

Progress in Sierra Leone country in 2023

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Women and girls in conflict and humanitarian situation as well as those excluded from governance are protected and provided with tools, access to services, goods and resources to build resilience and to lead.

In 2023, UN Women Sierra Leone made significant progress in promoting Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Sierra Leone. The government of Sierra Leone through UN Women is the 4th country in West Africa to develop a comprehensive National Action Plan (SLiNAP) for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325, 7th in Africa, and 17th globally which was published and used as a reference point for government parastatals in promoting peace and national cohesion in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SLiNAP II Second Generation) was successfully implemented, monitored and reviewed in 2023 nation-wide. And later 2023, UN Women through MOGCA held regional consultations on the development of the NEW Sierra Leone National Plan (SLiNAP III third generation 2024 - 2028) which will be finalized and launched in March 2024. For continuation of the implementation of WPS agenda, the UN Women SL CO in partnership with UNDP and World Vision established and strengthened a 120 CSO Coalition (with national and district structures) working on conflict prevention / mitigation and meaningful participation of women to serve as a vehicle for joint planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting the National Action Plan in-line with the Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820. Additionally, the Sierra Leone security sector procurement and administration system was reviewed and strengthened by incorporating gender sensitive issues, informed by UNW research on barrier assessment for the Sierra Leone Police and the Military which measured opportunities for women in peace operation, examined the challenges women faced in being deployed as United Nations Peacekeepers and proffered recommendations for the national strategy in improving the gender mainstreaming of both institutions which includes recruitment, retention, deployment, and promotion of women. The reports have been used as a reference for good practices for other COs. Following the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022 and the Public Elections Act 2022 (District Block Proportional representation) provided an opportunity to amplify the number of women in the legislature and the executive arm of Government. The participation of women in leadership positions and their engagement in political, economic, and public life have significantly improved, The proportion of women's representation in the National Parliament and Local Councils increased to 30.4 percent and 34 percent respectively in the 2023 general elections and more women appointed to cabinet positions (31.25 per cent) which is above the government of Sierra Leone regulatory threshold set in the GEWE Act. These achievements were significantly contributed by UN Women through its coordination leadership and interventions in strengthening women's political leadership in Sierra Leone. In 2023, UN Women engaged stakeholders in raising awareness on women's leadership and political participation nationwide, enhanced the capacity of 350 women candidates in campaign strategy, communication & coaching and provided them with adequate tools which enabled them to deliver effective campaigns in the 2023 general elections. In addition, UN Women helped develop a corps of transformative female and male leaders and strengthened national institutional capacities to promote gender equality, women's empowerment and women's leadership. Lesson learned sessions were held in 5 Regions where the female aspirants and candidates shared what worked well, areas they could improve on and how UN Women's interventions helped build their confidence and self-esteem. UN Women also trained 35 women political leaders from the All-Political Parties' Association (APPWA) in transformative leadership. This equipped women for leadership positions within the parties and provided an opportunity for women to amplify their voices. This engagement also strengthened the members of APPWA build bridges

across party and as well as fostered peace and national cohesion. UN Women equipped APPWA leaders with knowledge of the GEWE and PEA laws to effectively engage election management bodies, political parties, traditional leaders, and the media to ensure the laws are implemented during the 2023 general elections. Following the training, the women leaders stepped down the capacity, raised awareness about the content of the Acts and encouraged women to demand the implementation of the laws within their political parties. UN Women strengthened the capacities of Government officials (namely Election Commission in Sierra Leone and the Political Parties Regulation Commission), civil society organizations and women's networks to promote women and girls' leadership and political participation. This included 100 men trained to serve as male champions in the four districts, including Port Loko, Falaba, Pujehun Districts as well as the Western Area of Sierra Leone. Similar engagements were held in the North, South and Eastern region where the project reached 80 Paramount Chiefs. The target men (community, political, traditional and religious leaders - men) understood the importance of supporting women in realizing their aspirations and signed up to be agents of change within and outside of their communities and to advocate for women's rights and address issues such as violence, intimidation, discrimination and harmful cultural practices faced by women. This engagement also strengthened partnership and built trust between the EMBs and UN Women. In an effort to recognize the impact of gendered disinformation and online violence against women and the influence of social media platforms among young people, 12 social media influencers with significant followings on the platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter were reached. The two-day capacity support program focused on gender, peaceful and credible elections content. The influencers provided technical support to women candidates in promotion of women political participation, denouncing violence against women in elections. The knowledge they gained from this intervention further enhanced support to women political participation in the elections.

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1.5.2 Gender coordination strengthen through dialogue, production and analysis for improved programming and financing for gender equality

The UN Partnership for gender mainstreaming in Government Ministries (GiM) is the first-ever groundbreaking multi-stakeholder Joint partnership of UN WOMEN, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and IRISH Aid, supporting the government of Sierra Leone in advancing the rights of women and girls and accelerating gender equality. The Government of Sierra Leone's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Policy was a strong driver to addressing gender inequalities at national and community levels. Thus, with UN Women's support in mainstreaming has led to effective gender sensitive programs in the government line ministries through the setting up and capacity strengthening of gender focal points and desks. The United Nations Agencies and Development partners, in support of the transformational strategic vision, decided to create a pool fund to enable the implementation of the strategy. The partnership has given UN Agencies a competitive advantage to work together as one UN to support the passing and implementation of the GEWE policy and the GEWE Act 2022. The establishment of the UN Partnership Secretariat, housed in the UN Women Country office, was created to act as a conduit between MDAs and development partners for the implementation of all joint activities to promote gender equality as outlined in the GEWE Policy, GEWE Act 2022 under the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Gender issues were mainstreamed into public policies, strategies, programmes and projects to promote the implementation of the GEWE policy and the GEWE legislation in sierra leone through UN Women Partnership intervention in establishing and strengthening the institutional capacity of Gender Units in 28 Government Ministries as mandated by the GEWE Act 2022 (see the attached document). Additionally, through UN Women, the UN Partnership secretariat established the groundwork for gender mainstreaming, strengthened the structures to function as catalysts for gender equality and propelled the rights of women and girls by providing technical expertise, developed strategies for increased public awareness and providing access to tools for effective implementation of gender policies and legislation. The secretariat also strengthened working relationships to promote gender-sensitive commitments, enforcement of the law

and mainstreaming gender issues into policies. . Capacity-strengthening workshops allowed 60 participants from 30 government ministries to conduct preliminary assessments of their respective ministries and develop action plans for gender mainstreaming using a synergized institutional approach. Through coordinated engagements with government MDAs, CSOs, the private sector and women in leadership, The private sector consultations on the tenets of the GEWE Act increased their knowledge of the GEWE law and introduced them to the UN Women WEPs program, a tool designed to assist companies in identifying and addressing institutional gaps to achieve gender parity which have resulted to fifty of the top companies in Sierra Leone committed to the implementation of the law and work towards achieving 30% women representation in their institutions. For a behavioral and transformative shift in gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women partnership amplified the voices of women and girls through enhancing coalition for increased community actions for the GEWE policy implementation using a two-pronged approach of direct implementation and gender mainstreaming emphasizing on family-life balance to address gender equality. The regional engagements with stakeholders in Bo, Makeni, Kenema and Port Loko have significantly contributed to transforming social norms for women and girls in Sierra Leone. The HeForShe campaign with Paramount chiefs, religious leaders, women Leaders, Mammy Queens and CSOs working on women's rights to transform male leaders and traditional leaders into becoming advocates to support women's empowerment and the reduction of SGBV in their communities. Afterwards, the Paramount Chiefs developed actions to support community-led initiatives and committed to modeling positive masculinities in their spheres of influence. The male involvement strategy and messaging were cascaded in the communities in a culturally acceptable manner, adopting positive masculinity to promote women's empowerment. Engagement with over 2000 School children and adolescent girls in 4 communities have increased understanding and awareness of gender equality and women's empowerment and engagements. In co-educational schools, male-students were encouraged to support female-students to excel and advocate for gender equality. UN Women's Regional GEWE popularization consultations have influenced community stakeholders to align their mandates as community influencers with the GEWE Act and outlined some of the barriers preventing them from achieving the benefits of the GEWE Act. The Mamie Queens appealed to UN Women to continue to build their capacity to promote the GEWE act as they are the custodians of women's rights in their communities. The religious leaders gave excerpts from the Holy Koran and the Holy Bible that supported the promotion of women's empowerment and developed an implementation strategy to incorporate Gender Equality and Women Empowerment into their teachings.

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Gender transformative programmes including men and boys engagement are promoted to influence positive gender norms on governance, economic empowerment and on ending violence against women and girls.

There is a Male involvement strategy for the prevention of sexual gender base violence in Sierra Leone which is currently being used by development partner to support norms change in communities. However, because the strategy does not have an evidence based behavioral change model, this makes it more challenging to measure change. Plans are underway for a revision of the strategy to incorporate an evidence-based behavioral model.

OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-SLE_D_3.3

Outcome 4: Women's equitable access to services, goods and resources

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.