009 the Trust Fund for Victims was launched, and in March 2010 President Ernest Bai Koroma finally issued a public apology to all women for the violations they suffered during the conflict.

In addition to the provision for tribunals to guarantee an individual's right to have his course heard, the constitution, makes provision for an individual to be entitled to legal aid. There was a Pilot National Legal Aid Scheme (PNLA) in Freetown piloted by the JSDP with support from DFID. Although this pilot came to an end in May 2012, one of its key successes was the passage into law of the Legal Aid Act 2012. In addition, it was able to finish approximately five thousand (5000) matters during its two and a half year span. There are also other organizations which provide legal aid and paralegal services such as Legal Assistance through Women Yearning for Equality, Rights and Social Justice (LAWYERS), 'Timap' for Justice and the Open Society Justice Initiative. Legal aid and paralegal services done by these organizations do extend to the

provinces but this is not sufficient to cater for the needs of the large impoverished number of potential clients. However, one of the provisions in the Legal Aid Act 2012 is that there should be a paralegal representative in every chiefdom.

The Constitution in section 23 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the law. It denotes that all persons charged with a criminal offence shall be tried by an impartial and competent court, and shall be permitted to defend himself in person or by a legal practitioner of his choice. In addition, a person so charged shall be afforded facilities to examine witnesses called to testify before a competent tribunal on his behalf, be permitted to have an interpreter if he cannot understand the language of the tribunal and shall be given adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence. Furthermore, such person shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty.

Other complementary legislations to the Constitution for the guarantee of equality before the law and by the law are what has been famously labelled “the Gender Laws” (including the Devolution of Estate Act, the Customary Marriage and Divorce Act and the Domestic Violence Act.), the Chieftaincy Act 2009 and the Disability Act, make provisions for security of equal protection of the Law.

Theoretically, the Constitution affords a guarantee for the enjoyment of this right; this is not always the case in practice. This is not a misnomer on the part of the law makers. Customs and tradition tends to give the effect of the Constitutional guarantee as a misnomer due to the fact that they provide inroads for discrimination and unequal protection of the law especially against women.

In practice for example, a large number of sensitive cases in traditional settings are heard in the Poro Bush. The Poro Society is a male secret society and as such women and non members do not have any form of access to the Poro Bush. These cases are therefore deliberated upon in their absence and in most cases, not in their favour.

The recently enacted Devolution of Estate Act 2007 itself contains discriminatory provisions against illegitimate children. For the purposes of the Act, Section 2 of the Act defines a child as one who is born to the deceased and his lawful spouse or one born out of marriage while the deceased was married but recognized by both the deceased and his spouse, or child born to the deceased while he was unmarried and recognized by the deceased as his child. As such, an illegitimate child born while the deceased and his spouse were married but not recognized by both as the child of the deceased cannot claim under the Act. Also, as a matter of customary practice, illegitimate children cannot contest in any chieftaincy election. Section 8(a) of the Chieftaincy Act provides that a person can only be qualified for the chieftaincy title when he is born in wedlock to a rightful claimant or where tradition specifies, has direct maternal or paternal lineage to the rightful claimant.

As part of the recommendations of the Lome Peace Accord 1999 and the TRC report, government of Sierra Leone established by law the Human Rights Commission which has five Commissioners including two females and the Executive Secretary of the Commission is a

female as well. Additionally the Commission has a Women and Children Department that receives complaints on women and children's issues.

Challenges

- The 1991 Constitution recognizes the Customary Law in Sierra Leone and over the 70 percent of the country is governed by the customary law which is unwritten and uncertain. Most of the Chairpersons of the Local Courts are headed by males which makes access to justice for women and girls extremely difficult.
- Customs and traditions poses serious challenges to the human rights of women much as the National Constitution provides primacy over the statutory and customary laws.
- Enforcement and implementation of human rights instruments including International, Regional and National that seeks to provide protection for women and girls
- As stated earlier, the Chieftaincy Act of 2009 is discriminatory against women based on cultural and traditional practices.

Recommendation for Actions

- Government of Sierra Leone to fulfil its commitment by ratifying and domesticating outstanding International and Regional Instruments related to the human rights of women and girls
- Fully implement the outstanding imperative recommendations on women as enshrined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report in 2004
- The review of the 1991 Constitution to be gender and human rights responsive and ensure that all discriminatory clauses against women in the current Constitution is expunged
- Government and its partners to fully implement and enforce "Gender Justice Laws" including the Sexual Offences Act 2012

Women and the Media

There are constitutional guarantees on rights to free expression and access of individuals to information. **Chapter 3, Article 25** of the 1991 constitution categorically guarantees that:

'except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of the freedom of expression , and for the purpose of this section, the said freedom includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference,

Prominent women are often featured on television and radio panel discussions and other current affairs programmes focusing on political, social and cultural affairs and this ensures that the voices of Sierra Leonean women are heard. However there abound, many instances of use of prejudicial statements often depicting gender stereotypical views, characters and roles in all forms of the media. Soap operas reinforce the general opinion that women are illiterate, promiscuous and lovers of money thereby reinforcing derogatory models of women and propagating negative socially accepted views and standards. There are also no laws prohibiting the indecent representation of women through advertisement, books, pamphlets etc.

The national weekly television (TV) Programmes, 'Women's World', 'Inside De Petticoat' and 'Woman to Woman' also focus on women who have succeeded in gender stereotyped vocations

such as hairdressing, catering and gara tie-dyeing. Such programs also reinforce the stereotyped roles of women in employment and productivity.

Highlight of achievements

- Women in the Media in Sierra Leone (WIMSAL) was set up in 2007 as a media group to advocate for more equal rights for both female journalists and women in general in Sierra Leone. Over the past years WIMSAL has become a formidable lobby group. The organisation also functions as a support group especially for young female journalists working in the rural areas. WIMSAL has also been proactive in campaigning Government and other leaders for female journalists to be involved all aspects of journalism and not limited to women's issues.
- The setting up of Mass Communications Department in 1993 within the University of Sierra Leone to address the capacity gaps for media practitioners is also a great achievement. Over the years the department has grown and is now offering courses ranging from certificate, diploma, bachelor's and master's degree.
- Taking positions within the executive of Sierra Leone Association of Journalists for the time in 2013.

Challenges

- There a few women in senior strategic positions in the media, the majority of media houses are owned and managed by men. There are very few senior female media practitioners in media institutions and this has led to a chronic lack of support for female media practitioners. There is only 1 female newspaper proprietor and publisher out of a total of 83 newspapers.
- Many female media practitioners are faced with sexual harassment in their workplace. Harassment ranges from inappropriate comments to physical advancement and this has a negative impact on the female media practitioners.
- The level of education for most of the female media practitioners is very low and this has led to a low morale and self-esteem. Many of the journalists lack formal training and this increases their chances of being overlooked by their senior managers
- There is a general perception that female journalists cannot cover stories in detail and depths as their male counterparts. As such women journalists are dispatched to cover stories of women and children issues.
- There is a general perception that journalism is a man's job and therefore unfit for women to practice.
- WIMSAL is fraught with financial as well as technical challenges.

Recommendations for action

- Advocating for respect for female media practitioners.
- Increasing the confidence and professionalism of female media practitioners through capacity building initiatives.
- Changing perceptions of women in the media in Sierra Leone as the media is a micro-level of perceptions of what is reflected in the society at large.

Women and the Environment

Sierra Leone has serious environmental challenges; namely, land and forest degradation, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, loss of bio-diversity, pollution of fresh water resources and coastal area degradation. While women's role and importance in environmental resource management is now accepted, little has been done to diversify the sector and enhance women's contribution in this important area depicted as propagators of deforestation from cutting wood for domestic fuel.

Highlight of achievements

Women and the Environment

Sierra Leone has serious environmental challenges; major ones including land and forest degradation, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, loss of bio-diversity, pollution of fresh water resources and coastal area degradation. While women's role and importance in environmental resource management is now accepted, little has been done to diversify the sector and enhance women's contribution in this important area. Women are often depicted as propagators of deforestation from cutting wood for domestic fuel and failing to recognise women's contribution in managing the environment.

Highlight of achievements

The Environment Protection Agency - Sierra Leone (EPA-SL) currently headed by a female was established by an act of Parliament, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) Act, 2008, as a body corporate to provide for the effective protection and management of the environment and other related matters. The EPA policies and programs have been designed to integrate gender concerns and perspectives for sustainable development as referenced in the BDPfA.

In the area of Natural Resource Management where women play a special role in the natural resources sector, both as beneficiaries and as participants in the exploitation of the resources. Strategy and objectives of each of the subsectors in the EPA programs specifically include gender analysis, and compensatory and other mechanisms to ensure that equal benefits accrue to men and women.

Another achievement is the National Energy Policy 2009: This policy highlights government concerns addressing energy and development objectives and highlights the following issues:

- Involvement of women in decision making on activities in the energy sector.
- Institution of gender impact assessments on all energy projects to ensure that they do not negatively impact on women.

- Provision of alternatives to the household energy sector.

EPA within the Water Sector: Creates greater participation and capacity in the management of water resources at national, provincial, district and community levels, which take account of gender concerns.

Challenges

- Environment is often regarded as a cross cutting issue in most national documents and almost swept under carpet for most of the time.
- Women are mostly seen as contributing to the depletion of of the environment rather than providing solutions to the problem
- Full implementation of the legislations, policies and action plans

Recommendation for Action

- To fully implement the Environmental Protection Act and its complementary plan of action
- Involve critical mass of women in the environmental planning processes and implementation
- To engender all environmental laws, polices and plan of action

The girl-child

The Child Rights Act was enacted in 2007 as a step towards the domestication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Act repealed the Children and Young Persons Act of 1960, which defined a child as a person under the age of 14; and defines a child as any person below the age of 18. The Act criminalizes underage marriage i.e. marriage under 18 years, outlaws child labour, repeals the Corporal Punishment Act, elimination of harmful tradition practice including early marriage, forced marriage etc guarantees free medical care to children. Further, the Act also outlines parental responsibilities.

Unfortunately, children are unaware of their rights and responsibilities and cannot access nor claim them. The Sexual Offences which has been in the legislative pipeline since 2004 was finally enacted in 2012. The Act which harmonized the country's three contradictory laws on sexual violence has been lauded by both international and local actors as an important piece of legislation in the struggle against widespread impunity for violations as it protects persons with disabilities, minors, and married women. The Act prohibits forced sex in marriage and protects the girl child from abuse by teachers, religious and traditional authorities. It also stipulates stringent minimum sentences for offenders and increase the minimum jail term from two years to between five and fifteen years. An observer notes that the enactment of the Sexual offences Act is a "...clear demonstration of Sierra Leone's effort in harmonizing national laws and policies with international conventions and resolutions including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Union (AU) Protocol to the African

Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, among others”.

Early marriage, polygamy, and large spousal age differences are common in Sierra Leone although their prevalence appears to be decreasing. Sixteen percent of respondents (women aged 15-49) first married before the age of 15 while 50 percent of respondents (aged 18-49) were married before the age of 18. Among women aged 15-19 who are married or in union, 35 percent are with a man who is ten or more years senior to them. One in three women (34 percent) aged 15-49 years is in a polygamous union. Indicators of early marriage are highest in the north and lowest in the West. Higher levels of early marriage are associated with rural residence and lower levels of women's education and household wealth.

Highlight of Achievements

- The government of Sierra Leone developed policies and enacted laws for the protection of children especially the girl child. These include but not limited to the Child Rights Act 2007; Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009; Devolution of Estates Act 2007; Domestic Violence Act 2007; National Child Justice Strategy 2008 -2012; National Child Justice Strategy 2014-2018; Sexual Offences Act 2012; Child Welfare Policy 2014; Alternative Care Policy 2014; Education Act 2004; Reproductive and Child Health Policy; National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy 2013-2015; Social Protection Policy among others.
- Government of Sierra Leone introduced Affirmative Action or Temporary Special Measures to ensure girls are at par with their male counterparts in the field of education. Realizing that girls were behind the boys in terms of enrolment and retention especially in the Northern and Eastern Regions of the country, government introduced free girl child education to narrow the disparity between boys and girls. However this affirmative action has been extended to all girls in the basic education across the country.
- Government provides preferential scholarship or grant in aid for girls pursuing the sciences and engineering to encourage them in learning disciplines that were regarded as male dominated courses.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has established a girl child education division headed by an Assistant Director of Gender Affairs to promote girl child education in the country.
- The United Nations declared October 11 of each year as the International Day of Girl Child. Sierra Leone has used this advocacy forum to protect the rights and welfare of girls coupled with the observance or commemoration of the Day of the African Child on 16 June every year.

Challenges

- Effective implementation of the legislations, policies, plans and protocols

- The issue of teenage pregnancy has posed serious health and social challenges to the advancement of girls in the country as one out of every four girl becomes pregnant before 18 years
- Though on the decrease because of the sensitizations, awareness raising programmes on the harmful traditional practices including early marriage and forced marriage due to the legislations and policies, these practices are still an affront to the development of girls.
- Poor parenting coupled with male preference over the females

Recommendation for Action

- Fully implement all legislations, policies and plans developed to promote the rights and welfare of children especially the girl child.
- Extension of free tuition for girls from Primary through Junior Secondary School for the next five years.
- Reduce barriers for girls to complete secondary school, and improve access to higher education and lifelong learning.
- Establish special provisions for pregnant girls to continue education.
- Expand career and guidance counselling; ensure safe spaces in schools for discussing sensitive issues and confidence-building.

SECTION III

Statistics Sierra Leone is the national institution responsible for the collection, compilation, coordination, analysis and dissemination of high quality statistical data which informs decision making and discussion within the Government as well as the wider national and international community. Up till 2014, Gender equality indicators were designed by various surveys undertaken including the Demographic Health Survey 2008 and 2013, the Family Support Units (FSU) etc.

The Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministries of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in coordination with development partners have set up a gender portal website with established national indicators. The web portal is hosted within the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. A self-assessment toolkit was developed for assessing Government's performance in addressing gender inequality in Sierra Leone. The toolkit is intended to generate scores that will assist the Government implement appropriate policies. A technical Committee comprising of Government and development partners, has been set up with clear terms of reference to develop the indicators. (See Indicators in Annex 4) The web portal is purpose to create a platform to share information and progress about the Gender and Development and mainstreaming within the Agenda for prosperity, to share ideas, expertise and connect key experts and identify key experts on gender mainstreaming at the various levels on Gender. The main users will be all MDAs and local councils, technical experts, policy makers, bilateral Organizations, research centres, universities and NGO. The website will soon be launched. The domain name is www.genderagenda.sl

Preliminary report of Sierra Leone's 2013 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) was launched on January 2014. The report presents some of the key findings of the 2013 DHS that was conducted by Statics Sierra Leone in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation. The survey provides information on a variety of health and population indicators relating to fertility trends, family planning, maternal and child health, childhood mortality, nutrition and child feeding practices, and maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS. The survey was conducted to provide evidence based information for policy action and programme design and implementation to improve services. It was funded by the government of Sierra Leone and various UN agencies including WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, donors including DFID, the World Bank and other development partners.

The Family Support Unit within the Sierra Leone Police has the mandate to address child abuse, sexual abuse, and domestic violence in a broader perspective. The FSUs are also responsible for compiling statistics on Violence Against Women and girls. This information is not collected in accordance with the minimum set of gender indicators.

SECTION IV

It is evident that some progress has been made in Sierra Leone since the adoption of the BDPfA. Over the next three to five years key priorities for action for accelerating implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and subsequent intergovernmental agreements for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women at the national level include the following:

Consistency in the implementation of all national gender related legislation, plans and policies including specific institutional gender policies are still slow. Much more remains to be done in effectively applying them wider out reach into communities needs to be urgent and deliberate. .

Government priorities include

Ensure the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (2007) and the Sexual Offences Act (2012), including by reviewing the discriminatory provision in Section 27(4) (d) of the Constitution to bring it in line with the above laws and increasing the human and financial resources of the judicial system;

(b) Establish a mechanism to monitor the progress in the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence;

(c) Provide systematic and mandatory capacity building programs for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and health-care providers, to ensure that victims of violence are dealt with in a gender-sensitive manner;

(d) Raise awareness about the existence of new legal provisions prohibiting marital rape and incest, encourage women to report domestic and sexual violence, and ensure that they are duly informed about available legal remedies;

(e) Ensure that all reports of domestic and sexual violence are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are effectively prosecuted and punished. In this regard, the State party should expedite the enactment of the Criminal Procedure Bill with a view to expediting criminal proceedings in cases of gender based violence; and,

(f) Provide adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence, in particular by increasing the number, capacity and funding of shelter facilities.

Launch awareness-raising campaigns to highlight the importance of women's full and equal participation in leadership positions at all levels of governance.

The Sierra Leonean government is seizing the opportunity generated by the global review of the MDGs to reorganise the structures and mechanisms it has established to push forward its gender equality and women's empowerment agenda through:

- Reviewing gender discriminatory clauses within the 1991 Constitution
- Accelerating efforts for the finalization of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy and ensure it is sufficiently funded and effectively implemented. The new Policy should contain clear goals, benchmarks and timetables as well mechanisms for regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress in its implementation, including indicators
- Intensify efforts to fast track the *draft law on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment establishing a quota of 30% for women's representation in elected and*

appointed political positions, and in all levels of the judiciary; and ensure that the Constitutional review recommendations, inter alia, repeal the provision in the Chieftaincy Act that restricts women's participation in chieftaincy elections;

- Support to operationalise the Women's Empowerment Fund for which seed money has been provided by the government of Sierra Leone.
- Domesticating CEDAW and ratifying and domesticating the Maputo Protocol
- Strengthen the institutional and human capacity of the Ministry and ensure a sustained and steady increase in budgetary allocation to the MSWGCA.
- Engaging Sierra Leone Statistics Office to ensure that gender disaggregated data is readily available in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and that all MDAs adopt affirmative action in the recruitment and promotion of women in their institutions.
- Reviewing and expediting the passage of Local Councils' bye-laws on curbing SGBV that have been stuck in the office of the Attorney General
- Make widely known the National Referral Protocol/ Pathways for SGBV and support communities to use them through training
- Providing forensic tools to FSU to obtain legally admissible evidence on especially rape
- Re-introducing the teaching of Family Life Education in secondary schools in a bid to strengthen prevention of SGBV and Teenage pregnancy
- Strengthening the Local Council Social Services' Unit to monitor SGBV cases reported, acquitted or charged to court
- Establishing SGBV/Family courts that already exist (Saturday courts) in Freetown ,in each district
- Promoting functional literacy for women and campaign for retention of girls in schools to completion of basic education and promote women's enrolment at tertiary level and other educational institutions
- Raise awareness on the side effects and long term impact of various family planning products on teenage girls
- Localization/harmonization of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820 with Local Partners and its full implementation.
- Government is also hoping to review the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820.

Annex 1 List of Documents Consulted

1. Abdullah, H.J (2012), Gender equality in post-2015 Sierra Leone , Addressing inequalities- a Global Thematic Consultation , Dakar Senegal
2. African Development Bank Group, Sierra Leone Country Gender Profile, October 2012
3. Initial Social and Gender ASSESSMENT (ISGA) to Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth in Sierra Leone, October 2013
4. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Report 2010
5. Sierra Leone 6th periodic CEDAW Report 2011
6. Sierra Leone CEDAW Report: Initial, 2nd – 5th Periodic Report, 2006
7. Sierra Leone Demographic Health Survey 2008
8. Sierra Leone Demographic Health Survey 2013, Preliminary Report without Results of HIV prevalence
9. Sierra Leone GNWP Members In-Country Monitoring 2013, Report of the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000), (2013)
10. Government of Sierra Leone Millennium Development Goals Progress report (2010)
11. Sierra Leone TRC Recommendations, (2004) Volume 3B, Chapter 3
12. The Agenda for Prosperity: Sierra Leone’s Third Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2013-2018)
13. Sierra Leone National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence (2010-2013)
14. Sierra Leone National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence (2010-2013)
15. Women’s Manifesto

Annex 2

Processes of preparing National level review

- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs which is the national machinery for the Advancement of Women did the following during the preparation of the national review:
- Organise a senior management meeting comprising of all Directorates of the Ministry to plan the report writing process
- Engage UNWOMEN Country Office to provide technical support in the writing of the national report
- Shared the reporting guidelines with line Ministries and engaged them in a briefing meeting to fully discuss with them the guidelines for reporting. Subsequently, the line Ministries, Departments and Agencies were charged with the responsibility of providing relevant information relating to their sector in line with the critical areas of concern.
- Ministries, Departments and Agencies supplied the relevant information to the coordinating Ministry for collation and editing
- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs organised a validation meeting to ensure ownership of the report. The report was then shared with the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) for their information.
- The Ministries, Departments and Agencies that were involved in the process included: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health and Sanitation; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Information and Communication; Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; Ministry of Labour and Social Security; Environmental Protection Agency; Justice Sector Coordination Office; Statistics Sierra Leone; Human Rights Commission; Directorate of Gender, Sierra Leone Police

Annex 3

List of Laws, Policies, Action Plans

1. The Agenda for Prosperity: Sierra Leone's Third Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2013-2018) - www.undp.org/.../sierraleone/.../projectdocuments/.../undp_sle_The%20Agenda%20for%20Prosperity%20.pdf
2. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2005 - www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2005-7p.pdf
3. The Chieftaincy Act, 2009 - www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2009-10.pdf
4. The Child Rights Act of 2007 - www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2007-7p.pdf
5. The Citizenship Amendment Act (2006), www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2006-11.pdf
6. The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991- www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/constitution1991.pdf
7. The Devolution of Estates Act (2007) - www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2007-7p.pdf
8. the Domestic Violence Act (2007) , www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2007-7p.pdf
9. The Education Act, 2004, <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2004-2p.pdf>
10. The Gender Mainstreaming Policy (2000)
11. The Legal Aid Act (2012)- <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2012-06.pdf>
12. The National HIV and AIDS Commission Act, 2011 - <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2011-11.pdf>
13. The National Gender Strategic Plan (2010-2013) - scalingupnutrition.org/downloadable_pdf/sierra-leone-national-gender-strategic-plan-2010-2013
14. The National Policy on the Advancement of Women (2000)
15. The National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy
16. the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorces Act (2009) - www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2007-7p.pdf

17. The Sexual Offences Act 2012 - <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2012-06.pdf>
18. Sierra Leone National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence (2010-2013) - www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/sierra_leone_nap.pdf
19. The Sierra Leone Local Government Act, 2004- www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2004-1p.pdf

Annex 3**List of Tables****Women and Education****Table 1: DISAGGREGATED SEX DATA ON ENROLMENT FOR 2011/2012 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Pre- Primary			
Region	Male	Female	Both
East	3,748	4,290	8,038
North	3,375	3,524	6,899
South	3,250	3,509	6,759
West	13,266	14,044	27,310
National	23,639	25,367	49,006
Girls/Boys ratio	1.07		
% at level	3%		
Population	293,727	292,733	586,460
Gross enrolment rate	8.0%	8.7%	8.4%

Primary			
Region	Male	Female	Both
East	146,980	147,281	294,261
North	232,389	216,025	448,414
South	142,673	145,492	288,165
West	106,287	115,227	221,514
National	628,329	624,025	1,252,354
Girls/Boys ratio	0.99		
% at level	74%		
Population	500,598	505,990	1,006,587

Gross enrolment rate	125.5%	123.3%	124.4%
----------------------	--------	--------	--------

Junior Secondary School			
Region	Male	Female	Both
East	28,963	27,692	56,655
North	50,677	39,322	89,999
South	25,255	21,962	47,217
West	39,279	42,765	82,044
National	144,174	131,741	275,915
Girls/Boys ratio	0.91		
% at level	16%		
Population	203,135	207,327	410,462
Gross enrolment rate	71.0%	63.5%	67.2%

Senior Secondary school			
Region	Male	Female	Both
East	12,044	7,659	19,703
North	19,062	10,343	29,405
South	10,571	5,998	16,569
West	29,559	29,649	59,208
National	71,236	53,649	124,885
Girls/Boys ratio	0.75		
% at level	7%		
Population	175,407	179,842	355,249
Gross enrolment rate	40.6%	29.8%	35.2%

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2012

Table 2: Index of Women’s Participation in Governance in 2013

Index of women’s participation in governance in 2013			
	Number of women	Number of men	Percentage of women
National government (total) 185	23	162	12.4
Executive			
President	0	1	0
Vice President	0	1	0
Cabinet Ministers	2	25	7.4
Deputy Ministers	5	21	19.2
Ministers of State	1	5	16.7
Legislative			
Parliamentarians	15	109	12.1
Speaker of Parliament	0	1	0
Deputy Speaker of Parliament	0	1	0
Sessional Committees of Parliament (32)	15	109	12.1
Local government (total) 624	102	522	6.4
Mayors of Local Councils	1	5	16.7
Chairpersons of Local Councils	1	12	7.7
Deputy Mayors of Local Councils	4	2	66.7
Deputy Chairpersons of Local Councils	1	12	7.7
Paramount Chiefs	13	136	8.7
Councillors	87	369	19.1
Total			

Source: National Electoral Commission Report, 2012, In – Country Monitoring Report on UNSCR 1325

Table 3: Number of women and men in Decision Making Positions in the Diplomatic Service and NEC

	Number of women	Number of men	Percentage of women
Diplomatic/Public Service	4	22	15.4
High Commissioners	0	2	0
Ambassadors	3	14	17.6
Deputy High Commissioners	1	2	33.3
Deputy Ambassadors	0	4	0
National Electoral Commission – Chief and Regional Commissioners	3	2	60
Total			

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; National Electoral Commission {NEC 2013}

Table 4: Women participating in the Justice Sector in 2013

Index of women participating in the justice sector in 2013						
	2012			2013		
Sector of Judiciary	No. of women	No. of men	% of women	No. of women	No. of men	% of women
Justice of the Peace	3	7	30.0	2	11	15.4
Magistrates	2	18	10.0	2	23	8.0
High Court	3	11	21.4	3	13	18.7
Court of Appeal	3	2	60.0	3	2	60.0
Supreme Court	3	2	60.0	3	2	60.0
Law Courts - Chief Justice	1	0	100.0	1	0	100
Solicitor-General	1	0	100.0	1	0	100
Administrator-General	1	0	100.0	1	0	100

Total	17	40	29.8	16	51	23.9
--------------	-----------	-----------	-------------	-----------	-----------	-------------

Source: In- Country Monitoring Report 2013

Table 5: Number of SGBV cases reported, investigated, prosecuted and penalized from January to December 2012

Number of SGBV cases reported, investigated, prosecuted and penalized in 2012							
Type of SGBV	Reported	Investigated	Percent Investigated	Prosecuted	Percent Prosecuted	Penalized	Percentage penalized
Domestic Violence, Unlawful carnal knowledge³, Rape, Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Indecent Assault, Child/Human Trafficking	6,210	3,951	63.6	1,131	28.6	152	13.4

Source: In- Country Monitoring Report 2013

Table 6: Gender Patterns of Reparations Beneficiaries in 2009

CATEGORIES	REGISTERED VICTIMS PAID 2009	FEMALE VICTIM	%	MALE VICTIM	%
AMPUTEE	1,063	255	24%	808	76%
CHILD	7,005	3,012	43%	3,993	57%

³Unlawful Carnal Knowledge is an offence under the sexual offence law before the new /strengthened sexual offences law of August 2012. It applies to sexual penetration of a girl above 13 but below 14 years of age; the new sexual offences law has incorporated this offence and marriage to or consent of the victim is no longer a defence. Indecent Assault/Sexual Assault is when a person intentionally, without the victim's consent touches that person in a sexual manner or compels that person to touch the accused person in a sexual manner and in this case defence can use consent for women but not for girls under 14 years

WAR WOUNDED	4,378	1,365	31%	3,013	69%
WAR WIDOW	4,744	4,744	100%		
VICTIM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE	2,917	2,917	100%		
TOTAL	20,107	12,293	61%	7,814	39%

Source: Reparations Directorate, NaCSA 2009, CEDAW Report 2011