



# GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT POLICY



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# Message from the President, His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy demonstrates my government's continued commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The policy builds on and reinforces existing legal and strategic frameworks for addressing the myriad of political and socio-economic challenges to women's empowerment.

As a government, we pride ourselves in the full and effective empowerment of women, as articulated in the Medium-Term National Development Plan. The Plan demonstrates a road map for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through the strengthening of legal and policy frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment. The strategic goal and objectives of the GEWE policy resonates with those aspirations and priorities defined in the National Medium-Term Development Plan.

My government remains committed to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the policy including the launch and operationalization of the Women's Empowerment Act; an affirmative action that guarantees more political participation for women.

Sierra Leone has made significant gains in the emancipation of women in the social, political, economic and cultural fields. We will continue working on providing more economic opportunity, more access to basic and higher education, more access to healthcare, more security, and more political representation. This will ensure our attainment of our national aspiration for an equal and inclusive society for all that will drive our efforts as a nation to achieve our sustainable development goals.



# Foreword by the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy aims at mainstreaming gender into all development and political processes in Sierra Leone to ensure livelihood and social protection for women, men, boys and girls for sustainable peace and economic growth. It ensures that men, women, girls and boys benefit equally from all development interventions in all sectors and that inequality and discrimination of any type are not perpetuated at the national and local levels.

It draws on relevant national instruments such as the 1991 Constitution and other National Policy Frameworks that the government of Sierra Leone has adopted to promote gender mainstreaming and national development as well as regional and international instruments that Sierra Leone has ratified.

These include: National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming; the three Gender Justice Acts; the Child Rights Act; the Anti-Human Traffic Act; the Sexual Offences Act 2012; Sierra Leone National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325; the Amended Sexual Offences Act 2019; Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023; the Male Involvement Strategy; CEDAW; MDGs, UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, peace and security and The Maputo Declaration on Gender Mainstreaming and Effective Participation of Women in the Africa Union.

The policy analyzes the current situation of women in Sierra Leone from gender perspectives. It further provides broad and specific objectives to ensure the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment; and articulates the strategic and institutional frameworks and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective implementation.

It contains thirteen critical areas of concern which were identified by stakeholders including women's groups, youth, traditional and religious leaders, parliamentarians, law enforcement and persons with disabilities in very participatory consultative meetings held in all regions of the country to ensure ownership.

The development of this policy is further indication of the President's commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and to ensuring meaningful investment in women and girls as part of the national human capital development agenda detailed in the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023.

Many thanks go to all our Development and NGO Partners for all the support and continued partnership in the development and implementation of this policy.



# Acknowledgments

The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs expresses appreciation to institutions and individuals who played critical roles and made contributions towards the development of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy.

We wish to express our gratitude to His Excellency the President Retired. Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio for establishing the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs in November 2019 with the mandate to develop, implement and monitor policy and legal frameworks for issues relating to Women and Children below 18 years of age.

The Ministry has the mandate to address issues of violence against women and children; liaise with development agencies and NGOs to address the needs of Women and Children; lead on the development and monitoring of policies related to Gender and Children's issues and collaborate with relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies working on Gender and Children's issues. The overall mission of the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs " is to promote and protect the welfare and rights of women and children through development and review of policies, advocacy and coordination."

Special thanks to line Ministries, Departments and Agencies for making input towards the development of the policy during the consultation and validation meetings and more importantly the Sub Committee of Cabinet and the entire Cabinet for the adoption of the policy. This will ensure implementation of the policy through the various sectors.

The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs expresses gratitude to the United Nations System in Sierra Leone particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Entity (UN Women) for their technical and financial support in the development of the GEWE Policy. We are similarly grateful to the gender and human rights experts who made technical input during the consultations and validation meetings during the crafting of the policy.

The Ministry also expresses thanks to the National Women's Movement, National and International Civil Society Organizations for their diverse contributions to the development of the Policy.

Finally, the Ministry offers special thanks to the two national consultants who at different times worked on the policy (Ms. Finda Koroma and Ms. Battu Jambawai) for their immense technical capabilities during the crafting and reviewing of the policy respectively.



Charles Vandí

**Director of Gender Affairs**



# Executive Summary



The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy is a lawful reference point for addressing gender inequalities, minimizing poverty levels and incidences of social injustices, and enhancing capacities in the public and private sectors towards investing meaningfully in women, men, boys and girls in Sierra Leone. It calls for meaningful and timely allocation of resources and their efficient use to create a society in which men; women, girls and boys everywhere in the country have equal access to basic services and enjoy the same rights and

opportunities in enabling environments. The policy ensures that a gender perspective is mainstreamed in national development plans and sectoral policies and strategies supported by monitoring and evaluation indicators that are designed to benchmark the performance of stakeholders on gender equality and equity. It further calls on the President of Sierra Leone to take full leadership for the policy by outlining key steps that can be taken at the highest level of government to ensure that the fundamental principles of the policy cascade down to

all facets of society right through to the local communities.

The policy's overarching objective is the mainstreaming of gender into all the national, sectoral and local policies, plans, budgets and programmes, to achieve Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in all spheres of development in Sierra Leone. The policy acts as a blueprint for strategies and initiatives to combat GBV and as a roadmap for achieving equal treatment of men and women. It also positions women and men to contribute equally to Sierra

Leone's development agenda; influences the introduction of gender equality provisions in the 1991 Constitution; provides mechanisms and guidelines for planning, implementing and monitoring of gender equality programmes. It further creates an enabling environment for women's empowerment and active participation. Finally it highlights boys', girls' and women's needs in achieving gender equality, since females, more than males, have been affected by gender inequality. Among the principles guiding the policy are gender mainstreaming; affirmative action; women's leadership and participation; men's and boys' participation; an integrated and collaborative approach; zero tolerance to SGBV; rights-based approach; gender-responsive and inclusive processes and acknowledgment that women's rights as human rights.

To ensure ownership, the policy was developed through very participatory processes including regional consultative and validation meetings organized by the Gender Ministry and partners in collaboration with stakeholders such as parliamentarians; ministries, departments and agencies; non-governmental organizations; community-based organizations; women's and youth groups; groups representing Persons with Disabilities; military; law enforcement and media.

Those participants at the consultative meetings identified the following areas of concern for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

1. Gender, education and training;
2. Gender, trade, employment, economic development and social protection;
3. Gender-based violence;
4. Gender, decision-making and political leadership;
5. Gender, health, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS;
6. Gender, the environment and disaster management;
7. Gender, media and access to Information and Communication Technology and Innovations;
8. Gender, disabilities and other forms of social inequities;
9. Gender, legal justice and human rights;
10. Gender, culture and family;
11. Gender, peace-building and conflict resolution;
12. Gender Responsive Macro Sector Formation Budgeting
13. Building women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters.

The first section of the policy elaborates the context in which gender inequality and gender-based discrimination are exacerbated while the second analyzes the real life situation of women and girls in relation to each of the thirteen issues of concern. In the third section the policy articulates how it envisions Sierra Leone in the next five years.

The fourth section lists strategic actions for achieving the overall goals and specific objectives of the policy such as affirmative action; skill development and transformational leadership; legal and policy review/reformation; the application of information and communication technology tools; research; gender responsive budgeting and procurement and advocacy and lobbying.

The roles and responsibilities of state and non-state stakeholders including the Office of the President, government ministries and agencies, local authorities, civil society organizations and private sectors as identified by the policy, are elaborated in the fifth section. Finally to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the policy, the last section outlines the monitoring and evaluation indications as yardsticks for measuring the performance of all stakeholders.



# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>EVD</b>	Ebola Virus Disease
<b>FGM/C</b>	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GRB</b>	Gender Responsive Budgeting
<b>GoSL</b>	Government of Sierra Leone
<b>GRP</b>	Gender Responsive Procurement
<b>HRCSL</b>	Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>LAWYERS</b>	Legal Access through Women Yearning for Equal Rights and Social Justice
<b>MDAs</b>	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
<b>MoGCA</b>	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
<b>MoHS</b>	Ministry of Health and Sanitation
<b>MSWGCA</b>	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>PWDs</b>	Persons with Disabilities
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>MTNDP</b>	Medium-Term National Development Plan
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UN WOMEN</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# 1. Introduction



## 1.1.CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) recognizes and is committed to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) as a crucial element of attaining sustainable peace and social and economic development in the country. In the late 1980s, the GoSL set up administrative structures with the mandate to address gender inequalities. These included the Women's Bureau, the Gender Desk at State House in the 1990s, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MOGCA) in 1996 and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) incorporating the erstwhile MOGCA. The GoSL also established the Human Rights Commission and the Family Support Unit (FSU) and took legislative and strategic policy actions to address a spectrum of gender issues as part of its broader development objectives.

In recent times, the GoSL has taken encouraging steps to strengthen the country's ability to address gender issues and track progress made in those areas. New legislation and policies passed include the following:

- The Amended Sexual Offences Act 2019 which in Section 19 (iii) mandates 15 years' imprisonment for an adult who is guilty of sexual penetration or rape of another person and in Section 13 (2) further protects children, especially girls, from sexual abuse by persons in positions of trust including teachers and traditional leaders;
- Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (SLMTNDP) 2019– 2023 (SLM that aims at delivering development results to improve the welfare of men, women, girls and boys in Sierra Leone;
- SILNAP II which strengthens women's efforts in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building while providing early response mechanisms for addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict and post-conflict situations;
- the creation of a new ministry with the sole responsibility for leading the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of all issues relating to women and children below 18;

- the new ministry's priority areas including the Male Involvement Strategy for the Prevention of SGBV in Sierra Leone, the free hotline for reporting rape and sexual violence, the One Stop Centres currently operational in six districts with more to be established – one in each district – for responding to rape and sexual violence in one location, and the development of monthly pillar meetings to address the Ministry's priorities including gender equality issues;

In addition, the 'Hands Off Our Girls' initiative led and supported by the First Lady has also created awareness all over the country, especially about the rights of girls against sexual violence.

The GEWE policy which seeks to empower women to make choices in all sectors of the development paradigm is another piece of evidence of the GoSL's commitment to achieving gender equality. Recent catastrophic happenings in close succession, including the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) and repeated flooding and mudslides, coupled with mismanagement of Sierra Leone's economy in previous years, have taken a toll on the country, resulting in a slowing down of the country's economic growth and failure to meet its development targets in the last few years. The coronavirus disease COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020, and Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) confirmed its first case of COVID-19 in Freetown on 31 March 2020. The virus is not only claiming lives but bringing livelihood activities of most people to a halt.

All these realities have an overwhelming and disproportional impact on the lives and livelihoods of women and girls, and present opportunities for and challenges to the quest for gender equality. According to the 2015 Population and Housing Census of Sierra Leone, women account for 50.8 per cent of the country's population. And yet they remain significantly absent in decision-making and leadership positions in public and private spheres. Women also continue to experience unequal access to production resources like land, financial services and education and training. For Sierra Leone to achieve sustainable peace and development women have to be active and effective players in all spheres and their economic development must proportionally evolve with the country's economic growth and development.

## **1.2. The development of the GEWE Policy**

The first attempt at developing the GEWE Policy was in 2014. When the current Government came to power, the then MSWGCA undertook a review of that draft policy in 2018 and expanded it to reflect emerging national, regional and global issues and concerns. A technical committee consisting of the Deputy Minister MSWGCA and staff of the Gender Directorate discussed with the consultant the policy focus and content and the methodology of information gathering. With the help of international partners including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women and Irish Aid, the Ministry organized regional consultations of stakeholders including parliamentarians; ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs); non-governmental organizations (NGOs); community-based organizations; women's and youth groups; groups representing Persons with Disabilities (PWD); military; law enforcement and media. The participants at those consultations shared personal experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) and discussed

numerous issues militating against achieving GEWE.

In November 2019, the President of Sierra Leone established a gender and children's ministry, MOGCA which is specifically charged with leading the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of all issues relating to women and children below 18 years in the country. With the creation of the new ministry and a number of key emerging issues and priorities, another review and expansion of the draft policy became necessary. Therefore a literature review and internal consultations involving the new minister and the professional staff were undertaken by the consultant to provide policy direction and updated information including emerging issues and new developments.

Further extensive consultations were conducted through the ministry's Women's Economic Empowerment Pillar Committee that consists of a national cross-section of women's groups.

The GEWE policy is a lawful reference point for addressing gender inequalities by all stakeholders at the national and community levels and family units throughout the country. It calls for equal access for women, men, boys and girls to opportunities across all areas of the economy. In addition, it emphasizes the need for gender-responsive budgeting in the public and private sectors. It further clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Gender Management Structures and ensures that a gender perspective is mainstreamed in national development plans and sectoral policies and strategies, supported by monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators that are designed to benchmark the performance of stakeholders on gender equality and equity.

Finally, the Policy calls on the President of Sierra Leone to take full leadership for GEWE by outlining key steps that can be taken at the highest level of government to ensure that the fundamental principles of GEWE cascade down

to all facets of society right through to the local communities. The policy is designed to follow a multisectoral approach in implementation to ensure GEWE.

The following are the priority issues affecting the realization of GEWE, identified by stakeholders around the country for consideration in the GEWE policy:

- 1. Gender, education and training;**
- 2. Gender, trade, employment, economic development and social protection;**
- 3. Gender-based violence;**
- 4. Gender, decision-making and political leadership;**
- 5. Gender, health, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS;**
- 6. Gender, the environment and disaster management;**
- 7. Gender, media and access to Information and Communication Technology and Innovations;**
- 8. Gender, disabilities and other forms of social inequities;**
- 9. Gender, legal justice and human rights;**
- 10. Gender, culture and family;**
- 11. Gender, peace-building and conflict resolution;**
- 12. Gender Responsive Macro Sector Formation Budgeting;**
- 13. Building women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters.**

## 1.3. Intended policy outcome

The policy will ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed and promoted as a pertinent element to sustainable economic development. This will greatly depend on the meaningful and timely allocation of resources and the efficient use of those resources to create a society in which women and men have equal access to basic services and enjoy the same rights and opportunities in enabling environments.

## 1.4. Legal basis for the GEWE policy

The GEWE policy is guided by national, regional and international gender equality instruments and legal frameworks and development blueprints. These include:

**The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone** which provides the foundation for the principles of gender equality. **Article 15** which states that:

"... every person in Sierra Leone is entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, has the right, whatever his race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed or sex ..."

**National legal frameworks** - The GoSL has adopted National Policy Frameworks to promote gender mainstreaming which include: National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming (2000); National Policy on the Advancement of Women (2000); Domestic Violence Act (2007); Devolution of Estate Act (2007); The Child Rights Acts (2007); Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act (2009); National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence (2012); The Sexual Offences Act (2012); National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (2012); Sierra Leone National Action Plan for Full Implementation of United Nations, Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) (SILNAP) 2010–2014; The Agenda for Prosperity (2013–2018); Implementation Plan on the Sexual Offences Act 2015; National Gender Strategic Plan: (2018–2023) and Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2019.

**Regional and international instruments** - At the regional and international levels, Sierra Leone has adopted, signed and/or ratified a number of instruments, laws and agreements that conform to the principles of gender equality and oblige the Government to take steps to eliminate gender

inequalities and achieve parity. They are the following:

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979;** General Recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984); UN General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993): This declaration calls upon States to "take measures to ensure that law enforcement officers and public officials responsible for implementing policies to prevent, investigate and punish violence against women receive training to sensitize them to the needs of women." (Article 4-i); Beijing Platform for Action (1995); UN General Assembly Resolution 52/86 on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Measures to Eliminate Violence against Women (1998); Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: It includes acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence as 'Crimes Against Humanity' when committed in a widespread or systematic manner, whether or not in times of armed conflict (Article 7g); UNGA, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (2000/2004); The Maputo Protocol (2003); the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa adopted by African Union Heads of State and Government in July 2004; UNSC Resolution 1820 (2008): Among others, this resolution calls on states to end impunity for sexual violence and ensure that all victims have equal protection under the law (Art. 4); UNSC Resolution 1888 (2009); UNSC



Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, peace and security, which among others stresses the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain/promote peace and security; UNSC Resolution 1889 (2009) on Women, peace and security, which stipulates among others to design concrete strategies to support women and girl's security needs, including through gender-responsive law enforcement (Art. 10);

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003); African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Resolution on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Women and Girls Victims of Sexual Violence, (2007);

The AU Gender Policy predicated on a 50/50 gender parity principle; The Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security (2003); The Maputo Declaration on Gender Mainstreaming and Effective Participation of Women in the Africa Union (2003);

The Millennium Development Goals (2005–2015), which among other things calls for GEWE; the Sustainable Development Goals (2016) and ECOWAS Supplementary Act relating to equality of rights between women and men for sustainable development in the ECOWAS region (2015). With the enactment or ratification of these national, regional

and international frameworks and instruments the GoSL is obliged to improve the status of women everywhere in the country, eradicate the injustices they have suffered in the past and continue to suffer, and put measures in place for the implementation and promotion of social and economic justice for women, girls, men and boys.

## 1.5. GEWE guiding principles

This policy is guided and underpinned by the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and human rights principles and values as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948), CEDAW (1979), the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) as well as the Beijing Declaration (1995) to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity, all of which have been signed and ratified by the GoSL.

The following principles provide guide to programme planning, implementation and evaluation by stakeholders and partners.

- Ensuring that **gender equality is recognized as an integral part of poverty reduction and pro-poor growth** and that it is incorporated in the broader national development strategy;
- Meaningful and timely **resource allocation and political will** in Government and across political parties to promote national commitment to gender equality at all levels;
- Adopting **affirmative action** in order to address gender discrimination while also creating opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to all women and/or specific disadvantaged women's groups;
- **Leadership by women** and encouraging their participation in the development and governance and in implementing gender equality policies and initiatives;
- Supporting policy initiatives by developing strategies and mechanisms **addressing cultural orientations and attitudes that hinder gender equality**;
- Ensuring **gender mainstreaming** so that women's needs and aspirations will be included in policy formulation and programme planning, implementation and M&E;
- Creating opportunities for across the board **GEWE, sensitization and education** of the population;
- Encouraging the **participation of men and women** of all ages and demographics in the promotion of gender equality in the public and private spheres;
- Establishing an **integrated and collaborative approach** for tackling gender equality by ensuring gender issues are reflected in national policies across the board and are adequately resourced for effective implementation;

## 2. Situation analysis of policy priority issues

Women make up 50.8 per cent of the population of Sierra Leone, according to the 2015 Housing and Population Census. However, this representation fails to be reflected in key areas such as literacy, economic empowerment, and decision-making and political leadership. Although some strides have been made in areas such as legal reforms and increased gender awareness and activism, entrenched cultural beliefs and practices that discriminate against women and girls, and stereotypical perception of women and girls remain a stumbling block in achieving GEWE.

### 2.1. Gender, education and training

Although Sierra Leone witnessed a surge in school enrolment and increased rehabilitation of school structures after the civil war, the country continued to experience an increase in dropouts from primary and secondary schools, with girls in the majority. For example, the Sierra Education Country Status Report of 2013 substantiated by the World Bank education statistics on Sierra Leone in selected years confirmed that the country was still experiencing increasing dropouts from secondary and primary schools and girls were in the majority. The statistics stated that out of 74,458 dropouts from primary school in 2013, 40,765 were female. The secondary schools recorded 206,121 dropouts that same year and 109,508 were females.

In 2015, 60,624 dropped out of primary school and females were 31,132. That same year recorded 231,677 adolescent dropouts of whom 118,010 were females.<sup>1</sup> Similar trends were recorded in the World Bank Collection of Development Indicators (2017). The cumulative dropout rate for Grade 1 of lower secondary school was 10.08 per cent for boys and 11.71 per cent for girls, and for Grade 2 in lower secondary it was 10.58 per cent for boys and 13.61 per cent for girls. Many reasons account for this

trend including increasing sexual assault and harassment of girls by teachers and male students, absence of reproductive health in school curricula and inadequate safety and support mechanisms for girls in school. The situation was worsened by the unprecedented outbreak of EVD from 2014 to 2016 during which schools were closed in the entire country.

When the new GoSL came to power, it therefore prioritized human capital development and made access to free quality education its flagship programme. In 2018, the GoSL launched the Access to Free Quality Education programme for all children in GoSL-assisted primary and secondary schools. The programme includes textbooks for math, English and social study, subsidized bus services in the Western Area and all district headquarters and school feeding for children in remote areas to ensure that children don't attend school on empty stomachs. The programme has the potential to greatly reduce the illiteracy level in the country, especially among girls. The Government has also increased the budgetary allocation for education from the previous 12-19 per cent to 21 per cent which is the highest in the sub-region.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in June 2020, the Cabinet passed an incentive policy to improve girls' retention in school.

1. World Bank, World Bank Education Statistics, Education Report: Country at a glance – Sierra Leone.

The Government also overturned the ban on pregnant girls attending school.

Despite these encouraging strides, there still remain systematic GBV and discriminatory practices in school environments and communities that hinder girls' access to free quality education.

These include early marriage, rape, harassment, sex for grades and stereotypical ideas about courses that girls and boys should take, and careers to follow. Within higher institutions of learning including the tertiary and university, there remain stereotypical ideas which discourage girls and women from doing certain courses. For example, pure and applied science, technology, law and political science are believed to be the domain of men, while women dominate areas such as home economics, social work, teaching and

nursing, in line with their perceived role as caregivers. The Government has established a university scholarship programme for all students studying science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) but it is not certain whether a higher percentage of female students will benefit from the programme at this time since fewer female compared to male students are studying any of the required subjects.

There is a need for affirmative action, including financial aid targeted at females that will motivate and enable women and girls to venture into these areas of studies. Access to vocational training is almost impossible, especially for rural women, because there are very few functional training centres in the country, most of which are in the urban areas.

## 2.2 Gender, employment, trade, social protection and economic development

Women in Sierra Leone play very vital roles at all levels in society. These are not limited to their customary roles as primary caregivers but as contributors to development in terms of economic well-being and food security. They form 50.8 per cent of the population (2015 Population and Housing Census of Sierra Leone), and account for 57.58 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

However, access for women to good-paying jobs remains a challenge. They are not given equal opportunity in the formal sector. This results ultimately in lower income for women than men. Gender-biased recruitment practices and traditions also diminish the chances of female candidates. For instance, during consultations for this policy, some female participants shared that they had been denied recruitment because they had informed the employers during the interviews that they were either pregnant or breastfeeding. Within the work environment there exists another debilitating vice that affects most career women, namely sexual harassment. It is a silent destroyer of women's chances to progress in formal employment in Sierra Leone.

According to personal experiences shared by participants during the national consultations for the review of this policy, three out of every five career women among them stated that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment at work environment. However according to them sexual harassment at work remains grossly under-reported mainly due to women's fear of reprisal and in some cases low knowledge by many women, of what constitutes sexual harassment and the rights of those subjected to it.

2. Government of Sierra Leone, 'Government Budget Statement of Economic and Financial Policies for the Financial Year 2019' 2019

3. Allieu Badara Kabbia – Women in Sierra Leone's Labour Market, Published by China Daily 2016



Women are the majority among the poorest of the poor in Sierra Leone. They also experience unequal or limited access to financial services. They find it difficult to obtain loans for larger business ventures due to the rigid and sometimes gender-based discriminatory conditions included in the collateral requirement and high interest on loans.<sup>4</sup> Responding to this, the current GoSL has revamped the social safety net programme through which cash is transferred to poor households. There are also NGOs including faith-based organizations that operate microcredit schemes for women. However, due to the magnitude of the needs, there is still a long way to go to reach most communities. Thus, in order to raise funds for survival petty trade, most women usually resort to community-based fund mobilization such as microcredit and the Self-Rotating Saving and Loan Scheme locally known as osusu. However, this source of capital is unsustainable because members often default in payment as there is no legal binding on them. There are very few sustained money transfer services especially in the remote areas; moreover, women lack knowledge about and skills in

utilizing these services.

The situation for women is the same in the agricultural sector. According to the World Bank's development indicators for Sierra Leone, women account for over 53 per cent of labour in the crop farming subsector and 52 per cent in the poultry subsector.<sup>5</sup> Yet, rural women have little or nothing to show economically, mainly due to illiteracy and a lack of the skills, knowledge and resources needed to engage in mechanized farming that would bring in more yields. The situation is worsened by the general absence of trained agricultural extension service workers in rural areas to train and advise farmers including women. There is also unequal access to production resources like land, training and loans by women compared to that available for men. "Economic growth is driven heavily by agricultural and mineral production both of which are dependent on access to land."<sup>6</sup> Despite this, most traditional laws in Sierra Leone do not allow ownership of land by women. In some communities, women can access but not own land.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, rural women as food crop producers lack sustainable and widespread food security mechanisms that would enable

4. His experience was echoed by women and women's groups that participated in all the consultations preceding the review of this policy.

5. Dr. Bernadette Lahai et al. Government of Sierra Leone Statistics Sierra Leone 2004 Population and Housing Census: Analytical Report on Agriculture, 2006

6. Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023), Cluster 1: Human Capital Development sub-section 1.6 Lands and housing, p. 63

7. Personal experiences shared during the regional consultations for this policy



Their gendered multiple roles in the home also do not leave them adequate time to engage more effectively in farming activities. The negative impact of these realities on women's economic development cannot be understated. With the creation of the new Gender Ministry, it is hoped that new initiatives to enhance women's empowerment will replace some of the traditional or stereotypical strategies. Sierra Leone can learn from other countries such as Rwanda that are exploring non-traditional areas to empower women economically such as gender-responsive procurement.

Affirmative Procurement or Gender Responsive Procurement (GRP) is a proven critical strategy that contributes towards achieving women's economic empowerment. GRP embodies the Women's Empowerment Principles which are a set of principles offering guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the workplace, the marketplace and the community.<sup>8</sup>

In practice, GRP is the selection of services, goods and civil works that consider and target buying services from women-owned and women led businesses in all service/production sectors. In addition to building their business capacity, affirmative procurement from women contributes to supplier diversity and competitiveness and greater socio-economic benefit for women, who invest their incomes in family welfare including sending their children to school and accessing health services. Much technical work is needed in supporting this area of inclusive economic policies and programmes. Much success has been registered in many countries applying Affirmative Procurement/GRP policies including the Buy From Women platforms in Ivory Coast, Kenya, Rwanda and Senegal.<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Finance's implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting Principles and

Practices, the establishment of the Women's Fund, and a Child Fund as mandated by the Child Rights Act 2007, by MoGCA and the proposed Affirmative Procurement/GRP are all strategies towards achieving women's sustainable economic development and independence.

## 2.3. Gender-based violence

GBV is an act that is deeply rooted in gender inequality, and remains one of the most notable human rights violations in all societies around the world. It is violence that is directed against a person because of his/her gender. Even though both women and men experience GBV, the majority of victims are women and girls.

GBV continues to be a key impediment to GEWE in Sierra Leone. It happens in a context generally characterized by unequal power relations between men and women, with men having control over women's and girls' lives and many of the women accepting their disadvantaged position as the norm. GBV takes various forms including sexual, physical, psychological, economic and structural violence and harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and widowhood rites. It remains grossly under-reported due mainly to stigma, reprisal and ostracism and inadequate, weak and inconsistent response and support mechanisms. To make matters worse, perpetrators are often not brought to justice due mainly to inconsistencies in the laws, inefficiency of the police coupled with their lack of resources, victims/survivors' fear of reprisal and limited and unequal access for women to the justice system, compromise and lack of evidence.

To address this wide range of gender issues, the Government has taken legislative and

8. UN Women has registered more than 1,800 CEOs who have adopted Women's Empowerment Principles globally. The campaign is on-going. MOGCA is also presently promoting the Buy From Women through Affirmative Procurement Advocacy initiative within the Framework of Covid-19 Response which is promoting local production of PPEs as well as hand-washing soap produced locally by Sierra Leonean Women.

9. UN Women, The power of procurement: How to source from women-owned businesses - Corporate Guide to Gender-Responsive Procurement ISBN 978 1 63214 087 6, New York, 2017.



strategic policy actions as part of its broader development objectives. These include the enactment of relevant legal frameworks such as the three 'Gender Justice' Laws (Domestic Violence Act, Devolution of Estate Act and Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act) which address domestic violence and enhance women's rights to inherit in marriage and divorce; the Anti-Human Trafficking Act and the Sexual Offences Amended Act 2019 for the protection of women from GBV. The GoSL has also established institutions like the Human Rights Commission and FSUs to protect vulnerable groups against violence and human rights abuses.

However, for these institutions to perform their roles effectively there is need to strengthen their human and logistical capacities. There are, however, signs of the beginning of a shift in behaviour and a new strategy for reporting GBV, the Free Hotline, has been developed. Within three months of its inception (April to June 2020) the Free Hotlines received 121 alleged GBV reports including 91 alleged rapes. Furthermore, with the establishment of the One-Stop-Centres for responding to domestic and sexual violence where the complaints can be holistically addressed in single location, the recording and management of GBV are expected to improve.

Additionally, in response to the increasing incidents of sexual violence, especially sexual penetration of girls, the President declared a State of Emergency on rape and sexual violence in February 2019 which triggered the amendment of the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 by Parliament. The GoSL also separated the MSWGCA into two independent ministries: the MOGCA and the Ministry of Social Welfare. It has also developed other policy frameworks to strengthen prevention and responses to GBV such as the Medium-term National Development Plan (2019-2023), which has a Cluster dedicated to women's empowerment; SILNAP II; the National Male Involvement Strategy for the Prevention of SGBV in Sierra Leone; the SGBV Response Strategy 2020 and

the establishment of GBV monthly pillar meetings to address gender equality issues. A Safe Home has also been established in the Western Area and created across all other districts for the temporary housing of survivors of GBV who are vulnerable to reprisal or who need space for mental and psychological healing. On 24 July 2020 the President launched the Special Sexual Offences Model Courts for adjudicating rape cases. The Judiciary will establish one such court in each region and assign a judge to each court to expedite adjudication of rape cases.

These interventions are expected to yield some improvements; however, achieving a 50 per cent reduction target of GBV continues to be a challenge. For example, FGM/C, a traditional custom and ritual commonly known as the Sande or Bondo society, (traditional or cultural secret society for women), is widely practiced in the country. It is a contributing factor to the subordination of women and girls by men because the cutting is believed to minimize women's and girls' sexual urge. To minimize the practice, the GoSL has been taking steps to enforce the Child Rights Act, 2007, which prohibits "cultural practice which dehumanizes or is injurious to the physical and mental welfare of a child." However, enforcement is impeded by the non-inclusion of FGC in the definition of harmful traditional practices.

Trafficking in human persons, including of women and girls for sexual exploitation, has also continued in Sierra Leone. At the regional level the practice is aggravated by the fact that Sierra Leone shares porous borders with Guinea and Liberia. Within Sierra Leone, children, especially girls from rural areas, are trafficked to the cities by distant relatives for domestic servitude and petty trading. These children are also vulnerable to sexual violence, including rape, and perpetrators are often among the host family members.

## 2.4 Gender, decision-making and political leadership

Although the GoSL is making efforts to adopt policies and mechanisms to ensure women's active presence in decision-making, it is only one step in the right direction. Women are still grossly under-represented in policy and decision-making processes, in public and private spheres including in political parties, thereby denying them the opportunity to effect change from the perspective of women. For example, during the 2018 general elections some political parties took positive steps to have more female candidates by offering to pay the nomination fees for all their female candidates. However, most of those women did not even go through their respective parties' primary elections because they could not overcome other gender-based hurdles like discrimination, intimidation, lack of campaign funds and low self-esteem.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, only 17 women out of 146 parliamentarians were elected, forming only 12.32 per cent of the total legislators.

This percentage was further reduced when some MPs, including one female, lost their seats in post-election court cases. At present there are 16 female MPs (11.6 per cent of legislators). In recognition of this fact, the GoSL appointed a few women to key leadership positions including the first female Attorney General in Sierra Leone, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Social Welfare, the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, the Minister of Tourism and Culture, and the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs (The Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs is the first female Cabinet Minister from Koinadugu and Fabala Districts.) Women also hold other senior positions including as Deputy Ministers and Heads of Commissions, Parastatals, Agencies and Diplomatic Missions. However, a lot remains to be done to increase the percentage of female

political leaders and decision makers for which reason women have been calling for a minimum 30 per cent quota in all elective and appointive positions. The first call for this quota was in 2012 through a Private Member's Bill, but the motion was defeated in Parliament. The second time was in 2019 when the Sierra Leone Women Parliamentary Caucus made the call and although Parliament discussed the motion in 2019, no action has since been taken to enact an affirmation action policy.

Women also experience discrimination of varying types at local levels, including Prohibition from holding certain positions in some communities.

For example, women in the Northern Regions and in Kailahun and Kono Districts in the Eastern Region cannot become Paramount Chiefs despite recent changes in chieftaincy election rules.<sup>11</sup>

The Chieftaincy Act of 2009 is ineffective because it has been interpreted by the courts to permit discrimination based on sex and customs.

Within the private sphere, women are mostly confined to their traditional gender roles as wives, mothers and caregivers. Politically, they are largely restricted to roles in the traditional arena such as Soweis (heads of female secret societies) or Mammy Queens (women's leaders).

Within legal frameworks remains the challenge of harmonizing customary laws with statutory laws and consequently bringing them in line with international human rights instruments to enhance women's chances of holding leadership and decision-making positions. The GoSL is yet to develop strategies for implementing, monitoring

10. According to participants at the GEWE Policy Regional Consultations and members of the Female Parliamentary Caucus at the UN Women and UNDP-sponsored workshop on Affirmative Action in May 2018.

11. Women have been barred from becoming Paramount Chiefs in 2009 in Kono District. Elizabeth Simbiwa Sagbo-Tortu experienced GBV when she tried to run for chieftaincy in Kono District. She went to court and also tried with the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission unsuccessfully. Members of the Poro Society, (a male secret society) say it is not cultural for a woman to become a Paramount Chief. The Poro Society is practiced in the eastern, northern and southern regions but it is in the northern region and Kailahun and Kono Districts that women cannot become Paramount Chiefs

and evaluating policies, laws and programmes that support women's increased role in decision-making and leadership. Budgetary support for women's empowerment and gender equality programmes and projects is also grossly inadequate.

Obstacles to women's leadership include but are not limited to entrenched cultural perceptions about the role of women compared to that of men in political leadership and decision making, women's low self-esteem, the lack of women's empowerment programmes, high levels of illiteracy among women, poverty, gendered poverty, intimidation, gender multiple roles and women's limited participation in electoral processes.



## 2.5. Gender, health, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/ AIDS

Public health in Sierra Leone has continued to deteriorate over the years, due but not limited to gross underfunding coupled with poor conditions of service for health workers, inadequate skilled personnel and poor management of the delivery system. Thus, the country's maternal and infant mortality for instance have remained among the world's highest, with 1,360 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, and an infant mortality rate of 120 per 1,000 live births.<sup>12</sup> Efforts to improve reproductive health interventions are slow and hindered by adherence to traditional beliefs and practices, inadequate knowledge, poverty, distance of health centres from homes especially in the rural areas, intimidation by husbands, and ignorance and lack of legal frameworks to protect women's rights to reproductive health. Hence, Sierra Leone ranked the world's seventh highest in teenage pregnancy in 2013.<sup>13</sup> The maternal mortality rate stands at 1.8 deaths per 100,000.<sup>14</sup> The situation was worsened by the outbreak of EVD in 2014 which infected around 8,706 and killed up 3,590 of the infected including medical personnel. Like in all emergency situations, Sierra Leone recorded an increase in GBV including rape, many of which resulted in unwanted pregnancies and domestic violence with the obvious health implications for women and girls. A similar trend is experienced with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic which has not only claimed lives but destroyed livelihoods of women and men. For instance, the MOGCA has already started recording a spike in GBV on the Free Call lines.

<sup>12</sup>World Health Organization, 'WHO Country Cooperation Strategy 2017-2021: Sierra Leone' (2017).

<sup>13</sup>United Nations Population Fund, *Adolescent Pregnancy: A Review of Evidence*, UNFPA, New York, 2013.

Government of Sierra Leone Statistics Sierra Leone: *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census - National Analytical Report* (2017)

Malaria and tuberculosis continue to pose significant threats to public health while the HIV prevalence rate stands at 1.5 per cent according to the WHO Country Cooperation Strategy – Sierra Leone at a Glance (2017). An increase in the prevalence of cervical, breast and prostate cancer has also been noted in a context with no specialized medical units for diagnosis and treatment.

With regard to occupational health hazards in workplaces and other public areas there are no publicized policies to prevent them and since women generally dominate the service sectors like cleaning and catering, they remain highly vulnerable to diseases such as those caused by cigarette smoke.

At the end of the civil war in Sierra Leone, the GoSL constructed numerous Primary Healthcare Units (PHUs) in the rural areas to improve access to healthcare services and as part of the recovery programme. However, most of those structures remained under-utilized due to inadequate funding and lack of medical personnel willing to work in remote areas. The overall impact of these realities on women is overwhelming because in addition to being direct victims of the health lapses, they carry the burden of caring for sick family members while at the same time catering to their basic needs.

The recent move by the GoSL to provide ambulances for every district headquarters has improved access to health but there still remain unmet women-specific needs. This includes the capacity of health personnel to respond to girls' and women's specific health issues such as rape and other forms of sexual violence. There are also hardly any monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure GoSL policy regarding the treatment of victims/survivors of rape is adhered to by the hospitals and health centres.

## 2.6 Gender, environment and disaster management

Women and men have distinct roles in using and managing the environment and are also differently impacted by environment disasters. For example, in Sierra Leone, women and girls in most communities are usually responsible for fetching water for drinking, cooking, cleaning and gardening and fuel wood for cooking. Many women and girls also cover long distances daily in search of firewood while others stand in long queues for hours to collect water. The men on the other hand are responsible for 'major' economic activities like growing of cash crops, mining and building of homes. Even though environmental degradation adversely affects every human being, women being in the most vulnerable sector of most societies are disproportionately impacted. For example, during the outbreak of EVD in 2014 and the mudslide of 2017 in Sierra Leone, women did not only suffer as victims, but also as caregivers to affected loved ones and as overnight heads of affected families.

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has further highlighted how these health emergencies can negatively impact on women and girls. For example, with the declaration of a state of emergency in 2020 due to Covid-19, coupled with the consequent loss of livelihood by men, there has been insecurity in communities and increased tensions within most families, with a resultant increase in incidences of sexual and domestic violence. As a result of these realities and differing gender roles, women and men have different stakes in environmental and disaster management. In addition, the majority of Sierra Leonean women live in poor settlements

*. Women have been barred from becoming Paramount Chiefs in 2009 in Kono District. Elizabeth Simbiwa Sogbo-Tortu experienced GBV when she tried to run for chieftaincy in Kono District. She went to court and also tried with the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission unsuccessfully. Members of the Poro Society, (a male secret society) say it is not cultural for a woman to become a Paramount Chief. The Poro Society is practiced in the eastern, northern and southern regions but it is in the northern region and Kailahun and Kono Districts that women cannot become Paramount Chiefs*



characterized by a lack of basic necessities such as decent housing, safe drinking water and waste disposal systems.

The role of Sierra Leonean women in managing and preserving natural resources including water and land is fundamental, yet they are significantly absent from all conservation initiatives and interventions. They are almost absent in leadership positions and are hardly considered when it comes to decision-making on the environment, and in city and town planning, which remain one of the perceived male professions.

## **2.7 Gender, media and access to Information and Communication Technology and innovation**

The GoSL recognizes Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a critical tool for development. However, the daily realities of the women in this area indicate that stakeholders including the GoSL have hardly acknowledged that technology, as a socially constructed entity, can impact women differently from men. For instance, while the lack of or poor communication infrastructure, computer illiteracy, cost of connections and language skills are impediments to Sierra Leoneans' ability to exploit the potential of the new ICT as tools for their empowerment, the scope and nature of impact for women and men vary. Furthermore, the disadvantage women face can be aggravated by gender-based determinants such as women's multiple gender roles, relationships, low self-esteem and stereotypes about women's image and public roles.

Access to ICT is not limited to physical ability to utilize it, "it also refers to the ability to make use of the information and the resources provided."<sup>15</sup> As analyzed above, most women cannot make use of ICT due to their lived realities of being the poorest and

mostly illiterate. For example, most women cannot afford communication assets like the radio, computer, and mobile phones while their gender roles and domestic violence like spousal intimidation can also inhibit women's access. During the regional consultations on this policy, women shared that some of their partners would violently prevent them from using their mobile phones on the suspicion that they would 'communicate with their boyfriends'.

Another example of stumbling blocks that women face in the ICT world is physical access to and use of radio and TV stations. The GoSL has established or granted licenses for the establishment of FM radio stations in all regions and some district headquarters are transmitting in local languages to enhance communication and information sharing in the country. However, the news stories from these stations and the private media houses are mostly about events in the cities and urban areas featuring mostly men, while the rural events in which women feature as key players are not covered adequately. There are very few women-focused media programmes and women seldom feature in headline grabbing issues. Instead, women feature more prominently among 'vulnerable' groups or in events displaying their sexuality and beauty. In relation to imagery, women who vie for political leadership often have to struggle against biased or negative media coverage and portrayal. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that women are not adequately present in senior leadership and decision-making positions to be able to impact policies, programmes and practices.

Women, like men, need ICT to access information that enables them to play their productive, reproductive and community roles as well as acquire livelihoods. For instance, access to ICT will enable women to have a stronger voice in the affairs of the GoSL and their communities and as well as





at global levels. It will also make their contributions more visible and widely acknowledged, thereby contributing to transforming the mind-set about their social roles. Access to ICT also provides opportunities for women to participate in empowerment programmes without being physically present. This is true for women whose ability to participate physically in such activities is diminished by constraints such as multiple gender roles, spousal restrictions and the cost of travel.

With the establishment of the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Office of the President in 2018, it is hoped that the issues of ICT will be mainstreamed in the social, political and economic spheres of service delivery. The Directorate is currently headed by a female.

## **2.8 Gender and disabilities and other forms of social inequities**

Around the world, PWDs experience, physical, social, economic and cultural barriers that deny them access to employment, skills development, education and limited access to service because institutional structures are not disabled-friendly. Women and girls living with disabilities suffer even more discrimination based on their gender and disabilities. They have a lesser chance than men to be educated and employed formally.

The situation is no different in Sierra Leone, where 1.3 per cent of its population lives with disabilities according to the 2015 Population and Housing Census. Only 1.8 per cent of PWDs are formerly employed, 54 per cent of those in formal employment are males while the majority of the illiterates are females. Hence, the poorest of PWDs are found among women. They venture daily into unsafe and risky environments in search of food and other basic needs for themselves and loved ones and are sometimes vulnerable to sexual abuse including rape.

The GoSL is a signatory to the Convention on Disabilities and the GoSL has in turn

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15. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Gender equality and empowerment of women through ICT', 2005

domesticated the convention which commits the country to mainstream disability issues into all its policies, laws and programmes. This should be done from a gender perspective.

Also among persons with special needs are widows and aged women. Like most developing countries, Sierra Leone does not have any policies and formal mechanisms to cater to older persons; they are cared for by the extended family system. Most widows, on the other hand, either suddenly become household heads or 'depend' on their eldest male children to head the families. The foundation of these structures has been destroyed by recent happenings. These include growing poverty, the brutal civil war and the outbreak of EVD which claimed the lives of many young male and female members of the family leaving the aged as household heads.

The coronavirus pandemic has scientifically been proven to be more life-threatening to older persons. Older women are disproportionately impacted by this, because they have to care not only for grandchildren but older male members of the family in a context generally characterized by patriarchy. The GoSL needs to develop and implement programmes that empower widows, older women and persons affected by EVD.

## **2.9. Gender, legal justice and human rights**

The GoSL has the legal and policy frameworks and laws to promote gender equality and protect the rights of women. Parliament has enacted a number of laws which include the Gender Justice Laws: the Domestic Violence Act, the Registration of the Customary and Divorce Act, the Devolution of the Estate Act; Sexual Offences Act 2019 as Amended, the Child Rights Act and the Anti-Trafficking Act.

The national policy frameworks also exist, including the Advancement of Women (2000), the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming (2000), the Sierra Leone National Action Plan for Full Implementation of United Nations Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) (SILNAP), 2009-2014, SILNAP II, Sierra Leone National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (2012-2016), the Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018), and the National Mid- Term Development Plan 2019-2023.

All these laws and policy frameworks derive their legal basis from the 1991 Constitution as well as regional and international Conventions and Instruments including the Universal Human Rights Declaration, CEDAW, CRC and the Maputo Declaration.

However some of these laws and policies are inconsistent with each other or with the nation's Constitution, making implementation difficult. Some of the international regional instruments have also not been domesticated to make the GoSL more accountable. Therefore, for gender equality to be achieved in Sierra Leone, the GoSL has to identify and address these obstacles.

Most importantly, the GoSL needs to review or amend the 1991 Constitution with full and active participation of women in order to make it relevant to everyone in Sierra Leone including women and girls. Furthermore, the GoSL has to domesticate and implement the international and regional human rights instruments that it has signed and ratified.

These national laws and policies and international instruments form the legal basis for gender equality and their full and effective implementation will enhance gender relations and engender the protection and promotion of women's rights in the country, which is a sign of commitment to mainstreaming gender into all its laws, policies and programmes.

## **2.10. Gender, culture and family**

Sierra Leone attaches high value to family life. Over the years, the GoSL has established institutions, formulated policies and enacted laws to enhance the protection and coherence of the family units. These include the MOGCA, FSUs,

The National Committee Against Gender-based Violence (NACGBV) the Human Rights Commission, the Gender Justice Acts, the Child Rights Act, and the National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence, the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (2012) and the National Gender Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

However at the national level, the inconsistencies in law enforcement and the slow pace of the rollout of some of these laws and policies, among others, have remained a stumbling block to achieving gender equality in the family. At the family level, women continue to face discrimination due to entrenched adherence to patriarchal cultural practices and beliefs. For example, there are glaringly unequal power relations between males and females within family units.

This power imbalance especially between husbands and wives, denies women their rights to decision-making. Thus, for instance, the wife cannot decide the number of children to have, when to have sex or not, or who speaks on behalf of or represents the family unit outside the home. These are all considered the roles of the male members of the family units. She and her daughters are overburdened by perceived gender roles which do not leave them time for self-development. Even though females play multiple roles in the family including caring for the children and male members, their contributions are not given monetary value in relation to the development of the family in particular and the overall development of the country. Furthermore, wife beating is still seen as normal and part of the male's responsibilities to 'train his wife', in most cultures.

The daily experiences of widows, older women and single women are even worse as they suffer discrimination and inequalities not only based on gender but on their social status.

## **2.11. Women, peace-building and conflict resolution**

For 10 years, Sierra Leone experienced one of the most brutal civil conflicts in recent times. This made it possible for women and men to have lived experiences of the disproportionate impact of conflict on women. Like women in conflict situations anywhere in the world, women and girls were killed, maimed and endured all types of sexual violence including rape and gang rape, sexual slavery and forced abortion. As a result, many became either victims of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS or child/single mothers of children they had begotten through sexual violence. They also had the additional burden of taking care of male family members affected by the same conflict.

In recognition of the critical roles women play in preventing conflict and in building peace,

the UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security has called for women's full and active participation in conflict resolution and peace-building.

In 2010, Sierra Leone developed an action plan to implement the resolution. However, the rollout revealed among others that women were still significantly absent in political and decision-making positions; GBV including rape which affected women's active participation in society was still prevalent and the laws that prevented it were not effectively implemented.

It was also noted that women still had unequal or limited access to production resources that enhanced their ability to push for change. Furthermore, even though women in Sierra Leone had carried the brunt of the 11-year armed conflict by not only being victims but active fighters and caretakers of those affected by the same conflict, they were still not given significant and visible roles in conflict prevention and peace-building processes. Women were still being treated mostly as subjects or spectators in peace-building processes.

The GoSL undertook the country's second action plan (SILNAP II) which was completed in 2019, which includes strategies and benchmarks to address these concerns and other emerging ones. Despite this, women in Sierra Leone remain significantly absent in political leadership and decision-making. UN Resolution 1325 also underlines gender mainstreaming and women's leadership in decision-making and politics as crucial strategies for addressing gender concerns. However, gender mainstreaming and women's participation in political leadership decision-making still receives mostly lip service.

Women are still not participating actively in conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives as senior GoSL representatives. Instead, most of them participate either as members of CSOs or as survivors.

## **2.12. Gender responsive macro sector formation budgeting**

Sierra Leone, like many African countries has made little or no progress in introducing GRB into its fiscal policies. GRB is financial policy and fiscal administration for the actualization of gender equality and women's advancement. Gender budgeting enables the GoSL to integrate gender considerations into all its expenditure and revenue policies; and processes and programmes goals for achieving women specific needs.

The GoSL has created the MoGCA, for example, to cater to the needs of social groups that have experienced inequalities such as women, children and PWDs. However, it has fallen short of integrating gender-oriented goals into its expenditure and revenue policies, processes and programmes in meaningful ways.

This is in addition to the fact that budgetary allocations to the MoGCA have remained insignificant, pegged between 0.4 per cent and 0.7 per cent of the Consolidated Budget compared to 10 per cent for the health sector and 21 per cent for the education sector, reflected in the Government Budget and Statement of Economic and Financial Policies for the Financial Year 2019.

As a result, the Ministry has been unable to implement many of its programmes at the district

level, for example, and has relied heavily on funding from its Development Partners, drawn mostly from the international donor community.

The MDAs have also not been funding their gender focal points and have been paying lip service to mainstreaming gender into their sectorial action plans and strategies. The situation has hardly been different at the district and municipal levels. With the exception of the few with female mayors or district chairmen, local councils have not had constant gender-sensitive budgeting or action plans and strategies.

The situation is further handicapped by a lack of or inadequate capacity of the stakeholders including GoSL officials responsible for budget and CSOs including women that can engage with budget. Therefore, even though a gender budgeting policy may exist on paper, it is yet to manifest itself in budget-making procedures.

## **2.13. Building women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters**



Globally, women and women's rights organizations play an important role in humanitarian action, crisis response and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

More often than not, women are first responders in disasters and humanitarian crises and are as such, key in delivering humanitarian response, especially in hard-to-reach areas.

They also play a key role in recovery efforts at the household and community level in contributing towards community as well as at the national level making life-saving contributions and building resilience. In this regard, they are a vital resource in the nexus of humanitarian crisis and development continuum.

In Sierra Leone, women form 50.8 per cent of the country's population and are usually affected the most by humanitarian emergencies alongside their children.



Due to pre-existing gender inequalities, women and girls bear the heaviest brunt of all humanitarian emergencies. However, they are not always helpless victims and humanitarian and DRR efforts must recognize that women and girls, like men and boys, have much to contribute in preparing for and responding to crises. Not enough is done to highlight the role of women and girls as agents of change in crisis situations and in resilience-building.

Evidence and experience show that the meaningful involvement of women in the design and implementation of humanitarian action, crisis response and DRR render interventions more gender-responsive and inclusive.

The low status of most women in the country even before a humanitarian emergency occurs makes it even more urgent that women's capacity for leadership is particularly targeted. The gender inequality index is 0.65, ranking Sierra Leone 151st in the world,<sup>16</sup> and the situation of women's and girls' rights remains poor. Progress has been made in girls' access to primary education, but the few available indicators show very high levels of discrimination, SGBV against women and girls and harmful practices.

Women's participation in economic life is still characterized by non-productive employment and is limited by lack of access to productive resources including land ownership and financial resources.

Their participation in socio-economic and political and public decision-making spheres is still below the international and regional standards stipulated in human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol which the GoSL is

a signatory to.

Despite some progress, the status of women remains very low.

The challenges of gender inequality in the country are deeply rooted in the patriarchal norms which inform and shape political and governance systems and power structures, all of which constitute major impediments to the progress of not only women but also the country's overall development outcomes. Sierra Leone's maternal mortality rate is the highest in the world at 1,165.<sup>17</sup>

Sierra Leone is prone to cyclic humanitarian disasters including floods and mudslides and the negative impact of climate change on food production.

Therefore, it is vital that women are empowered and included in all humanitarian disaster responses. Sierra Leone's fragility is both exacerbated by, and directly responsible for the high impact of internal and external shocks on the country's social and economic development.

After several years of positive progress the country was hit by two major shocks in 2014 and 2015: the collapse of iron ore market prices and the EVD epidemic; in 2017 by floods and a mudslide and in 2020 with the coronavirus pandemic, each with dire consequences on the country.

The economic growth recovered in 2016 up to 6.3 percent, but then it slowed down to 3.5 percent in 2017, mainly due to decline in iron ore mining as well as reduced activities in the non-mining sector. Inflation peaked at 20 percent in March 2017.

# POLICY FRAMEWORK

## 3. The GEWE policy framework-purpose, vision, goal and objectives

### 3.1 Policy purpose

According to the 2015 Population and Housing Census of Sierra Leone, women account for 50.8 per cent of the country's population.<sup>18</sup> Despite this, they remain significantly absent in decision-making and leadership positions in public and private spheres.

Women also continue to experience GBV including rape and other forms of sexual violence, wife beating, and unequal access to productive resources like land, financial services and education and training.

For Sierra Leone's strives for sustainable development and peace to be achieved, women have to be active and effective players in all spheres and their economic empowerment must go together with the country's economic growth and development.

Even though the GoSL over the years has developed many gender-sensitive legal frameworks, laws, policies, and related action plans and strategies over the years, the full implementation of these laws and policies and their strategic plans have been marred by many challenges including inconsistencies in some of the laws, lukewarm political will and lack of GRB to enable the respective line ministries to implement the programmes.

Even with the creation of the new ministry, the MOGCA budget has remained between 0.4 per cent and 0.7 per cent of the country's Consolidated Budget over the years. Consequently, the Ministry has not been able to implement many of its programmes and has relied heavily on funding from its international development partners.

MDAs do not have a budget to support gender mainstreaming and their focal points are often low-level staff members who do not have any influence or decision-making powers. The situation is no different in most of the district and municipal councils.

However, since a new ministry has now been created to implement or coordinate implementation of all programmes and policy development for the attainment of GEWE.

The GEWE policy will first address the gaps in existing gender-related policy frameworks by proposing strategic objectives and actions and indicators for monitoring progress. Secondly, it will articulate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholder institutions including the office of the President to warrant the political will needed to achieve GEWE and finally, the policy will lay the foundation for the enactment of Sierra Leone's first GEWE Law.

### **The policy will serve the following purposes:**

- Act as a basic blueprint on which strategies and initiatives for combating gender-based discrimination and gender inequalities will be based;
- Be used as a roadmap for achieving equal treatment of men and women in Sierra Leone;
- Position women and men to contribute equally to Sierra Leone's development agenda;
- Make a case for introducing gender equality provisions in the 1991 Constitution which is currently under review and the consequent amendment of the Child Rights Act and Chieftaincy Act 2009 to reflect the anticipated gender equality provisions in the new constitution;
- Provide mechanisms and guidelines that enable stakeholders to plan, implement and monitor gender equality programmes and strategies;
- Create an enabling environment to ensure women's empowerment and active participation in public and private spheres;
- Highlight boys', girls' and women's needs in achieving gender equality as females, more than males; have been affected by gender inequality.

## **3.2. Vision**

The GEWE policy derives its basis from the 1991 Constitution which calls for the equal enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms by men, women, girls and boys everywhere in Sierra Leone and at all times, and regional international instruments and conventions.

The policy envisions a country with legislative, socio-economic and political structures eliminating all forms of discrimination and guaranteeing the transcendence of gender equality in all private, public and development sectors with women and men, and boys and girls living and working as equal partners in enabling environments.

## **3.3 Goal**

The policy's overall goal is to mainstream gender into all the national, sectoral and local policies, plans, budgets and programmes, to achieve GEWE in all spheres of development in Sierra Leone.

## **3.4. Broad policy objectives**

1. Achieve gender equity and equality in all sectors and enable women to take their rightful position in national development, and political leadership and decision-making;
2. Ensure satisfactory quality of life for women and girls and eliminate the feminization of poverty;
3. Eliminate all forms of GBV and discrimination.

## **3.5. Specific policy objectives**

The specific objectives of the GEWE policy are to:

1. Ensure equal access to quality education by girls, boys, men and women by providing guidelines to diminish GBV and other discriminatory practices and policies in schools and in education in general by 2025;
2. Strengthen women's access to and

control over productive resources to lessen poverty among women in Sierra Leone by 2025;

3. Harmonize relevant laws and strengthen implementation mechanisms to reduce the incidences of GBV in the country by at least 60 per cent by 2025;
4. Review/create and enforce policies to ensure Sierra Leonean women's active participation in political leadership and decision-making at all levels by 30 per cent minimum by 2022;
5. Implement measures to ensure at least 60 per cent of women and adolescent girls, children and infants have access to health including sexual and reproductive health, cancer and HIV/AIDS by 2025;
6. Review and/or implement guidelines to increase women's active and effective participation in environmental and disaster management initiatives by 2023;
7. Implement and promote measures to improve women's access to and leadership in Information and Communication Technology and innovations by 2022;
8. Eliminate obstacles women and girls with disabilities and special needs face with regards to equality and economic empowerment, by proposing practical transformative measures;
9. Protect and promote women's and girls' human rights by implementing human rights protection mechanisms and strengthening women's access to justice;

10. Promote equality in the family units and the upholding of women's rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance by strengthening the mechanisms that protect these rights;

11. Enhance the participation in, and contribution of, Sierra Leonean women to peace-building and conflict resolution by implementing Resolutions 1325 and 1820 and SILNAP II;

12. Provide guidelines for public expenditures and meaningful allocation of public resources including to the Gender Ministry by institutionalizing gender responsive macro sector formation budgeting into all sectors and levels;

13. Ensure effective mainstreaming of gender perspectives in humanitarian disaster interventions.

## 4. Policy areas of focus, objectives and strategic actions

The MOGCA in collaboration with its partners including women's groups, traditional and religious leaders, Local Councils, FSUs and CSOs, have identified 13 priority areas for policy and programmatic interventions to decrease gender inequality in Sierra Leone. These include Education and training; trade, employment, economic development and social protection; GBV; decision-making and political leadership; health, reproductive health, cancer and HIV/AIDS; the environment and disaster management; media and access to Information and Communication Technology and innovations; disabilities and other forms of social inequities; legal and human rights; culture and family, peace-building and conflict resolution; GRB; and building women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters.

The strategies proposed below are informed by the situation analysis in chapter 2.

### 4.1. Gender, education and training

#### 4.1.1. Policy objectives: Ensure equal access to quality education by girls, boys, men and women by providing guidelines to diminish GBV and other discriminatory practices and policies in schools and in education in general by 2025.

Education is a right. Notwithstanding, most Sierra Leoneans have never acquired basic education due to high levels of poverty in families, early marriage of girls, ignorance of the importance of education especially for girls, gender role expectations and lack of schools especially in rural areas. Many children start school but drop out before entering the senior secondary level, and the majority of these happen to be girls.<sup>19</sup>

Education can enhance women's self-esteem; enable their engagement in formal employment and business ventures; strengthen their political leadership and decision-making abilities and enable them to better take care of their children. Furthermore, additional years of secondary education for girls can reduce their chances of early marriage and pregnancy. The free and quality education programme introduced by the GoSL is a step in the right direction and the new Stay-in-School Initiative intends to reduce the dropout rate among girls. However, the hurdles that have limited girls' access to and or prevented them from completing school such as sexual harassment and exploitation and abuse need to be addressed urgently.

#### 4.1.2. Strategic actions

- Monitor the free and quality education programme from a gender perspective;



- Do robust awareness-raising about women's and girls' rights and the importance of education for women, men, boys and girls;
- Develop and support mechanisms to motivate girls and women including PWDs to study subjects like STEM and technical courses which are stereotypically considered male domains;
- Include comprehensive sexuality education and life skills in the primary and secondary school curricula;
- Include gender in the curricula of teacher Training Colleges and reinforce in-service training for teachers on gender, human rights, sexuality, Teachers' Code of Conduct, and guidance and counselling to strengthen teachers' abilities to support and protect children and adolescents in school;
- Provide incentives for teachers working in remote areas of the country;
- Construct additional buildings in GoSL-assisted schools and new structures within a two-mile radius in remote areas to accommodate the surge in school enrolment;
- Provide more gender-sensitive learning materials and fully equip schools, especially in rural areas;
- Revamp the adult literacy programme countrywide and include life skills and encourage active participation by women;
- Train more teachers in sign language and Braille and ensure an inclusive approach in teaching at all levels.



## 4.2 Gender, trade, employment, economic development and social protection

### 4.2.1 Policy objective: Strengthen women's access to and control over productive resources to lessen poverty among women in Sierra Leone by 2025.

Women in Sierra Leone form 50.8 per cent of the population, 60 per cent of the farmers and 57.58 per cent of the labour force. Yet, women are among the poorest members of society. Women's active participation in trade and economic development will ensure sustained growth and hence all policies and legislation relating to trade and economy must

incorporate women's special needs and aspirations.

### 4.2.2. Strategic actions

- Build women's capacity in business and life skills and link them to financial institutions;
- Review the National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020 to be gender-sensitive and implement it;
- Encourage banks to embark on countrywide financial literacy programmes in local languages through community radio and other technologies to improve women's chances for loans;
- Develop and review agricultural laws and policies including on land tenure, and programmes around rural development to incorporate gender perspectives;
- Provide gender training for agricultural extension service workers and increase their numbers especially in rural areas;
- Promote soft loans for women in agriculture and other micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) especially in rural areas;
- Strengthen women's skills in food processing and preservation to add value to their products and provide safe and secure community storage systems in rural areas;
- Organize regional events including agricultural trade fairs to enhance experience-sharing and showcasing;
- Provide security and promote more lomas or dorweis (periodic markets) to enhance rural farmers' access to markets;
- Provide opportunities and enabling spaces for rural female farmers to acquire skills that can help them improve on their farming methods;
- Provide gender and human rights training for security personnel and ensure those deployed at border crossing points include senior female officers;
- Review and analyze key economic and trade laws and policies, including how they impact the economy and the attainment of GEWE in Sierra Leone;
- Formulate and enforce affirmative gender-responsive procurement;

## 4.3. Gender-based violence

### 4.3.1. Policy objective: Harmonize relevant laws and strengthen implementation mechanisms to reduce the incidences of GBV in the country by at least 60 per cent by 2025.

As mentioned in the analysis above, Sierra Leone has substantial number of laws and other legal frameworks and policies for the protection of women from GBV. In addition to these the country has ascribed to regional and international relevant human rights instruments mentioned in Chapter 1. This has not however resulted in a decrease in the prevalence of GBV anywhere in the country. There is urgent need to adopt a multispectral approach that addresses prevention, awareness-raising, advocacy and lobbying, rehabilitation, coordination of efforts and either the reform of existing laws or harmonizing them with the GEWE policy and enforcing them.

### 4.3.2. Strategic actions

- Examine relevant laws and policies to determine their appropriateness in eliminating GBV, and monitor the enforcement of all legislation and policies aimed at eradicating all

forms of GBV in all spheres of society;

- Popularize all legislation and policies combating GBV through user-friendly manuals, radio programmes, religious gatherings, workshops, seminars, workplaces and learning institutions;
- Train all entities providing services to prevent or respond to SGBV such as medical personnel, security staff, law enforcement agencies and social workers;
- Enhance the capacity of the courts, FSUs and police prosecutors including by improving human resources and logistics to prevent and respond to SGBV;
- Monitor the adjudication of SGBV cases and produce an annual consolidated report for advocacy purposes;
- Enforce and monitor the implementation of free medical services for survivors of SGBV at GoSL health facilities especially in rural areas;
- Document and share successful community-based or self-protection methods/practices to enhance the skills of women, girls and PWDs to protect themselves from SGBV;
- Strengthen women's and girls' access to protection mechanisms, such as those that prevent and address GBV including sexual abuse and exploitation
- Undertake countrywide research or a desk review on root causes of GBV and prevalence, and the nature of violence against girls and PWDs;
- Establish at least one forensic laboratory in each region to enhance access for survivors of SGBV and enable accurate and timely documentation of forensic evidence;
- Support and promote the training of Sierra Leone Police in the collection of forensic evidence including from perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

## **4.4. Gender, decision-making and political leadership**

### **4.4.1. Policy objective: Review/create and enforce policies to ensure the active participation of Sierra Leonean women in political leadership and decision-making at all levels by at least 30 per cent by 2022.**

Sierra Leonean women are still under-represented in parliament, political parties, GoSL, boards, agencies and educational institutions especially universities and national and local committees as leaders despite calls by gender and human rights activists over the years for women's active and equal participation in political leadership and decision-making. The calls for a 30 per cent quota in elective and appointive positions have received only lip service including by political parties. Women's full and active participation is crucial for sustained economic development and peace and security. The following strategies are proposed to make this needed change.

### **4.4.2. Strategic sections**

- PPRC to review the political parties' Act to mandate political parties to implement the minimal 30 per cent quota for nominations for national and local council elections and for leadership positions within the respective political parties;
- Political parties to review their constitutions and structure to reflect the 30% quota
- Political parties to review their policies and adopt gender policies such as safe seats for women
- Adopt affirmative actions like a minimum 30 per cent quota in governance at all levels;

- Review and amend the Constitution to incorporate affirmative actions to ensure women's participation in decision-making and political leadership;
- Enact an affirmative bill;
- Reform local and traditional laws and align them with statutory laws to enhance women's chances of participation in leadership and decision-making at national and local levels;
- Create a database of potential women for leadership and decision-making positions and regularly share this with stakeholders including the office of the president and MDAs;
- Train women to improve their self-esteem to take leadership positions;
- Institute, support and promote empowerment programmes for young women including mentorship, to increase their self-esteem and assertiveness;
- Re-deploy a functional gender advisory office in the Office of the President that will reaffirm the political will to mainstream gender into all GoSL policies, programmes and interventions;
- Provide regular gender and human rights trainings for parliamentarians and local councilors;
- Enhance the capacity of female parliamentarians and local councillors for public speaking, advocacy and leadership;
- Encourage, nominate and support female parliamentary aspirants to compete in safe and winnable constituencies;
- Enforce laws prohibiting all types of campaign violence;
- Encourage political parties to set up special funds to assist female candidates and PWDs to participate in general elections.

## 4.5 Gender, health, cancer, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

### 4.5.1. Policy objective: Implement measures to ensure at least 60 per cent of women and adolescent girls, children and infants have access to health including sexual and reproductive health, cancer and HIV/AIDS by 2025.

Sierra Leone's health services have witnessed a steep decline over the years due mainly to underfunding and lack of functional health centres in most rural areas. Thus, Sierra Leone continues to be among countries with the highest ratio of maternal mortality as mentioned in the analysis above. The country has many health policies and legal frameworks but non-implementation of most of them remains a challenge.

Women's improved sexual and reproductive health is fundamental in achieving GEWE. The GoSL has articulated health programme strategies for the achievement of universal health. However, there is a need to mainstream gender perspectives into these strategies to make them directly relevant to women's improved health. The GEWE policy thus proposes the following strategies.

### 4.5.2. Strategic actions

- Review all existing legislations and policies on health to integrate women's and girls' (including PWDs) needs and rights to sexual and reproductive health;
- Refurbish/build and equip more PHUs to include HIV/AIDS and hepatitis services;
- Provide gender-sensitive primary health care training for health personnel particularly on

sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS;

- Design, develop and promote gender-responsive health care services focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights including HIV/IDS and cancer;
- Provide incentives including allowances for medical personnel working in remote areas;
- Provide training on ethics and integrity for health workers at all levels;
- Incorporate functional adolescent and youth-friendly services into all PHUs and other relevant locations;
- Organize community-based programmes to create awareness on the benefits of family planning and impacts of unsafe abortion and encourage active participation of traditional and religious leaders;
- Review, finalize and implement the draft National Strategy for the reduction of FGM/C;
- Develop and implement a free and quality health care policy to minimize maternal and child mortality;
- Implement the Abuja declaration of a 15 per cent budgetary allocation by the GoSL to the health sector;
- Implement and monitor health care provisions as articulated in the Domestic Violence, Sexual Offences, and Persons with Disability Acts and the Offences against the Persons act that criminalizes abortion of any kind;
- Revitalize and strengthen village welfare committees, community health units and gender alert groups to monitor GBV in communities;
- Domesticated and/or popularize CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol especially Article 14.2 on health and reproductive rights.

## **4.6. Gender, the environment and disaster management**

### **4.6.1. Policy objective: Review and/or implement guidelines to increase women's active and effective participation in environmental and disaster management initiatives by 2023.**

Even though women are key players in the use and protection of the environment in Sierra Leone, they are grossly under-represented in the environmental arena and policy formulations and their specific needs and aspirations remain marginalized in relevant policies and initiatives. To ensure sustainable environment, women should cease being seen as subjects of environmental protection initiatives and disaster management and responses and should instead become full and active partners.

### **4.6.2. Strategic actions**

- Review national legislation and policies and domesticate relevant international instruments to ensure women's equal participation with men in environment and disaster management design, implementation and evaluation;
- Provide conducive environments and opportunities including through training to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in MDAs dealing with environmental issues;
- Develop and implement programmes to enable women participate fully in conservation and city and town planning initiatives;
- Identify and promote women-led positive practices on environmental protection and



management to reduce climate-related incidents;

- Organize community-based programmes on environmental awareness and protection including designated days for planting economically valuable trees such as mango, orange, avocado and cashew nut trees;
- Develop and promote programmes to reduce women's vulnerability to identified environmental hazards in the workplaces and homes in line with the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development;
- Include women in chiefdom, district and provincial security committees that identify, plan and implement environmental protection initiatives and programmes;
- Train women in smart climate initiatives such as climate smart agricultural programmes, to improve their livelihoods.
- Assess the environmental impact of existing policies and programmes on the communities as well as on women's access to natural resources like land and water;
- Develop and enact laws, including appropriate penalties for defaulters to enforce the national monthly cleaning initiative;
- Develop or review and enforce community-based environmental protection by-laws and waste disposal policies;
- Encourage rural women to reuse, and recycle resources to avoid waste and excessive use;
- Promote affordable and accessible energy-serving cooking devices or methods for rural women;
- Train rural women's groups in solar technology and provide them with solar energy;
- Integrate indigenous women's knowledge of sustainable resource management;
- Promote the provision of alternative livelihood support to women especially in rural areas to mitigate environmental degradation.

## **4.7 Gender, media and access to Information and Communication Technology and innovations**

### **4.7.1. Policy objective: Implement and promote measures to improve women's access to and leadership in information and communication technology and innovations by 2022**

Sierra Leone is making good use of ICT and innovations to disseminate information, educate and entertain. The most common media are the radio, TV, print media, billboards, the internet, skits, music and drama. The mobile phone is increasingly becoming the most accessible and affordable tool as all the networks are quickly extending their services to almost all corners of the country. While these new innovations are enhancing information sharing and public education, they have drawn attention to pertinent concerns that need to be addressed to enable women to equally enjoy and use the innovations for their empowerment.

The most pressing among them is the challenge of inaccessibility. For instance, most media houses are concentrated in urban areas and focus mostly on events dominated by men, such as politics, at the expense of service in rural areas where women abound. There is also the prevailing media culture of portraying women and girls in stereotypical, demeaning and negative ways including in local music.

A women's rights-based revolution in ICT in Sierra Leone can immensely contribute to achieving GEWE. This policy articulates the following strategic interventions for achieving this.

### 4.7.2. Strategic actions

- Develop and organize more gender training for journalists, media personnel and performing artists;
- Advocate for the appointment of women in decision-making positions in the ICT/telecommunication sector and media houses;
- Ensure the participation of women in formulating ICT policies and legislation;
- Mainstream and monitor gender perspectives in all ICT interventions including policy formulation;
- Support and promote mechanisms that encourage girls to venture into ICT/telecommunication professions;
- Develop and implement programmes to create awareness on SGBV in online platforms;
- Establish community-based programmes such as internet cafes, tele-centres and adult education for rural women;
- Train and appoint women in decision-making positions in media houses;
- Support media organizations to monitor and report on political and developmental issues that are contributing to the achievement of GEWE;
- Increase and promote the number of female-focused programmes in media house and encourage IMC to formulate policy on this;
- Conduct research and develop policies on health and environmental hazards in ICT industries;
- Develop and implement clear communication on SGBV prevention strategies via media platforms;
- Encourage media houses and musicians to portray women as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to, and beneficiaries of the process of development;
- Train, profile and showcase female media practitioners;
- Train rural women in ICT, to increase opportunities for them in trade, economic activities and information sharing;
- Include ICT in the national curricula of primary and secondary schools.

## 4.8. Gender, disabilities and other forms of social inequities

### 4.8.1. Policy objective: Eliminate obstacles that women and girls with disabilities and special needs face in achieving economic empowerment and social equality by proposing practical transformative measures.

Women, men, boys and girls living with disabilities comprise 1.3 per cent of the population of Sierra Leone<sup>20</sup> and experience physical, social, economic and cultural barriers that deny them access to employment, skills development and education due to discriminatory perceptions about them. Access to most educational materials and the print media is also very limited to PWDs as the materials are not adapted to suit their special needs.

This reality has a disproportionate impact on women with disabilities. They suffer further discrimination based on their gender and gender roles expectations. The following strategic actions are intended to reduce these obstacles to full and active participation of

women and girls with disabilities in development programmes.

### **4.8.2. Strategic actions**

- Review and enforce legislation, policies and programmes to remove barriers to the empowerment of women and children living with disabilities;
- Enforce laws to build ramps in all public places including offices, institutions of learning, hospitals, public toilets and places of worship to enable entrance by persons with special needs;
- Encourage public learning institutions to adapt learning materials/methods to improve accessibility by persons with special needs;
- Encourage media houses to make information more accessible to PWDs by adapting news to meet their special needs;
- Create and implement policies and programmes to cater to widows, older persons, orphans, women and children with disabilities and, especially, women affected by EVD;
- Implement and monitor the medical services policy for PWDs;
- Encourage media organizations and institutions to employ PWDs.

## **4.9. Gender, legal justice and human rights**

### **4.9.1. Policy objective: Protect and promote women's and girls' human rights by implementing human rights protection mechanisms and strengthening women's access to justice**

Sierra Leone has enacted a good number of laws and formulated legal frameworks and policies aimed at protecting women's human rights. It has also ascribed to many regional and international legal frameworks and agreements and domesticated some of them, all aimed at the same objective of protecting women's human rights. However, effective enforcement of these laws, policies and legal frameworks remains to be seen due to reasons such as the following: inconsistencies in some of them, lukewarm political will to enforce them, inadequate financial resources and staff capacity, a lack of access by women to services, women's low knowledge of their human rights and these legal and policy instruments, and gender-based discriminatory cultural practices and beliefs such as separate dress codes for women to enter court houses and buildings housing GoSL offices. Protection of women's human rights is vital for the achievement of GEWE in Sierra Leone.

### **4.9.2. Strategic actions**

- In collaboration with Law Reform Commission and civil society partners, review, amend or repeal all laws that do not equally provide for men and women including older persons or PWDs;
- Provide training on human rights, gender laws and international instruments protecting women's and children's rights, targeting women's groups, traditional and religious leaders and law enforcement agencies;
- Strengthen the capacity of GFPs in sectors and MDAs to monitor the implementation of laws and policies protecting female employees, and investigate alleged abuses against women in the workplace;

- In collaboration with the Law Reform Commission, Local Councils and civil society organizations, harmonize conflicting laws protecting women's and children's rights, including between customary and statutory laws and the Registration of Marriage Act, the Domestic Violence Act and the Child Rights Act;
- Map out districts without magistrates and ensure the vacancies are filled and provide incentives including allowances and housing for those in remote areas;
- Provide adequate logistics and human resources for the courts and police including vehicles, cameras, notebooks and phones;
- Organize trainings for the judiciary, police and traditional court personnel to enable them to fully enforce laws protecting women;
- Eliminate all practices at formal and traditional courts that give differential treatments to women and men in court procedures;
- Deploy, accessible, affordable, trained and functional legal services at all district levels;
- In collaboration with CSOs, organize programmes including radio talks and community meetings to explain explicitly laws protecting women and children including PWDs;
- Encourage women's active participation in drafting and reviewing laws;
- Provide child-friendly spaces for the interview of child survivors of GBV;
- Enforce laws on sexual violence including rape and sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse;
- Monitor the implementation of and advocate for the timely production of periodic/annual reports on international human/women's rights instruments;
- Create a platform for grassroots women to voice their plight and demand and claim their rights;
- Provide massive education on the Gender Justice Laws, Child Rights Act, Anti Human Trafficking Act, Sexual Offences as Amended 2019 and other relevant laws through radio, annual commemorations of human rights- related events, seminars and community events like wedding and naming ceremonies to enhance awareness especially among women of these laws;
- Enforce laws on child marriage including children with disabilities;
- Strengthen collaboration with the Sierra Leone Correctional Services in capacitating women in conflict with the law;
- Providing aids like sign language during court hearings to ensure equal representation before the law for PWDs;
- Law Reform Commission to act on the recommendations raised by women during the Constitutional Review Process.

## 4.10. Gender, culture and family

### 4.10.1 Policy objective: Promote equality in the family unit and the upholding of women's rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance by strengthening the mechanisms that protect these rights.

Women all over the country, irrespective of their regional and geographical location, tribal affiliation, educational level or status, experience some kind of inequality within the family unit. These may be in decision- making, financial management, roles and responsibilities and rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance. All these practices not only deny women their independence and reduce their self-esteem but are debilitating to their empowerment. There is urgent need to put mechanisms in place to free the many women

and girls suffering from unequal treatment and gender-based discrimination within the family unit if GEWE is to be achieved.

#### **4.10.2. Strategic actions**

- Formulate and review, popularize and enforce laws and policies that promote equality and rights in the family;
- Embark upon a massive sensitization programme to create awareness about the rights to demand maintenance funds;
- Recruit, train, equip and deploy more social workers including in the rural areas for easy and affordable access to their services by especially women and PWDs;
- Organize community-based educational programmes on family life and the vital roles women play in the family unit and their right to equal treatment;
- Implement and promote community-based programmes to increase access to safe drinking water to reduce women's and girls' domestic workload;
- Develop mechanisms in collaboration with Statistics Sierra Leone and CSOs including LAWYERS to attach monetary value to women's gender roles;
- Publicize the law criminalizing marital rape;
- Promote sexual reproductive health and the right of women, girls and boys to choose.

### **4.11. Gender, peace-building and conflict resolution**

#### **4.11.1. Policy objective: Enhance the participation in, and contribution of Sierra Leonean women to peace-building and conflict resolution by implementing Resolutions 1325 and 1820 and SILNAP II.**

Sierra Leonean women and girls, like men and boys have different experiences of conflict and varying skills to resolve or prevent conflicts and build peace. Therefore, it is imperative that they should form an active part of all peace-building and conflict resolution processes, be allowed to speak for themselves in preventing or resolving conflicts and have their specific needs recognized and included. Stakeholders should acknowledge this, enforce relevant policies and legal frameworks and enable women to actualize these objectives.

#### **4.11.2. Strategic actions**

- Mainstream gender into peace support operations;
- Give women senior leadership roles in conflict resolution and peace building;
- Incorporate gender into security forces' training curricula;
- Organize gender training for security personnel preparing to participate in peace support operations;
- Enact Gender/Female/Women's Services Act to enhance increased female representation and to allow women to serve fully at all levels during peace and conflict times;
- Send more female personnel to participate in peace support operations;
- Enforce disciplinary actions against Sierra Leonean security personnel who commit GBV in the country and while participating in peace support operations;
- Highlight and acknowledge the vital roles women play in conflict resolution and peace-building and promote their full and active participation;
- Establish a monitoring board to ensure that women are recruited into senior leadership



- positions and are part of decision-making bodies;
- Recruit more women into the security forces and place them in senior leadership positions.

## 4.12. Gender responsive macro sector formation budgeting

### 4.12.1. Policy objective: Provide guidelines for public expenditures and meaningful allocation of public resources including to the Gender Ministry by institutionalizing gender responsive macro sector formation budgeting into all sectors and levels.

Before 2018, the revenue base of the GoSL had mostly been very weak. Hence, GoSL allocation to public services such as health, education and women's empowerment programmes had remained minimal. Civil society, which ought to have been engaged with promoting GRB budgeting through research, advocacy and public education generally, lacked the capacity to do so.

However, since April 2018, the GoSL embarked on reforming public financial management that has resulted in successful local revenue collection for public services. Gender-oriented goals need to be integrated into these programme-based budgets in order to achieve GEWE. The GEWE policy recommends the following strategic actions.

### 4.12.2. Strategic actions

- Strengthen, through training, the capacity of personnel responsible for developing budgets;
- Provide budget oversight committees and CSOs working on budgets with resources needed to execute their mandate;
- Demonstrate the need for gender budgeting through research and published findings;
- Train CSOs, including women's groups, in budget preparation and to conduct a gender analysis of GoSL fiscal policies, processes and programmes to hold GoSL accountable;
- Strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians and councillors, through training, on GRB;
- Collect and publish gender disaggregated statistics and data on unpaid work;
- Enhance the capacity of local stakeholders through technical support to collect gender disaggregated statistics and the dissemination of best practices of GRB;
- Financially support gender-responsive projects to ensure the actualization of GEWE;
- Advocate for the adoption of GRB approaches by the GoSL;
- Include gender responsive programmes in all projects;
- Undertake or support gender-disaggregated tracking, M&E of all budget allocations from the consolidated funds and use findings to engage stakeholders;
- Increase budget allocation to MOGCA to enable it to cater to social groups experiencing inequalities.

## 4.13. Building women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters

### 4.13.1. Policy objective: Ensure effective mainstreaming of gender perspectives into humanitarian disaster interventions.

Due to the cyclical and repeated humanitarian emergencies, it is important that women's capacity and leadership in building resilience is also entrenched in the GEWE Policy. This will guarantee the resources needed to achieve a balanced approach in addressing the interconnectedness of the socio-economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and how they relate to risk management in humanitarian emergencies. Applying integrated social and environmental standards will help prevent adverse impacts on people, particularly women and children, who are the most vulnerable during humanitarian crises. Below are specific programming interventions that should be maintained to enable women's effective participation, build their resilience and enable them to cope with and overcome humanitarian emergencies.

### 4.13.2. Strategic actions

- Ensure women are targeted especially and benefit from all socio-economic and livelihood opportunities which includes skills training and second chance education as a basis of their empowerment;
- Increase leadership and participation of displaced women in community mobilization, decision-making and social cohesion, including through engaging men and boys in working towards gender equality;
- Build strong partnerships between response mechanisms and women's rights organizations and ensure that the localization agenda is framed in terms of gender equality and women's leadership;
- Ensure that humanitarian action contains objectives and indicators for gender equality and the participation of local women leaders, including by incorporating such tools in the terms of reference for senior humanitarians;
- Increase resources for organizational change in the humanitarian system and track the allocation of funding to women's organizations;
- Invest in capacities, systems and tools for the collection and use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus, including disaster loss and damage;
- Address root causes and structural barriers limiting women's participation in disaster risk reduction decision-making and humanitarian response, including the burden of unpaid care work;
- Adopt specific quotas for women's participation in humanitarian and disaster risk reduction platforms at community, national and international levels;
- Ensure that policies are harmonized and explicitly reference the leadership and participation of women.

# 5. Institutional frameworks for policy implementation

All stakeholders have the responsibility to implement the GEWE policy to enable women's advancement. These include the Office of the President, the MOGCA as the lead agency, the Gender Focal Points in MDAs and the Gender Development Partner Cluster. The structures mentioned in this policy including the National Gender Steering Committee will form part of the key stakeholders responsible for placing the Gender Agenda on a sound footing.

## 5.1. Office of the President

The political will to mainstream gender, displayed and actualized at the highest level, namely in the office of the President, can have a spill-over effect in every sectoral level. Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023), for instance, has women's empowerment among its priorities. It should

therefore champion and cascade gender equality principles throughout every aspect and level of policy making and implementation. Maximum efforts should be made to mainstream gender into international protocols, cooperation agreements and bilateral arrangements ascribed to or entered into by the President and the GoSL. All aspects of the President's ICT strategy should manifest and showcase best practices and experiences of gender mainstreaming.

### ***The Office of the President will:***

1. make gender issues a national priority and lead all national coordination of the Gender Programme;
2. mobilize development partners to support the GoSL's efforts in mainstreaming gender into its development paradigm;
3. incorporate gender mainstreaming into the performance evaluation of MDAs to ensure its effective integration into their sectoral policies and strategies;
4. ensure the integration of gender frameworks into public service regulations; ensure the effective integration of gender perspectives in policies and programmes of the private sector and civil society institutions

## 5.2. The National gender machinery

### 4.2.1. Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs

The MOGCA, which leads, coordinates and monitors GEWE programming as well provides policy guidance and technical support to the office of the President will maintain its role. More specifically, the Ministry will:

1. lead and coordinate the implementation of the GEWE Policy;
2. develop monitory mechanisms of the GEWE policy
3. represent the Gender Programme in all Cabinet committees;

4. provide professional advice on gender issues;
5. oversee the political content of the Gender Programme;
6. account for the GEWE Policy implementation;
7. act as the lead advocate on gender issues at all levels;
8. liaise with other ministries and ensure coordination on the implementation of the Gender Programme;
9. widely disseminate the GEWE Policy at national, regional and international levels;
10. mobilize resources for implementing national gender interventions;
11. Liaise and network at national, regional and international levels on gender issues.

### **5.2.2. The National Gender Steering Committee**

This committee will be appointed by the President and will comprise the Minister of Gender and Children Affairs, Minister of Finance and representatives from the private sector, Parliament, CSOs and Local Government Authorities. Its role will be purely the M&E of the implementation of the GEWE policy. The Committee will prepare periodic evaluation reports for the President on the GEWE policy. It will ensure that the strategy direction is consistent with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States' gender policies; and that Sierra Leone maintains the gender mainstreaming strategies and international commitments and obligations that it has adhered to in relation to GEWE. It will also review capacity-building processes, institutional and legislative reforms, educational curriculum and other policy reforms, management information systems, gender disaggregated statistics, local initiatives and networking. It will be tasked with creating innovative ways of promoting gender equality principles in the private sector, public institutions, CSOs, community-based organizations, NGOs and cultural and religious groups.

### **5.2.3. The Gender Focal Points**

The Gender Focal Points will:

1. Ensure that each MDA implements the GEWE Policy;
2. ensure that gender issues are routinely considered in strategic planning and implementation exercises of MDAs and quarterly reports are produced;
3. review departmental policy and planning in line with the National Gender Policy Framework for Implementation;
4. Review all policies, projects and programmes for their gender implications;
5. lead the process for developing sector-specific gender indicators;
6. Conduct specific analysis on gender disparities to ensure a comprehensive sector plan;
7. Ensure that MDAs provide and use gender disaggregated data in their work;
8. Establish mechanisms to link and liaise with civil society;
9. Coordinate and facilitate gender training and education of all staff within departments to ensure that gender is integrated into all aspects of the work;
10. Monitor and evaluate departmental projects and programmes to assess whether they are consistent with the GEWE Policy;
11. Submit progress reports on a quarterly basis to relevant authorities and at various forums with respect to the implementation of the GEWE Policy;
12. Receive, investigate and report on GBV incidents in their respective MDAs.

#### **5.2.4. Female Parliamentary Caucus**

The Female Parliamentary Caucus will:

1. Strengthen its institutional capacity by establishing an annual plan of action that may include training, the provision of technical staff, the establishment of a structure for regular meetings, the installation of monitoring and reporting mechanisms and the provision of access to information on gender mainstreaming in all sectors of the economy;
2. build an effective consensus with its colleagues to support requests to Parliament for adequate fiscal support for the implementation of the GEWE Policy and to lobby for donor support for the same;
3. facilitate the effective implementation of the GEWE Policy by engaging in parliamentary debates on gender mainstreaming and passing relevant bills required to achieve gender justice;
4. receive training on budgetary debates to query the presenters of the budgets;
5. Engage its respective consistencies on the GEWE Policy and help to popularize it.

#### **5.2.5. Women's Empowerment Fund for Female Entrepreneurs**

There have been calls for the establishment of a Women's Fund under the Agenda for Prosperity (2013- 2018). It was later agreed that the fund would be known as the Women and Youth Fund. The Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023) acknowledges this initiative as a strategic tool for the implementation of the GEWE policy. The terms of reference for this fund and its organizational structure will be prepared by the MOGCA in close collaboration with the MOPED and the Ministry of Finance (MOF). The fund is now known as Women's Empowerment Fund for Female Entrepreneurs as cited in the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023.

Regional Funds focusing on women could be established to address the common challenges women face under public health and other emergencies. Such funds could address social protection, women's health and economic recovery. It is highly recommended that such funds be accessed through a call for proposals at national, regional, district and community levels to ensure that the process is transparent, fair and open to applicants at all levels.

#### **5.2.6. Government ministries**

From the perspective of promoting GEWE, each Ministry will be required to elaborate a gender sector policy and strategic plan for implementing the GEWE Policy. Each Ministry will also be expected to establish a comprehensive gender responsive M&E system and develop a capacity-building plan in gender skills for its personnel.

This M&E system and capacity development plan will be in standardized formats to ensure a uniform approach and facilitate the process of benchmarking their performances based on clearly established indicators described below. Evaluations will be published.



### **5.2.7. Local Government Councils**

Local Governments are responsible for delivery of services under the GoSL's decentralization policy. The inadequate provision of these services will impact women negatively. Therefore, gender sensitive policies, procedures and practices in the delivery of such services will be critical. The MoGCA will collaborate with the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization to facilitate and coordinate gender mainstreaming into policies, procedures and practices at the district and city council levels. This coordinating mechanism will be led by the Gender Directorate and supported by GFPs at the district and city council levels and will among other things:

1. ensure that gender issues and concerns are fully integrated into development plans and budgets of district and city councils;
2. oversee and facilitate the implementation of the GEWE Policy at the district and city levels;
3. initiate and implement gender responsive budgeting in the implementation of development programmes;
4. Strengthen the capacity of female councillors and give them leadership and decision-making positions.

### **5.2.8. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone**

Women's rights are human rights, and women should avail themselves of the services of the Human Rights Commission. This commission should establish gender sensitive structures to monitor human rights from a gender perspective in collaboration with the MOGCA, the Office of the President, the Attorney General, the Judiciary, the MoHS, the Ministry of Social Welfare and new gender-specific bodies that will be established under legislation or the Constitution. The commission must continue to sensitize the public and create awareness that women's rights are human rights and must therefore be respected and relevant legal policy provisions complied with.

### **5.2.9. The National AIDS Secretariat**

Sierra Leone's National AIDS Secretariat has ensured that there has been no discrimination based on gender in addressing HIV/AIDS issues, raising awareness of the issue, the treatment and other programmes. In close collaboration with the MOGCA and the MoHS, the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat will ensure that the multifaceted gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS and their impact are effectively mainstreamed into the Secretariat's policies, programmes and budgets.

### **5.2.10. Tertiary institutions and universities**

By their nature, institutions of higher learning and tertiary institutions have a major role to play in promoting gender awareness and equality. The transformation of gender departments into full-fledged Schools of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and their proliferation into academia will serve to generate and improve much needed research and discourse on gender issues, especially with regard to actualizing empowerment and equality. Training courses could be fashioned on emerging gender issues in the development paradigm

either as short-term or long-term courses. They could also serve as vehicles for documenting and preserving best practices in gender studies on empowerment and equality.

#### **5.2.11. Civil society organizations**

Generally speaking, CSOs play a pivotal role in shaping public awareness and in shifting public policy agendas for women. The GoSL's national machinery is closely linked with a strong women's movement including the Women's Forum, the umbrella organization for women's groups. The GoSL must therefore strengthen its coordinating and collaboration machinery so that it can interface effectively and develop even closer relationships with CSOs. It can do so by empowering CSOs through training, information dissemination, resources mobilization and distribution, education and capacity-building.

MDAs must be encouraged and capacitated by the MOGCA to share information on their functions, policies and programmes pertaining to gender issues with CSOs. In turn, CSOs must endeavour to undertake awareness-raising activities and provide education and training specifically on women's issues such as women's economic empowerment, women's health, women's access to land, women in agriculture and agro- business, women in science and technology, women's legal and human rights and women's access to finance. CSOs can mobilize resources, demand accountability for abiding by agreed upon standards, lobby and advocate for gender equality, undertake gender sensitization at the community level and design and implement affirmative actions to bridge the gender gap. With technical assistance, research, monitoring, advocacy and awareness-raising, CSOs could be positioned to play a major role in effective development and implementation of the GEWE Policy.

#### **5.2.12. Development Partners**

Development Partners have placed gender mainstreaming at the forefront of development paradigms. Through the Gender Development Partners Cluster, multilateral and bilateral institutions, international NGOs and UN Agencies are able to develop mechanisms for collaborating amongst themselves on the one hand and with the GoSL on the other, to mainstream gender under their programmes of assistance and as part of other forms of intervention in the country. Development Partners provide financial and technical support for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the national gender agenda in close collaboration with the MOGCA and other key stakeholders.

#### **5.2.13. The private sector**

The Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce and Industry is the main coordinating body for the private sector. The Sierra Leone Chamber of Agriculture along with the Sierra Leone Chamber of Mines has been established more recently. Together, these Chambers should be more vocal on gender equality issues such as pay levels, employment and the advancement of women in managerial and decision-making positions in the private sector, women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship development, equity ownership in companies and access to financing, and on sexual harassment at the workplace. Going forward, the private sector, led by the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce as co-coordinator, should work closely with the MoGCA to promote a better understanding of gender equality in order to pave the way for gender mainstreaming of the private sector.

More specifically, through corporate social responsibility, Sierra Leonean content development (local content) and public-private partnerships for development, the private sector can facilitate and support gender mainstreaming by incorporating these programmes and initiatives in their corporate and financial planning and forecasts as well as in their operational budgets.

These various chambers can therefore play pivotal roles in spearheading the economic empowerment of women by prioritizing small to midsize business development and women's access to finance through the development of gender-friendly financial instruments in the banking sector and targeting national and development partners' aid programmes in support of access to finance for women.

## 6. Monitoring and evaluation

### 6.1. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

On an annual basis, during the last quarter of each calendar year, the MOGCA and the Steering Committee should establish a mechanism for national reporting to ensure the regular and systematic follow-up and review of progress made in the implementation of the GEWE Policy. Various stakeholders should be invited to the meeting to report on progress in their respective areas. The meeting should seek to assess performance-based indicators described below and provide guidelines for the way forward. It should also be responsible for distributing the monitoring guidelines widely to all stakeholders and for collecting and disseminating information to be presented at the annual monitoring meeting.

It would be extremely helpful if the Performance Contract Directorate of the Office of the Chief Minister in the Presidency included the percentage of reporting on gender deliverables by public actors. This can promote a level of accountability and commitment to promoting GEWE in the country in line with the Medium-Term National Development Plan.

In the short term, the effectiveness of the GEWE Policy will be measured by the extent to which the GoSL incorporates a gender perspective in all aspects of governing, as part of the transformative process outlined in sectoral policies, programmes and practices of both central and local governments. More particularly, the structures that have been put in place to coordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy and the extent of the gender sensitivity of policies, procedures, practices and structures of the GoSL, the private sector and civil society will serve as useful benchmarks for such measurement.<sup>21</sup>

In the medium to long term, the GEWE Policy's success will be measured by the actual transformation in Sierra Leonean society and its way of life, from the current situation of gender discrimination to one of gender equality as envisaged in this policy. Its long-term impact will be measured by a range of criteria including the extent to which women have achieved (i) equality of access to the means of developing human capabilities; (ii) equality to basic needs and services; (iii) equality of opportunity to participate in all aspects of economic, social and political decision-making; and (iv) equality of rewards and benefits.<sup>22</sup>

21. The Office on the Status of Women, 'South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality', 2002

22. Ibid.

On a separate level, the assessment should measure the reduction of patriarchy in Sierra Leonean society – the extent to which women and men have changed those cultural belief systems that grant men the sole power over women and make them the primary decision-makers in public and private spheres; and values, norms and practices which subordinate, exclude and prevent women from upholding their basic rights and realizing their full potential. Such assessment should take the form of periodic surveys every two years that should report on the attitudes towards women in leadership and in decision-making, for example.

## 6.1. Indicators on gender equality and empowerment for SDG Goal 5

The GEWE indicators outlined below correspond to and are aligned with the GoSL-specific SDG Framework and indicators as well as SDG 5 which is a cross-cutting goal for all SDGs, which is also grounded in human rights treaties. The targets and indicators are aligned to the GoSL Medium Term National Development Plan (2018–2023). The indicators also reflect the transformational nature that this GEWE Policy encapsulates through the proposed multispectral strategies including investing in financing for GEWE and gender statistics; adopting a multispectral approach, and enhancing women's access to appropriate and use of technology.<sup>23</sup>

POLICY AREA	SDG INDICATOR
Gender, education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of girls completing primary school</li> <li>• % of girls completing secondary school</li> <li>• % of girls completing tertiary education</li> <li>• % of girls completing university education</li> <li>• % of females in decision-making positions in universities and tertiary education</li> <li>• % of women who have acquired skills through adult education</li> </ul>
Gender, trade, employment, economic development and social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of women in formal employment</li> <li>• % of women (rural and urban) utilizing financial services including banks, loans, payments, markets and money transfers</li> <li>• % of women owning land</li> <li>• % of women entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Number of people owning land, sex aggregated</li> <li>• % of women owning land</li> <li>• % of women engaged in mechanized farming</li> <li>• % of rural women utilizing financial services including banks, markets, credits, payments and money transfer</li> <li>• % of households with access to safe drinking water</li> <li>• % of poor and vulnerable people receiving social safety net funds</li> </ul>
Gender-based violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of incidents of GBV</li> <li>• Number of women and girls reporting GBV</li> <li>• % of survivors with access to treatment, protection and psycho-social and legal services</li> <li>• % of women going to court with their GBV cases</li> <li>• % of GBV cases adjudicated</li> <li>• % of men involved in GBV eradication activities</li> <li>• Number of published research/survey reports on SGBV</li> </ul>

21. UN Women, *Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals: Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls*, New York, 2015.

POLICY AREA	SDG INDICATOR
Gender, decision-making and political leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ratio of women and men in political, decision-making and managerial positions including legislature, cabinet, civil service, agencies, NGOs and traditional and religious authorities</li> </ul>
Gender, health, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of functional PHUs</li> <li>% of women and girls accessing health and sexual and reproductive health including HIV/AIDS and cancer</li> <li>HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among women and children</li> <li>% of maternal mortality</li> <li>% of child mortality</li> <li>% drop in teenage pregnancy</li> </ul>
Gender, the environment and disaster management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of women holding executive positions in environmental related MDAs, committees and interventions</li> <li>Number of community-based disaster prevention and management programmes</li> </ul>
Gender, media and access to ICT and innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of women in decision-making positions in media houses</li> <li>% of news headlines and publications about women</li> <li>% of women that have access to news</li> <li>% of women listening to news and reacting to what they hear</li> <li>% of community-based telephone and internet centres</li> <li>% of women with access to ICT</li> </ul>
Gender, disability and other forms of social inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of formally employed women living with disabilities</li> <li>% of accessible public entities and utilities by persons with special needs</li> <li>% of user-friendly resource materials for persons with special needs</li> </ul>
Gender, legal justice and human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of women accessing justice services</li> <li>% of adjudicated GBV cases</li> <li>% of convicted perpetrators of GBV</li> <li>% of survivors/victims who are provided with protection services including safe homes</li> <li>% of women who are aware of their human rights</li> </ul>
Gender, culture and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of drop in incidence of sexual and domestic violence in family units</li> <li>% of females inheriting property of deceased spouses and relatives</li> </ul>
Gender, peace-building and conflict resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of women holding senior positions in the security sector</li> <li>Number of Sierra Leonean police officers and military forces serving in peace-keeping missions</li> <li>% of women participating or holding decision-making positions in peace-building and conflict resolution processes</li> </ul>
GRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of gender objectives and outcomes in public programmes, spending decisions and policies</li> <li>Number of sex-disaggregated data sources or data points for integrating gender objectives into public spending</li> <li>Number of specific provisions on gender equality in budget policies</li> <li>% of financial allocation to GEWE programmes</li> <li>% of trained personnel in gender budgeting</li> <li>% of CSOs trained to engage in GRB</li> <li>Number of research reports on GRB</li> </ul>



POLICY AREA	SDG INDICATOR
Women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of women engaged socio-economic and livelihood initiatives</li> <li>• % of women and girl with access to protection mechanisms</li> <li>• % of displaced women leaders among displaced people that are mobilizing communities towards gender equality</li> <li>• % of humanitarian actions with objectives and indicators for gender equality</li> <li>• % of humanitarian systems' resources allocated to preventing or responding to humanitarian emergencies</li> <li>• % of humanitarian resources invested in the development of systems, and tools for the collection of data</li> <li>• % of Quotas for women's participation in humanitarian and disaster risk reduction platforms and number of systems for enforcing them</li> </ul>
GRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of gender objectives and outcomes in public programmes, spending decisions and policies</li> <li>• Number of sex-disaggregated data sources or data points for integrating gender objectives into public spending</li> <li>• Number of specific provisions on gender equality in budget Policies</li> <li>• % of financial allocation to GEWE programmes</li> <li>• % of trained personnel in gender budgeting</li> <li>• % of CSOs trained to engage in GRB</li> <li>• Number of research reports on GRB</li> </ul>

## 6.3. Resource allocation and utilization

In order to achieve full implementation of the GEWE policy, the process has to be supported by effective coordination, networking and investment. This will be made possible by guaranteed financial/human and technical support for programmes such as law review, capacity-building of service providers and other stakeholders, research, advocacy and M&E. This will require all stakeholders to contribute financial, technical and human resources and for the MOGCA and implementing partners to utilize these resources effectively and efficiently and provide detailed and timely reports.

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