



# **GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE**

## **COUNTRY REPORT BY SIERRA LEONE**

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

**Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs  
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## Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
AfP	Agenda for Prosperity
ANC	Anti Natal Care
AU	African Union
BDPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
DFID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
EmONC	Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care
EPA-SL	Environmental Protection Agency- Sierra Leone
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FHC	Free Health Care
FSA	Financial Services Association
FSU	Family Support Unit
GATES	Girls Access to Education and Services
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HSSP	Health Sector Strategic Plan
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
MARWOPNET	Mano River Union Women Peace Network
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOHS	Ministry of Health and Sanitation
MOPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
MP	Member of Parliament
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
MTNDP	Medium Term National Development Plan
NaC-GBV	National Committee on Gender-Based Violence
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action
NCTVA	National Council for Technical Vocational and Other Academic Awards
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
NPSE	National Primary School Examination
NWPAU	National Witness Protection and Assistant Unit
PBF	Performance Based Funding
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

SGBV	Sexual Gender-Based Violence
SiLNAP	Sierra Leone National Action Plan
SLaDA	Sierra Leone Social Marketing and Development Agency
SLCDD	Sierra Leone Community Driven Development Project
SLDHS	Sierra Leone Demographic Health Survey
SLESHI	
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
Stat-SL	Statistics Sierra Leone
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendants
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TOCU	Transnational Organised Crime Unit
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNODC	United Nations for Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure in the Forestry Legislation
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WASSCE	West African Secondary School Certificate Examination
WELD	Women Empowered for Leadership and Development
WFP	World Food Programme

## Preface

The government of Sierra Leone has demonstrated its commitment to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment by not only developing and enacting policies and laws, but the appointment of women in governance and leadership positions. As a proof of this commitment, the government of His Excellency the President, Rtd. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio has developed the Medium Term National Development Plan (2019-2023), which is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063. Gender and Women's issues are fully mainstreamed and there is a whole cluster (Cluster five), titled: Empowering Women, Children and Persons with Disability, in the Medium Term Development Plan. These interventions are also related to the International and Regional frameworks, including but not limited to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA), United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the AU Heads of State Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality.

As part of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the government of Sierra Leone has taken several measures to promote the empowerment of women as enshrined in the 12 critical areas contained in the document. Concrete measures, include the crafting of the second generation of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820, drafting the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, the Presidential Declaration on Rape and Sexual Violence as a National Emergency on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 coupled with the review and strengthening of Sexual Offences Act, already approved by Cabinet to end violence against women; allocation of a budget line for the setting up of Women's Development Fund for female entrepreneurs, appointment of females in governance at all levels including the first female Attorney General and Minister of Justice among others.

The report is classified into four broad sections. Section one focuses on the achievements, challenges and setbacks; section two focuses on inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work, poverty eradication, social protection and social services, freedom from violence, stigma and stereotype, participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions, peaceful and inclusive societies and environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation. All these sub headings in section two contained the 12 critical areas of the BDPfA. Section three is on national institutions and processes, while section four looks at data and statistics.

The report carefully examined the achievements, challenges and setbacks relating to the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the last five years (2014 - 2019). The government of Sierra Leone has attempted to provide data statistics to corroborate the information provided relating to the status of women in the period under review.

My Ministry coordinated the national review process, but the process was very participatory from the government line Ministries, Department and Agencies, Women led Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and UN Agencies, to ensure national ownership. The government of Sierra Leone will continue to do more for the women of Sierra Leone.

Hon. Baidou Dassama

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

## **Acknowledgements**

The government of Sierra Leone through the would like to thank the leadership of Line Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Heads of UN Agencies, Civil Society Organizations and women led organisations for designating their technical staff for the preparation of the national review of the Beijing +25 report. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, which is the national machinery for the advancement of women is charged with the responsibility of promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of women, men, girls and boys without discrimination.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (DBPfA) plus 25's national review was developed through a wide range of stakeholder consultative processes with the aforementioned, and so, this outcome document is reflective of their opinions, to ensure ownership and sustainability. The government of Sierra Leone would like to acknowledge the technical and financial contributions of our Development Partners, especially UN Women country office in Sierra Leone. Special gratitude to Dr. Mary Okumu, Country Representative of UN Women Sierra Leone, for her invaluable support in moving this process forward.

I would further like to thank Hon. Baindu Dassama, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and the Deputy Minister, Hon. Mohamed Haji-Kella, for their political leadership in ensuring that this national review process for the drafting of Beijing + 25 came to fruition. The Ministry is hugely indebted to the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Ahmed Mustapha, and the Chief Social Services Officer, Mr Joseph S. Sinnah for their astute administrative and professional leadership in the crafting of this national report. I would remiss in this responsibility if I fail to acknowledge the technical staff of the Gender Affairs Directorate for their day to day coordination from its inception to the final document.

Special thanks go to the writing team, including: Mrs. Anita Esther Momoh, Mr. Harry Abdul Mahoi and Mrs Rosa David all of whom are Senior Social Services Officers in the Gender Directorate; Mrs. Mahawa Kondeh, Statistician assigned to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Ms. Baindu Massaquoi, Mr. Marbey Sartie, Ms. Mary G. Foday and Mr Umaru D. Samai, all of UN Women, and of course, Mr. Charles B. Vand, Director of Gender Affairs for drafting the various sections of the report. This report would not have been completed without their selfless and tireless efforts in meeting the deadline.

Finally, let me acknowledge the technical services of Ms. Battu Beatrice Jambawai, for serving as the National Consultant, to facilitate the technical review and painstakingly edited the draft document for finalization. Let me thank all the stakeholders who made diverse contributions to the development of the country assessment review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action + 25. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs will continue to work collaboratively with all actors for the implementation of the 12 critical areas in the BDPfA.

Charles B. Vand

**Director of Gender Affairs**

**Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs**

SECTION ONE:

**PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS**

**1.1. Achievements towards gender equality and women’s empowerment**

**1.1.1. Gender Mainstreaming into the National Development Plan**

Building on the benchmark of development on gender equality and the advancement of women, Sierra Leone has made tremendous effort over the years in enhancing gender equality priorities included in the country’s development agenda. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) III known as “The Agenda for Prosperity” (2013-2018) made provision for a standalone pillar on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the National Development Plan which gave more importance to gender issues and at the same time ensured that gender was mainstreamed into the remaining 7 pillars of the entire document.

During its development, the crafters, smartly aligned it with International and Regional gender development frameworks including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 1820; the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol); and the AU Heads of Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. The document was seen as credible and acceptable by all stakeholders in that national consultations were held and inputs ranging from community to national levels were captured and incorporated.

Similarly after the 2018 general elections, the new government exhibited the political will to continue with the development agenda as enshrined in its party manifesto by developing a new National Development. The Ministry of Development and Economic Planning together with development partners, donor Agencies and CSOs completed and launched the new plan in February 2019, which is known as the PRSP IV with quality education for girls and boys as the flagship programme. A quality education with equal access and protective and enabling environment for girls is crucial to achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in Sierra Leone.

**1.1.2. Ratification of the Maputo Protocol**

Sierra Leone is a signatory to the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). In 2015 the

Sierra Leone Parliament ratified the Maputo Protocol which showed clear manifestation of the country's readiness to domesticate the protocol. Most of the provisions in the Protocol had either been addressed in the Constitution or policies that had already been developed relating to it. In other words, most of the articles were domesticated even before its ratification. In addition, Sierra Leone has developed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (GEWE) which implies most of the issues in the protocol.

### **1.1.3. Submission of Beijing Plus 20 Report**

As an obligatory on Sierra Leone to submit a Country Report on the implementation of Beijing Plus, the Government submitted its first Beijing Plus 20 Report to the United Nations in 2014. Key milestones achieved and reported on were the National Policy on the Advancement of Women and the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming both of which were adopted in 2000 to guide the Government's gender equality project. These were reinforced by the National Gender Strategic Plan (2010-2013), and the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SILNAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; and UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence, adopted and launched in 2009 and 2010 respectively. The MSWGA was also instrumental in establishing a Gender Pillar within the Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018) national development plan in promoting gender equality

### **1.1.4. Development of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (GEWE)**

The government through the MSWGCA has also developed a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy. Regional Consultations and validations of the document in all the five regions have been completed. The MSWGA has submitted a Cabinet Paper relating to the discussion and subsequent approval of the GEWE Policy. Following Cabinet's approval and concurrence, the Policy will be submitted to the Law Officers' Department for Drafting of a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill.

Enshrined in the Policy is the minimum 30% quota for women representation in decision making at all levels of governance, the free medical examination for all victims of SGBV as well as the setting up of the Women's Empowerment Commission that mans the affairs of women and girls amongst others.



### **1.1.5. Crafting of the Second Generation SiLNAP II**

Over the years, the government of Sierra Leone has been actively involved in the implementation of UN Resolution 1325. The government has been working with International partners and civil society organizations that are fully engaged in advocacy and actions aimed at the effective and meaningful implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820, and the supporting resolutions on women, peace and security. The country developed the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP) in 2010 for the proper implementation of the UN Resolution. The plan was aligned with national priorities including Gender Policies, Laws and the PRSP III. However the effective implementation of the plan was affected by the advent of Ebola and other national catastrophes. Thus it expired in 2014 without achieving many of the strategic objectives.

In November 2015, the UN Women hired a consultant to undertake the final evaluation of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (2010-2014). Series of Consultations were done throughout the country by the consultant in collaboration with the National Steering Committee members, a structure formed for the implementation of the plan. The draft report of the exercise was shared with partners to make comments and recommendation.

The evaluation highlighted key discriminations women faced since the plan was developed and made recommendations including the need to review the National Action Plan.. Thus the government prioritized the development of the second national action plan (SiLNAP II). The National Steering Committee met to initiate the process. Several meetings and activities were proposed and undertaken to enhance the crafting process including Costing of SiLNAP II, Resources Mobilization, Commissioning of the process of writing SiLNAP II, Regional Consultations, Writers' Retreat, Development of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, Regional Validation and printing and launching of SiLNAP II. , The final draft document is now available and will soon be finalized for launching in May 2019.

### **1.1.6. Development of implementation Plan of the Sexually Offences Act**

An implementation plan for dissemination of the 2012 Sexual Offences Act was developed in 2014. Series of awareness raising programmes on the Act were conducted across the country. Gaps have been identified during the implementation calls made for a review of Act especially with the emerging incidences of sexual assaults all over the country.

### **1.1.7. Development of National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy**

The 2013-2015 National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy was developed, launched, and implemented to some extent. The Strategy presented a multi-sectorial approach to empowering adolescents and young people particularly girls. It involved all stakeholders and presented simple but ambitious solution to teenage pregnancy. The second strategy has been developed, launched and implementation is on-going. The plan still maintains its multi-sectoral approach

comprising of five government ministries and the Ministry of Health taking the lead and coordination role.

#### **1.1.8. Presidential proclamation on rape and sexual violence against women and girls**

Rape and sexual violence against women and girls has increased alarmingly in recent times. In every 48 hour period there is a report of either a child or a woman having been sexually assaulted. Even when there are laws and policies that prohibit sexual violence, the act is on the increase. Perpetrators are left roaming the streets while the survivors/victims are left with everlasting pain and in perpetual fear of reprisal and stigmatization. It was on this backdrop that the current President proclaimed a State of Emergency on Rape and Sexual Violence as he vividly presented the problem in this statement.

“Of nearly 3,000 reported sexual assault cases, 602 of the survivors became pregnant; seven of them contracted HIV/AIDS; 2,404 had STDs; thousands more were scarred and traumatized by the ordeal. And of the 3,000 reported cases, only 39 were successfully prosecuted. 2,961 of the survivors of sexual violence were denied justice”<sup>1</sup>.

Thus the president declared rape and sexual violence as National Emergency with the following directives:

- All Government Hospitals MUST provide Free Medical Treatment and certificate to every victim of rape and sexual abuse.
- A Special Division for Rape and Sexual Penetration of Minors be created by the Sierra Leone Police to speedily handle all cases of Rape and Sexual Penetration of Minors. The new Special Division will be separate from the Family Support Unit
- The Chief Justice to consider creating a Special Division with assigned judges to deal with cases of Rape and Sexual Violence.
- With immediate effect, sexual penetration of minors is punishable by LIFE IMPRISONMENT
- The High Court should consider 136 Proceedings in the High Court in order to speed up prosecution and trial of ALL new cases of Rape and Sexual Violence.
- Law Officers Department to consider charging all persons accused of Rape and Sexual Violence with an offence of “Aggravated Assault”
- A National Emergency Telephone Number be available to the public and dedicated to reporting Rape and Sexual Violence.
- Invest in training specialized police personnel, providing adequate forensic facilities, collecting and collating comprehensive sexual violence data,

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<sup>1</sup> Presidential Declaration on Rape and Sexual Violence as National Emergency on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at State House

delivering free medical services to survivors, and catering for safe homes and psychosocial care for survivors.

- Government to engage communities and civil society in dialogues to eliminate the culture of compromise and silence around sexual violence.

The President premised the proclamation on the following harrowing statistics on GBV:

This was a landmark pronouncement and a major step towards protecting women, young girls and children from sexual penetration and all forms of sexual violence and exploitation in Sierra Leone.

#### 1.1.8.1. Political participation and decision making by Women



Steps have been taken focused on increasing women's participation in political leadership and other decision making processes. Series of international and local organizations have been conducting leadership trainings and community awareness-raising sessions on women's human rights across the country to increase the quantity and quality of women in decision-making positions. For instance, during the 2018 general elections, the UN Women supported local NGOs to mentor and train women from all political parties, aspiring to be elected into the various elective positions. Some political parties also paid the candidature fees for female aspirants for various elective positions. Furthermore, the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) has a policy that mandates political parties to give priority to women aspiring for different elective positions. Although the policy remains to be enforced, its existence in black and white is a move in the right direction. Many other organizations have also continued to work with political parties, legal experts and activists to help refine legal processes in support of women's political empowerment. These includes putting pressure on the government to enact the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill, which, among other things calls for a minimum 30% quota representation of women in all decision-making

positions. All these efforts led to the increase in the number of females that aspired for various elective positions in the 2018 general elections compared to 2012. For example, out of the 16 presidential candidates that contested in the 2018 elections, two were women, compared to none in the 2012 elections as seen in table 1 below.

Furthermore, during the 2018 general elections, the government of Sierra Leone undertook other activities such as the setting up of the Situation Room as a women's peace-building platform that was observing the pre, during and post-elections processes. The Situation Room was meant to look into pertinent issues affecting women's participation in the general elections as well as to serve as a vital place for non-partisan observation by women, of election related violence and intimidation against women throughout the country. They focused on eliminating obstacles to women's participation in the electoral processes especially violence against women.

**i). Women in the 2018 General Elections**

In 2018 Sierra Leone conducted its national general elections for the country's President, parliamentarians and local councillors. However despite all the efforts highlighted above to improve women's chances of being elected, the results showed a drop in women's representation in parliament and local councils. Of the 146 elected parliamentarians, only 18 (12.3%) were females as compared to 13.2 in the 2012 general elections. Similarly 18.7% (90) of the 389 councillors were females compared to 19.2 in 2012. Furthermore only one of those councils elected a female as the chairperson. With regards to Mayors of the five city councils, two of the elected were women with Freetown the capital city having its first female mayor after many decades. Table one below gives a comparative summary of female representation in the last two general elections.

**Table 1**  
**Women in Elective Positions 2012 and 2018 General Elections**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>2012</b>					<b>2018</b>				
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%M</b>	<b>%F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%M</b>	<b>%F</b>
<b>Sex</b>										
<b>Presidential Candidates</b>	10	0	10	100	0	14	2	16	87.5	12.5
<b>Vic-Presidential Candidate</b>	6	4	4	60	40	12	4	16	75	25
<b>Parliamentarians</b>	106	16	122	86.8	13.2	128	18	146	87.6	12.3
<b>Paramount Chief MP</b>	12	0	12	100	0	12	2	14	85.7	14.2
<b>Mayors</b>	5	1	6	83.3	16.6	5	2	7	71.4	28.5
<b>Council Chairperson</b>	12	1	13	92.3	7.6	20	1	21	95.2	4.7
<b>Local Councilors</b>	384	91	475	81.2	19.2	389	90	479	81.2	18.7

Source: Sierra Leone draft 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic CEDAW Report 2019

## **ii). Women in Appointed Positions**

For the first time in Sierra Leone, the government appointed a female **Attorney-General** and **Minister of Justice**, in the person of Dr. Pricilla Schwartz. Women are also serving as Ministers of Fisheries and Marine Resources; Development and Economic Planning; and Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. Furthermore, the Auditor General, Executive Chair of the Board of National Revenue Authority, State Chief of Protocol and Presidential Adviser and several Ministers of State and chairpersons of various parastatals are women. Six of the senior personnel on diplomatic mission are females including three Ambassadors and three deputies. On the whole, the participation of women in appointive leadership positions is higher than in elective positions. However, while this is considered a milestone in the achievements the country has registered in relation to gender equality since the last BDPfA report, the government is yet to achieve the 30% quota recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) report.

### **1.1.8.2. Challenges**

Some of the progress made in 2013-2014 was unfortunately interrupted by the deadly Ebola epidemic of 2014-2015 which reversed many of the gains that were initially recorded in the implementation of the Agenda for Prosperity. In a bid to recover from Ebola the constitutional review process was again stalled by the hit of the mudslides in August 2017 which diverted government attention from implementation of normal government development priorities to humanitarian response.

With regards to women's participation in political leadership and decision making positions, the country recorded an increase in women aspiring for political positions especially parliamentary from 65 in 2012 to more than a 1000 in 2018 thereby showing an improvement in the level of awareness and zeal women had acquired to take up leadership positions. However, the zeal is watered down by the two male-focused major political parties at the helm of affairs, both of which remain less sensitive to gender concerns around elections. Gender-based discriminations in the award of symbols to women, remains a major obstacle to women becoming candidates and hence assuming political leadership. The parties have remained insensitive to the value of women's participation and hence are not implementing their own gender policies and that of the PPRC.

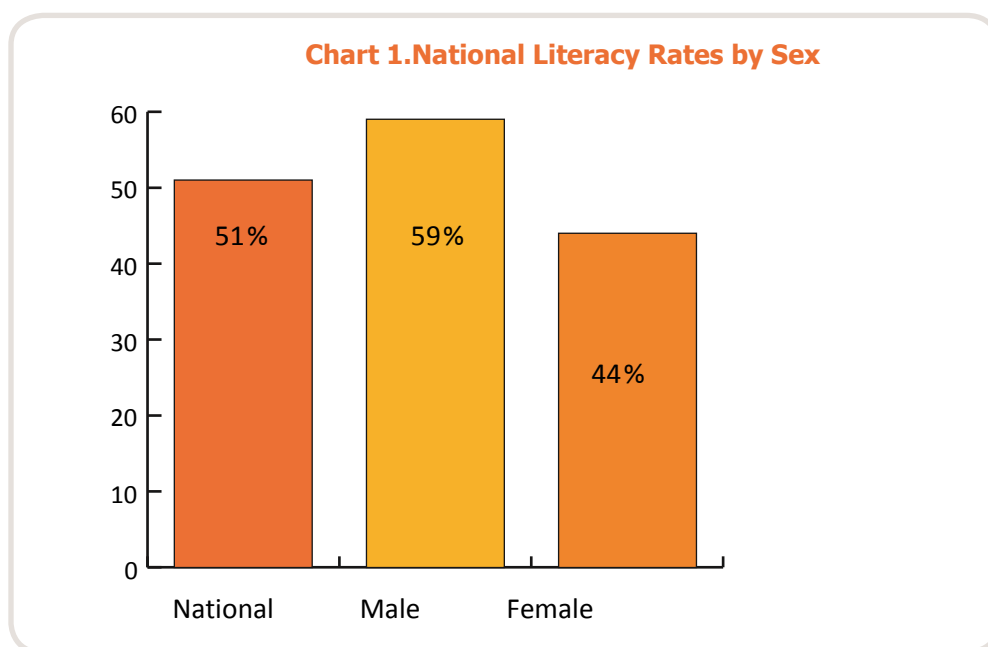
Furthermore, there is an increase in cases of sexual penetration and rape across the country. Even though the government has put some mechanisms in place to respond to cases of GBV, the gap still remains as to how to prove allegation without forensic laboratory test.

### **1.2.1. Quality Education, Training and Life-long Learning for Women and Girls**

Sierra Leone was once known as the ‘Athens’ of West Africa as it was the centre for quality education in Anglophone West Africa. However over the years, the country has witnessed a steady decline in the provision of good standards for quality education. This has immensely affected the human resource base of the country and productivity of its economy. In 2013 under the Agenda for Prosperity Development Plan, government introduced the 6344 educational system as opposed to the previous 6334 (Six years in primary level, three years in junior secondary, three years in senior secondary and four years in tertiary institution) system of education, adding a year to the educational cycle.

The 2015 Census defined literacy as “the ability to read and write in any language”. Questions about literacy were asked to persons 10 years and above. Findings from studies have shown that literacy has so many benefits for individuals, families, communities and nations. It is fundamental for informed decision-making, personal empowerment, active and passive participation in local and global social community (Stormiest, 2005, p. 12).

Chart 1. below shows the national literacy rates by sex. It shows that just over 50% of the people in Sierra Leone are literate and that men make up a much higher proportion of that number (59%) than women (44%).



The country’s educational stages are made up of pre-school education, lasting for three years; primary education lasting six years; junior secondary education for three years;

four years of either senior secondary education or technical vocational education; two to three years of tertiary, nursing or teacher training education; and four years of university studies.

Table 2: below shows the gender disparity in male and female enrolment from primary to senior secondary levels of education. The table below shows that at the entry point (primary), more females are enrolled than their male counterparts. There is a drop in both sexes from primary level to junior secondary school. The drop is even sharper when pupils move from junior secondary to senior secondary.

With regards to gender disparity in retention, the massive enrolment of girls in primary school that outweighs boys starts to reverse as they progress to junior secondary. These findings highlight the challenges young girls in Sierra Leone face in their education. Young girls' education is shrouded in challenges related to early marriage, teenage pregnancy and unwillingness of parents to support girls in their educational pursuits.

**Table 2: Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) by Educational Level and by Sex**

SIERRA LEONE	Total	Male	Female
Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) for Primary	105.4	102.8	108.1
Net Enrolment Rates (NER) for Primary Level	65.3	63.5	67.1
Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) for Junior Secondary School Level by sex	96.7	100.4	93.0
Net Enrolment Rates (NER) for Junior Secondary School Level by Sex	20.9	21.2	20.7
Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) for Senior Secondary School Level by Sex	48.1	55.8	40.4
Net Enrolment Rates (NER) for Senior Secondary School Level by Sex	14.3	14.9	13.6

**Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census**

Thus in August 2018, the new government, having quality education as its flagship programme, launched the free and quality education programme. The package focuses on government and government assisted schools all over the country. The government's support include free subsidy for pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary schools, accelerated primary school programme for over-aged children in non-formal education learning centres, subsidy for pupils taking private examination. The fees for Basic Education Certificate, (BECE), National Primary School Education (NPSE), West



Africa Secondary School Certificate of Education (WASSCE) and National Council for Technical Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA) examinations are met by the government. The government has also provided scholarships for women and girls studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) at tertiary level.

The free education programme will supply core text books in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Integrated Science and Civic Education; essential teaching and learning materials for pupils and teachers including exercise books, pens, pencils, chalks, registers and sports equipment, and a school meal. Much needed furniture is being supplied to schools in all districts and more trained and qualified teachers are now on the government payroll. The government has also declared its commitment to strict enforcement of the Education Act of 2004 which clearly states that it is a criminal offence for any parent or guardian not to send his or her child to school. The free quality education programme of the new government has been welcomed by all well-meaning Sierra Leoneans eliminating violence against women and girls. In its determination to narrow the gender gap in the education system, the government of Sierra Leone has enacted several legislations and undertaken intervention programmes focusing on women's empowerment. The 2004 Education Act provided for nine years of free basic education whilst the 2007 Child Rights Act emphasizes the rights of every child to education. The government introduced free education for girls in public primary schools to achieve gender parity at the primary level of education. The vision of the government is that 'by 2035', 90% of Sierra Leoneans should be able to read and write.

### **1.2.2. Eliminating violence against women and girls**

The "Gender Justice Laws" mentioned above, the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 and other national policies, which are some of the strongest in West Africa, were passed to prevent the people of Sierra Leone, especially women and girls from gender-based violence and protect survivors. The Sexual Offences Act, 2012 which was enacted by Parliament on the 23 August, 2012 and came into force on the 12 November the same year is widely acclaimed as a strong instrument for addressing sexual offences nationally as crimes against the state. It brought together all existing and previous laws aimed at addressing sexual offences for more effective responses to addressing these offenses. It handles criminal matters relating to all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape and sexual abuse of women and girls and ensures that such cases are swiftly brought to justice. The Act has an Action Plan which was finalized and validated in June 2014, to ensure well-coordinated, effective, and efficient implementation. It is a four-year plan that has five outcomes, looking specifically at five pillars or areas of intervention.

Section 19 of the Sexual Offences Act, 2012 makes it an offence for a person to take part in any sexual activity with a person that is below 18 years of age. The punishment for the offence is 15 years' imprisonment. Sections 20 to 26 also pronounce punishments for any sexual activity with a child.

With regards to sexual harassment at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, Section 13 of the Sexual Offences Act authorizes the court of law to fine the offender the sum of Le 10,000,000 or send him/her to prison for not more than three years.

For effective coordination and better service delivery, the National Gender Machinery set up the National Committee on gender-based Violence (NaC-GBV). It is a multi-sectoral body established to enhance GBV prevention and response services. The Committee was established against the backdrop of increasing need to address and respond to GBV in a coordinated and holistic manner. The aim is to harmonize resources including expertise; and avoid duplication of efforts in GBV programme interventions. This multi-sectoral body is also replicated in the regions through the Regional GBV Steering Committees in the Northern, Southern and Eastern regions. The Committee meetings are normally held on the last Friday's of every month and topic of discussion hinges on GBV issues affecting Sierra Leoneans, especially women and children and necessary actions taken or to be taken.

Below are key outcomes:

- A coordinated and strengthened GBV prevention and response services at National and Regional levels.
- Ensured prompt and comprehensive response services for GBV victims.
- Available monthly updates on GBV interventions by national and regional GBV partners.

### **2.2.3. Harmful traditional practices FGM/C, early marriage and widow inheritance**

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has worked strategically with civil society actors and development partners on initiatives designed to reduce the prevalence of FGM/C, Early Marriage and Widow's Inheritance. Two coalitions have been established that have as part of its activities to reduce the prevalence of FGM/C, namely the National Movement for Emancipation and Progress (NAMEP) in 2007 and Forum Against Harmful Practices in 2014. Both umbrella organisations bring together key players to strategize on how to encourage FGM/C abandonment or total abolition.

### **2.2.4. Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights**

#### ***i) Reproductive/ Maternal Health***

The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in Sierra Leone is estimated to be amongst the worst in the world at 1,165 per 100,000 live births per year. However, MMR in Sierra Leone has declined by 54% from 2,300 (1990) to 1,165 (2013). The average annual percentage decline change in MMR was 3.3%. The maternal mortality ratio still remains

high and above the target for the MDG, however Sierra Leone is making steady progress as indicated in the following:

**ii) *Universal access to reproductive health***

- The modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) amongst women aged 15-49 years in Sierra Leone has increased from 7% in 2008 to 16% in 2013 (DHS 2013).
- Practically all pregnant women in Sierra Leone are attended to by skilled birth attendants at ANC (97%). Six in ten births are attended by a skilled provider, mostly a nurse/midwife (44%) or MCH Aide (14%), and in 2% of cases by a doctor. One-third of births (36%) are attended by a traditional birth attendants, and 3% by relatives or some other person.
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of women who had a live birth in the five years preceding the 2013 report making ANC visits at least four times during pregnancy.
- Fifty four percent (54%) of births in Sierra Leone take place in a health facility.

**iii) *Access to appropriate affordable and quality care, information and related services***

Health care delivery for women and girls is improving and the government is committed to making sure health care continues to improve. The Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) with support from its development partners has developed diverse initiatives aimed at increasing access to reproductive and maternal health services. Over the years, women's access to health services was limited as a result of cost and this, according to evidence, contributed significantly to the high maternal mortality rates (MMR) in the country. Efforts to reduce the appalling MMR led to the Free Health Care (FHC) initiative launched by the President in April 2010. The aim of this initiative was to provide universal access to quality health care for the vulnerable groups and targeted pregnant women, lactating mothers and children below the age of 5 years. This initiative contributed to more women accessing health facilities during and after pregnancy. It also led to dramatic improvement in health outcomes. This was reflected in the 2013 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) preliminary report which shows an increase in the use of family planning methods among married women (from 7% to 16%); institutional delivery from 25% to 56%; the use of long lasting insecticide treated nets against malaria for under-five children doubled from 26% to 49%; antenatal care by skilled providers increased from 87 % to 97%; delivery by skilled birth attendants rose from 42% to 61%; rates of fully immunized children increased from 40% to 68% (DHS 2013)

**A) Ambulance Services**

On Wednesday 21st February, 2018, the [Ministry of Health and Sanitation](#) and its partners commissioned over one hundred ambulances that would kick start the operations of the National Ambulance Service in the country. It's important to note that this service is the first in the country and the fourth in the whole Africa ambulance service. A State House release says 163 ambulances will kick it off, with 450 drivers and 600 paramedics having been trained for the service. It can be recalled that in early 2009-2010, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation commissioned a study titled 'Barriers to Accessing Health'. The study investigated the specific reasons that were preventing people, particularly the most vulnerable in society women and children from accessing health care<sup>2</sup>.

Two important factors were identified in that study as being the major stumbling blocks to people accessing health care, these were: cost of accessing health care and distance to the health facility/lack of transportation. The report informed the government to officially launch the free health care in 2010. [The Free Health Care](#) provides free access to medical services for pregnant women, suckling mothers and Under Five Children.

The government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation has launched the National Ambulance Service to promote Sexual and reproductive Health and Rights and address the issues of child and maternal mortality in the country. It is deployed in strategic location in the districts to provide free service and healthcare support to pregnant women and vulnerable children in the country for immediate referrals.

Table 3: Ambulance distribution

Districts	No of Ambulances
Pujehun	05
Western Area Urban and Western Area Rural	13
Bo	06
Kenema	05
Bombali	07
Port Loko	06
Tonkolili	07
Bonthe	04
Kono	06
Kailahun	06
Moyamba	05
Koinadugu	06
Kambia	04

Source: Ministry of Health and Sanitation 2019

<sup>2</sup><http://www.focus1000.org/index.php/blog-1/229-national-ambulance-service>

## **B) Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance (SLeSHI)**

In March 2017, the Government of Sierra Leone officially launched a mandatory and universal Social Health Insurance (SLeSHI) scheme. SLeSHI is envisaged as an autonomous corporate body with legal, administrative and financial autonomy. The benefits package under SLeSHI includes primary health services<sup>3</sup>. It is proposed that the scheme is funded by contributions by formal and informal sector employees as well as ear-marked taxes. The contribution rates being currently discussed are 6% of salaries from formal sector employees, and LE 15,000 per month for informal sector employees. The contribution from the informal sector was determined based on the findings of a willingness to pay survey. It is also proposed that contributions from the Goods and Services taxes, a percentage of MoHS budget, registration fee of vehicles, and contributions from Social Safety Net Funds be used to fund this scheme. The next steps planned in 2017 for establishing the scheme include the passing of the SLeSHI Act in 2017 and the continued sensitization of key stakeholders nationwide.

### *iv) Strengthened preventive programmes that promotes women's health*

- The Ministry is currently working closely with its development partners, namely DFID, CIDA and UNFPA, to strengthen and expand family planning (FP) service delivery and build national capacity. Modern methods including implants are being strengthened with the objective of reducing the high rate of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies in the country.
- A policy on family planning has been developed and is currently being implemented.
- The launch of Hands off Our Girls in December 2018 by the First Lady helped in raising awareness as repositioning of teenage pregnancy was one of its key strategies.
- FP commodities are now available in the country through the UNFPA Global Programme to Enhance Reproductive Health Commodity Security (GPRHCS).
- The introduction of e-LMIS using CHANNEL software has significantly reduced incidences of stock outs, especially at central and district levels.
- A demand-creation component for the uptake of reproductive, maternal and new-born services has led to increased awareness on services such as family planning among adolescent girls and is creating a significant impact towards teenage pregnancy rates in the country. Also, the MOHS, through Health education unit has been routinely

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<sup>3</sup>The benefits package has not been finalized in June 2017 and might change before SLeSHI is introduced.

embarking on the dissemination of preventive health messages to influence behaviour change and uptake of health services.

- The MSWGCA in collaboration with MOHS supported by UNFPA is implementing a community empowerment programme aiming at sensitizing rural communities and facilitating their improvement in health seeking behaviour (i.e. encouraging the utilization of the Free Health Care Initiative by community Action Groups that are comprised of transformed traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) and transformed FGM/C heads (Soweis).

v) ***Research and increased resources and monitor follow-up for women's health***

- The government of Sierra Leone committed to increase substantially its financing to the health sector aiming to achieve the Abuja Declaration by 2015 and developing new financing mechanisms including a social health insurance scheme. The Social Health Insurance Scheme (SLESHI) is about sustaining Free Health Care (FHC) in Sierra Leone and ultimately reaching Universal Health Coverage. Beneficiaries of the FHC Initiative (pregnant women, lactating mothers and children below five years of age) suffering from malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS will all be exempted from premiums. However, the financing structures to pay for their treatment can be part of the wider financial structure for government provision of public health care. In this way, the scheme will help government raise money for health care and create the unified structures necessary for government to buy into health that is currently largely donor funded.
- The government has constituted a technical Committee of representatives from government institutions and partners to design SLESHI. A blue print has been developed, pilot districts selected, institutional arrangement approved whilst the benefit package is being designed. Additionally, preparatory work is at an advanced stage for a survey that will not only assess willingness and ability to pay for the scheme, but will also provide the baseline that will be used to assess the impact of the scheme after the pilot. A facility assessment is being planned in order to provide an overview on the situation of the facilities in the two pilot districts. The assessment will include public, private and faith-based facilities and also hospitals, laboratories and community-led referral systems. The general infrastructure of the district (transport, communication, human resources) shall be analyzed too. Already, government has allocated the sum of Le3.5 billion (equivalent to \$ 850,000 to enable the project kick start.
- The Free Health Care is a costly initiative to the government and its development partners. The health system was required to be strengthened to enable it to handle the increase in demand for services. This led to the increase of staff salaries and

strengthening referrals among others. The government in the following year significantly increased the annual funding of running the MOHS.

- With the support of the World Bank, another scheme known as Performance-Based Financing (PBF) for primary health care throughout the country was introduced by the government of Sierra Leone in 2011, a hospital PBF scheme in two tertiary hospitals since 2012 with increased funding envelop to compensate health workers delivering women's health services across the health system. The aim is to improve coverage and quality of health services using specific indicators for women and children's health, and staff benefit from the quantity as well as the quality of services provided to these groups; with payments done on a quarterly basis.
- The introduction of the PBF has contributed immensely to the overall service uptake and improving quality of services delivered countrywide. It has also strengthened supportive supervision and monitoring at central and district levels. PBF has improved the capacity of peripheral health units (PHUs) in terms of record keeping, data collection and reporting. The output of this is that data collection and reporting has increased in quantity and quality. Current DHS 2013 data also suggests there have been significant periods of improvement in new and continuing clients of family planning, PHU deliveries, uptake of postnatal care, number of children under 12 months fully immunized and outpatient visits by children under five.
- PBF has brought innovations at facility levels such as use of PBF to pay fees to TBAs to refer clients to the health facilities for deliveries, ANC, postnatal and other services. Some facilities use payments to buy needed drugs, repair or construct structures, buy gifts for children fully immunized and mothers attending the required ANC and postnatal visits and for delivering at the facilities.
- Planning is on the way to extend the scheme to other secondary hospitals and central level administration in future. This is going to be called PBF plus.

#### **2.2.5. Political Participation and Representation**

On equality in political, social, economic and cultural fields, the government of Sierra Leone through the MSWGCA has held regional consultations for the crafting of the National Gender Strategic Plan, the GEWE Policy which when finalized, and approved will inform the drafting of the Affirmative Action Bill to include the establishment of the Gender Affairs Commission, minimum 30% quota of women in governance at all levels and the creation of the Women's Development Fund for female entrepreneurs among others.

The Enactment of the GEWE Policy and Bills and the minimum 30% quota representation of women in governance at all levels are flagship programmes for the

government of Sierra Leone. The Cabinet in 2014 gave approval for the development of the policy and encouraged wide range of consultations including women's groups, CSOs, traditional and religious leaders, local councils and development practitioners. This policy will be ready later in 2019. It is a milestone for fast-tracking the enactment of the GEWE Bill.

### ***1.2.5. Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes***

Boys and men continue to experience many privileges in Sierra Leone, while women and girls, and people with diverse gender identities, continue to be disproportionately affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and structural inequalities. At the same time, boys and men are also negatively affected by restrictive gender roles and norms, which, not only affect them but those they interact with. If men and boys learn about human rights, gender inequalities and their root causes and engage in activities that can transform discriminatory gender norms and unequal power relations between women and men, they can be crucial allies, partners and champions in promoting gender equality.

Thus series of sensitization programmes have been designed to raise awareness on gender equality and women's empowerment. After the enactment of the 'Gender Justice Laws' including Domestic Violence Act 2007, Devolution of Estates Act 2007, Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009 there has been increased public education and awareness raising on the legislations.

### **1.3.0. Preventing discrimination and promoting the rights of women and girls experiencing multiple forms of discrimination**

#### ***1.3.1. Women living in remote and rural areas***

Sierra Leone is still a dominantly agrarian economy with 57.9 per cent of households engaged in agricultural production. The majority of those households (42.2 per cent) are headed by men, with just 15.7 per cent headed by women. This is has changed since the 2004 Census which reported 52.2 and 47.8 per cent of female and male headed household involvement in the agricultural sector respectively.

The 2015 Census reveals a high literacy rate in Sierra Leone with just over half of the population literate in any language and 44.2 per cent literate in English. Data show that nearly two thirds of all agricultural households in the Northern, Eastern and Southern regions never received any formal education. The situation is comparatively better in the Western region where the majority (57.6 per cent) of heads of households went to school. Less than 20 per cent of those from agricultural households who went to school completed the basic education certificate examination and education level attainment worsened as people progressed from lower to higher qualifications. As a result, the percentage of agricultural households reporting completion of senior secondary school education fell below double digits in the regions with the exception of the Western



region, which recorded 18 per cent completion of senior secondary school by heads of agricultural households. Although there are (minor) variations in livelihood and/or economic activities within agricultural households in Sierra Leone's various regions and districts, in general the activities include crop farming, livestock, poultry, fishing, hunting and exploitation of forest products.

Sierra Leonean women constitute 50.8 percent of the total population<sup>4</sup>, majority of which lives in rural areas. They are mainly engaged in subsistence farming, petty trading and family management. Due to the country's economic status they experience high levels of poverty, violence, and exclusion. Lack of storage facilities for rural women to store their agricultural product remains a key challenge and a contributing factor to the post-harvest loss. Poor road network has also created problem for women to transport their goods to bigger towns. Even though there are policies giving equal access to productive resources including land, most rural women still face an uphill task in accessing and owning land. It is hoped that the effective implementation of the National Development Plan will give rural women their rights.

### 1.3.2. *Women Living with Disabilities*



According to the 2015 Census conducted by Statistics Sierra Leone, 93,000 people in Sierra Leone have disabilities.

Addressing the challenges and concerns of this large community remains a monumental task. Making the Sierra Leone society disability-friendly is yet to be addressed. Laws have been passed but very little implementation has

occurred to help those with disabilities attend school, access transportation, work or live comfortably. The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the Sierra Leone Union of Persons with Disabilities, in collaboration with partners, called on the government and

<sup>4</sup> Sierra Leone Population and Housing Census 2015 by Statistics Sierra Leone

relevant stakeholders to make people with disabilities really count in Sierra Leone’s development and transformation.

*i) Gender perspective of disability*

According to the United Nations, persons with disabilities include people who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In this condition, a person is unable to use his/her body to the normal natural expectation. Despite this fact all persons with disabilities remains the most disadvantage group in Sierra Leone. They experience physical, social, economic and cultural barriers that refuse them access to employment, skills development and education and disabilities. With regards to gender, disabilities may have different consequences for females and males as women and girls living with disabilities can suffer even more discriminations based on their gender and disabilities.

In 2011, Sierra Leone enacted a Disability Act which established the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities to ensure that the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities (PWDs) are mainstreamed in government policies and programmes in line with the SDGs. The Commission is charged with the responsibility for fighting all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities and ensuring the enhancement of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities among other matters.

Thus the 2015 Census collected information on the main and second type of disability for all persons in households across the country. The results from the analysis indicate that there are 93,129 persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone of which 54% are male and 46% female. The Northern Region has a higher proportion of persons with disability (35.3%) whilst the Western Region has the least (12.8%). This pattern remains the same when disaggregated by sex.

**Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Persons with Disability by Region and Sex**

Region	Total		Male		Female	
	Number	Percent(%)	Number	Percent(%)	Number	Percent(%)
Sierra Leone	93,129	100.0	50,319	100.0	42,810	100.0
Eastern	25,577	27.5	14,150	28.1	11,427	26.7
Northern	32,849	35.3	17,337	34.4	15,512	36.2
Southern	22,770	24.4	12,207	24.3	10,563	24.7

Western	11,933	12.8	6,625	13.2	5,308	12.4
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Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

### School attendance for persons with disability three years and older

It shows significantly that less girls with disabilities attend school than males with disabilities.

Table 5: School Attendance for Persons with Disability 3 years and older

School attendance	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Ever attended	34,282	37.2	22,164	44.6	12,118	28.6
Never attended	57,538	62.5	27,416	55.1	30,122	71.1
Don't Know	256	0.3	133	0.3	123	0.3
Total	92,076	100	49,713	100	42,363	100

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Girls with disabilities experience greater exclusion and injustices because of their disability and gender. They are less likely to go to school and are often considered a burden on the family because they are considered as non-productive members of the society.

Table 6: Educational Level Attained among Persons with Disability 3 years and older

Level attained	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Kindergarten	2,011	5.9	1,161	5.2	850	7.0
Primary	14,684	42.8	8,446	38.1	6,238	51.5
JSS	7,342	21.4	4,698	21.2	2,644	21.8
SSS	5,855	17.1	4,296	19.4	1,559	12.9
Vocational/Technical/ Nursing/Teacher	1,739	5.1	1,272	5.7	467	3.9
Higher (First Degree)	694	2.0	560	2.5	134	1.1
Tertiary (Post-graduate) & PHD	292	0.8	232	1.1	60	0.5
Koranic	1,455	4.2	1,360	6.2	95	0.7

Other	155	0.5	107	0.5	48	0.4
Don't Know	55	0.2	32	0.1	23	0.2
Total	34,282	100	22,164	100	12,118	100

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

The proportion of girls with disability who achieve a primary level of education is higher than for boys with a disability. However, 5.7% of males who have disabilities have attained vocational, technical, nursing or teacher's level of education compared to 3.9% of their female counterparts.

Table 7 shows that 4,053 orphans below 18 years of age in Sierra Leone have disabilities. Most of these orphans are adolescent children between the ages of 10 and 17 years and there are more male orphans (55%) compared to their female counterparts (45%). These children will need special care and provision of basic needs for their up-keep if they are to have any meaningful development in society.

Table 7: Orphaned children 0 - 17 years with disability

Age	Total count	Male		Female	
		Count	Percent(%)	Count	Percent(%)
	Both Sexes				
Total	4,053	2,228	55.0	1,825	45.0
<5	561	318	7.8	243	6.0
5-9	967	534	13.2	433	10.7
Adolescent (10-17)	2,525	1,376	34.0	1,149	28.3

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Although the last Parliament enacted the Disability Bill, no concrete action was taken by the out-going government to provide basic services to PWDs or even implement the provisions of the Act. To date, the basic structures for implementing the Act are weak. Government budgetary allocation is low and actual disbursements are not regular. Additionally, support by NGOs is limited and restricted to provincial capitals. Thus to improve status of PWDs and ensure the full realization of their human rights, the current government has made commitment to: (i) review and implement policies and laws

relating to disabilities, especially making public facilities disability-friendly (ii) review and improve incentives for Teachers in Special Needs Institutions (iii) provide free health care for the physically challenged and the aged (iv) provide livelihood support to PWDs for economic empowerment.

### **1.3.3. Women Living with HIV/AIDS**

Though the HIV prevalence in Sierra Leone has remained at 1.5% among the general population, particular populations (women) are at higher risk of HIV exposure and tend to have higher rates of HIV prevalence than the general population. These key populations include male and female sex workers, gay men and men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender individuals and prisoners.

Since 2017, Sierra Leone is believed to be having approximately 240,000 sex workers, 20,000 men who have sex with men, and 1,500 people who inject drugs. Data for the size of the population of prisoners and transgender persons was unavailable.<sup>5</sup> In 2017, HIV prevalence among sex workers and people who inject drugs was at 8.5%; 14% among men who have sex with men; and 5.9% among prisoners. Prevalence data among the transgender population is not available at the moment.

In collaboration with multi-sectoral stakeholders, the National HIV/AIDS Commission developed the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2011–2015 to help guide the national AIDS response and is being coordinated by National HIV/AIDS Secretariat.

The table below displays a vivid reality of the gender dimension of the virus. According to the data women are in the majority of those living with HIV and its prevalence.

**Table 8: Sierra Leone HIV Fact Sheet 2017**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number/Prevalence</b>
Women aged 15 and over living with HIV	32000 (27000-39000)
Men aged 15 and over living with HIV	23000 (18000-29000)
Children aged 0-14 years	5500(4400-6700)
Adult aged 15-49 HIV prevalence	1.4(1.1-1.7)
Women aged 15-49 HIV prevalence	1.6(1.3-1.9)
Men aged 15-49 HIV prevalence	1.4(1.1-1.7)
HIV prevalence among young women	0.7(0.3-1.3)
HIV prevalence among young men	0.4(0.1-0.8)

Source: UNAIDS, Sierra Leone – HIV Fact Sheet 2017

The table above exhibits the social and economic reality in the country. Women living with HIV/AIDS are greatly affected by the social and economic situation in the country. Furthermore, HIV and AIDS being widely viewed as a moral issue fuels the stigma and discrimination that accompanies the pandemic. More women are on records in knowing and declaring their status on one hand, and more women are in each of the 40 support groups of PLHIV more than men. Therefore the need for women to have their own space as well as leadership in addressing the problems they face was very necessary. It was against this background that women living with HIV and AIDS supported by SWAASL, UNIFEM & ActionAid established a network of HIV and AIDS positive women as an umbrella network of support groups of all women living with HIV. The Voice of Women (VOW) was created would highlight and advocate for mainstreaming the famine challenges and the special needs of women into the country's HIV response. According to the members the "overall mission of VOW is to advocate for the Rights of women living with HIV, including access to treatment, psychosocial care, capacity building and economic empowerment as well as facilitating prevention for non-positive women girls and children."

The network has support groups in all the 14 geographical districts in the country including the western area. It creates a forum specifically for women living with HIV to interact, cushion and leverage each other whilst at the same serving as safety nets for new HIV positive women to overcome stigma and other forms of discrimination they experience as a result of their status.

#### **1.3.4. *Migrant Women***

As reported over the past five years, Sierra Leone is a source and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Victims originate largely from rural provinces and are recruited to urban and mining centres for exploitation in sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic service, artisanal, diamond and granite mining, petty trading, portering, making ceramics, rock breaking, street crime, and begging. At times, sex trafficking occurs on beaches and in nightclubs. Trafficking victims are also exploited in fishing and agriculture and subjected to sex trafficking or forced labor through customary practices, such as forced marriages. Traffickers typically operate individually, convincing parents to hand over their children and promising to provide education or better life but instead exploiting the children in trafficking. Sierra Leonean girls are also increasingly being exploited in Guinea. Traffickers have reportedly taken boys and girls from Sierra Leone to work as "cultural dancers"—and possibly also for sexual exploitation—in Gambia.

Sierra Leonean adults voluntarily migrate to other West African countries, including Mauritania and Guinea, as well as to the Middle East and Europe, where some are subjected to forced labour and forced prostitution. As in previous years, Sierra Leonean women were subjected to trafficking to Kuwait and Lebanon where they are reportedly physically and mentally tortured and sexually abused some of their employers. Children from neighboring West African countries have been victims of street begging, forced labor, and prostitution in Sierra Leone.

***i) Statistics on Human Trafficking /People Smuggling 2013/2014***

A Trafficking in Persons (TIP) database was set up at the Anti-Trafficking Secretariat based in the MSWGCA in mid 2014. Field trials of the questionnaires were undertaken by key stakeholders between April and July of same year. Based on this, the field questionnaires were reorganized, finalized and realigned with the upgraded database which became operational in first quarter of 2015. The database is designed to generate statistics on trafficking victims and perpetrators, cases prosecuted and convicted, as well as the affected areas or sectors in order to determine the nature and trend of human trafficking in the country for appropriate response. By the beginning of 2015, information was also being gathered on the topics and number of training and community education carried out by service providers, as well as other activities undertaken in responding to trafficking issues.

In 2014, crimes reported with regards to human trafficking included sexual abuse and labour exploitation of mainly young women and girls.

**Table 9: Human trafficking (2014)**

Category	Male	Female	Total
Human Trafficking Survivors	3	24	27
Victims of sex trafficking			11
Victims of sex and labour trafficking			1
Victims of labour trafficking			15
Cases managed in shelter			22
Cases managed in community homes			5
Trafficking cases persecuted			1
Trafficking perpetrators convicted			0

Source: Crimes Division: Sierra Leone Police

The table above shows that only one out of the 27 cases went to court and even this was thrown out of court for ‘lack of evidence’ according to the report. Furthermore, no perpetrator has been convicted. The table also shows the gap that characterizes most

statistics on critical issues in Sierra Leone namely lacking age and sex disaggregated data.

*ii) Efforts Made by the MSWGCA in Combating Human Trafficking/People Smuggling*

The National Taskforce on Human Trafficking was established in November 2004, and named as one of the structures in the Anti-Human Trafficking Act 2005. The Task Force meets second Monday of every month with the MSWGCA as chair and the Ministry of Justice as co-chair. It has a task to primarily coordinate the implementation of the Act and to ensure the enforcement of the law against Trafficking. The Taskforce is also there to ensure effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation of activities carried out by service providers.

- The MSWGCA through the National Task Force has been generally coordinating the implementation of the Act. In 2014, MSWGCA spearheaded development of TIP policy and implementation guidelines, and encouraged local initiatives for improving the economic well-being and opportunity for potential victims, as well as for increasing public awareness of the causes and consequences of trafficking.
- A Task Force sub-committee on Legal and Policy Framework was set up in 2014 to revise/review the Anti-Trafficking Act. The sub-committee is headed by the Ministry of Justice/Law Officers' Department. A brainstorming meeting of key stakeholders that would lead to the drafting of a revised Act, to be supported by UNODC, is due to begin in 2015. The government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with its partners has validated the Anti Human Trafficking Act for the attention of Cabinet for approval and onward tabling in Parliament for enactment.
- Efforts to draft a new law against Migrant Smuggling started in 2014, and are also spearheaded by the legal and policy sub-committee. A drafting workshop would take place in 2015 which is also to be supported by UNODC. This follows the 24 July 2014 ratification by Parliament of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (the "Palermo Protocol"); the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components. This process has been concluded with the validation of the revised Anti Human Trafficking Act in March 2019.
- The National Taskforce in late 2014 agreed that the TIP Secretariat should put together a draft National Referral Mechanism to show clear pathways to Service Provision for



trafficking victims/Survivors. The draft, which is to be produced early 2015, would be finalized later in the year. .

- A draft National Action Plan produced by the TIP Secretariat mid October 2014, would be validated and finalized in 2015. This action plan would be implemented and reviewed at the end of each year.
- Regarding capacity building, the MSWGCA in collaboration with UNODC organized a four-day training workshop from 29 July to 1 August 2014 for members of the National Taskforce and relevant stakeholders on ways to identify and combat trafficking in persons. In addition, there a was two-day TIP training session from 16 to 17 July 2014, which was organized by the Sierra Leone Labour Congress in collaboration with the American Solidarity Centre. The training aimed at equipping law enforcement personnel and union activists to combat human trafficking in Sierra Leone.
- As combating trafficking in Sierra Leone has been a big challenge, the MSWGCA through the National Taskforce now ensures that coordinated action is taken to do background checks on agencies employing migrant workers, as well as organizations or persons(other than biological parents) wishing to take children out of the country. Through this coordinated efforts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Sierra Leone Embassy in the State of Kuwait was able to identify nine Sierra Leonean women and girls working as maids in Kuwait on 14 October 2014. The maids had complained about their conditions which they described as those ‘similar to slavery. Early this year, the names and contact addresses of the women and girls involved were passed on to IOM for repatriation assistance. TOCU plans to commence investigations upon the arrival here of the alleged victims.
- In the area of ongoing inter-state cooperation in the fight against Human Trafficking, the MSWGCA represented Sierra Leone in the Annual ECOWAS Training and Review Meeting in July 2014. The meeting provided an opportunity for member states to learn from each other the best practices and how they worked in their respective countries to combat human trafficking.
- The TIP Task Force in 2014 signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Witness Protection and Assistant Unit (NWPAU) for a better collaboration and guaranteed protection for victims of trafficking and other witnesses.
- The Anti-Human Trafficking Act was enacted in. The Act gave legal basis to prosecute offenders. Section 2 (1) of the Act creates the offence of trafficking in person whilst Section 2 (2) and (3) defines what trafficking means.

- For the purpose of the implementation of the Anti- Human Trafficking Act (2005), an Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up to oversee and provide advice and policy guidance to the National Task Force on Human Trafficking.
- An Anti-Human Trafficking Secretariat was established within the MSWGCA. The mandate of the Secretariat is to coordinate, monitor and supervise the activities of Service providers for victims of trafficking.

*iii) Key challenges faced by the MSWGCA in the fight against human trafficking/people smuggling*

- In 2013, government through the MSWGCA provided a special budget line for human trafficking, and then allocated about Le90 Million but the fund was never accessed. Meantime, the National Task Force on Human Trafficking which comprises government and civil society organizations continued its monthly meetings up to September, 2014 when they were suspended.
- In 2014 there were instances in which TIP cases were compromised. Victims and perpetrators continued to inhibit efforts to combat trafficking in the country by agreeing to make out-of-court settlements. Endemic poverty in some localities is among reasons given for some of these out-of-court settlements. The other reason is that witnesses/victims would refuse to testify in court due to inadequate protection for them.
- Many of the TIP cases thrown out of court in 2014 were apparently as a result of wrong charges laid by police prosecutors. Law Officers Department had to advise that the prosecutors should not pursue the matter because they would find it difficult to convict the alleged offenders. However, high profile cases may have been withdrawn under the cover of inadequate investigations and wrong charges.
- Frequent adjournment of cases due to lack of commitment in judging very high profile cases by the Judiciary was another reason for the no conviction rate in TIP cases for 2014. Where cases are frequently adjourned the witnesses from poor localities would fail to attend subsequent court sittings, due to transportation constraints.
- Currently, there is no law on migrant smuggling which poses a big challenge in combating human trafficking nationally and globally. However, the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants was ratified by Parliament in July 2014. A process to draft a national law against migrant would begin in 2015.

- No shelters for adult victims of trafficking. Drop-in centres have so far being used for adult male victims.
- Key stakeholders including social workers, law enforcement officers and labour activists have low knowledge of human trafficking issues.

#### **1.2.4. Efforts Made by the MSWGCA in addressing discrimination against vulnerable groups**

- The Ministry aligns with the ratification and domestication of international instruments that are set out to promote the rights of vulnerable groups. For instance, Sierra Leone ratified and domesticated the UN Convention on the right of persons with disabilities through the Sierra Leone Persons with Disability Act 2011; Child Right Act 2007, in protecting the rights of children and for protecting the rights of women. Sierra Leone ratified and domesticated the UN Convention on the elimination against all forms of discrimination against women.
- Rolls out and popularizes the relevant national legislations
- Holds Coordination meetings with partners on the related issues to mobilize support to provide required services to these vulnerable groups
- Awareness Raising and sensitization on human rights especially of vulnerable groups
- Commemoration of all advocacy events, for example Day of African Child, June 16, International Day on Disabilities and World AIDS Day
- Capacity building for vulnerable categories

#### **1.2.5. Level of Religious Tolerance in Sierra Leone**

One of the assets Sierra Leone as a country is Religious Tolerance. There are some pockets of religious tension but the level of religious intolerance is very minimal. The country has a very effective and inclusive Inter-Religious Council which among other things preaches the importance of every religion in Sierra Leone, addresses potential tensions and encourages every religion to be tolerant. For examples, Muslims participate in Christian festivals and marriages and vice-verse. There is no reliable data on the incidents of religious intolerance in Sierra Leone

##### ***i) Efforts by the MSWGCA to Sustain Religious Tolerance in Sierra Leone***

- (1) Regularly convenes meetings with Inter- Religious Council

- (2) Facilitates pilgrimages for both main religious bodies (Christian and Muslims)
- (3) Awareness Raising on Religious Tolerance
- (4) Intervene to settle disputes among religious bodies
- (5) Follow-up visits on religious bodies/organizations

### **1.2.5. Younger Women**

Adolescents or teenagers are people, human beings, persons, individuals, citizens and right holders requiring recognition, protection and provision by the State. They have right to life, liberty and security, right to information, right to be protected from torture or cruel treatment, right to health, right to education etc. The State has duty to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of adolescents or teenagers and it does so through national policies, laws, international and regional conventions and treaties ratified. Laws relating to the care, welfare, growth, development and protection of children and younger persons, which meet international standards, when ratified by the State, implemented and enforced will definitely reduce or eliminate violations and abuses younger women experience in their daily lives. In Sierra Leone, younger women experience all types of GBV that older women suffer from including rape, sexual harassment and trafficking, More specifically younger women are vulnerable to teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

The Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce **Act** enacted in 2009 was intended to end early, forced and child marriages permissible under customary law and to protect women who marry under this law. It stated that no marriage will be valid unless both spouses are not less than 18 years old and consent to it. This is in conformity to all the international and regional conventions that Sierra Leone has ratified and agreed to domesticate. The Local Councils are charged with the responsibility of registering such marriages but fee vary from one Local Council to another.

Subsequent subsections inserted in this law allowing persons less than 18 years to marry with the consent of their parents, guardian or a Magistrate or Local Government Chief Administrator has led to much confusion. These subsections fell short of reflecting the true intention and enactment by Parliament as it included contradictory provisions inconsistent with its intent and with CEDAW.

Some of the issues that affected the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the last five years principally include Ebola and Mudslide/flooding which culminated in the loss of economic gains and wholesomely reversed the progress Sierra Leone was making.

### **1.3.0. Humanitarian crises that affected the implementation of the BPfA in Sierra Leone**

#### ***1.3.1. Ebola***

Sierra Leone experienced Ebola outbreak in 2014 with the government declaring a state of public health emergency. The rapid and wide spread of the EVD created anxiety and generated fear in communities and destabilized several households. People in quarantined homes had their movements restricted. It was alleged that some girls from quarantined homes were raped whilst they went in search of water and fuel wood by the very security forces who had been posted to secure them. The country's nine-month school closure had been directly linked to increases in exploitation of girls, exposure to violence in the homes and communities, and teenage pregnancy.

From a multi-sector impact assessment study of the gender dimension of the EVD undertaken by government, in collaboration with UN WOMEN, Statistics Sierra Leone and Oxfam GB, in Sierra Leone. It was found that 56.7% of females were infected by Ebola as at December 2014, compared to 43.3% of males. Women and girls were hit with the disease because of their care-giving, reproductive and productive roles. Based on the gender responsive empirical data, specifically targeted gender responsive measures and interventions were implemented to address their specific gender needs. These included specifically designated ambulances for expectant women and girls; having sanitary pads and adequate WASH facilities; observing women's and girls' privacy and dignity during the transfer to holding facilities and within the health facilities during treatment, and messaging that was targeted at women and girls in the national EVD response. In addition to the prevention dimensions at communal and health facility level, infection control measures at maternity wards included the retaining of the health personnel as well as their confidence building through mentorship that restored their confidence in providing safe maternal services within the context of EVD. Similar measures were undertaken in trust building for expectant mothers and the community at large to have trust and confidence in the available health facilities across all the regions and districts

The outbreak of Ebola virus created serious socio-economic impact on the women and children in Sierra Leone. Much as the data from the epi-centres were not disaggregated by age and sex, indication of reported and confirmed cases suggested that more women and children had been infected and affected by the virus than men. Several women and children died as a result of contracting the virus; women had become widows and single parents; some children had become orphans; some children had been separated from their parents; women and children who were survivors of the Ebola virus risked stigmatization and rejection by their communities.

### ***1.3.2. The Mudslide***

According to the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Centre, Sierra Leone experienced a particularly wet rainy season, with the capital city of Freetown, in the Western Area of the country, experiencing 41 inches (104 cm) of rainfall from 01 July 2017 14 August 2017, the date of the mudslide – nearly tripling the area's seasonal average. Sierra Leone's meteorological department did not warn residents to leave areas prone to flooding in time; from August 11 to 14, Freetown faced three consecutive days of rain, which led to severe

flooding in the city and its surrounding suburbs. Flooding is an annual threat for the area: in 2015 floods killed 10 people and left thousands homeless.

Overlooking Freetown, Sugar Loaf Mountain partially collapsed, triggering mudslides in the early morning of 14 August 2017, which damaged or completely submerged several houses and structures, killing residents – many were of whom still asleep were trapped inside. The collapse of the mountainside took place in two stages – with the lower slope sliding into the Babadorie River Valley and, 10 minutes later, the upper portion collapsing, resulting in a "tidal wave" of landmass and debris. Highly mobile, the saturated debris flew from the collapse of the upper mountainside, carrying mud, large boulders, tree trunks, and other material, advanced towards the main river channel, Lumley Creek, with a wall of flood water leading in front.

Another mudslide struck the Regent Suburban District. A mountainous settlement 15 miles (24 km) east of Freetown, Regent was covered by mud and debris when nearby hillsides collapsed around 6:00. The sub-urban districts of Goderich and Tacuguma were also hit by mudslides, but the under-developed areas did not sustain significant damage to infrastructure or loss of life.

As a result of the two natural disasters mentioned above, the government had to redirect its human and financial resources from its regular programmes including those specifically targeting women's empowerment and advancement in order to address the emergencies highlighted above.

#### **1.4.0. Top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in Sierra Leone in the next five years**

##### ***1.4.1. Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls***

Improving Education and Skills Training - The primary objective of the New Direction is to increase access to quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training as well as university education that will enable young people engage in meaningful productive economic activity.

To demonstrate this commitment to education, the Government has increased budgetary allocation to education to a minimum of 20% of the national budget in 2019 whilst previous allocations to the education sector have been below 15%. The government has also reverted the education system from 6-3-4-4 to 6-3-3-4 because according to the government it did not add value to the standard. Among other things, the classroom blocks and teachers were not adequate to meet the needs of pupils for an additional year of schooling. The system also impacted on teenage pregnancy and early school leaving among girls who considered the period of schooling too many.

#### **1.4.2. Poverty eradication agricultural productivity and food security**

The recent past efforts in agriculture have not produced the desired results. Despite the large acreage of arable land, Sierra Leone continues to be a net importer of rice. The Budget Statement of 2018 estimated rice import at US\$108 million for the first half of 2017. For 2018, this figure was projected to be at least US\$200 million. According to the 2015 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis study conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 49.8 percent of households were food insecure in 2015 compared to 45 percent in 2010. That is, they consumed limited or insufficient food to maintain a healthy and active life. Global Hunger Index 2017 ranks Sierra Leone as the third hungriest country in the world with percentage of population that is undernourished estimated at 38.5 percent compared to 28.6 percent in Guinea and 16.2 percent in Ghana.

During the State Opening of Parliament in 2018, the President itemized steps his government was committed to take to revamp the agricultural sector which is the backbone of rural development and a landmark in poverty eradication. He reiterated that the overall goal of his government agricultural programme was to diversify the production of food and on a scale enough to feed the growing population and provide gainful employment through increased investment in agriculture, mechanized commercial agriculture, increased food crop production and increasing and diversifying cash crop production, improved land management system and improved governance and research among others. However, for women to active beneficiaries of the proposed programme, the government will need to review and enforce policies that negatively impact women in the agricultural sector and other economic development initiatives such as inheritance and land acquisition and ownership; and access to financial services and markets. The government also needs to invest in training and gender-sensitive agricultural machines and deployment of trained and gender-sensitive extension workers in the rural areas.

#### ***1.4.3. Access to affordable quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights***

According to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics, life expectancy in 2015 was estimated at 50 years compared to 53 in neighbouring Liberia and 59 in Guinea. According to the Demographic and Health Survey (2008), infant mortality rate increased from 89 per 1,000 in 2008 to 92 per 1,000 in 2013 and under-five mortality rose from 140 per 1,000 in 2008 to 156 in 2013. Maternal mortality was 1,165 per 100,000 live births in 2013 compared to 857 in 2008. WHO even estimated maternal mortality at 1,360 per 100,000 live births and puts Sierra Leone as least on the child survival league table. Two (2) out of every five (5) maternal deaths is due to teenage

pregnancy. The figures above indicate that the Free Health Care launched in 2010 has not created the desired impact. There are still reports of leakages in the distribution of drugs, limited manpower to provide health care and poor incentive for the limited staff and probably wrong entry point to reduce mortality among children and mothers. Despite the health system strengthening efforts under the Post-Ebola Recovery Strategy, healthcare services delivery remains gloomy.

The current government's strategic objective of the health sector is to transform the current health infrastructure and healthcare delivery system to make it high quality, efficient, reliable, cost-effective, affordable and sustainable. The thrust is on increasing access for all the population (particularly mothers, children and the elderly) to quality health services in an equitable and efficient manner through health governance and financing, human resource, free health care, disease prevention and control and service delivery. Government is putting measures in place including following - raising the current public spending on health and sanitation from its current level of less than 10 percent to 15 percent as required by the Abuja Declaration and ensure timely disbursement of allocated resources, reviewing and implementing the National Health Insurance Scheme and developing special incentive scheme for trained medical doctors and health workers working in remote areas. Government has also started a National Ambulance Service. If this service gets to at least all the fourteen district headquarters, it will enable the timely transportation of patients and reduce preventable mortalities especially among children and pregnant women whose deaths are often due to delayed medical care. Furthermore, the government is committed to launching a National Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health for adolescents to reduce teenage pregnancy and the alarming maternal mortality. The government is also initiating discussions towards the reintroduction of Family Life Education in schools.

#### ***1.4.4. Women's Political Participation and Representation***

The Knowledge Aptitude and Perception (KAP) survey sponsored in 2018 establishes that there is a marked increase in knowledge concerning laws that promote women's participation in leadership. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents are aware that women have a right to vote, 96.6% are aware that women have a right to take up local leadership roles and 98.3% are aware that women have a right to hold political positions. Women's full and active participation in political leadership and decision-making is vital for Sierra Leone's sustained economic development and peace and security. The current government seems cognizant of this fact, as it has appointed a few more women into senior leadership positions including one as the first female Attorney General. However though these moves are recognized, they are still a long way from the proposed 30% quota in all elective and appointed positions at all levels proposed by the TRC. The percentage of women in elective positions dropped in both



parliament and local council in the 2018 general elections. Therefore, there is urgent need for policy and programmatic interventions to actualize women's active political participation and representation. Central to these include amending the constitution to incorporate affirmative actions that ensure women's participation in decision-making and political leadership, reforming local and traditional gender-based discriminatory laws to align them with statutory laws, reviewing the political parties' Act to mandate the minimal 30% quota at all levels, enhancing women's leadership capabilities through formal education, training and mentoring and integrating gender-oriented goals into the fiscal policies and programmes. Since April 2018, the government has embarked on reforming the public financial management that is resulting in successful local revenue collections. If it continues like this the revenue base of the government will be strengthened to integrate gender budgeting into its fiscal policies and programmes.

In his message to the nation on the 58<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary on 27 April 2019, the President reiterated his government's commitment to accomplishing some of the priorities highlighted above in the following statement. "We will continue to invest heavily in human capital development through free quality education, quality health care and food security initiatives. ----- Our goals remain capacity building and job creation. We will continue institutional and governance reforms, and relentlessly pursue national cohesion. As a government we also recognize that our national Constitution must be reviewed to reflect the rights and aspirations of all our citizens."

#### **1.4.5. Women's Entrepreneurship and Women's Enterprises**

As a demonstration of its commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, the Government of Sierra Leone devoted a separate pillar of its development strategy, AfP to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development is committed to mobilizing the required resources to fund the AfP and also promote gender equality and women's empowerment. To this end, the following programmes, projects and activities have been undertaken:

##### ***i) Promoting Access to Finance for women***

As a result of the Ebola outbreak, economic activity took a downturn, reducing incomes of households and women and increasing the vulnerability of communities. Therefore, the Government re-prioritized expenditures to take into account Ebola-related spending. Government spent the equivalent of around US\$25.0 million in 2014 to Ebola related activities including social support to women and children.

Government is providing credit and financial services to female entrepreneurs given that women make up a significant proportion of the clients in the micro-finance

industry. Community banks and Financial Services Associations (FSAs) have been established to provide agricultural and business finance to farmers and businesses especially women in rural areas who are finding it difficult to carry out normal activities owing to lack of finance.

**I) *Women and Youth Empowerment Fund***

Government is in the process of establishing a Women and Youth Empowerment Fund. The fund aims to support projects that empower women and youth, increase their access to resources and enhance their participation in economic activities. The fund operates as a basket fund with contributions from both the Government and its development partners. Due to the Ebola and its impact on public finances, the fund could not be operationalized.

**II) *Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Fund***

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Sierra Leone (SMESL), which was established by Parliament in 2015, will provide loans at interest rates below 10% per year without a collateral requirement, in an effort to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises. “It will also ensure that Sierra Leoneans have a fair and transparent opportunity to compete for the delivery of local materials and other goods and services under a preferential price sensitive procurement system without compromising timeliness, quality, safety and other standards”. To ensure full implementation of its deliverables, the government established a Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Fund as a direct intervention to improve the productivity of the informal sector and increase access to financing at affordable rates. The informal sector in Sierra Leone is dominated by women engaged in micro-enterprises and hence the SME Fund will inevitably support women. There is a deliberate policy to skew support for enterprises managed by women. The Government established a team that will work with an SME specialist from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) with support from the World Bank to develop a sustainable structure for the Fund.

Furthermore, through the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), the government is implementing the following Projects

**A) *Sierra Leone Community Driven Project (SLCDD)***

The Self- Help Affinity Groups (SAGs) were formed under the Sierra Leone Community Driven Project (SLCDD) funded by the GOSL & Islamic Development Bank in 12 districts excluding Koinadugu and Kailahun. Community Empowerment and Facilitation forms one of the components of the SLCDD project, which include Building Institutions of the Poor to improve the socio- condition of women and the poorest in rural communities.

## **B) Supporting Women's Quotas and Affirmation Action**

Cabinet has approved the drafting of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and Bill. The Ministry has a draft policy and several comments have been made electronically. Similarly, the Ministry has fast-tracked the enactment of the Bill, including the minimum 30% quota for women in governance at all levels.

## **SECTION TWO: PROGRESS ACROSS THE TWELVE CRITICAL AREAS**

### **2.0. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK**

#### **2.1.0 Actions taken to advance gender equality in relation to women's paid work**

##### **2.1.1. *Workplace policies***

The National Employment Policy acknowledges the gender disparities in the employment sector due mainly to unequal access to education and socio-economic opportunities. Typically, more men have access to paid jobs than women, and women earn less from paid employment than men. In general, women in the labour force are concentrated in unpaid household and family work or relatively low-quality jobs which generate meagre incomes. The wide gender disparities in employment have to be addressed through interventions designed to combat low literacy rates among girls and confront traditional and cultural practices that are major obstacles to gender equality.

##### **2.1.2. *Land rights and tenure policy***

The National Land Policy of 2017 seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. It gives more opportunity to women to access land, owing to the fact that Sierra Leone is a patriarchal society. The National Development Plan has section on Land and Housing. The strategic objective is to ensure effective land management and administration that is environmentally sound and sustainable for equitable access to and control over land including providing affordable housing for low and middle-income groups to alleviate poverty and promote economic growth. The key targets include:

- At least 20% of women in rural areas have access to and control over land resources and housing facilities.
- Ease access to land for productive agriculture and other land use for economic development.
- Ensure houses are built to standard and are well laid out.

- Financial inclusion and access to credit including for self-employed women

### 2.1.3. *Bank and credit services*

Progress was also made in improving access to rural financial services. The Apex Bank was established in 2016 with a network of 51 Financial Services Associations (FSA) and 17 Community Banks (CBs) to help farmers access financing for agricultural activities (See Project Supervision Mission Report 2016; and Table 10.2 for summarized status of key financial indicators, including *number of active borrowers from Community Banks*, disaggregated into women and youths; and *number of active savings accounts*).

Table 10: Aggregated Financial Indicator of 17 CBs

	2014	2015	2016
Gross outstanding portfolio (Le '000)	11,728,393	18,772,903	23,627,774
No. of active borrowers	10,982	14,966	15,594
percent of women	39.5 %	41.6%	38.8%
percent of youths	34.0%	40.5%	40.5%
No. of active savings accounts	35,753	43,534	46,827

Source: Sierra Leone National Development Plan 2019 – 2023

According to current national data for public and private sector, approximately 84% of rural women and 63% of urban women engaged in commercial labour operate in the informal sector of the economy. These include farming, petty trading, mining, housewife, fishing, small businesses, and others. However, women's access to land, financial capital, business development and agricultural extension services, transportation, access to markets, and other types of essential financial inputs, is far behind that of men. Little wonder that, women's participation remains largely at the informal and low levels in the microenterprise, agriculture, business, and trade sectors.

Table 11: Percentage of Women aged 15-49 who own a house

Residence	Do Not Own a House	Own a House Alone	Own a House Jointly
Urban	79.4%	3.1%	14.8%
Rural	50.8%	5.8%	36.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>

Source: DHS 2013

Symptoms and conditions of Food insecurity are more visible in households headed by women. USAID supports women-led enterprises, and ensure that women hold significant leadership positions in producer, business, and forest management committees, as well as in their communities and learning groups. Through the USAID funded Women Empowered for Leadership and Development (WELD) project implemented in eight(8) district, women in Sierra Leone benefit from entrepreneurship and basic arithmetic trainings, improved farming technologies and grants that enable them to manage complex and medium enterprises effectively, to engage in formal transactions, and to expand their agricultural activities. Women now have access to loans and savings through the implementation of WELD Programme; thereby increasing the financial independence of women and networking of women through regular meetings held by the loan groups and support to members from the social funds of the savings and loan group members. These significant investments boost production, processing and marketing and increase incomes and local economies. Such support has enabled some women-owned market associations to manage contracts for the supply of rice, sorghum and Benni (sesame) seed in the country<sup>6</sup>.

One of the achievements of the WELD project is that it has improved rural women's access to productive economic resources. There are 361 savings groups in WELD project area with a membership of 9,620 (1297 male, 8,323 female). 87% of the members in these savings groups are female. 81.0% of executive positions in these savings groups are held by women. As of August 2018, these groups had saved \$410,712.2. The groups disbursed 61.5% [\$252,381.33] as loans to 7,472 members. The total amount accumulated in the social account by these groups amounted to \$15,795<sup>7</sup>. By introducing financial literacy training, WELD enabled financially excluded women to make the right choices and access appropriate financial services. WELD's economic intervention is proving that it is possible for financial institutions to reach the most vulnerable groups, mostly women with formal financial services through financial literacy training and linkage. Financial literacy training and linkage to a finance institution includes women in the wider economy, enhancing their contribution to economic growth and sustainable livelihoods.

However, hope for many women may lie in the implementation of the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion 2017 – 2020 which aims “to make financial services available, accessible and affordable to all Sierra Leoneans and MSMEs, and support inclusive and resilient private-sector led growth”. The plan is to “remove impediments to greater

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.usaid.gov/sierra-leone/gender equality and women's empowerment](http://www.usaid.gov/sierra-leone/gender-equality-and-women's-empowerment)

<sup>7</sup> WELD Annual Report, 2018

financial inclusion and find innovative ways to expand access and deliver pro-poor products and services.” As hopeful as this strategy may be, it does not mention gender equality or women’s economic empowerment, does not have a specific approach to ensuring that women do benefit and does not list the MSWGCA or any women focused-NGO as stakeholder for any of the six strategic interventions.

A related study, the Financial Inclusion Baseline Survey 2017, also co-sponsored by the World Bank, identified a range of 18 barriers to financial inclusion in Sierra Leone and some of these are: a) lack of knowledge and understanding of financial services; b) high cost of products and services; c) long distance to access points; d) low income of individuals; e) inappropriate products; and f) regulatory barriers. In light of these barriers, it is concerning that the absence of credit and access to other financial services may drive consumers to alternative providers, which may come at a much higher cost and risk than traditional financial services. For some consumers, the non-traditional financial services may be seen as more convenient or customer-friendly than those offered by traditional financial institutions. But this convenience further worsens the precarious financial state of many families and, in many cases, locks them into a downward trend of deteriorating finances.

The development and implementation of the Framework for Financial Literacy in Sierra Leone will help to ensure that there is a more comprehensive, more sustainable and more effective range of Financial Literacy programmes than has previously been the case and to avoid unintended gaps and unnecessary overlaps. It will provide focus and momentum, improve co-ordination and help to generate active support from a full range of stakeholders. Working together within a comprehensive, inclusive and coordinated national strategic framework will enable stakeholders to build on and to extend what has been achieved so far and will help to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from the efforts of all those organizations which have an interest in improving people's personal financial management skills.

#### **2.1.4. *Mobile Money Transfer***

Sierra Leone is a cash-based economy with a rudimentary payment system that offers limited use of debit and credit cards, cheques and internet banking. However, with over 80% of network coverage, there is a huge potential for the growth of mobile financial services. Mobile money was first introduced in Sierra Leone in 2009 by Zap with less than a thousand customers and only used to buy talk time for mobile phones. To date there are three Mobile Money Financial Services Providers (MMFSPs) namely Splash, Airtel money and Africel money, the latter two of which are the main mobile companies providing 90% of mobile coverage in the country. This financial service acquired a transformational role when it was used to make fast, accurate and secure payments to over 30,000 Ebola response workers all over the country. This service enabled the timely

payment of salaries and allowances and eased transfer of money for Ebola related activities<sup>8</sup>.

Through the WELD's project, WELD's private partnership with Orange Money pilots a savings aggregation product and Orange Money Transfer services to the communities in rural areas. Seven savings groups are participating in this intervention. Women constitute 79.0% (43 male, 162 female) in the participating savings groups and have saved \$10,905. This initiative will digitalize the activities of the SG, provide them with a more secure means of saving money, give SGs an opportunity to generate more income, and provide job opportunities for savings group women who will act as mobile money agents in rural communities<sup>9</sup>.

CARE's Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) programme has also had several empowerment functions for recipients, providing their groups with start-up funding initially, as well as a year of financial training. During the Ebola outbreak, VSLA helped to serve as a safety net for many families, although some have argued that these came to a standstill. VSLA members helped each other during Ebola, providing loans to members during the crisis, which helped members buy food as well as seed purchasing for planting during the planting season, and assist family of deceased members. During the Ebola outbreak, CARE leveraged its relationships to combat misinformation and government distrust, encouraging people to believe that Ebola was real. Also, while the outbreak had far reaching negative consequences on many livelihoods, CARE VSLA members mentioned that the Associations served as a safety net as women were able to borrow from each other, while CARE later assisted members with seeds start-up funds obtained through cash for work.

A new initiative (May 2016) was undertaken by CARE and the Sierra Leone Social Marketing and Development Agency (SLaDA) again to encourage women entrepreneurs and strengthen economic empowerment with the Campaign 'My Story, Your Inspiration,' in which successful women entrepreneurs are encouraged to share their stories of success with other women as a source of motivation and encouragement<sup>10</sup>.

### **2.2.1. Austerity measures taken by the government in the last five years**

The government of Sierra Leone declared austerity measure in 2016 at the peak of the Ebola Emergency response. The impact was far reaching on every member of society. Majority of the Women in Sierra Leone are in the informal sector engaged in petty

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<sup>8</sup> *Status of Women's Financial Inclusion in Sierra Leone by WACSI*

<sup>9</sup> WELD Annual Report, 2018

<sup>10</sup> *Status of Women's Financial Inclusion in Sierra Leone by WACSI*

trading and small medium enterprises. The country was experiencing an economic meltdown where goods were not exported and the exchange rate between the dollar and the local currency deteriorated. Prices were hiked and women not selling as they used to do when the economy was stable. Women continue to bore brunt effect of the austerity as primary care givers of the families.

No assessment was conducted before and after the austerity measure to assess the impact on women and men.

## **2.2. POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **2.2.1. Actions to reduce rural poverty among women and girls**

The 2015 Population and Housing Census depicts poverty as a serious issue. It suggests that 68.2 % males are poor whilst 68.4% females are poor. In the rural dimension, 78.2% males are poor and 79.3 % females poor. In the urban setting, 44.3% males are poor as against 45.2% females that are poor. The figures are suggesting that disparity between males and females relating to poverty is not much. In fact the recommendations from thematic reports of the population and Housing Census suggested that mothers and women in general should be more empowered towards child healthcare by strengthening and increasing coverage of the free healthcare initiative for pregnant and lactating mothers. Government can also increase the participation of women in gainful employment to complement household income and be more active in household decision making.

Highlighting the impact of the economic decline on women and girls in its 2018 annual report, WELD explained that the economic situation in their project area was not favorable after the March 2018 elections. According to the report, prices of fuel increased from Le 6,000.00 (\$0.78) to Le 8,000 (\$1.06) per liter. The increase in fuel prices resulted in an increase in prices of basic commodities and fares, which limited movement of people especially in the rural areas. Dollar exchange rate has also increased to an all-time high of Le 7,889/\$ in the bank and Le 8550/\$ in the streets [black market]. Prices of basic commodities such as rice and gari sky rocketed; gari which was retailing at Le 50,000 (\$0.07) per cup before the elections is now sold at Le 1,500 (\$0.2). Retail price for a bag of rice increased from Le 195,000.00 (\$25.8) to Le 220,000.00 (\$29.1). (WELD Annual Report 2018)

The recent hike in fuel prices has led to a significant increase in prices of commodities, especially locally produced foods, which is a crucial concern for project beneficiaries. Although the women are yet running their businesses and paying their savings group contributions, persistent increases of commodity prices will pose serious challenges to them. This may have far reaching impacts on the women, especially affecting their



savings, given that part of what is normally saved will be spent on purchasing food and other necessities<sup>11</sup>.

The government has committed to empowering women economically by establishing the Women's Development Fund to support female entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Finance has approved Le2 billion for the women's empowerment fund in the 2019 budget. The MSWGCA will work to ensure this becomes a reality.

Social protection plays a central role in addressing poverty and inequality. It increases the income of poor households either by guaranteeing a minimum income or employment. The Government of Sierra Leone through the NaCSA is implementing the Social Safety Net Project. This project serves as a beacon of hope for women especially those in the rural areas<sup>12</sup>.

NaCSA applied for and received a Grant of US \$20.107 million from the World Bank towards the cost of a Social Safety Net Project (SSNP). The project finances a package of cash transfers to 20,000 extremely poor households in nine districts in the country. Women in selected communities received unconditional cash transfer of Le250, 000 every quarter. Sierra Leone Government is providing counterpart contribution of US\$ 2.5 million to support 1,000 beneficiaries. The project also supports the building of social protection systems, provide institutional support to national structures and finance effective national coordination of social protection interventions and initiatives. The Project Development Objective is to establish the key building blocks for a basic national safety net system and provide income support to extremely poor households in Sierra Leone.

The Project Development Objective is to establish the key building blocks of a basic national safety net system and provide income support to extremely poor households in Sierra Leone. The SSNP will be implemented by the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) with support from the National Social Protection Secretariat (NSPS)

### **2.2.2. Cash transfers – UN WOMEN**

The project will directly impact the sites of intervention with

- Increased resilience and sustainable income of young (aspiring) women entrepreneurs and their families
- Increased employability of young women in sustainable and resilient economic sectors
- Increased autonomy, self-reliance and self-confidence of young women

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<sup>11</sup> WELD Annual Report 2018

<sup>12</sup> Speech delivered by the Commissioner, National Commission for Social Action, IWD 2019)

- Young women between 15 and 35 years will benefit from the project.<sup>13</sup> Young women living below poverty line and affected by the recent mud-slide and floods will be prioritized and targeted by the project

### 2.2.3. *Improving health outcome for women and girls*

A) On health service delivery, the available data shows that the density of health facilities is fairly constant across most of the country, with a handful of districts having significantly more or significantly fewer health facilities. On the key question of what this means for accessibility, performance across the country is far more variable with many districts having far too large a proportion of the population without access to a health facility within a reasonable distance. Optimizing quality of care remains a persistent challenge. While 90% of health facilities provide MCH services, the quality of these services remains sub-optimal. In a recent health facility assessment, only 1% of health facilities had basic amenities including standard measures for ensuring patient safety (WHO, 2012). Just 35% of facilities had basic equipment required for service delivery. Despite a recent effort to strengthen 13 hospitals and 65 CHCs nationwide and upgrade them to Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (EmONC) status, an assessment conducted in July 2014 suggested not a single facility had been sufficiently upgraded to meet standards across the seven domains assessed – with a lack of necessary equipment, staffing, drug supplies, laboratory services, referral system, electricity, water and sanitation noted as frequent obstacles (MOHS, Evidence 4 Action, World Bank, and Options, 2014).

Despite encouraging gains, levels of child and maternal mortality remain intractably high - 156/1,000 and 1165/100,000 live births respectively (Measure DHS and Statistics Sierra Leone, 2013). These reflect a range of critical implementation challenges. Sierra Leone faces a critical shortage of health workers. The WHO has determined a critical threshold of 23 doctors, nurses, and midwives per 10,000 population, for the health workforce to be able to provide the minimal levels of basic skilled care for pregnant women and children. Countries that fall below this threshold will struggle to provide the skilled services required to improve the status of maternal and child health and are likely to suffer higher levels of maternal and child mortality. As of 2010, Sierra Leone had only two skilled providers per 10,000 population, and the country ranked fourth from the bottom of a list of 49 priority low-and-middle-income countries for health worker-to population ratios (Chen, et al., 2004) (WHO, 2014). Based on the recent Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan, 64% of skilled health worker posts are currently vacant

C)

Last but not the least, the health education and health promotion team provided a tremendous range of support to all programmes and units in their various activities during the year – from prevention of ill health, to generating demand for services, sensitizing the public to forthcoming campaigns around immunizations and other activities. Without demand for better health the supply of health services would be wasted, and so it is important to recognize the critical role played by this team.

iv)The Ebola outbreak highlighted Sierra Leone’s potential to use data for improved decision making to better target services and resources. Monitoring systems based on case-finding, contact tracing and Community Event-Based Surveillance (CEBS) were established to support the Ebola response; these systems were linked with laboratory and admissions data to draw a fuller picture of the outbreak and to focus efforts. Harnessing lessons learned from this experience and applying them to routine information and surveillance systems is a critical priority for the post-Ebola recovery period. The adoption of District Health Information System 2 (DHIS) by the MoHS is an important achievement. Deployment is on-going and currently limited to routing service data from primary and secondary facilities. Initial progress was made in the use of DHIS data for decision-making, but the process of sector review is yet to be institutionalized. National Technical Guidelines for IDSR were formulated since 2008 but are yet to be implemented. Surveillance and information are technically not services provided under the BPEHS, but improved, robust surveillance and information systems at all levels with access to laboratory confirmation services are crucial components of the enabling environment for a functioning and resilient health system capable of delivering the BPEHS.

D). The Government of Sierra Leone and its people have reviewed and enacted new laws to ensure that women’s right to quality health services is guaranteed. These include The Safe Abortion Act 2015, which is currently under review, Hospital Boards Act 2003; Sierra Leone Health Services Commission Act 2011; National Pharmaceutical Procurement Act 2012; Sierra Leone Council for Postgraduate Colleges of Health Specialties Act 2016; Teaching Hospitals Complex Administration Act 2016; Sierra Leone Health Service Commission Act; National Public Health Agency, SLESHI Act; National Medical Supplies Agency Act; Regulation of Personnel and Substances, Medical Practitioners and Dental Surgeons’ Act 1966; amendment (2008), Nurses and Midwives Board Act, The Pharmacy and Drugs Act 2001, The National Drugs Control Act 2008; Amendment (2008), Allied Health Professionals’ Act, Nurses and Midwives Council Act, Pharmacy and Drugs Act and the Food Safety Act(new).

The government through the MoHS has developed and adopted the Sierra Leone National Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) II (2017-2021). This plan form the foundation for

better health security, preventing deaths, tackling diseases, strengthening the health system and improving the health and well-being of the population. The HSSP II provides the overall direction for the sector, prioritizing and orienting efforts around the most pressing issues that need to be addressed. It also provides a basis for longer-term practices that are vital for the country's achievement of the SDGs.

The MoHS made significant progress in restoring essential health services and continued with the implementation of the Free Health Care Initiative prioritizing the restoration of essential health services for women and children. Routine and supplementary immunization, defaulter tracing of TB and HIV/AIDS patients were intensified. About 210,865 children were fully immunized against childhood killer diseases, and 206,229 women of child bearing age have received at least two doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine to protect against neonatal tetanus. In June 2015, a total of 1,475,856 children 0-59 months were vaccinated against polio which represented 98.8% coverage. House-to-house birth registration of children was done, and about 1,756,692 children between the ages of 0-59 months were registered and issued with a birth certificate. Over 12,103 TB cases were notified to health authorities, 13,796 HIV patients received treatment, and 569,373 malaria-positive children under the age of five years were treated. About 3,057 EVD survivors received eye care while 567 were treated with ENT related problems.

An extensive programme of health facility construction and rehabilitation was launched. WASH upgrade projects were implemented in over 295 health facilities and permanent screening and isolation structures were constructed in 46 community health centres and 22 public hospitals.

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

### **2.2.3. Actions taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls**

There was an increased coverage of schools at all levels of education. The 2018 schools census covered a total of 10,747 schools in the country, a 16.1% increase from 9,258 in the previous year. Out of this, 1,633 were Pre-Primary schools translating to 15.1% of all schools; 7,002 (65.1%) were primary schools; 1,531 (14.2%) were junior secondary school; and 581 (5.4%) were senior secondary schools.

Three of the four levels of education experienced enrolment increase with gender parity showing in all the levels of education. The 2018 results show that there were a total of 1,982,475 students enrolled in the four levels, 4% lower than the enrolment in 2017 the drop accounted for by 7.9% drop in primary enrolments. There was an increase in enrolment at pre-primary (11%), junior secondary (0.8%) and senior secondary (15.3%) between the two years. At the national level, the census shows equal participation between boys and girls at the first three levels of education, the parity being 1.11, 1.03, 0.99 and 0.91 pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary schools respectively. There is need to strengthen investment in girls at senior secondary.

Gross Enrolment Rate is high for primary and low for pre-primary and secondary levels signalling need to strengthen commitment to investing in early year education. The enrolments in pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary schools translate to GERs of 13.5%, 108%, 55% and 30% respectively. Weak coverage in early years compromises quality delivery in primary and subsequent levels of education and as such there is need to increase the effort in the pre-primary. In addition to the weak coverage in pre-primary, the census shows that pre-primary remains largely an urban phenomenon, 42% of the learners in the entire country enrolled in Western Area.

While Gross intake is high, there is weak internal efficiency rendering low completion at primary and secondary levels. In class 1, the Gross Intake Rate is 138% - more than one generation accessing school. Completion in Class 6 stands at 73% implying that the retention rate is only 53%. In junior secondary, the intake rate is 67% while the completion is 49% resulting into retention of 73%. In senior secondary, the retention is 47% following an intake of 33% and a completion of 16%. There is need to strengthen internal efficiency to ensure all learners who come to school only leave at designated exit points. **(2018 Annual Schools Census Report)**

Comparison between 2017 and 2018 School Censuses

**Table 11** presents summaries of schools and enrolments from the 2017 and 2018 censuses. The 2017 school census covered a total of 9,258 pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary schools. The census revealed a total of 2 million learners/students were enrolled in the four levels of education, majority enrolled in primary education, the average school size ranging from 67 in pre-primary to 447 in senior

In the 2018 schools census, the coverage of schools increased by 16% ranging from 9% in primary schools to 45% in senior secondary - this should not be considered an actual increase in the number of schools but rather improved coverage. It could also mean that in the previous school censuses some school heads were not returning their questionnaires back to the office for processing. While the coverage of schools increased, this did not translate in increased learners/students. Overall, the enrolment in 2018 was 4% lower than the 2017 results. This may be attributed to the quality control measures

put in place for the first time during the 2018 exercise where the Sierra Leone teachers Union (SLTU) members were engaged in verifying and validating the data reported by school heads before enumerators were allowed to pick them. There was a 7.9% drop in primary enrolments due to the increased coverage. The census however recorded increase in enrolment at pre-primary (11%), junior secondary (0.8%) and senior secondary (15.3%). Table 3-2 presents the summary of schools and enrolments from the 2018 census.

**Table 11**

**Comparative summaries of schools and enrolments 2017 and 2018**

Categories	2017					2018				
	Pre Primary	Primary	Junior Sec School	Senior Sec School	Total	Pre Primary	Primary	Junior Sec School	Senior Sec School	Total
Male	38,924	736,275	156,394	94,187	1,025,780	42,922	674,034	158,651	108,144	42,922
Female	42,968	750,664	156,525	85,034	1,035,191	47,779	695,704	156,849	98,392	47,779
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,892</b>	<b>1,486,939</b>	<b>312,919</b>	<b>179,221</b>	<b>2,060,971</b>	<b>90,701</b>	<b>1,369,738</b>	<b>315,500</b>	<b>206,536</b>	<b>90,701</b>
Ave Sch Size	66	232	257	447		<b>56</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>56</b>

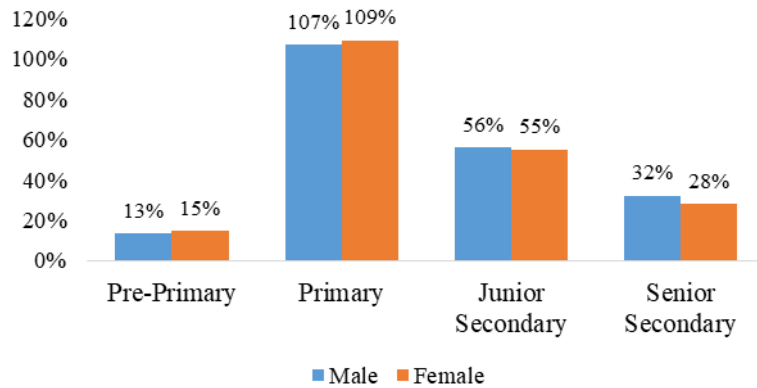
*Source 2017 and 2018 Annual Schools Census Statistical Year Books*

▪ **Summary of Enrollment Rates**

As illustrated in table above, access to school is relatively high for the established segments of the system, primary education recording incredible achievements. Majority of children eligible for pre-primary are not in school with only 14% reported to be in school, girls having a slight advantage over boys. In primary, the coverage is above 100% indicating the adequacy of the system to carry the primary school age population. In depth review of the primary school enrolment reveals that there is considerable number of underage children enrolled in Class 1, and they tend to stick there for a while. This is attributed to the limited establishment of pre-primary – children have to stay in class 1 to be ready for primary. In junior secondary, the enrolment is up to 55% of the population eligible for this level while in senior secondary, the enrolment is less than one third of children eligible for this level (30%). At lower level of the schooling, there are more females than males enrolled, while at higher level there are more male than enrolled than their counterpart.

**Chart 1**

**Gross Enrolment Rate by Gender**



▪ **Retention and Completion**

Based on the available data, it is evident that student flow is the main indicators of efficiency. The indicators here include Gross Intake, Retention and Transition Rates. The results show that there is high Gross Intake Rate at primary for both boys and girls (139% and 138%). Transition between the levels is relatively high, 9 in 10 students completing primary making it to junior secondary and 2 in 3 students completing junior secondary making it to senior secondary. The weakest link in the student flow is the retention within levels. Of the children who access class 1, slightly more than half (53%) are likely to complete class 6; 7 in 10 of those who access junior secondary stay in school; and less than half of the students who enroll in senior secondary are likely to stay in school to the very end.

**Table 12: Student Flow Indicators**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Primary</b>			
Access Class 1	139%	138%	138%
Access Class 6 (Primary Completion	73%	73%	73%
<b>Transition</b>			
Transition from Primary to J-Sec	92%	90%	91%
Transition from J-Sec to S-Sec	68%	67%	67%
<b>Junior Secondary</b>			
Access J-Sec 1	67%	66%	67%
Access J-Sec 3	51%	47%	49%
<b>Senior Secondary</b>			
Access S-Sec 1	34%	31%	33%
Access S-Sec 4	17%	14%	16%
<b>Retention</b>			
In Primary from Class 1 to Class 6	52%	53%	53%
In Secondary from J-Sec 1 to J-Sec 3	75%	72%	73%
In Secondary from S-Sec 1 to S-Sec 4	50%	45%	47%

*2018 Annual Schools Census*

The 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan (ESP) is intended to be a transition document between the 2014-2018 ESP and the 2021-2025 ESP. Even so, it is not just an update and extension of the current ESP, but is an improvement that recognizes the weaknesses of the document it is replacing and takes into cognizance lessons learnt from the devastating Ebola epidemic, that put schools to a close for a period of nine months and brought Sierra Leone to its knees

All other interventions/activities described in this ESP contribute in one way or another to the achievement of the above outcomes, and include interventions across four areas: i)

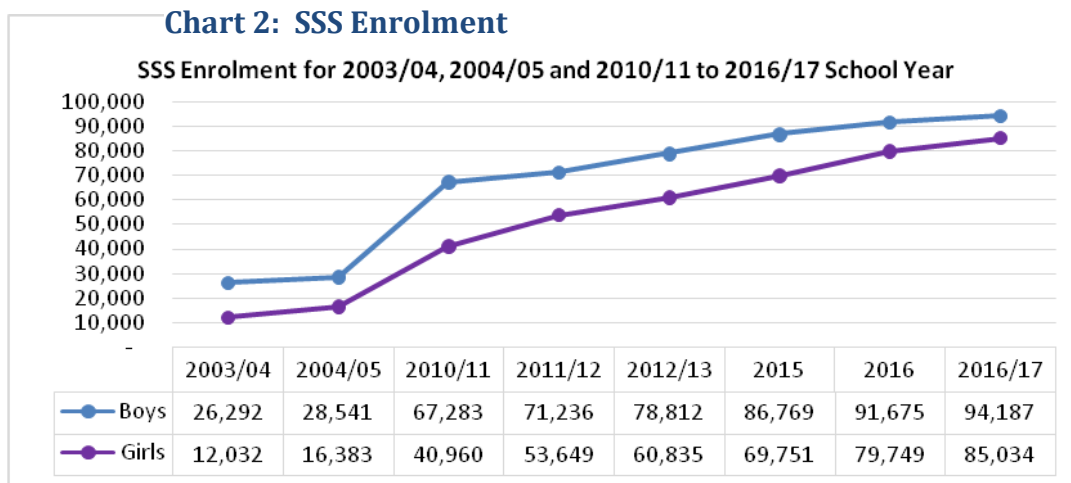


Access, equity and completion, ii) Quality and relevance, iii) Systems strengthening, vi) Emergency preparedness and response. The links are graphically illustrated below.

This ESP focuses on continuing, expanding and sustaining improvements already made under the ESP (2014-2018) in access and equity, quality and relevance, and system strengthening. In addition, it includes a new focus on strengthening the system’s emergency preparedness that will ensure better response to shocks such as disease epidemics, natural disasters, and insecurity.

▪ **Gender Parity in School Enrolment and Completion**

The 2018 -2020 Education Sector Plan (ESP) aims to: “Increase the transition levels from primary to JSS to 92% in 2020 and GER at JSS level to 75% over the same period by expanding the tuition support for girls at JSS level, formalizing the policy for re-entry of teenage mothers to the school system, and ensuring all schools are safe for girls through curbing sexual violence and exploitation in schools” (ESP 2018-2020). There is large gender parity at primary and junior secondary levels, but this narrows down at the senior secondary level, as indicated in the graph below.



A key issue affecting the ability of girls to stay in school, remain safe in school and learn effectively is the severe **shortage of female teachers**. In 2016, the total number of teachers in all schools was 63,535, of which only 17,147 (27%) were females. Numbers of female teachers are much smaller in the rural areas. This deprives female pupils of critical mentoring and role modelling support, as well as safe reporting mechanisms for sexual and gender-based violence.

Growth in enrolments in higher education has almost remained at the same level over recent years, with low female enrolments at university level. In 2013/2014, the number of students in universities was 30,687, lower than the previous year with 31,381 students.

The number of women enrolled in universities is much lower than that of men, with women constituting only 39.5 % of the total population. However the percentage of women enrolling at university level has been rising, for example, from 37.6% in 2012/2013 to 39.5% in 2013/2014. This increase is higher in universities, compared to the polytechnics.

**Table 13: Adult Literacy and Educational Attainment: Gender Differences**

Gender	% Who Never Attended School	% Who Completed Primary School	% Who Completed Junior Secondary	% Completed Senior Secondary or Higher	Total % who are Literate
Female	46%	12.5%	18.5%	22%	41.5%
Male	30.2%	13%	21%	36.6%	58.3%

Source: MICS 2017

In terms of provision of opportunities for accessing TVET institutions there is a seeming regional bias with the Western Area having far more institutions than each of the other regions? There is also a bias towards urban areas that result in relatively few TVET institutions being found in rural areas. The fact that the majority of TVET institutions are private with a focus on making profit explains in part the regional and urban bias.

The table below shows the distribution of enrollment by type of TVET institution and sex in the aforementioned study.

**Table 14: Enrolment in TVET Institutions by Type of Institution and Sex - 2015**

TVET Institution	Male	Female
CEC-A	237 (20%)	947 (80%)
CEC-B	202 (21.3%)	747 (78.7%)
TVC	1,326 (32.7%)	2,731 (68.3%)
TVI	2,605 (42%)	3,599 (58%)
VTC	646 (23.6%)	2,091 (77.4%)

Source: Situation Analysis Study of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Sierra Leone

The table above indicates that there are more female than male students registered in TVET institutions covered by the 2015 situation analysis study. There is no reason to believe that the situation is drastically different in other TVET institutions not covered by

the study and the likelihood is that more females are enrolled in TVET institutions than males nationwide but this need to be confirmed by a more comprehensive study. Every region of Sierra Leone has tertiary level institutions registered with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). Just 4 out of 14 districts appear to lack institutions registered with the TEC. The majority of registered institutions are from the Western Area according to TEC records. Unlike the situation with TVET institutions, female enrolment in the public universities and teacher training colleges in Sierra Leone is much lower than male enrolment.

In 2013 – 2014 the former President, His Excellency Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma launched the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy in Sierra Leone and has also been reviewed and renamed, National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancies and Child Marriage. This strategy has been launched by His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio for full implementation.

The current government has also instituted a targeted financial support to females in the STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), aimed at encouraging increased participation of the girl child in science and technology. (ESP 2014-2015, ESP2018-2020)

Schools should be a safe environment for all kids (boys and girls) to come, enjoy and learn. Cases of sexual violence and exploitation are from time to time reported, with additional cases passing in silence and never reported and it is a serious concern of the MSWGCA. To protect children from sexual abuses within schools and to ensure those that break the set rules and regulations are sanctioned, MEST will develop child protection mechanisms and guidelines. It will also ensure mechanisms are in place for taking legal action against those within and outside schools involved in sexual violence and exploitation of school girls. In the meanwhile, through the Girls Access to Education and Services (GATE) project, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) is building the capacity of school leaders (principals and deputy principals, peer mentors, guidance counsellors and adult school mentors) to monitor and report on violence in schools and ensure schools are safe for girls. The GATES Project is an Irish Aid funded Project. GATES project is implemented by MEST through the Directorate of Non-Formal Education, and relevant line ministries; MoHS, and MSWGA, as well as local NGOs. GATES project aims to increase access of out-of-school adolescent girls to comprehensive and quality sexual reproductive health information and services and increase the capacity of girls and boys to prevent and respond to Gender Based Violence in their communities.

In 2015 – 2016, the MSWGCA with support from UNFPA provided health and psychosocial information and services to pregnant and lactating mothers and other out-of-school girls in learning centres.

There is also the national Girls Camp project aimed at equipping adolescent girls with the knowledge and skills to achieve their full potential. The week-long residential camp is designed to boost self-confidence, encourage girls to speak up about the issues affecting them, provide mentorship, critical reasoning and logical thinking skill, healthy morals and opportunities for growth, and develop a course of action to increase girls' empowerment and elevate their status in society.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is one of the strategic prongs towards realizing the full potential of adolescents and youth and, when implemented correctly, can reduce adolescent pregnancy which could in turn reduces drop-outs. CSE is defined as a right-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school. The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to the implementation of CSE and policies related to its implementation will be in the revised National Education Policy. Age appropriate CSE will be integrated in the curriculum through the main subject areas from Upper Primary School to Senior Secondary School. The government is committed to scale-up and strengthen the existing CSE training (Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Life Skills) to Primary School teachers and expand this to Upper Primary School (UPS), Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS), technical and vocational institutions, teacher training colleges and out of school learning Centers.

### 2.1.5. Water and Sanitation

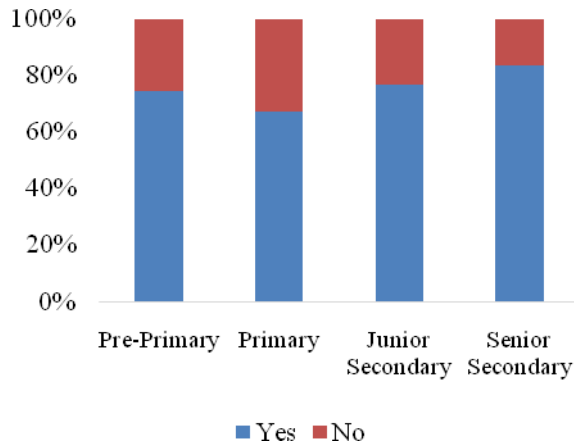
#### Water



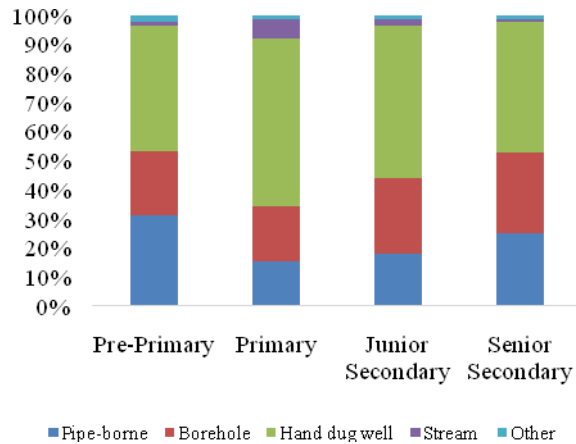
Three in 4  
pre-primary;  
2 in 3

primary; 1 in 4 junior secondary and 86% of senior secondary have access to water with hand dug well-being the source of water in most of the schools.

**Chart 3: Availability of Drinking Water in Schools**



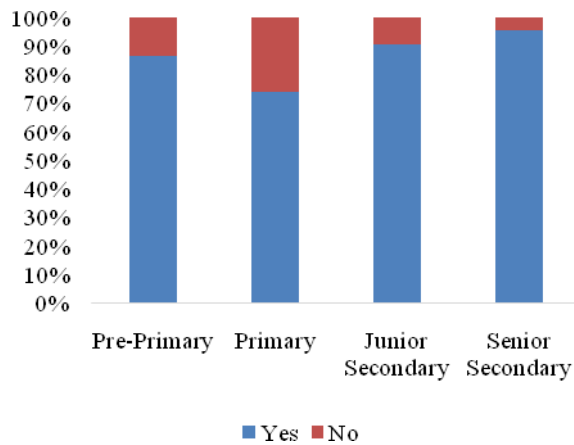
**Chart 4: Distribution of School Water Source**



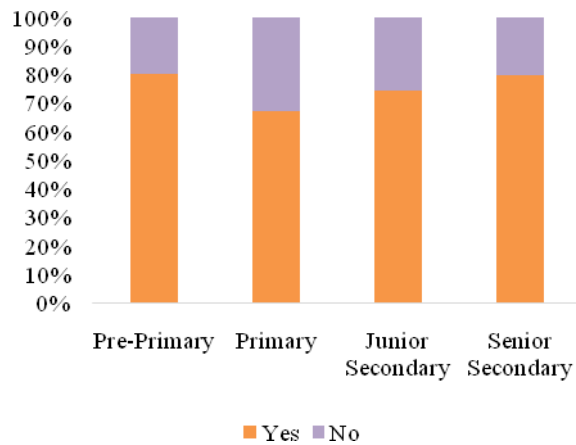
**Sanitation**

Majority of schools have latrines, primary having the largest share of schools without sanitation facilities at 26%. Even at senior secondary, 5% of schools do not have latrines. Even though availability of latrines is generally high, considerable number of schools report their latrines to be in poor condition. 20% of pre-primary; one third of primary schools; 1 in 4 of junior secondary and 1 in 5 senior secondary reports having their latrines in poor conditions

**Chart 5: Availability of Latrines in Schools**



**Chart 6: Latrines in Good Condition**



On average, 15% of the latrines in schools are shared between boys and girls; 19% in pre-primary, 15% in primary, 13% in junior secondary and 12% in senior secondary. Based

on single sex latrines, the ratio of latrine usage is quite high in primary and secondary schools and for either gender. In primary, 57<sup>14</sup> learners use one latrine on average (66 boys and 67 girls). In junior secondary, there are up to 45 students per latrine while in senior secondary, there are 63 students using a single latrine!

**Table 15: Number of Latrines and Ratio of Usage**

	Boys	Girls	Shared	PToR (B)	PToR (G)	PToR (T)
Pre-Primary	1810	1878	872	24	25	20
Primary	10180	10324	3491	66	67	57
Junior Secondary	2959	3103	890	54	51	45
Senior Secondary	1464	1438	414	74	68	62

#### 2.2.4. Achievements

Efforts have now been made to ensure gender sensitivity in the portrayal of men and women, boys and girls in text books. The school curricula have been revised to give equal opportunities to girls and boys to pursue traditionally female or male vocations respectively.

In the area of access, equity and completion there are some accomplishments worth highlighting:

- ✓ There have been significant increases in the number of schools across sub-sectors, from the pre-primary to the senior secondary and tertiary levels. As mentioned above, the number of schools has risen in the last three years by 812 of which 434 were primary.
- ✓ Reflecting the demographic trends of the country population there has been a marked increase in the total number of children and youth enrolled in school. Growth in enrolments has been highest at pre-primary level, at 35%, compared to 6% at primary and 10% at both JSS and SSS.
- ✓ The gender disparity at pre-primary and primary school level has been bridged with Gender Parity Index (GPI) now standing at 1.1 and 1.0, respectively.
- ✓ At JSS, the GPI has improved, from 0.91 in 2012 to 0.96 in 2015, an indication that with more effort gender parity can be realized at the JSS level in the next five years. At SSS level, the GPI improved from 0.59 in 2010 to 0.74 and 0.77 in 2015.( ESP2018-2020, Free and compulsory education for all children).

<sup>14</sup> This is inclusive of the shared latrines

### 2.2.5.

#### *Equitable access to Basic Education for children (Boys and Girls) in Sierra Leone, with focus on vulnerable groups*

By 2016 36, 482 children accessed formal or non-formal education with support from UNICEF. By the end of 2018, 81,545: boys - 26,411 & girls - 55,134) accessed Formal or Non- formal Education.

By the end of December, 2018 44,937 communities were reached with key messages on promoting enrollment, retention and alternative /positive forms of discipline

Also strategies have been developed to enhance gender-responsive Education Sector Planning, Implementation and Monitoring of Educational Programmes and activities; 1,790 school heads (male- 1618, Female-172) and 3,602 mentors (Male-1,968, Female-1,634) from 924 Junior Secondary Schools were trained to promote transformative and accountable leadership and mentorship in schools; 17,300 Vulnerable girls in JSS benefitted from Cash/Kind grants across the country; 15,577 Out of School Girls (primary-4,227; Junior Secondary School-8,797 and Senior Secondary School-2,553) registered in 282 Learning Centres for remedial classes and later encouraged to go back to acquire formal schooling; Consultations to review the Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Personnel were held and the reviewed copy has been drafted awaiting further consultation on finalization; 1,200 Primary School Teachers were trained on Sexual and Reproductive Health. More are presently being trained with funds provided by other Agencies and over 300 classroom Blocks have been built over the years

### 2.2.6.

#### **Challenges:**

1. There are a huge number of vulnerable girls at risk of dropping out of school who still need support at JSS.
2. Inadequate trained and qualified teachers, few female teachers in schools, coupled with inadequate teaching and learning materials are preventing good learning outcomes;
3. Children are being withdrawn from school and secluded in society bushes, making them miss school sessions and public examinations;
4. Poor road network associated with some hard to reach riverine communities, crossing points and Island communities slow down project implementations in some communities;
5. As enrollment increases, dilapidated school infrastructure pose risks and inadequate sitting accommodation and overcrowding pose threat to school retention;
6. Parents and school authorities compromise cases of SRGBV and sometimes there are delays on the part of Family Support Unit in supporting Victims access justice.

7. Participating in excessive farm work and mobile market days (Trade Fares) by most of the members of the school and community structures is hampering the timely implementation of some key activities enshrined in the Chiefdom Action Plans.

### **2.3.0. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES**

#### **2.3.1. Actions to address Violence against women and girls**

- A) In 2016, the government of Sierra Leone set up the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) to review the 1991 National multi-party Executive Presidential system of Government. The National Constitution is the Fountain from which all other Laws flow. The final report from the CRC captures grey areas that will end violence against women. The current government has promised to look into the CRC report.
- a) The government of Sierra Leone has adopted a parliamentary resolution committing parliamentarians to fast track issues emanating from the UNSCRs 1325 & 1820 Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Parliament has pledged to promote law reforms in support of gender equality, including amending a section of the 1991 Constitution which currently allows for discrimination against women in certain instances, bringing to the Table of the House, an Affirmative Action Bill, and fast-tracking the adoption of amendments to the Child Rights Act of 2007.
- b) The President has injected the political will into the framework to end Violence against women by declaring rape and sexual violence as national emergency. This provided the space for all government hospitals to provide FREE Medical Treatment and certificate to every victim of rape and sexual abuse, a division for Rape and Sexual Penetration of Minors has been created within the Sierra Leone Police to speedily handle all cases of Rape and Sexual Penetration of Minors. Furthermore, sexual penetration of Minors is now punishable by LIFE IMPRISONMENT and a dedicated National Emergency Telephone Number for reporting Rape and Sexual Violence will be available to the public.
- c) The MSWGCA has closely worked with partners to support existing safe homes like ‘‘Commit an Act’’ for victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- d) In 2012, the government and people of Sierra Leone enacted the Sexual offences Act. Following close revelation and manifestation of the implementation of Sexual Offences Act, activists discovered loopholes in the Act that do not fully protect women and girls, hence, in late 2018, the government of Sierra Leone through the local NGOs and international partners started reviewing the Sexual Offences of Act of 2012.



### **E) The Hands Off Our Girls Project**

The First Lady of Sierra Leone, Her Excellency Mrs. Fatima Bio, launched the “Hands off our girls” project to protect girls from sexual abuse, early marriage and teenage pregnancy. According to Sierra Leone’s 2013 demographic and health survey, 13% of girls are married by their 15th birthday and 39% of girls before their 18th birthday. According to the World Health Organization also, teenage pregnancy is also a leading cause of death for mothers in Sierra Leone, with the maternal mortality rate at 1 360 deaths per 100 000 live births<sup>15</sup>.

During the official launch of the Project by His Excellency the President Julius Maada Bio on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2018, Mrs. Fatima Bo said, “People want to link this dastardly act to religion, but as a Muslim I know it is not in the Quran, nor is it in the Bible. This act (sexual abuse and early marriage) is a bad cultural practice that needs to stop. Our girls should be safe and able to go to school in peace.”

In 2018 alone, more than 2 300 rape cases were reported. Fatima Bio believes an example needs to be made of those who rape girls by the handing down of life sentences. “We must make examples of these men who say they protect their own children at home while they are running after other girls. The laws must be changed and we must continue the education, especially civic education, to teach these men that girls must be in school and not running homes. Rapists are humans – they must not be protected but should go to jail for life.”

F) There is a progress in the establishment of Gender Desks and Gender Officers in government Ministries and Agencies. Remarkable among these is the Sierra Leone Police with the gender directorate and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces with Gender and Equal Opportunity Unit.

G) The Sierra Leone Police has made remarkable progress in handling issues of violence against women including but not limited to the following: development of a Standard Operating Procedures and other tools for investigation of sexual and domestic violence cases; training of personnel from general duty and Family Support Unit on procedures and processes for the investigation of sexual and domestic violence; case management guidelines developed for investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence cases

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<sup>15</sup><https://thisisafrica.me/girls-sierra-leone-rape-national-emergency/>

and outreach programmes to educate communities on laws relating to sexual and domestic violence laws.

**2.3.2. Progress in terms of addressing portrayal of women and girls in the media during the last five years is as follows**

**A) Legal frameworks**

- Sierra Leone has not enacted any law that will combat discrimination and gender biases in the media. The Independent Media Commission Act remains vague on gender related matters.
- At the moment there is no binding regulation in existence
- The media code of conduct was developed and introduced in 2012 but enforcement remains a challenge
- There is currently no data on women in the media. There are less than three female media managers out of the 190 newspaper, radio and television stations in the country
- Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), through advocacy for the welfare of female journalists and decent representation of women in the media, has received national and international training on media ethics, media regulations and media management. WIMSAL has about 116 members across the four regions, and its membership comprises of female journalists from both print and electronic media. Apart from the increase in female journalists, more women have accessed and continue to hold leadership positions.

B) The 2015 State of the Media Report; a publication of Media Reform Coordinating Group Sierra Leone led by the Mass Communications Department of Fourah Bay College the University of Sierra Leone featured women representation in the media. With Ms. Willette James (Former SLAJ Presidential Aspirant) as Acting Head of Mass Communication Department, there has been significant progress in creating opportunities for female journalists to gain formal education in journalism. The Mass Communications Department is currently offering courses ranging from certificate, diploma, bachelors and Masters Degree and PhD.

C) UN continue to support the empowerment of women in the media in gender sensitive reporting and peace building in Sierra Leone.

D) In 2016, the Women's Voice Newspaper was launched with the motive to protect and promote the cause of women and the Girls Child. Since its establishment as the first newspaper dedicated to women, it has gained momentum in the print media landscape.

However the manager is faced with financial constrains and making it difficult to pay workers. The newspaper is published twice a week largely because of lack of resources.

## **2.4. PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS**

### **2.4.1. Women's participation in public life and decision-making**

- A) The 1991 Constitution does not limit the participation of women and minorities in the political process. Women have the right to vote, but husbands or other patriarchal figures most times influence their decisions. As of August 2017, women led four of the 23 Ministries. On the three highest courts, 11 of the 35 judges were women. Cultural and traditional practices in the northern areas of the country have prevented women from holding office as paramount chiefs (a parallel system of tribal government operated in each of the 190 chiefdoms).

Women in Sierra Leone are making progress but are yet to meet the threshold of 30% quota as recommended by the TRC. However, during the Presidential and General Elections in March 2018, the following were recorded as compared to their male counterparts. In the area of political processes, USAID trained female candidates and supported the registration of increased numbers of women voters for the 2018 national and local elections. With support from the WELD program, political parties and election management bodies in Sierra Leone engaged to identify women candidates for the local council and parliamentary elections. WELD supplied women with the skills, experience and will to run for and serve in public office. The demand for women in leadership is also being strengthened. U.S. assistance also promotes democratic governance at the local district level and among associations. Women representatives, including local council representatives, have now been empowered to take on development and leadership roles. In addition to the initiatives supported by WELD, a local organization known as the 50-50 Group with its primary objective of attaining parity mentored and trained women veering for leadership positions and created a database of women.

- B) Government placed particular focus on increasing women's political participation and other decision making processes ahead of the 2012 and 2018 elections respectively. Series of International and local organizations have been conducting leadership trainings and community awareness-raising sessions on women's human rights across the country. These organizations were working with politicians, legal experts and activists, to help refine, legal processes in support of women's political empowerment. This includes a draft Gender Equality Bill, which calls for a minimum 30% quota representation for women in decision-making, and is due to be submitted soon to the country's parliament for enactment.

- C) Other activities, includes the setting up situation room in the 2012 and 2018 Presidential and General Elections which as mentioned earlier above was manned by eminent women from all political parties to track, investigate and report all elections related violence against women to the Elections Management Bodies.
- D) Series of projects have also been implemented by various women’s NGO and INGOs in various communities and districts to increase the quantity and quality of women in decision making positions and to ensure that as leaders the women would work towards the alleviation of women’s inequality. Lots of mentorship programmes, training in leadership, decision making, public speaking and political campaign trainings have been carried out by 50/50 Women’s Group as an institution established for training of women for leadership positions, and other NGOs and INGOs.
- E) Some political parties also trained and mentored female aspirants and paid their candidature fees for for various positions. There is a Gender Policy developed by the PPRC that mandates all political parties to give women priority in aspiring to different positions

**Table 16: Women in Elective and appointed positions 2018**

Categories	Male	Female	Total	%M	%F
<b><i>Elected Positions</i></b>					
Presidential Candidates	14	2	16	87.5%	12.5%
Vice-Presidential Candidate	12	4	16	75%	25%
Parliamentarians	128	18	146	87.6%	12.3%
Paramount Chief MP	12	2	14	85.7%	14.2%
Mayors	5	2	7	71.4%	28.5%
Council Chairperson	20	1	21	95.2%	4.7%
Local Councillors	389	90	479	81.2%	18.7%
<b><i>Appointed Positions</i></b>					
Cabinet Ministers	20	5	25	80%	20%
Deputy Ministers	20	5	25	80%	20%
Ministers of State	3	2	5	60%	40%

Source: Sierra Leone National Development Plan 2019-2013

#### **2.4.2. Access to information and communication technologies**

In the 2015 Census, questions were asked on access to Internet facility and, specifically, the use of the Internet in the past week. These questions were asked to persons 10 years and above and the findings are shown below

**Table 17: Percentage Internet Access by Sex among Persons 10 years and older**

Internet Access	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%
Yes	651,826	13.0	393,763	16.0	258,063	10.0
No	4,359,515	86.6	2,052,037	83.6	2,307,478	89.6
Don't Know	18,675	0.4	10,027	0.4	8,648	0.4
Total	5,030,016	100.0	2,455,827	100.0	2,574,189	100.0

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, Thematic Report on Gender

In Sierra Leone, only 13.0% of persons 10 years and older have access to the Internet. The proportion of males with access is higher than for females. The results clearly show the vast majority of women and men having no access to the Internet.

#### **2.4.3. National budget allocation for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment**

There has been lots of investment in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women across all sectors. However, it is difficult to measure the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. There is currently no gender responsive budgeting in operation. Efforts are now made to ensure that the national budget is gender responsive going further.

#### **2.4.4. Nation action plans for the implementation of CEDAW UPR recommendations**

The Government of Sierra Leone through the MSWGCA developed the National Gender Strategic Plan 2010-2013 and the midterm evaluation was done in 2012. To further advance the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, the Ministry with support from UNFPA and UN Women has finalized the National Gender Strategic Plan 2019-2023. The strategy is aligned to the National Development Plan and that of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the targets under SDG 5. The strategic objectives of the plan include:

- Support formulation/review and implementation of policies, plans, strategies and laws relating to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment
- Promote Women's Economic Empowerment
- Improve women's Political Participation and Representation at all levels
- Promote Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights of women and adolescent girls
- Strengthening coordination and Gender Mainstreaming across sectors
- Support Research, ICT and Reporting
- Support and promote Women Peace , Security and Humanitarian Action
- Production and Use of Gender Statistics for Evidence-Based Localization of the SDGs

The Strategic Plan does not have sufficient resources from the government of Sierra Leone budget to support its full implementation. However, it attracts support from development partners working on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is also hoped that since the plan is fully aligned to the National Development Plan and SDGs, funding mechanisms can be arranged to meet the key targets and strategic objectives.

The Government of Sierra Leone through the MSWGCA developed a work-plan for the implementation of the Regional and International treaties the country has acceded to. The government is very mindful of Sierra Leone's reporting obligations in Article 18 of CEDAW and similarly the Universal Periodic Report (UPR). The Government of Sierra Leone was due to submit its 7<sup>th</sup> periodic report to the Committee of Experts on CEDAW in February 2018. The country has draft report and is working towards its finalization and official submission. As a State Party the country is also working on the mid-term review of the UPR and will subsequently work on the full report relating to the UPR.

#### **2.4.5. National Human Rights Institution in Sierra Leone**

Sierra Lone Government established the national Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) through an Act of Parliament in 2004. The State of the Human Rights Report is produced by the Commission and presented to the President on an annual basis. Gender equality and discrimination and violence against women and girls form core part of the report. In fact the Commission established the Women and Children's Unit a couple of years ago. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone 2017 report highlighted the following issues:

- a) Rape and Domestic Violence:** The law criminalizes rape for which conviction is punishable by between five and 15 years' imprisonment. Rape was common and viewed more as a societal norm than a criminal problem. The law specifically prohibits spousal rape. Indictments were rare, especially in rural areas. A reluctance to use the judicial system by both victims and law enforcement officials, coupled with women's lack of income and economic independence, helped perpetuate violence

against women and impunity for offenders. Despite the establishment of the FSU of the SLP and the existence of applicable legislation, reports of rapes and sexual penetration, especially involving child victims, steadily increased. For data on the incidence of rape and domestic violence, see the HRCSL website at [www.hrsl.org](http://www.hrsl.org). The HRCSL observed that the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence continued to rise while arrests and convictions of perpetrators were negligible.

- b) Discrimination:** The law provides for the same legal status and rights for men and women under family, labor, property, and inheritance laws, but it does not provide the same legal status for women and men in relation to religion and personal status. Women continued to experience discriminatory practices. Their rights and positions are largely contingent on customary law and the ethnic group to which they belong. The law provides for both Sierra Leonean fathers and mothers to confer nationality to children born abroad. The law provides for equal remuneration for equal work without discrimination based on gender. Either spouse may acquire property in their own right or women may obtain divorce without being forced to relinquish dowries. The MSWGCA reported that women faced widespread societal discrimination, particularly in matters of marriage, divorce, property, and inheritance, which are guided by customary law in all areas except the capital. Formal laws apply in customary as well as formal courts, but customary judges have limited or no legal training and often are unaware of formal laws or chose to ignore them. Women's rights and status under customary law varies significantly depending upon the ethnic group to which they belong, but such rights and status are routinely inferior to those of men. Under customary law women's status in society is equal to that of a minor. A woman is frequently perceived to be the property of her husband, to be inherited on his death together with his other properties.
- c) Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C):** The law does not prohibit FGM/C for women and girls. UNICEF data from 2014, the most recent available, reported that nine of 10 women and girls had undergone the procedure. As a result of the statutory lapse of the Ebola state of emergency measures in August 2016, suspension of activities, including FGM/C, by the "bondo" and other secret societies was no longer in force. Beginning in January there were reports that FGM/C was being perpetrated. In July 2015 the MSWGCA signed a memorandum of understanding with the Soweis and other traditional leaders who practise FGM/C, whereby the traditional leaders committed not to initiate girls under the 18 years of age. The FSU reported that of six recorded cases of FGM/C of girls under the 18 years of age between January and August 2016 four were investigated, but no charges were filed. A renewed call to end the practice began following international attention to the death of 19-year-old Fatmata Turay after she underwent FGM/C.

It is important to note that government officials are often cooperative and responsive to the views of local and international NGOs and generally acknowledge the human rights issues. They often schedule forums in conjunction with NGOs to discuss such topics as women's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities. Most domestic human rights NGOs focused on human rights education. A few NGOs, including the Campaign for Good Governance, Lawyers' Center for Legal Action, Timap for Justice, the Center for Accountability and Rule of Law, and Access to Justice, monitored and reported on human rights abuses.

- d) Government Human Rights Bodies:** The Parliamentary Human Rights Committee operates without government or party interference. It focuses on keeping human rights issues on the parliamentary agenda, paving the way for the passage of amended laws and ratification of international conventions and doing public outreach.

The Institutional mechanism for the Advancement of Women is structured as follows:

- **The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs** is the National Machinery for the Advancement of women in Sierra Leone
- **Parliamentary Committee on Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs** which provides Parliamentary oversight for all welfare, gender and child protection issues
- **The FSU of the Sierra Leone Police** was established in 2004 to investigate all gender-based violence and child abuse matters. The FSU signed a memorandum of understanding with the MSWGCA to support the joint investigation and psychosocial support to victims and survivors of violence.
- **The National Committee on Gender-Based Violence (NaC-GBV)** is the multi-sector committee comprising of government institutions, UN Agencies and International and National Non-Governmental Organizations working on the prevention and response to gender-based violence. The Committee meets every month and the meetings are chaired by the Hon. Minister and co-chaired by the Assistant Inspector General in charge of Gender in the Sierra Leone Police.
- **Gender Focal Points** are established in the various MDAs. They are expected to facilitate gender mainstreaming activities within their respective MDAs. However they are not effective. MDAs appoint administrative staff with little or no power in taking decisions. –

## **2.5.0. PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES**

### **2.5.1. Implementation of UNSCR1325**

Sierra Leone was one of the first countries in Africa that adopted the Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR 1325. An Evaluation of the Sierra Leone National Action on



UNSR1325 and 1820 was conducted in 2015. The Evaluation Report highlighted key discriminations against women/girls in Sierra Leone and made a variety of recommendations for the review of the National Action Plan. The draft SiLNAP II is soon to be adopted. SiLNAP II which has six priority themes, for the effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Sierra Leone, has incorporated in these themes the core values of prevention of violence, protection, participation and recovery as enshrined in UNSCRs 1325 and 1820. These themes range from Prevention of Conflict in Communities and addressing the root causes at all levels, in Pillar 1, through Prosecution, punishment and rehabilitation of perpetrators of SGBV effectively and safeguarding women’s, young adults’ and girls’ human rights at all times, in Pillar 3, to Promoting effective monitoring, evaluation, coordination, implementation and reporting of the National Action Plan in Pillar 6.

### 2.5.2. Women participation in the security sector and peace keeping operations

Great progress was made in Sierra Leone in terms of increase in number of women in military and police forces and peace missions. The promotion for recruitment of females into military and police measures of affirmative action represent attempts to eliminate prejudice based on the idea of inferiority of women and is informed by a number of policies <sup>16</sup>. Female soldiers and police perform in many functions and capacities, from command to frontline roles, while bringing an added value to peacekeeping operations. Female soldiers and police provide an invaluable perspective in planning operations and in making key decisions, especially those affecting civilians, particularly women and girls. The affirmative action ensures that recruitment of more police women only, could contribute significantly in the fight to prevent SGBV/protect women and girls. Victims/survivors will feel more confident to relate with a female officer than a male. However, there are not enough women to service, even the small numbers of FSUs. Since more female police officers would be needed for staffing, even the existing few FSUs, the SLP may want to apply a female targeting form of affirmative action recruitment measure. This would boost the institution’s gender responsive approach to delivering more effective police service in matters of VAWG/SGBV in rural areas/and peri-urban communities.

**Table 18: Women’ participation in the military**

Index of Women’s participating in the Military	
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- <sup>16</sup>The Sierra Leone Police Revised Recruitment Policy, 2014
- The Sierra Leone Police Revised Promotion Policy, 2014
- The Sierra Leone Police Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy 2014
- The Sierra Leone Police Gender Mainstreaming Policy, 2014

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Percentage of Female 2013</b>	<b>Percentage of Male 2013</b>	<b>Percentage of Female 2018</b>	<b>Percentage of Male 2018</b>
Lt. General			0	100
Major-General	0	100	0	100
Brigadier-General	17	83	0	100
Colonel	0	100	8	92
Lieutenant-Colonel	12	88	8.3	91.7
Major	5	85	4.5	95.5
Captain	7	93	3.7	96.3
Lieutenant	6	94	8.4	91.6
2nd Lieutenant	10	90	18.9	81.1
Warrant Officer Class 1	5	95	1.3	98.7
Warrant Officer Class 2	4	96	1.7	98.3
Staff Sergeant	1	99	1.6	98.4
Sergeant	3	97	3.7	96.3
Corporal	2	98	3.1	96.9
Lance Corporal	5	95	6.8	93.3
Private	7	93	11.9	88.1

Source: *Ministry of Defence Headquarters, Tower Hill Freetown, June, 2018*

In terms of participation of women in peacekeeping and decision making at the rural communities, Sierra Leone is making a steady progress.

- Sierra Leone Parliament adopted the Women, Peace and Security Agenda on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019. This is an important milestone in moving the women, peace and security agenda in Sierra Leone.
- The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces has recruited 332 female military personnel currently undergoing training including 62 cadets (42 Infantry, 20 specialists) and 270

recruits. This will contribute to the engendering of the peace processes as Sierra Leone is a contributing nation to peace keeping missions around the world.

- Affirmative action of the Sierra Leone Police to accelerate promotion of women in the police force;
- Increased participation of women in peacekeeping operations, particularly in the police components;
- Establishment of Rural Women Security Networks and advocacy for the inclusion of women in security sector architecture
- In 2018, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs established women in rural areas network to ensure the participation of women in decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods.

**Table 19: Participation in Peacekeeping Missions**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>MISSION</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
2018	AMISOM	23	69.7	10	30.3	33
	UNAMID	16	76.2	05	23.8	21
	UNMISS	08	66.7	04	33.3	12
	FPU 1	132	83.0	27	17.0	159
	IPO’s	47	71.2	19	28.8	66
	Secondment	02	100	00	00	02
2019	FPU	131	81.9	29	18.1	160

Source: Sierra Leone Police 2019

There are four Gender Justice Laws (2007-2009, 2012) protecting women and girls in Sierra Leone these are the Domestic Violence Act (2007); Devolution of Estates Act(2007); Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorces Act (2007/2009) and Sexual Offences Act(2012). The purpose is to protect women and girls from deeply rooted structural injustice, and improve the climate for providing access to justice for them, for their socio-economic empowerment, and for reducing violation of their human rights at all levels

On Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018 the President of Sierra Leone officially declared a national Emergency on Rape and Sexual Violence, as a major step towards addressing rape and all forms of sexual violence in Sierra Leone. However, there needs to be other measures including policy, legal and institutional reforms to actualize the prevention and response to sexual gender-based violence in Sierra Leone.

Analyzing current representation of women in law enforcement agencies at the national and entity levels, one can conclude that women are under-represented, particularly in the decision-making positions and those of higher ranking.

Attempts of affirmative action by specifically encouraging women to apply to both the armed forces and police force have often proved futile, as only small number of female SLP officers apply and out of this number very few (less than 30%) qualify at any point in time. In addition the forces continue to rely on traditional means of disseminating information on recruitment procedures with little or no reference to social media, text messages and the TV.

Another challenge is the retention of women in the forces forms. Some women have reported sexual harassment which serves as disincentive for continuous stay in the SLP, others lack knowledge on the contents of recruitment and promotion policies or even the opportunities open to females within the forces.

### **2.5.2. Civil Society Contribution to peaceful and inclusive society**

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are also active in empowering community members to actively take their own peace and security in their hands, creating room for human security. With support from the Peace Building Funds, Mano River Women Peace Building Network (MARWOPNET) in partnership with UN Women has trained 110 Peace Ambassadors including 68 females and 42 males. Participants were selected from six districts: Kambia, Karene. Kono. Kailahun. Pujehun, and Western Rural and in 34 chiefdoms. These will add to create the enabling environment for women`s participation in political processes

The training has capacitated women and men to positively engage in conflict prevention and building peaceful co-existence, stand for human rights especially women`s right in decision-making and also addressing root causes at community level. The Peace Ambassadors are active in their communities in the midst of so many challenges. They disseminate information about conflict prevention, peace building and the need for women`s participation in decision-making to the wider populace. They do address domestic and community conflicts which include post elections conflict that are not criminal.

In some communities the Chiefs /Headmen do not take major decisions without the presence of the peace ambassadors especially the females whose motherly inventions they do cherish. The key outcome is that communities are more enlightened about peace and security as well as greater acceptance of women`s role in decision –making at all levels This is in no way saying that there are no challenges.

There are lots of positive changes in the communities especially matters relating to the children`s behaviour, due to the community sensitization done by the peace ambassadors and the effective parental care given to the children. There is less disorderly behavior, less waywardness, less idleness, less violence and respect for women is improving.

## **2.6.0. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION**

### **2.6.1. Women and the environment**

During the previous decade, Sierra Leone had intensified efforts to address environmental challenges and to harmonize legal frameworks of environmental protection and management in existing environmental laws in line with international environmental standards. Key legislative acts and policies that apply to this sector are the Forestry Act 1988, Environment Protection Act, 2008 and its amendment of 2010, the National Renewable Energy Policy and National Energy Efficiency policy 2009, the National Climate Change Policy 2012 etc. Gender-related impact of these laws and strategic documents has not been assessed yet, and this is considered to be one of future priorities, having in mind the recognized role of women in sustainable development and environmental governance and management. Environmental issues are deepened by gender inequity and inequality, lack of environmental awareness and inadequate understanding of environmental resources management by women and men.

The Environment Protection Agency - Sierra Leone (EPA-SL) is a corporate body which provides for the effective protection and management of the environment and other related matters. The EPA policies and programmes have been designed to integrate gender concerns and perspectives for environmental sustainability and sustainable development as referenced in the BDPfA which include: promoting sustainable environmental management by incorporating women at all levels of policy formulation and decision making in the Disclosure process of environmental, social and health impact assessments (ESHIA) prior to the granting of Environment Impact Assessment Licenses for all projects whose operations have an impact on the environment.

In the area of Natural Resource Management, women in Sierra Leone play a role in the natural resources sector, both as beneficiaries and as participants in the exploitation of the

resources. The use of biomass continues to be the main source of fuel for cooking in both rural and urban communities in Sierra Leone. This over reliance on biomass as main energy source has greatly contributed to massive deforestation or loss of forest covers increased black carbon emissions with corresponding consequences on the Sierra Leonean society such as increased number of natural disasters and a decline in the biodiversity. Notwithstanding its popularity, the charcoal and cook-stoves sub-sector remains informal, unregulated and fragmented and plagued by inefficient production system relying on non-renewable sources supported by incoherent and often conflicting policy statements out lined in the National Energy Policy 2009. However, this policy has been revised to adopt the new national energy renewable and energy efficiency policies.

In 2014 the Government launched the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure in the Forestry Legislation (VGGT) in Sierra Leone. The VGGT are designed to safeguard tenure rights, ensure equal access to land and protect the rights of every citizen from any kind of discrimination in accessing land and other resources. The VGGT consistently call for adequate approaches for the promotion of equality between men and women. According to the FAO (2015), the policies and legislation relating to forests do not expressly discriminate women, but generally remain silent as to the protection of their rights. In practice, however, under the communal forms of tenure that are typical in rural areas, decisions tend to be made without giving adequate consideration to women's rights. Access to courts in relation to forest tenure disputes may in substance be difficult for women, especially where ownership is based on patrilineal lines. The National Land policy (2017) is largely aligned to the VGGT and a lot of efforts on the promotion and protection of women's tenure rights is visibly observed. In practice women's rights to land continue to be deprived and there is a need for continuous advocacy for gender equality and women's rights to access, use and own land and other natural resources, and enforcement of policies towards women's land rights.

Women tenure rights had been deprived. Intervention of large-scale land investments (LSLIs) in the country have rendered women more vulnerable to violation of their tenure rights. Furthermore, due to visibly huge impacts of ecological damage and climate change as a result of LSLI, opportunities for communities/families to practice their usual subsistence farming is hindered, thereby increasing people's dependence on exported food commodities.

Sierra Leone has diverse types of ecosystem. The range of activities constituting major threats to biodiversity includes Agriculture, Livestock farming, Forest exploitation, illegal logging and forest fragmentation, Fishing, fuel wood collection and charcoal burning, Mining and quarrying, Transportation, Urbanization (infrastructure development) and improper Waste disposal. The mass illiteracy, inappropriate policies, weak institutional arrangements and legislative frameworks are among the greatest threats to biodiversity. The agricultural practice of shifting cultivation involving slash and

burn method, fuel wood collection and charcoal burning have contributed to deforestation and forest fragmentation as has irresponsible mining activities. The Country is a party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and has established the National Protected Area Authority under the National Protected Area Authority and Conservation Trust Fund Act (2012) with the sole responsibility to manage national protected areas in the country.

Women in Sierra Leone play an important role in conserving biodiversity, due to their important role in household activities, including teaching their children the importance of nature and conserving forest biodiversity. Their first-hand knowledge of the land and its uses tends not to be taken into consideration when it comes to finding sustainable environmental solutions. Poor use and management of forest and wetlands over the years threaten the conservation of forests and wetlands. Key challenges identified in biodiversity conservation include but not limited to a weak institutional and legal frameworks, limited capacity and coordination in the management of marine resources, massive environmental degradation, lack of awareness among the population, limited data and information, uncoordinated conservation efforts and financial constraints.

### **3.1.0. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES**

A) The National Machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women is the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs. It is established by the Constitution of Sierra Leone with political leadership from the Minister who seats in Cabinet as the highest decision making body of the Executive arm of government. The Ministry has undergone several functional and management review. It has five Directorates including: Gender Affairs, Children’s Affairs, Social Welfare, Policy and Strategic Planning, Human Resource, Administration and Finance. The Ministry’s Strategic Plan 2018-2022 has the following objectives, mission and vision:

The vision of the Ministry is a

*Sierra Leonean society where women, children, elderly and people with disability live a life of dignity and respect, are not discriminated and their human rights are fully protected. They are able to make their voices heard and are active agents in their own protection.*

The mission of the Ministry is

*“ to protect and promote the rights of women, children, elderly, people with disability and other marginalized groups through development, review, implementation and*

*monitoring of favorable laws and policies; sector stakeholders' engagement and coordination for optimal results; mobilization of resources from the Government and development partners; empowerment of rights holders; greater accountability of duty bearers; raising the profile of marginalized groups locally, nationally and internationally; challenging traditional laws and practices that allow discrimination; and facilitating the development of a national culture that believes in and promotes equity and equality."*

The Head of the National Machinery is a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation. The structure for the implementation of the SDG in Sierra Leone is structured as follows:

- B) **Sierra Leone National strategies:** The eight clusters of Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019-2023, Education for Development, are aligned with the SDGs. This alignment can be clearly seen on Page 3 of Volume 1 of the Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) in figure 1.1. <sup>17</sup>Each of the 17 SDGs are integrated in the 8 clusters of the MTNDP. The SDGs are being implemented within the framework of Sierra Leone's MTNDP, which was launched on 28 February 2019 by H.E. the President Julius Maada Bio. Sierra Leone has also integrated the SDGs into its national budget. In fact, the SDGs constituted a major policy thrust in Sierra Leone's National Budget for the 2019 Fiscal Year, with the goals aligned to match spending categories in the Budget. The Budget Statement clearly defines the responsible actors and the scope of their reporting responsibilities on the SDGs within the various government offices where resources were allocated.
- C) **National institutional arrangements:** The Presidential Board on the SDGs (PBS) leads SDG implementation at the highest level, providing overall policy and strategic guidance. The PBS is chaired by the President of Sierra Leone, with members from the Office of the President, the Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC), the Ministry of Information and Communication, and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator.

Under the PBS is the Ministerial Committee on the SDGs (MCS), which provides operational guidelines to line ministries and agencies at both central and local levels. The MCS includes representatives from MoF, MOPED, MFAIC, Statistics Sierra Leone, the Open Government Initiative/Partnership and Strategy and Policy Unit from the Office of the President, as well as other relevant offices and stakeholders. The Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs is engaged with the Ministerial Committee on the

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<sup>17</sup> : <http://www.moped.gov.sl/mtndp/>



SDGs. At the next level below the MCS, experts work in cluster working groups, where technical staff members of MSWGCA are actively engaged. Within each cluster, they are tasked to capture technical follow-ups and reporting on the SDGs.

D) **Local authorities:** MoPED and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development have engaged the 19 local councils in Sierra Leone to integrate the SDGs into their district and municipal development plans to ensure that future annual budget proposals of councils are aligned with the SDGs. This will facilitate progress reporting on the goals at the local level.

A variety of stakeholders are engaged in the aforementioned formal structures to coordinate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sierra Leone participated in the 2016 HLPF and VNR process and submitted the status report in 2017 even though the report was not reviewed. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) is currently leading stakeholders in the formulation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) in the implementation of SDGs for the 2019 UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York. The preparation of the VNR utilizes the governance structure of the Medium Term National Development Plan. This governance structure is inclusive of national government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), local councils, traditional leaders, civil society, development partners, NGOs, the private sector, among many others. In summary the under-mentioned are the structures put in place:

- **Presidential Board on the SDGs** to provide overall policy and strategic guidance to the implementation of the SDGs
- **Ministerial Committee on the SDGs** to provide operational guidance to the SDGs process to line ministries, departments and agencies of the government, as well as civil society organizations, the private sector, and other national stakeholders
- A **Parliamentary Action Group on the SDGs** was set up to provide oversight

The Government of Sierra Leone recognizes the importance of civil society to delivering the SDGs and the Beijing Declaration, thus a concept note was developed to create an Integrated Platform for CSO Engagement on the SDGs. The success of this inclusive process is sustained by the active engagement of a national organization called Coalition 2030, which organizes civil society around the SDGs. In 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Parliamentary Action Group on the SDGs and the Sierra Leone Coalition 2030 was signed with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Some of the responsibilities of the Parliamentary Action Group was to ensure that the passage of laws and policies relating to the full implementation of the SDGs and on the

part of the coalition to engage communities and the media for the participation of all stakeholders.

The Government recognizes the importance of public awareness of the SDGs for successful implementation. To this end, the Government launched a popular version of the SDGs in the Parliament during the national Budget Speech and distributed it to a cross-section of other stakeholders, including civil servants, NGOs and CSOs. With financial support from the New Deal facility, the Government provided a briefing to Cabinet and held several radio talk shows to explain the SDGs to the general public. These engagements with the Parliamentary group are sustained and Parliamentarians are expected to gather feedback from their constituents. Additionally, large billboards have been designed and erected around the country to inform citizens about the Global 2030 Agenda.

The Government of Sierra Leone is cognizant of the fact that women and girls form majority of the population of Sierra Leone. Sidelining this critical mass of the population will be counterproductive. Government introduced the Local Governance system to bring development and government interventions closer to the communities and allow every citizen to participate in the governance service delivery initiatives. Section 95c of the Local Government Act of 2004 stipulates that at least 5 of the 10 Ward Development Committee members should be women. Women and Women's Groups were part of the consultations in the development of national and sectoral policies and plans aimed at empowering women and girls.

The MSWGCA with support from UN Women launched the Women in Rural Areas Network (WIRAN) in 2018 to provide space for women at the rural community to discuss issues affecting lives and livelihood. Additionally, public advocacy events including International Women's Day and 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence through community and radio discussions creates space for marginalized and vulnerable women to project their views on issues affecting them.

#### **E) Stakeholders Engaged in the Preparation of this Report**

The preparation of this report commenced with a technical planning meeting between the MSWGCA in March 2019 and a comprehensive work plan for the report writing process was elaborated. Relevant government line Ministries, UN Agencies, Women's Groups and Civil Society Organizations were identified for the reporting writing process. This included stakeholder consultations on soliciting information relating to the questionnaire guiding the report writing process, conducting desk review of relevant materials,

technical peer review of the various sections of the report, validation of the draft report and finalization.

The Medium Term National Development Plan (2019-2023) makes provision for cluster 5 on Empowering Women, Children, and Persons with Disability whilst ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in the document. The strategic objective is to promote the overall empowerment of women in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. Key policy actions include: review and increase budgetary resources for the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act of 2012; strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and national non-governmental organizations to provide psychosocial services to all victims; strengthen knowledge about the referral pathway for sexual abuse; stigmatize perpetrators of sexual violence; increase the capacity of the Family Support Units, the Ministry of Justice, and the Judiciary to investigate and prosecute reported cases and punish the perpetrators without any exception, including by not accepting any out-of-court settlements in such cases; strengthen protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration support for victims of sexual abuse; Strengthen legislative frameworks to promote gender balance, including electoral frameworks; quotas with sanctions legislated and enforced; the criminalization of violence and enforcement of laws; and the modification of discriminatory laws; support legislation on political party registration/regulation that will require more women in leadership at all levels of political parties and institutions; review policies and laws to ensure that they are gender responsive, and strengthen institutional frameworks to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls; review, finalize, and implement existing policies and strategies, such as the National Referral Protocols on Gender-based Violence, the National Strategy for the Reduction of Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting, and the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy; ensure that services are funded and provided in line with each policy; and review existing and pending legislation, including the Matrimonial Causes Act, the Child Marriage Bill, and others, and advocate for their passage into law.

The government of Sierra Leone has just concluded the drafting of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, National Gender Strategic Plan and the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 all of which are aligned to the National Development Plan (PRS IV). The Stakeholders who contributed to the crafting of these frameworks highlighted contributed immensely as their valued inputs were transferred to the finalization of the Beijing + 25 report.

There is a sustained political will and commitment for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in Sierra Leone. During the State Opening of Parliament in 2018, His Excellency the President Julius Maada Bio alluded to the challenges women continue to face in Sierra Leone and proffered ideas as to how to fix

them. He said “women account for 51% of the population and face major challenges in their communities to access justice, social and economic opportunities and seek their overall advancement. Specifically, the challenges of women include (a) gender-based violence (b) barriers to women’s economic empowerment, especially in terms of access to markets, training, finance, infrastructure, technology, education, counselling and entrepreneurship development (c) exploitative or hazardous forms of the livelihood of poor, unskilled women and girls, especially commercial sex workers (d) inadequate sensitization and education on gender and development issues and low political participation as a result of socio-cultural, educational, legal and policy environment and economic factors”.

He concluded by outlining some the quick win measures. “In the New Direction, my government will promote gender equality, equity, empowerment, and the protection of the rights of women either as mainstreamed interventions or as stand-alone initiatives. Our specific actions will be to (i) provide training and educational opportunities for our women (ii) establish a Women’s Development Fund to support female entrepreneurs (iii) promote women in agriculture through direct support to them for farming and agro-processing activities (iv) provide improved facilities for fish processing and poultry, and promoting female access to land and other strategic resources (v) transform the Gender Directorate into National Commission for Gender Affairs”.

The government of Sierra Leone through the MSWGCA has developed the National Gender Strategic Plan 2019-2023 with clear strategic objectives for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Additionally, the Ministry with support from the Peace-building Fund through UN Women has crafted the second generation of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 for full implementation. The National Machinery for the advancement of Women has similarly with support from UNDP and UN Women completed the drafting of the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy and is awaiting the approval by Cabinet for full implementation. All of these frameworks are aligned with the National Development Plan (2019-2023) which has standalone cluster on ‘empowering women, children and Persons with Disability and fully aligned with the key targets of the SDGs.

#### **4.0. DATA AND STATISTICS**

Sierra Leone government through an act of Parliament instituted the Statistics Sierra Leone (Stat SL) to facilitate the collection of sex and gender disaggregated data. The three main areas where Sierra Leone has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level are:

- Established an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)
- Re-processed existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics
- Improved administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps

The first gender thematic report was produced using 2015 Population and Housing Census data. The aim of this report was to address issues affecting women and girls, most importantly to make some comparisons between women and men that will subsequently improve gender equitable development process.

Cluster Five: Empowering Women, Children, And Persons with Disability in Sierra Leone’s Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023 has a well thought out plan for the development of women, children and persons with disabilities. Under this cluster, the government will focus on the following broad result areas: Empowering women; Increasing investment in children and adolescents; and Increasing investment in persons with disabilities.

To this end, in the draft Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy, Gender, disabilities and other forms of social inequities is one of the thirteen priority areas for policy and programmatic interventions to decrease gender inequality. This priority area has specific objectives and strategic actions to raise awareness on the impediments women and girls with disabilities and special needs battle with in relation to economic empowerment for their practical involvement in socio-economic and political activities.

In the 2018/19 academic year, government started implementing the free quality education for every child in government and government assisted schools in Sierra Leone, as it seeks to develop human capital and improve academic performance. The aim is to ensure that education is modernized and made relevant to the development needs of Sierra Leone.

The three main priorities for strengthening statistical gender statistics over the next five years include:

- Establishment of an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)
- Re-processing of existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics
- Statistical capacity building of users to increase statistical appreciation on and use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)

In response to the demand for improved quality, reliable and timely Statistics required to monitor progress towards the attainment of the SDGs, Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats S L) has positioned itself to provide data that will be used to inform policy by the government and development partners. Under the mandate of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, Stats SL has deployed statisticians in various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to help who are charged with the following responsibilities:

- Providing official statistics for policy intervention in the Ministry
- Serve as Liaison person between Stats S L and the MDAs
- Provide support and technical expertise, coordination in the area of research and data collection activities.
- Designing questionnaire for data collection and entry
- Oversee/supervise data collection exercises
- Analyze data, write report and subsequently validate survey report.

Stats SL has established a Gender Statistics Unit under the Demographic Health and Social Statistics Division. The Statisticians deployed at the unit are part of survey technical working groups to guide the production of gender statistics for various surveys.

There plan to establish a gender statistics working group/committee at the national level that will be responsible for the production and use of gender statistic nationwide. Stats S L will be working together with other local and international development partners to form the committee.

Specialized gender indicators that are used for tracking progress on SDG 5 and other gender specific indicators (See The Sierra Leone SGG Result Framework below), are not often incorporated into regular surveys, and hence the need to conduct standalone / dedicated surveys such as Time Use, GBV etc, which is costly. Stats S L together with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, have developed a concept to conduct a GBV Survey nationwide as the last national GBV Survey was done in 2008. This concept note/proposal has been sent to various organizations for funding.



Table 20

Proposed Indicators	SL	Baseline	Source of baseline data (Date)	Baseline 2	Source of baseline 2 data (Date)	Targets			Notes
						By End 2020	By End 2025	By End 2030	
1.2.1 Proportion of national population in multi-dimensional poverty		77.50 %	UNDP/Global Human Development Report (2016)						
2.1.4 Proportion of underweight women		9.10 %	SLDHS (2013)			6.10%	3.00%	0.00%	
2.1.4 Proportion of underweight men		11.30 %	SLDHS (2013)			7.75%	3.72%	0.00%	
4.1.1 Proportion of girls completing primary education		65.40 %	2015 Annual School			76.90%	88.50%	100.00%	
4.1.2 Proportion of boys completing primary education		66.60 %	Census and UN projected population figure for Sierra Leone			77.70%	88.90%	100.00%	
4.1.1 Proportion of children completing primary education				64.2	MICS6 (2017)				



4.1.3 Proportion of girls completing junior secondary education	48.70 %			65.80%	82.90%	100.00%	
4.1.4 Proportion of boys completing junior secondary education	53.60 %			69.10%	84.50%	100.00%	
4.1.3 Proportion of children completing junior secondary education		44.2	MIC S6 (2017)				
4.1.5 Proportion of girls completing senior secondary education	15.10 %			43.40%	71.70%	100.00%	
4.1.6 Proportion of boys completing senior secondary education	21.70 %			47.80%	73.90%	100.00%	
4.1.5 Proportion of children completing senior secondary education		21.7	MIC S6 (2017)				
4.1.7 Net primary school enrolment rate		62.7	MIC S6 (2017)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	Above 100%
4.1.8 Net junior secondary school enrolment rate	30.20 %	81.8	MIC S6 (2017)	53.50%	76.70%	100.00%	

				7)				
4.2.1 Net pre-primary school enrolment rate	8.40 %	2015 Annual School Census and	8.0	MIC S6 (2017)	38.90%	69.50%	100.00%	
4.5.1 Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	1.01	UN projected population figure for	81.8	MIC S6 (2017)	=/> 1	=/> 1	=/> 1	
4.5.2 Ratio of girls to boys in junior secondary education	0.95	Sierra Leone	36.2	MIC S6 (2017)	0.97	0.98	1	
4.5.3 Ratio of girls to boys in senior secondary education	0.8		28.6	MIC S6 (2017)	0.87	0.93	1	
4.5.4 Ratio of girls to boys in technical-vocational training	1.7				1.47	1.23	1	
4.6.2 Adult literacy rate (literacy rate ages 15+)	45.70 %	World Bank DataBank - World Development Indicators			55.50%	65.20%	75.00%	

		(2013)						
4.6.2 Adult female literacy rate (literacy rate ages 15+)		World Bank DataBank - World Development Indicators (2013)	41.5	MIC S6 (2017)				
4.6.2 Adult male literacy rate (literacy rate ages 15+)		World Bank DataBank - World Development Indicators (2013)	58.3	MIC S6 (2017)				
5.1.1 Proportion of women aged 15-49 with secondary and higher education	7.70 %	World Bank DataBank - World Development Indicators (2013)	22.0	MIC S6 (2017)				Changed to 5.1.1
5.1.2 Female years of schooling (% male)	54.10 %	UNDP (2015)			67.77%	81.43%	95.10%	Data from 2015. See SDSN.

5.1.3 Share of women employed for cash in total number employed in non-agricultural activities	23.20 %	SLDHS (2013)			32.00%	41.00%	50.00%	
5.2.1. Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to physical violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months	55.50 %	SLDHS (2013)			20.00%	13.00%	5.00%	Changed to SLDHS from SSL
5.2.2. Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to psychological violence by spouse in the previous 12 months	29.20 %	SLDHS (2013)			24.20%	19.20%	14.20%	Added baseline and targets. Source changed to SLDHS from SSL
5.2.3. Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to sexual violence by spouse in the previous 12 months	7.30 %	SLDHS (2013)			4.87%	2.43%	0%	Baseline added and targets changed. Source changed to SLDHS from SSL. Sexual violence from spouse only

								(higher as % than sexual violence by anyone!). 5.2.4 removed.
5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-45 married before/at age 18	48.00 %	SLDHS (2013)	29.9	MIC S6 (2017)	32.00%	16.00%	0.00%	the limit asked for is 20 to 45 instead of 20 to 49. therefore we chose 20-49
5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting	89.60 %	SLDHS (2013)	86.1	MIC S6 (2017)	79.64%	69.69%	59.73%	Baseline changed from 90%
5.3.3 Proportion of circumcised women circumcised before age 14	69.60 %	SLDHS (2013)	8.4	MIC S6 (2017)	58.00%	46.40%	34.80%	
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	12.40 %	NEC	12.9	NEC	18.00%	23.00%	30.00%	

5.5.3 Proportion of women mayors and local councilors and chairpersons	18%	HRMO	28.6	NEC	30%	40%	50%	
5.5.4 Proportion of female Paramount Chiefs		Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development			30%	40%	50%	
5.5.5 Proportion of women ward committee members	48%				30%	40%	50%	
5.5.7 Percentage of currently married women that participate in key decision making processes at home (health care, major household purchases and visit to family)	45.40%	SLDHS (2013)			60.27%	75.13%	90.00%	
5.6.2: Laws and regulations in place that guarantee women aged 15-49 access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education	No	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, MOFED			YES	YES	YES	

5.6.3 Unmet demand for contraceptives (%)	65.70 %	WHO (2016)			50.43%	35.17%	19.90%	Data from 2015. See SDSN.
5.a.2: Legal framework (including customary law) in place that guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and other entitlements (g7+)	No (process indicator)	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, MoFED			YES			This is a process indicator. There is need to find out at what stage the process is
17.8.3 Proportion of population with mobile phones	54.90 %	SLDHS (2013)			69.93%	84.97%	100.00%	Changed from 'Mobile Cellular Subscribers per 100 inhabitants'
17.8.3 Proportion of women with mobile phones (Fix line or ,mobile phone)		SLDHS (2013)	45.2					
17.8.3 Proportion of men with mobile phones (Fix line or ,mobile phone)		SLDHS (2013)	64.8					

There are 45 gender specific indicators from the Sierra Leone Result Framework. The term ‘gender-specific indicators’ is used to refer to indicators that explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For example, SDG indicator 5.c.1 captures the percentage of countries with systems to track public allocations that are directed towards policies and programmes that promote gender equality—the underlying objective is the promotion of gender equality. The term is also used for indicators where women and girls are specified within the indicator as the targeted population (see UN Women. 2018. *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York) as specified in A/RES/70/1, with the addition of education and marital status.



## SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) Results Framework

Proposed SL Indicators	Base line	Source baseline (Date)	ofBase dataline 2	Source of baseline 2 data (Date)	Targets			Notes
					By End 2020	By End 2025	By End 2030	
5.1.1 Proportion of women aged 15-49 with secondary and higher education	7.70%	World Bank Databank World Development Indicators (2013)	22.0	MICS6 (2017)				Changed to 5.1.1
5.1.2 Female years of schooling (% male)	54.10%	UNDP (2015)			67.77%	81.43%	95.10%	Data from 2015. See SDSN.
5.1.3 Share of women employed for cash in total number employed in non-agricultural activities	23.20%	SLDHS (2013)			32.00%	41.00%	50.00%	
5.2.1. Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to physical violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months	55.50%	SLDHS (2013)			20.00%	13.00%	5.00%	Changed to SLDHS from SSL

5.2.2. Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to psychological violence by spouse in the previous 12 months	29.20%	SLDHS (2013)			24.20%	19.20%	14.20%	Added baseline and targets. Source changed to SLDHS from SSL
5.2.3. Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 years subjected to sexual violence by spouse in the previous 12 months	7.30%	SLDHS (2013)			4.87%	2.43%	0%	Baseline added and targets changed. Source changed to SLDHS from SSL. Sexual violence from spouse only (higher as % than sexual violence by anyone!).
5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-45 married before/at age 18	48.00%	SLDHS (2013)	29.9	MICS6 (2017)	32.00%	16.00%	0.00%	The limit asked for is 20 to 45 instead of 20 to 49. therefore we chose 20-49
5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting	89.60%	SLDHS (2013)	86.1	MICS6 (2017)	79.64%	69.69%	59.73%	Baseline changed from 90%
5.3.3 Proportion of circumcised women circumcised before age 14	69.60%	SLDHS (2013)	8.4	MICS6 (2017)	58.00%	46.40%	34.80%	
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	12.40%	NEC	12.9	NEC	18.00%	23.00%	30.00%	
5.5.3 Proportion of women mayors and local councilors and chairpersons	18%	HRMO	28.6	NEC	30%	40%	50%	

5.5.4 Proportion of female Paramount Chiefs		Ministry of Local			30%	40%	50%	
5.5.5 Proportion of women ward committee members	48%	Government and Rural Development			30%	40%	50%	
5.5.7 Percentage of currently married women that participate in key decision making processes at home (health care, major household purchases and visit to family)	45.40%	SLDHS (2013)			60.27%	75.13%	90.00%	
5.6.2: Laws and regulations in place that guarantee women aged 15-49 access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education	No	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, MOFED			YES	YES	YES	
5.6.3 Unmet demand for contraceptives (%)	65.70%	WHO (2016)			50.43%	35.17%	19.90%	Data from 2015. See SDSN.
5.a.2: Legal framework (including customary law) in place that guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and other entitlements (g7+)	No (process indicator)	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, MoPED			YES			This is a process indicator. There is need to find out at what stage the process is

All major surveys in Sierra Leone collect the following disaggregation routinely: geographic location, income, sex, age, education marital status, race/ethnicity, disability and some other relevant information.

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