

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



**SIERRA LEONE
COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE**

OCTOBER 2011

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Affirmative Action
AfDB	African Development Bank
ANC	Antenatal Care
ARV	Anti-Retroviral
BPPEHS	Basic Package of Essential Health Services
BSL	Bank of Sierra Leone
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Plan
CB	Community Bank
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGP	Country Gender Profile
CRC	Child Rights Convention
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DFID	Department for International Development - UK
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunisation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAWE	Federation of African Women Educationists
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FHCI	Free Health Care Initiative
FHH	Female Headed Households
FP	Focal Point
FSA	Financial Service Association
FSU	Family Support Unit
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDO	Gender Desk Officer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GRADOC	Gender Research and Documentation Centre
GSVB	Gender and Sex-Based Violence
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Food and Agriculture Development
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JAS	Joint Assistant Strategy

JSS	Junior Secondary School
MAFFS	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agency
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEST	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MFI	Micro-Finance Institutions
MFMR	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource
MHH	Male-Headed Households
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MOFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MSM	Men Having Sex with Men
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTR	Mid-term Review
NAC-GBV	National Committee Against Gender-Based Violence
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action
NCDB	National Cooperative Development Bank
NDB	National Development Bank
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHSSP	National Health-Sector Strategic Plan
NRS	National Recovery Strategy
OFSA	Other Financial Service Act
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PC	Paramount Chief
PHC	Primary Health Care
PHU	Peripheral Health Unit
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PPASL	Plan Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RFCIP	Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme
RMC	Regional Member Country
S/GBV	Sexual Gender-Based Violence
SILNAP	Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820
SLEDIC	Sierra Leone Export Development and Investment Corporation
SLeGEN	Sierra Leone Girls' Education Network
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLEPA	Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SSS	Senior Secondary School
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
U5s	Under Five
UA	Unit of Account
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund Population Agency
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions

USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WASH	Water and Sanitation Policy
WB	World Bank
WIAN	Women in Agricultural and Nutrition

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Development Bank's (AfDB) funding for the Sierra Leone Country Gender Profile (CGP) is in line with commitments made in the Updated Gender Plan of Action (2009-2011) to support Regional Member Countries (RMC), to build their knowledge base, and to inform their work on gender equality, women's economic empowerment and the Government of Sierra Leone's (GoSL) post-war reconstruction policy framework. It is also one of the non-lending activities of the Joint Assistance Strategy for Sierra Leone (JAS) prepared by the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (2009-2012). In this sense it is a manifestation of the harmonisation of efforts following the recommendations of the Paris Declaration. The overall objective of the multi-sectoral CGP is to be responsive to and effectively engage with the GoSL's gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. The specific objectives are to i) assess gender-equality issues relating to basic services and women's economic empowerment, and to identify key gender gaps and offer recommendations; ii) examine the socio-cultural and economic factors that constrain efforts at gender equality in the country; iii) assess the institutional capacity of the National Gender Machinery; and iv) examine existing gender policies, strategies and legislation, and recommend actions. It is worth noting that this gender profile is the first of its kind in the country and is a timely intervention, as it will also inform the JAS Mid-Term Review (MTR) and the new JAS in 2013.

Historical Overview

Peace has now been consolidated in Sierra Leone, after the country's 11-year civil war, characterised by general mayhem, arson, rape, abduction and the torture of civilians by various armed factions. Public and private property including schools, offices, hospitals, private homes and businesses, roads, bridges and other social infrastructure were badly damaged or totally destroyed. Consequently, every post-conflict development indicator placed Sierra Leone among the worst in the world. The country experienced complete economic and social collapse. Insecurity, infrastructural decay, low earning power, unemployment, a breakdown of the health system, poor education, blatant gender inequalities and neglect of child welfare were among indicators of the civil war on society. For example, before 2010 the country ranked consistently at the bottom of the UNDP's Human Development Index, and it experienced a negative growth rate of -4.5% between 1990 and 2000. Life expectancy at birth fell from 42 years in 1990 to 34.5 years in 2005, and the maternal and child morbidity indicator of 457 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births was the worst in the world. Today, only 47% and 30% of the population have access to potable water and sanitation facilities respectively, and 30% of children of primary school-going age are not enrolled in school.

Reconstruction and Development

Since the end of the war in 2002, post-war Sierra Leone has undergone a process of transformation as a result of the GoSL's post-conflict reconstruction agenda of establishing a new social order to achieve, sustain and improve economic productivity and growth, advance gender equality, promote good governance and protect basic human rights. Legislative reforms to protect the human rights of women and girls have been instituted. Four elections – two each at the national and local levels – have resulted in a democratic transition from the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)¹ to the All People's Congress (APC). Also, there has been devolution of power to local councils. Furthermore, new institutions such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Human Rights Commission and the Legal Ombudsman were established and old ones such as the Judiciary, the Law Reform and

¹The SLPP ruled between 2002 and 2007. The APC won the 2007 election.

Electoral Commissions and the Sierra Leone Police have been strengthened to ensure good governance and the rule of law.

Socio-economic Profile

The country is implementing its second-generation poverty-reduction strategy and has experienced economic growth and improvement in some of its social indicators. The economy has expanded, growing from 6.3% in 2002 to 6.5% in 2003 and then to 7.4% in 2004. Between 2005 and 2007 the growth rate averaged 7.2%, but there was a return of inflationary pressures due to a mix of external and internal factors; economic growth rates slowed to 5.5% in 2008 and 4.0% in 2009 (AfDB, 2009). Whilst poverty rates have decreased in overall terms, the country has an unbalanced score sheet on the gender-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MDGs 1 and 3 on Poverty Reduction and Women's Empowerment are not achievable by 2015, and the result on MDG 2 Universal Primary Education is inconclusive due to lack of data to track progress. In relation to MDGs 4 and 5 on Child Mortality and Maternal Health respectively, the government believes that these goals are achievable by 2015 thanks to the dramatic drop in the country's extremely high infant and maternal mortality rates from 170 per 1,000 live birth and 1,800 per 100,000 live birth in 2000 respectively to 140 per 1,000 live birth to 857 per 100,000 live birth. The introduction of the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI) for pregnant and lactating women and children under five years old is also a great stride in the right direction. Sierra Leone is likely to achieve only the HIV/AIDS component of MDG 6 since the HIV prevalence rate has stabilised at 1.5%.

Institutional Framework

Established in 1998, the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) is mandated to formulate gender-responsive policies and to coordinate and monitor their implementation within different sectors of the society. It advises government on all matters relating to the full integration of women in national development at all levels; serves as the official national body for coordinating and liaising with national and international organisations on all matters relating to the status of women; and serves as the official central source of information on women in Sierra Leone, among other matters. However, MSWGCA is underfunded and understaffed. The Gender Desk Officers (GDOs) are not qualified to undertake the technical responsibility of gender mainstreaming in their sectors and are marginalised from the decision-making structures in their institutions. As part of the decentralisation process, all Local Councils have established Gender and Social Welfare Committees but they, too, are underfunded and marginalised within Council operations.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

Two national policies, the National Policy on the Advancement of Women and the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, were adopted in 2009 to guide the Government's gender equality project. These were reinforced by the National Gender Strategic Plan (2009-2012), 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 were adopted in 2009 and 2010 respectively.

To date, the GoSL has enacted various laws to ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children, such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2005), the Sierra Leone Citizenship Amendment Act (2006), the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Act (2007) and the three Gender Acts (2007) on domestic violence, customary marriages and divorces and the devolution of estates, and Child Rights Act (2007). While the government's efforts are highly commendable, its refusal to expunge Section 27 (d) from the constitution

and criminalise and/or ban Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in the society makes its gender agenda questionable.

In its quest to move the country from humanitarian assistance to long-term development, since the end of the war the government has adopted various economic policies to ensure its objectives. The Interim PRSP (IPRSP) and the National Recovery Strategy (NRS) of 2001 and 2002, “Vision 2025” of 2003 and later PRSP1 and now PRSP2 all identify gender as a cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed in the country’s post-war reconstruction agenda. Although gender is not mainstreamed throughout PRSP11, it contains strong commitments to gender equality and action points cutting across all sectors of the economy.

Key Sectors

Employment and Entrepreneurship: 55% of the country’s economically active population are in regular cash-earning jobs, with only 5% in the paid formal sector. Women’s labour-force participation in crop farming and in trade and repairs stand at 65.8% and 21.9% respectively. The dominance of women in the self-employed/informal sector with poor working conditions, low salaries and no social protection leaves them open to exploitation and increases their vulnerability to poverty. Since there is no policy or programme on the sector, a gendered analytical review should be initiated assessing its contribution to economic growth and its connection with poverty to improve working conditions for its participants, especially women and children, and to get them into the formal economy.

On the other hand, while a small number of women own medium- and large-scale enterprises, the majority are engaged in micro-production with no access to formal-sector skills and development-advisory services. Although the government’s emerging Private-Sector Development programme is growing, not much has been done to integrate women into the mainstream of this sector.

Women are also marginalised within the agricultural sector, in which they predominate. They have little or no access to credit facilities, improved technologies, extension services and post-harvest technologies. Furthermore, they do not have permanent land rights and can be dispossessed of their lands by male relatives or through divorce or death of their spouse. Unlike the private formal sector, where their presence is negligible, women predominate in the informal economy. Women’s marginalisation in a sector where they dominate and is the mainstay of the country’s economy requires urgent attention. The Land and Devolution of Estate Bills should be revisited to ensure women’s security of tenure in land.

Education and Vocational Training: Although the government has put in place many initiatives that have resulted in increased enrolment, completion and retention rates over the years, Sierra Leone has yet to achieve parity at even the primary-school level and it seems like a daunting task at other levels. The Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MEST) needs to claim ownership in particular of the Sierra Leone Girls’ Education Network (SLeGEN) as the first step in the move towards eliminating gender disparities in education and achieving parity.

Health: Health-service delivery is a key challenge in post-war Sierra Leone, as the 11-year civil war took its toll. This situation continues to undermine standards, availability and accessibility of the services provided. In addition to physical distance to health facilities’ presenting a major access barrier to care, existing functional health facilities are inadequate and unevenly distributed nationally. As a result, general population utilisation rates of health

services in Sierra Leone is at 0.5 contacts per capita per annum; this means only half the population visits a health facility once a year.

Governance and Decision making: Unlike most post-conflict countries, where Affirmative Action (AA)/gender quotas have been instituted to promote women's participation in governance and decision-making, in Sierra Leone such initiatives were opposed until 2010. Despite the government's refusal to implement a gender quota, women's participation in electoral politics has improved steadily. In the current parliamentary cycle 2007-12, women account for 13.5% of parliamentarians and 18.9% of councillors.

Gender-Based Violence: The brutalities of rape, sexual slavery and other gross acts of abuse that women endured during the country's civil war resulted in the enactment of several pieces of legislation, such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Law, the Domestic Violence Act and the Child Rights Act. Additionally, the Sexual Offences Act and the Matrimonial Causes Bill are awaiting both cabinet and parliamentary approval. Furthermore, the GoSL has established various institutions and mechanisms to advance the process.

Environment: Sierra Leone has serious environmental challenges; namely, land and forest degradation, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, loss of bio-diversity, pollution of fresh water resources and coastal area degradation. While women's role and importance in environmental resource management is now accepted, little has been done to diversify the sector.

HIV/AIDS: This is not only a major public health issue, but also an economic and social problem affecting every facet of society, with devastating impacts. Women's low bargaining power in negotiating safe sex and the failure of the government in enacting policy initiatives to empower women and protect and promote their sexual rights can affect the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the country.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- i)** The Government of Sierra Leone's focal and advisory institution Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) should be strengthened with the necessary technical expertise, logistics and training to enable it undertake its coordinating role; the capabilities of related sectoral programme staff from other ministries and Gender Desk Officers should also be strengthened to effectively mainstream gender in their work;
- ii)** Statistics Sierra Leone needs to institutionalise sex- and age-disaggregated data collection processes in each ministry's research and planning department to track the effects of policies and programmes on women, men, girls and boys and identify gaps and proffer solutions as necessary;
- iii)** The government should increase spending on social services that benefit women and girls whilst implementing pro-poor policies to accelerate poverty reduction, as results world-wide have proved that investing in social services will enable the realisation of the MDGs.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Objectives of the Country Gender Profile

1.1.1. The African Development Bank's (AfDB) Gender Policy, adopted in 2001, outlines the Bank's vision and commitment to gender equality. It states that gender mainstreaming is the tool that will be used to foster poverty reduction, economic development and gender equality on the continent. In their Joint Assistance Strategy (JAS) for Sierra Leone, the AfDB and the World Bank (WB) stressed the importance of gender equality to sustainable development and poverty reduction in the country's post-conflict reconstruction efforts. As such, the AfDB's funding for the Sierra Leone Country Gender Profile (CGP) is in line with commitments made in the Updated Gender Plan of Action (2009-2011) to support Regional Member Countries (RMC) to build their knowledge base in order to inform their work on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and it is one of the non-lending activities of the JAS 2009-2012.

1.1.2. Gender equality as a developmental goal gained wide currency in post-war Sierra Leone's development planning and discourse as a result of the extreme brutalities that women and girls endured during the country's 11-year conflict. As a result, the GoSL adopted gender mainstreaming as a pathway to achieve not only equality between the sexes, but also to poverty reduction, economic growth, sustainable development and the improved well-being of its citizenry. Despite the GoSL's effort at strengthening old structures and/or creating new ones, and initiating legislative reforms for gender equality and women's empowerment, gender inequality is still pervasive on the country's political, economic and socio-cultural landscape.

1.1.3. The AfDB initiated the Sierra Leone CGP to support both the GoSL's effort in mainstreaming gender in its post-war reconstruction and peace consolidation development agenda and the Bank's programme intervention in the country. Thus, the multi-sectoral CGP will contribute to this by presenting a situation analysis of Sierra Leone's progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, using indicators on health, education, economic development and well-being, infrastructure, political participation, HIV/AIDS and violence against women. This analysis and subsequent recommendations will inform both policy making and programme implementation by both the GoSL and its development partners including the AfDB. To this end, the CGP will:

- i. Assess gender-equality issues relating to basic services and women's economic empowerment, identify key gender gaps and offer recommendations;
- ii. Examine the socio-cultural and economic factors that constrain efforts at gender equality in the country;
- iii. Assess the institutional capacity of the National Gender Machinery; examine existing gender policies, strategies and legislation; and recommend actions.

1.2. Methodology

1.2.1 The study involved both primary and secondary data-collection processes. Following the terms of reference for the study, the data-collection process was organised in two phases. The first, the primary data-collection stage, entailed in-depth interviews with key government officials and gender programme managers in multilateral, bilateral and UN agencies, and local and international NGOs. This was supplemented with secondary data based on extensive desk

reviews of policy, strategy and programme documents of both state and non-state actors and of published and unpublished academic writings.

1.2.2 During the second phase of the field study, a data-validation process was undertaken to review preliminary findings and solicit input from selected stakeholders. Thus, a half-day stakeholder workshop was organised in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) on 10 December 2010, which brought together a cross-section of stakeholders working on gender issues to discuss the preliminary findings of the study. Finally, comments and recommendations from the workshop were integrated in to the report.

1.3. Organisation of the Report

1.3.1 The report is structured into seven sections, starting with a historical overview of gender issues in Sierra Leone. This is followed by a socio-economic analysis of various indicators to present a situation report on women's position in the country. The national framework for gender equality, including policy, legal and institutional structures, is analysed in section three. In section four, a gendered analysis of key sectors of the economy namely, economic development, education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure, is presented. The focus of section five is on cross-cutting issues such as the environment, governance and decision-making, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. Section six outlines the activities of key development partners including the AfDB and finally, section seven presents the main conclusions and identifies strategic recommendations for action to both the GoSL and the AfDB.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

2.1. Historical Overview of Gender Relations in Sierra Leone

2.1.1. Sierra Leone is a patrilineal society with pockets of matrilineality among the Mende and Sherbro ethnic groups in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Within Sierra Leone's patrilineage system, descent and inheritance practices are male-centred and marital residence is patrilocal. On the other hand, matrilineality in the country does not conform to the usual matrilineal kinship norms and practices such as matrilocality and female-centred lineage and inheritance customs. Rather, descent is acknowledged both patrilineally and matrilineally and women's inheritance and political rights are recognised, but cannot be passed on to their children. It must be noted, however, that irrespective of the lineage system that is recognised and practiced in society, women are subordinated and discriminated against in the decision-making process, as it is men who dominate the governance structure in both traditional and modern political systems.

2.1.2. Social relations, including gender relations, were until 2002 characterised by discriminatory laws, customs and traditional practices that subordinate and oppress women and girls. In addition, the Constitution is ambiguous on gender equality. As part of its post-war reconstruction and development efforts, the government initiated wide-ranging reforms to achieve not only long-term sustainable economic and human development, but also gender equality. As a result, laws reforming marital relations, inheritance, domestic violence and citizenship rights, among other matters, have been enacted.

2.1.3. As part of the GoSL's effort to foster and institutionalise a democratic culture and uphold its commitment to good governance, accountability and the rule of law in the country, four elections (two each at the national and local levels) have been organised since the end of the war in 2002. In addition to establishing a TRC and HRC, a Legal Ombudsman, the judiciary and the Electoral and Law Reform Commissions have been strengthened and their independence has been guaranteed, and an active and increasingly independent media and civil society has emerged.

2.2. National Demographic Indicators

2.2.1 Sierra Leone's population during the Population and Housing Census in 2004 was 4,976,871 persons, of whom 51.3% were women and 48.7% were men. The population was young, with 41.7% aged between 0 and 14 years, 53.9% between 15 and 64 years and 4.4% are 65 years and above. Based on the country's age structure, the total Age Dependency Ratio was put at 85.5%, the Child Dependency Ratio at 77.4% and the Old Age Dependency Ratio at 8.1%. The Age Dependency Ratio shows that each person within the working age category of 15-64 years has at least one additional person to support.

2.2.2 The same census also showed that 39% of the population lived in urban areas whilst 61% lived in rural settlements. One out of every five households was headed by a woman. The phenomenon of female-headed households (FHH) was more common in urban than in rural areas, at 26 % and 21 % respectively. The average household size in the country was put at 5.9 persons; the size was slightly larger in rural than in urban areas, at 6.0 persons and 5.7 respectively. Furthermore, 13% of urban households compared with 8% of rural households were more likely to have one or two members. Overall, one in six households, representing 16% of households nationally, had nine or more members.

2.2.3 According to the 2004 census, poor households were generally larger, above the national average and with more women and dependent people per worker. For example, the average household size in poor male-headed households (MHH) was 6.9%, compared with 5.7% in non-poor MHH. In poor FHH, the average size was 5.8% compared with 5.2% in non-poor households. In relation to the marital status of the population, it was observed that 50.9% of the population aged over 10 years was married, compared with 42.1% who had never been married. Some 57.6% of the non-married population was in the Western Area, which includes Freetown, the capital city and its environs, compared with less than 40% in the regions. Some 56.1% of women were married, and almost 90% of the married population was in a marital union.

2.3. Gender and Poverty Profile

2.3.1. Poverty is widespread in Sierra Leone. The country's first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP1) 2005-2007 stated that 70% of the population is poor and that 26% is food-poor, i.e., they cannot afford a basic diet. Additionally, poverty was identified as a rural phenomenon, with the rural areas accounting for almost 73% of the country's poor, exceeding their population share of 66%.² Urban poverty was more acute in the provincial centres at 64.9%, while in Freetown, the capital city, it was 22.2% (AfDB, 2009). Although the GoSL has concentrated its development efforts since the end of the civil war on alleviating poverty, the current poverty level of 60% noted in the country's 2010 MDG Progress Report is still very high. While the report noted that some progress has been made in reducing poverty

²The country's poverty profile shows that the main poverty indicators are inadequate food, poor housing, poor health, high infant and maternal mortality, high illiteracy, limited access to clean water and lack of money.

levels, it also pointed out that MDG 1 will not be achieved by 2015 because the vast majority of the population is still poor.

2.3.2. Although FHH are disproportionately poor and have lower educational levels, limited access to productive resources and a narrow range of formal labour sector opportunities (Health Sector Review, 2004), it was noted in PRSP1 (2005-2008) that the intensity and severity of poverty was higher in MHH than in FHH because of their polygamous nature³.

2.3.3. Sierra Leone's scorecard on meeting the gender-related MDGs is mixed. The government's assessment on MDG 2 Universal Primary Education is inconclusive due to a lack of data to track progress. However, it was noted that yearly enrolment at the primary level between 2006 and 2008 has been constant at 62%, with high dropout rates among girls reaching puberty. Like MDG 1, MDG 3 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment will not be met despite a near gender balance in gross primary enrolment because of high female dropout and low completion rates. Furthermore, structural inequalities and gender discrimination against women and girls still exist in the country. In relation to MDGs 4 and 5 on Child Mortality and Maternal Health, the government believes that these goals are achievable by 2015 thanks to the dramatic drop in the country's extremely high infant and maternal mortality rates and to the introduction of the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI) for pregnant and lactating women and children under five years old. Sierra Leone is likely to achieve only the HIV/AIDS target of MDG 6 since the HIV prevalence rate has stabilised at 1.5%.

3. POLICY, INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1. Gender Policy Framework

3.1.1. The GoSL's approach and response to gender equality is informed and influenced by both local and international commitments and frameworks. At the local level, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2000 as one of the structures for national reconciliation, recommended the repeal of all statutory and customary laws that discriminate against women. At the international level, Sierra Leone ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1988 and its optional protocol in 2000⁴. Sierra Leone is a signatory to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Child Rights Convention (CRC), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Beijing Platform for Action, among others.

3.1.2 Sierra Leone's policy framework for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is guided mainly by its two national policies, the **Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the National Policy on the Advancement of Women**, both adopted by Parliament in 2000. The National Policy on the Advancement of Women aims to create an enabling environment to improve women's status and their participation in the development process. The Gender Mainstreaming Policy reinforces the overall development objectives in the country. It emphasises government's commitment to gender-responsive development and seeks to strengthen and provide a legal basis for gender-oriented sectoral policies.

³ This is an interesting finding, as poverty data used in the analysis are likely based on consumption/expenditure patterns and not household incomes. When household incomes are used in the assessment of poverty, often the reverse is true — more female-headed households living in poverty. However, more analysis is needed to determine the factors behind this phenomenon.

⁴ Completed its initial, 2nd-5th CEDAW reports in 2006 and sixth report in 2010.

Furthermore, The National Gender Strategic Plan (2009-2012) and the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence launched in 2010 have been added to the country's policy framework to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, peace building and reconstruction.

3.2. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

3.2.1. A full-fledged institution, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, was created in 1996 to promote and advocate for the rights of women and children in the country. It was

Box 1: Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights: UN Gender Technical Team

The UN Joint Vision Programme 17, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", is primarily supporting the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission relevant to women and girls, the concluding comments to the 1st-5th CEDAW reports for Sierra Leone, the Government of Sierra National Gender Strategic Plan and the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820. The Lead Agency, UNIFEM, and the UN Gender Technical Team prioritised enhancing and building the capacities of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs for the Government of Sierra Leone's national machinery on gender equality to operate more effectively and drive the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

Source: Joint Progress Report on the Agenda for Change.

merged with the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1998 and renamed the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA). As part of the ongoing Public-Sector Reform to ensure an efficient public service, the MSWGCA was reorganised into a Directorate System⁵ to provide efficient and reliable services and to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of women, children, the aged, the disabled and the marginalised.

3.2.2. However, the MSWGCA has not been effective in carrying out its mandate, because of high senior staff turnover and the weak human-resource and institutional capacity. This is in spite of the various institutional and human-capacity training and the financial and material support that the ministry (Barnes et al 2007, Abdullah and Fofana-Ibrahim, 2010). It is currently staffed by 9 of the 36 senior staff that are needed for it to effectively carry out its mandate. Six are in Freetown and the other three are the regional GDOs based in the provincial headquarters of Bo (Southern Province), Makeni (Northern Province) and Kenema (Eastern Province). As a result, the ministry is constantly in need of technical and financial resources to enable it engage effectively with its various partners.

3.2.3 The ministry's problems have been compounded by low budgetary allocations from the national budget. Unlike other social sectors like health and education, whose share of the national budget ranged between 4.1% to 9.6% and 11% to 19.4 respectively in 2005-2010, the MSWGCA's annual budgetary allocation has been a dismal 0.2 % to 0.7% of the national budget and 1.1% and 2.7%⁶ of the sectoral allocation. Due to its poor financial and technical capacities, and in spite of its inter-ministerial mandate, the MSWGCA is one of the weakest and least influential institutions on the national political scene.

⁵ Gender affairs, children's affairs, social welfare, planning and strategic policy, human resources, finance and administration.

⁶ The Gender Directorate's share of the ministry's sectoral budgetary allocation is between 0.75 % and 1.35%.

3.2.4. Although all MDAs are expected to have GDOs or Focal Points (FPs) to follow up on the government's mainstreaming agenda, only a few -- such as the Ministries of Education, Science and Technology, Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Finance and Economic Development and Labour, Employment and Industrial Relations -- have designated GDOs/FPs in their institutions. The GDOs are usually junior administrative-level personnel with little or no technical and managerial capacity to effectively function and/or engage with their respective management teams in promoting the government's agenda. Finally, GDOs/FPs are expected to add their focal-point duties to their normal workloads.

3.2.5. The MSWGCA, in collaboration with development partners, initiated a multi-donor coordination forum in 2010 to harmonise and manage donor initiatives on gender equality in the country. The group met three times in 2010, but no follow-up activity took place in 2011.

3.3. The Legal Framework

3.3.1 Sierra Leone's Legal system includes its Constitution and common, statutory and customary laws⁷. The 1991 Sierra Leone Constitution, the supreme law of the land, includes a Bill of Rights in Section 15 guaranteeing the human rights of all Sierra Leoneans irrespective of their sex. Although this is reinforced in Sections 27⁸ and 171 (15)⁹, Section 27 (d) of the same Constitution nullifies these provisions by exempting discrimination in laws relating to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death or other matters of personal law. This section thus excludes customary law and practices, which are biased against women from the Constitution's non-discriminatory provisions. As a result, women have no legal recourse when discriminated against on issues relating to these exemptions, which are at the core of gender relations in Sierra Leone.

3.3.2. As part of its post-war gender-equality agenda to protect and promote the rights of women and girls, the GoSL has enacted a number of laws to promote equality between women and men in both the public and private realms of society, such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2005), the Citizenship Amendment Act (2006), the 2007 Gender Bills on Domestic Violence, Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorces and the Devolution of Estates and the Child Rights Act of 2007 and the 2009 Chieftaincy Act . For example, the Domestic Violence Bill criminalises violence, and the Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act protects girls from forced marriage as it stipulates 18 years as the minimum age for customary marriages and requires the consent of both parties. The Chieftaincy Act emboldened women to contest for Paramount Chieftaincy in areas where they were barred by traditional norms and values.

Challenges in Protecting the Rights of Women and Girls

3.3.3 In addition to the aforementioned legislation, the Sexual Offences and Matrimonial Causes and the Gender Commission Bills are awaiting cabinet approval. While the government's legal-reform efforts are to be commended, it should nevertheless be noted that the reform is fraught with difficulties. Firstly, the continued existence of Section 27(d) in the Constitution, in spite of the Constitution Review Committee's recommendation that it be

⁷ Customary law and practices are governed by the principle of male superiority over women in all spheres of life.

⁸ Provides that no law shall contain any provision that is discriminatory, either by itself in the performance of the functions of any public authority.

⁹ States that the Constitution shall be the supreme law and that any other law found to be inconsistent with any provision of the constitution shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be null and void.

expunged, and the CEDAW Committee's response to the country's initial to Fifth Periodic Report in 2007 that it contradicts all provisions in the 2007 enacted gender equality laws, shows the discrepancy between policy commitments and programme implementation. Secondly, the non-codification of customary laws, especially in relation to the rights of women and girls, is a stumbling block in the state's gender-equality project. Thirdly, the implementation process is plagued by the weak technical, human and financial resources, such as ignorance of the new laws by both women and law-enforcement agencies and inadequate qualified personnel to sensitise and lobby various national constituents on the ongoing changes taking place in the society. Finally, the government's statement that MDG 3 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is unachievable by 2015 is a major setback to all actors in the sector.

4. GENDER ANALYSIS BY SECTOR

4.1. The National Development Agenda for Poverty Reduction

Economic Development Trends

4.1.1 Sierra Leone's relatively robust growth at independence in 1961 declined in the 1970s and 1980s due to the government's mishandling of the economy through corrupt practices. This was exacerbated by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil price increase in 1973 and the low international prices for agricultural products. As a result, the government adopted a series of macroeconomic and structural reforms aimed at stabilising the economy and restoring growth¹⁰. However, the programme was derailed with the onset of the civil war. Thus, the economy shrunk and experienced a negative growth rate of -4.5% per annum between 1990 and 2000 (PRSP 1). Since the end of the war, the economy has expanded, growing from 6.3% in 2002 to 6.5% in 2003 and then to 7.4% in 2004. Between 2005 and 2007, the growth rate averaged 7.2%. The return of inflationary pressures due to a mix of external and internal factors slowed the economic growth rates to 5.5% in 2008 and 4.0% in 2009 (AfDB, 2009). The agricultural sector is the backbone of the Sierra Leonean economy. It contributes 45% to the national GDP, followed by services at 31% and with mining and construction and manufacturing accounting for 18% and 7% respectively in 2008 (ibid.).

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP 1 and 2)

4.1.2. The government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers 1 (2005-2008) and 2 (2008-2012), the Agenda for Change, and the country's second generation PRSPs evolved from a series of economic strategies¹¹ aimed at moving the country from conflict and poverty to consolidating peace and creating prosperity. Gender was identified as a cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed in the country's post-war reconstruction agenda. The overall objective of PRSP2 is to reduce poverty through economic growth, with a focus on private-sector development. The GoSL's gender equality goal within this framework is in line with MDG 3 to "eliminate gender disparity at all levels with a special focus on secondary education for girls"; and it addresses amongst other issues, such as sexual and reproductive health, women's property and inheritance rights, equal employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors, women's political representation, gender discriminatory laws and practices, the

¹⁰ Reduction of the budget deficit, liberalisation of the exchange rate, abolition of price controls and exchange restrictions.

¹¹ Interim Poverty Strategy Paper (IPRSP of 2001), the National Recovery Strategy (NRS of 2002) and Vision 2002 of 2003.

domestication of CEDAW into Sierra Leonean law and women's access to assets including training and credit.

4.1.3. Although gender is not mainstreamed throughout the Agenda for Change, the document includes strong commitments to gender equality. Cross-cutting action points of the economy have been recommended as possible entry points for addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in the country, such as gender mainstreaming; mechanisms and tools for monitoring and assessing the impact of gender policies, projects, plans and programmes on beneficiaries; review of all laws, customs, rituals and practices that contribute to the subordination of women in society; micro-credit facilities for women; and capacity building of women through education, training such as in budgeting and project implementation; and increased access to capital.

Resources for Monitoring and Evaluating Gender Equality

4.1.4. Gender-responsive budgeting initiatives are designed to facilitate a gendered analysis in the formulation of government budgets in the allocation of resources (Leadbetter, H. 2000). Gender budgeting is an attempt to disaggregate national budget allocations according to their impact on women, men, girls and boys. Gender budgeting as a social-equality mechanism within national budgetary frameworks monitors how allocations from national budgets feed into various sectors of the economy, with a special focus on social services. The idea of gender-responsive budgeting in Sierra Leone started in 2002 with the implementation of the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF), which shifted line-item to activity-based budgeting practices. The MSWGCA, in partnership with the Budget Directorate of MoFED, has piloted the gender budget initiative in the ministries of agriculture, education and health. Gender budgeting in Sierra Leone has provided funds from the national budget for school-meals programmes, girls' education and maternal health. In addition, training and sensitisation workshops have been organised for parliamentarians and local government officials on the meaning and practice of gender-responsive budgeting, especially in a post-war situation.

4.1.5. Nevertheless, the process has yet to be fully integrated in the planning and budgeting procedures across MDAs due to the low human-resource capacity. The unit for gender budgeting is currently staffed by a programme officer seconded to the MSWGCA from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

4.2 Employment and Income-Earning Activities

4.2.1. The 2004 Housing and Population Census also reports on employment and labour, the most current available statistics. It showed that 85.62% of the population are within the working or economically active age category of 15-64 years¹² (Figure 1). Some 96.45% of the

¹²Population aged 15-64 years engaged in any economic activity either as paid employees, self employed, unpaid family workers and those looking for work. On the other hand, the economically inactive are those 15-64 years who are neither working nor looking for work, full-time household workers, full-time students, retired/pensioners, totally impaired, or occupied caring for family members. Generally, the inactivity rate is the proportion of the population that is not in the labour force.

economically active population are employed, compared with 3.55% that are unemployed. Regionally, the Northern Province, with almost one-third of the country's population, accounts for 35% of the national labour force, followed by the Eastern Province with 24.3%. The number of employed males and females is 750,194 and 676,004 respectively, while unemployed males total 43,096 and unemployed females total 20,166, revealing a higher male labour-force participation rate of 52.6%. The unemployment rate for men is 4.4%, almost double that of females at 2.3%. Male unemployment is higher because more females are employed as unpaid family workers or engaged in household work.

4.2.2. Figure 2 shows that 55% of Sierra Leoneans aged 15-64 year are in regular paid earning employment. Self-employment is the main source of economic activity among the country's economically active population. At 50%, it includes people who are paid either in cash or in kind for their services. The other 5% are in paid formal-sector employment. The family farm is composed of persons who work for the family business, most of whom are engaged in subsistence farming. This group, which is excluded from the cash-earning population, accounted for about 13% of the labour force. There is also the non-active group, which comprises 19% of the population. Among this group are those not looking for work, the unpaid household workers who did not receive any income but worked as unpaid family labour, students and the retired. Some 2% of the labour force was actively looking for work, while less than 1% had irregular employment and was classified as "other" by Statistics Sierra Leone.

Figure 1: Sierra Leone 2004 Census Working Population According to Economic Status

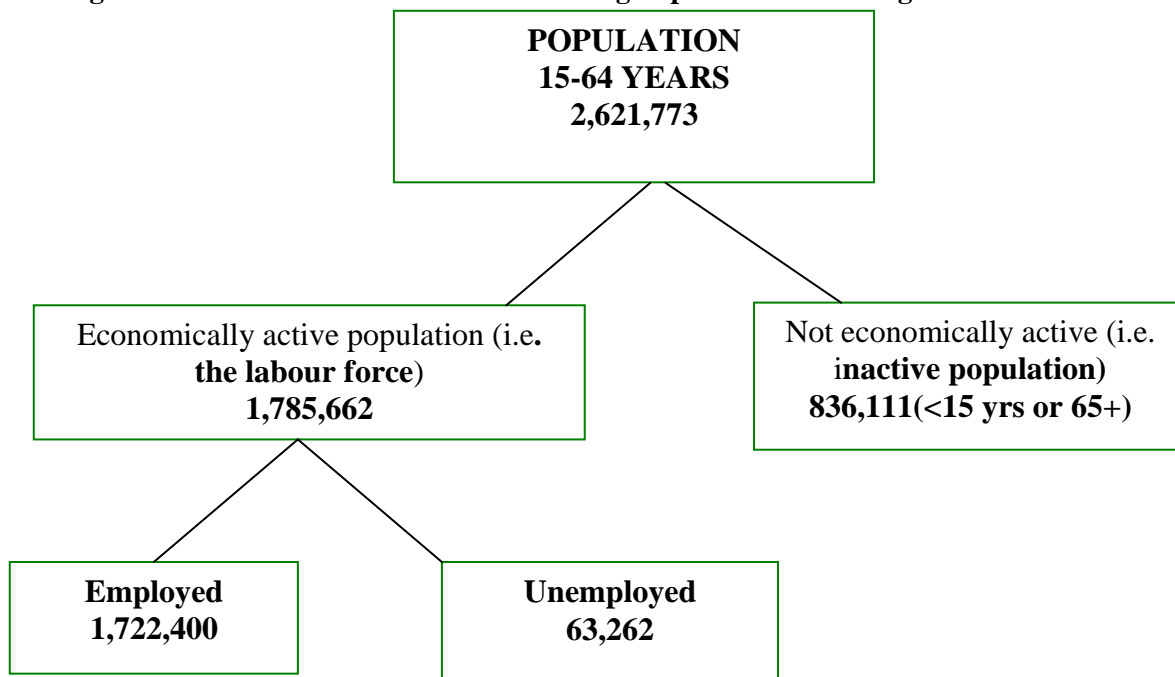
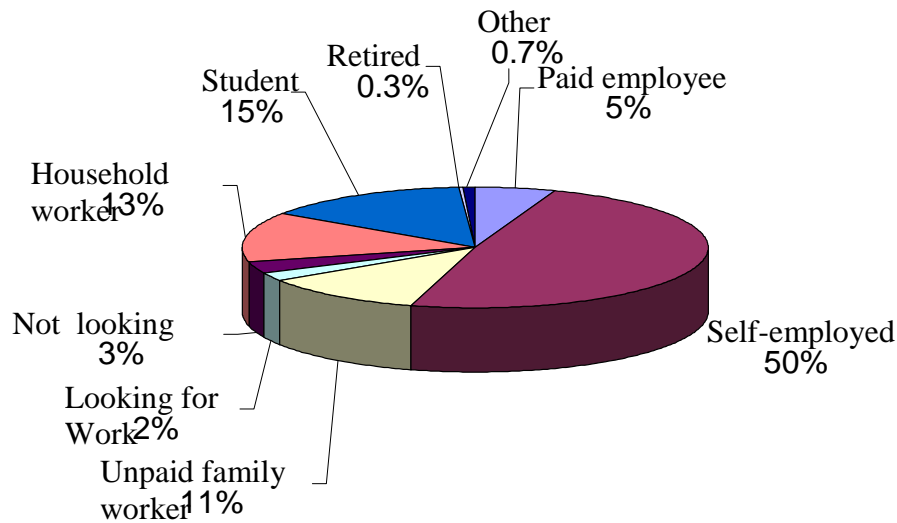


Figure 2: Cash-Earning Status of the Labour Force Classified by Activity Status



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone: Analytical Report on Employment and Labour Force, 2006.

4.2.3. A sectoral analysis of Statistics Sierra Leone's data on labour force participation and sex confirms the agrarian character of the economy as agriculture, hunting and forestry sub-sectors¹³ account for 64.9% of the total labour force, with crop farming alone taking the lion's share of 64.0%. This is followed by the trade and repairs industry with 14.3%, education and public administration at 1.8% each, health and social work 1.1%, transport, storage and communication 0.9%, manufacturing 0.5%, financial services and hotels and restaurants 0.3%. A sex distribution of the data shows a higher percentage of women in crop farming (67.8% vs. 60.4%) and trade and repairs (18.1% vs. 10.7%). More women than men were also engaged private-household employment and health and social work (GoSL, 2006:28).

4.2.4. While Sierra Leone's cash-earning economy is predominately male, there are more women (93.7 %) in the low-earning and low-skilled categories of service, shop and sales workers, skilled agricultural and fishery workers and elementary occupations compared with men (83.0%). Although such activities tend increase the income in poor households, they usually lack social-protection benefits. The disparities in employment and wage rates affect women's opportunities and advancement in the society, and thus discourage them from seeking formal-sector employment. Women's predominance in low-skilled occupations reflects their low status in the society, low skills training and educational levels, and poor career and promotion prospects.

Women's Enterprises

4.2.5 A 2009 enterprise survey of 150 firms by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) notes that 7.9% of the surveyed businesses are owned by females; 6.4% are small firms employing between 1 and 10 workers and 14.5% were medium-sized firms with 11-99 workers. According to Sierra Leone's Sixth Periodic Country Report on CEDAW, most of the women employed in the formal private sector of the economy are in the hotels/restaurants,

¹³ Crop farming, livestock and poultry production.

insurance and air-transport and shipping business. There are fewer women in construction, wholesale trade, and manufacturing because of the large capital outlay needed to commence operations and the difficulty in obtaining bank loans because of the stringent bank rules requiring houses, land or other property as collateral, which few women possess.

4.2.6. Unlike the private formal sector, where their presence is negligible, women dominate the informal economy, with 84% of rural and 63% of urban women operating in the informal sector (Sixth CEDAW Country Report, 2010). Women's predominance in the informal sector, which generally has no social-protection provisions and is characterised by low wages and poor working conditions, offer them very little financial reward for their labour and does not sufficiently diminish their vulnerabilities to poverty. Despite this fact, the government has no policy framework that caters to the needs and interests of those working in the informal sector.

4.2.7. The unequal gender division of labour both in the household and market economies, combined with poor infrastructure, increases women's time poverty as they try to navigate remunerative work spheres and their domestic and child-care responsibilities. This affects women's well-being and livelihood, as they spend more time collecting water, fetching firewood, cooking, and taking care of the sick, elderly and children. It leaves them with little or no time to engage in leisure or self-development activities such as adult literacy, entrepreneurial skills development or community or national affairs. Girls, being the extension of their mothers, are also affected as they are usually withdrawn from school to ease the burden of household chores and work responsibilities of their mothers (Agricultural Sector Review, 2003).

Access to Financial Services

4.2.8. Sierra Leone has one of the lowest bank branch penetrations in Africa, with one branch per 200,000 people¹⁴. Although agriculture accounts for more than 70% of the employed population and contributes more than 40% of GDP, agricultural loans account for only 2% of gross loans because banks do not honour agricultural lands as collateral due to the tenure policy which is dependent on local customs that are not recognised by the banks.

4.2.9. Before the outbreak of the war, the microfinance sector comprised two national development banks, the National Cooperative Development bank (NCDB) and the National Development Bank (NDB), two Community Banks (CB) established by the BSL and a Post Office Savings Bank (AfDB, 2004). About 50-60 MFIs are currently active in the country, servicing around 13,000 customers, primarily small traders and town-based enterprises, with a combined loan portfolio of less than \$5 million. The overall demand has been conservatively estimated at \$45 million (NSADP, 2009). The Financial Service Association (FSA), under the International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD)-the Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP), has disbursed more loans to women than men, but there are still fewer female shareholders than males in the scheme. Currently, the MFI sector is dominated mainly by a government-funded initiative, the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA). NaCSA gives priority to women in the disbursement of loans.

Challenges in Engendering the Employment Sector

4.2.10. The unacknowledged role of the informal sector in policy discourse undermines the government's development strategy for growth and job creation. The greatest challenge for

¹⁴ Private sector credit of 5% of GDP is far below the sub-Saharan average of 17%.

the government is to determine how to create an enabling environment to expand job-creation facilities in the formal sector and move informal-sector operators beyond micro-level subsistence. Furthermore, the government's embryonic private-sector development programme, which aims to create among other things a conducive climate for private-sector development, does not include gender action plans or strategies with clear objectives and targets to ensure women's engagement. Additionally, the MFIs that are the financial lifeline of operators in the informal sector are not gender-sensitive, and they hinder women's access to markets and credits by not having specific programmes, targets or policy initiatives directed specifically to women.

4.3. The Agriculture Sector

4.3.1. As indicated earlier, Sierra Leone is essentially an agrarian economy. The sector contributes 45% the country's GDP, employs 70% of the population and generates almost a quarter of the country's export earnings. As a result, the agricultural sector is at the forefront of the GoSL's post-war human-development and poverty-reduction agenda. The National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan 2010-30 (NSADP) was adopted in 2009 as part of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Plan (CAADP). The key policy objectives of the government in the next few years are: i) increasing agricultural productivity, ii) promoting commercial agriculture through private-sector participation, iii) improving agricultural research and extension delivery systems and iv) promoting efficient sector-management systems.

4.3.2. The sector includes the crops sub-sector, which accounts for 69.5% of agricultural GDP, with the fishery sub-sector contributing 17.4% and the livestock and forestry sub-sectors contributing 6.5% each to the agriculture GDP (NSADP, 2009). Agriculture has received increased government support since the end of the war. For example, actual government spending increased to 5.3% of GDP in 2009 from 3.5% in 2008, with substantial support given to farmers¹⁵. This support is estimated to have resulted in the cultivation of 61,514 acres of land for rice production in 2009. As a result, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) estimated that rice production would increase by 15.4%.¹⁶ The production of cash crops also increased in 2009, with coffee production increasing by over 270% and cocoa by 8.6% relative to 2008 (MoFED and JICA, 2010).

Land Tenure and Land Use

4.3.3. Owing to its historical heritage, Sierra Leone's land tenure system is characterised by a regional dual holding system. Before independence in 1961, the colony of Freetown was ruled by an elected local government which applied the British legal system, while the rest of the country, known then as the Protectorate, remained under the control of local chiefs. Thus, Freetown (Western Area) and its environs, the former Colony, were governed by an English system of land ownership which includes fee conveyances, mortgages and leases. As a result, the land tenure system in the Western Area, which is dependent on the market economy, has no discriminatory customary practices against women. Women who have the means can acquire land without any hindrance.

4.3.4. Outside of the Western Area, where the majority of the population resides, customary practices determine land access, and they are discriminatory against women. Women's land problems stem mainly from the patrilineal inheritance system that privileges men over

¹⁵125 tractors, 223 power tillers, 205 rice threshers, 205 rice mills and 193, 445 bushels of seed rice.

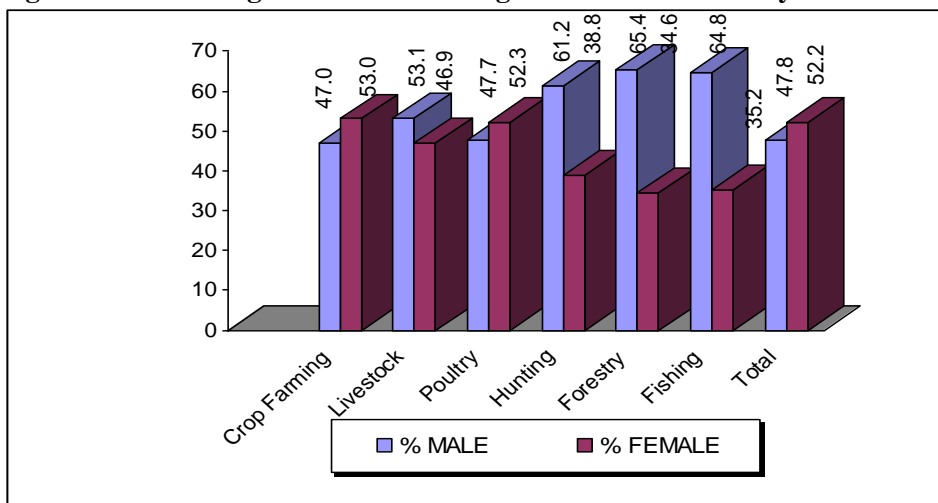
¹⁶ From its 2008 level of 680,097 metric tonnes to 784, 727 metric tonnes in 2009.

women. While women cannot inherit land, they have rights to land before marriage and are entitled to land to cultivate upon marriage. But they usually encounter problems over control of land when their husbands die or if they divorce. If there are children from the marriage, they will inherit the land, and if there are no children and a woman remarries into her late husband's family, she can continue to cultivate the land. A woman who returns to her patrilineal family regains her rights to land for cultivation from the male head of her family.

Gender Division of Labour in Agriculture

4.3.5. Agriculture in Sierra Leone, as elsewhere in Africa, is characterised by gender differentiation. In general, agricultural activities such as crop farming, household poultry raising of chicken and ducks, fish processing and marketing and gathering of fuel wood, vegetables, herbs, fruits and nuts from forests are dominated by females, while cattle and the raising of small ruminants, such as goats and sheep, hunting and logging for timber, fuel wood and charcoal are the preserve of males. A gendered disaggregation of agricultural activities by Statistics Sierra Leone in 2006 (Figure 3) shows women's dominance of the crop and poultry sub-sectors at 53% and 52.3% respectively, while men dominated the livestock, hunting, forestry and fishery sub-sectors at 53.1%, 61.2%, 65.4% and 64.8% respectively. According to Statistics Sierra Leone, even though women are the major fish processors and gatherers of fuel wood, fruits, vegetables, nuts and herbs from forests, their dominance was not properly captured in the census, hence their low participation rate in forestry and fishing.

Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Agricultural Activities by Gender



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone Analytical Report on Agriculture, 2006.

Food Processing, Marketing and Export

4.3.6. As part of their dominance of the crop sector, women process, preserve, store and transport all food crops for marketing. However, their labour is mostly non-remunerative and they have little or no access to post-harvest technologies, credit, extension services and training and research facilities. In addition, women farmers are more affected by the country's limited transport facilities and extremely poor road infrastructure, because of the highly perishable nature of their crops and the absence of cold storage facilities to prolong the shelf life of their produce. Accordingly, they have to walk long distances to markets with their produce on their heads to avoid post-harvest losses.

4.3.7. With Chinese financial assistance, the Sierra Leone Export Development Investment Corporation (SLEDIC) rebuilt the ginger export trade with the aim of providing jobs to 9,000 subsistence farmers, of whom 60% are women. This initiative resulted in the country's first exports in 2006 after 22 years and the creation of 150 processor jobs dominated by women and 30 jobs for foremen, loaders, transporters and others.

Fisheries

4.3.8. The fisheries sub-sector plays an important role in the Sierra Leonean economy. Its contribution to the national GDP before the 1990s hovered around 10%. Currently the sub-sector contributes only 3.68% to the national GDP. The sub-sector employs over 100,000 fishers directly and about 150,000 persons indirectly in fish processing, distribution and associated trades. Recent surveys estimate a standing stock biomass of about 300,000 metric tonnes, down from the 1985 level of 446,000 to 674,100mt.

4.3.9. The marine fisheries sub-sector employs more men than women, while the inland artisanal fishing is controlled by women. Women play a major role in fish processing and financing. In many cases, they pre-finance the purchasing of nets, engines and other inputs. The predominance of women in artisanal fisheries post-harvest activities such as micro-fish retailing, fish processing, and fish marketing gives them an important role in the distribution process. However, the poorly developed fish distribution system in the country (fish landing-handling-preservation-processing-storage-transport) means that all losses, inconvenience and drudgery inherent in the system are borne by women.

Challenges in Engendering the Agricultural Sector

4.3.10. The Women in Agriculture and Nutrition (WIAN) Unit was established in 1997 to underscore the role of women in the sector and to specifically take on board their needs and interests. Unfortunately, the WIAN has been struggling to achieve its objectives, because there is no policy to aid women in agriculture and the national agricultural strategic plan's gender mainstreaming activity is focussed mainly on organising sensitisation workshops and campaigns. Furthermore, WIAN has neither the expertise nor decision-making powers to influence policy and undertake research to inform policy. Even though sectoral policies, strategies and programmes recognise the need to mainstream gender into agriculture, there is no elaboration of gender activities in the national, district or major sub-programmes. It is therefore not surprising that women, the vast majority of farmers, have little or no access to extensions services, markets, credit and post-harvest technologies that would help them in the marketing of their produce. Additionally, the poor road network affects more women farmers because of the perishable nature of their commodities.

4.3.11. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) adopted a fisheries policy in 2003. In broad terms, the policy recognises the importance of the sub-sector to national development in relation to employment, revenue generation and food security. Although one of the policy's stated objectives is to raise the socio-economic status of people in the fisheries sector with an emphasis on women, thus far nothing has been done to promote and enhance women's status in the sub-sector.

4.4. The Education Sector

4.4.1. The education sector, like other sectors, was badly affected by the civil war. Many schools were destroyed. Students were even abducted by various armed factions and/or

abandoned their studies, and hundreds of teachers and lecturers fled the country. As part of the state's reconstruction effort, a two-shift system was introduced to absorb students into schools, and untrained and unqualified teachers were employed to fill in the gaps left by those who fled the civil war. These interventions affected the quality of education as the success rate in various external examinations deteriorated over the years. As part of efforts to address this issue, the government established a Commission of Enquiry in 2008 to investigate the issue and recommend immediate, short-, medium- and long-term measures to improve and sustain pupils' performance. Among these are the modification of the 6334 to 6344 system of education to include a compulsory early-childhood component and an extension by one year to the duration of senior secondary school; free and compulsory primary education in both policy and practice; the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission, with one of its objectives being the review of the conditions of service of teachers as a top priority action; the banning of ACCESS courses in tertiary institutions; the phasing out of the two-shift school system; a reduction in class sizes and a reduction in the number of education subjects from nine to seven for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE). in conformity with the decisions of the other West African countries.

4.4.2. Although the ratio of girls to boys in primary schools has improved, completion rates remain low: 30% of school-aged children are out of the system. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is 1.01 at the primary level and 0.78 at the secondary education level, showing that gender parity has not been reached in secondary education. The value of the GPI also shows a divide between rural and urban locations. For example, the value of the GPI in the three provinces (North, South and East) was 0.64, and it was 0.90 in the Western Area and 0.56 in rural areas, as opposed to 0.82 in urban areas. Secondary school statistics are far worse across all regions except the Western Region, where 25% of women have some secondary education and 10% have completed secondary education. The difference in the GPI is strongly associated with increasing wealth status of the households¹⁷(MICS 2005). Pre-school education remains largely in the hands of the private sector.

4.4.3. The DHS (2008) data on literacy rates in the country reveal that 58% of women and 46% of men are illiterate. More than two-thirds of women in the rural areas have no education (69%), while only about one quarter (24%) have some level of primary education. The literacy rate among 15-to-24-year-olds was 43.5% for women and 69.6% for men. Based on these statistics, it has been argued that Sierra Leone will not be able to eradicate illiteracy among this age group in the foreseeable future (MDG Progress Report, 2010).

4.4.4. Based on the situation outlined above, the 2010 Government White Paper on Education calls for, among other things: the adoption of a policy on Early Childhood Education, and free and compulsory education at all levels. Finally, through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), the government has developed special interventions strategies in the Education Sector Plan to reduce gender disparity and gender-based violence (GBV), particularly for girls in schools, such as to revise the terms and conditions of service of teachers to ensure the protection of children, enact and enforce legislation criminalising sexual harassment by teachers and agree on a code of ethics with the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU), provide safe environment for girls including separate toilets, institute severe penalties for child abusers and allow child-mothers and drop-out girls to return to school.

¹⁷ Results are based on net attendance rather than gross attendance rates.

Basic Education (Primary Education and Junior Secondary School)

4.4.5. As indicated earlier, gender parity in primary education has improved over the years as enrolment, completion and retention rates have increased. Net enrolment rate (NER) increased from 63% in 2004 to 69% in 2005, but dropped to 62% in 2008 because of the high dropout rate of girls reaching puberty. Completion rate increased from 11% in 2005 to 12.9% (11.3% for girls and 14.5% for boys) in 2008. The ratio of girls to boys in primary school was maintained at 1:1.2 in 2004, as against the medium target of 1:1 in 2005. Table 3 shows the enrolment rates of boys and girls in primary schools between the 2005/2006 to 2008/2009 academic years. Boys' enrolment rate in the 2005/2006 and 2008/2009 school years were 10% and 12% higher than that of girls in the same period, while girls' enrolment in 2006/2007 was slightly higher than that of boys, at 2%.

4.4.6. There was improvement also in the ratio of girls to boys in Junior Secondary School (JSS), falling from 1.1.5 to 1.1.4 in 2003/2004. Significantly more boys than girls enrolled in every local government area and every region in 2003/2004. The Northern Region, the least developed of Sierra Leone's four administrative regions, had the lowest NER and gross enrolment rate (GER), at 8% male and 5% female and 90% male and 67% female for NER and GER respectively.

4.4.7. The increase has been attributed to the government's Affirmative Action (AA) policy to allow every girl to attend school. School fees in primary schools were abolished in 2001 and in 2003, and full support was provided for all girls entering Junior Secondary School (JSS) in the Eastern and Northern regions because of the low attendance rate in these areas. Currently, this policy has been expanded to include all girls enrolled in JSS nationwide. The government also pays for all national examination fees for primary, JSS and Senior Secondary School students (SSS) in government-assisted and private schools for all pupils.

Academic year	Sex				
	Female	%	Male	%	Total
2005/2006	581,386	45	709,869	55	1,291,255
2006/2007	628,508	51	603,730	49	1,232,238
2007/2008	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2008/2009	579,547	44	744,170	56	1,323,717

Source: MEST Inspectorate Division, cited in the Sixth CEDAW Country Report.

Secondary School

4.4.8. In 2002/2003 there were approximately 65,141 registered students at the SSS level, of whom 34.5% were girls and 65.4% boys. Available data on transition rate from primary to secondary education showed that 52% of surveyed children who successfully completed the last grade of primary school during the year prior to the MICS3 survey were in their first year of secondary school. While there was very little gender variation, there were remarkable disparities among the provinces. For instance, the value in the Eastern Region was 34%, versus 43% in the South Region, 48% in the North Region and 78% in the Western Area. Regional differences are strongly correlated with urban residence and with the mother's higher educational and/or socio-economic status (MICS, 2005). It was stated further that low transition rates between primary and secondary education are attributable to several factors,

including limited physical access to secondary schools, costs, and the difficult secondary-school entrance examination.

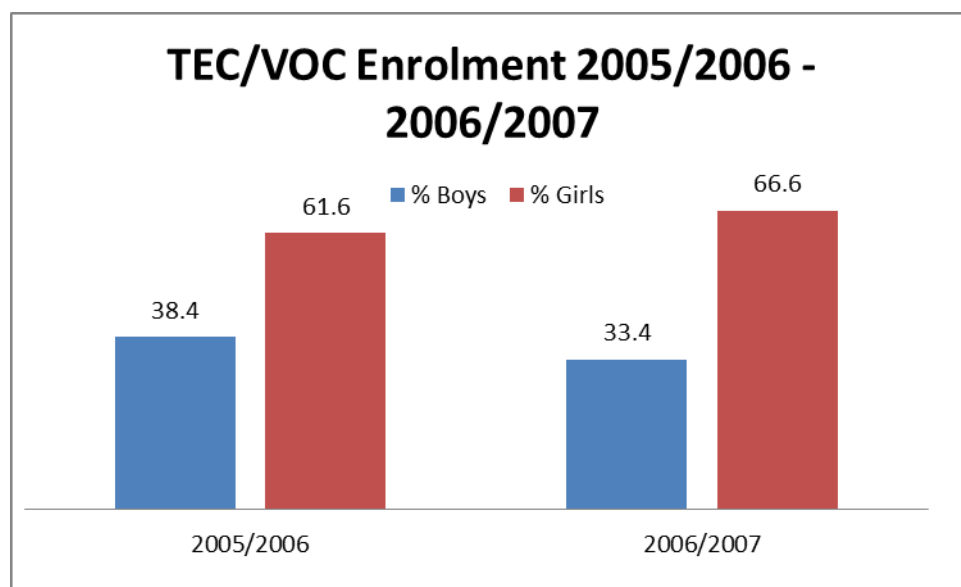
Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

4.4.9. The enrolment figures for girls are worse at the post-secondary-school level. For example, at the teacher-training institutions, available data on enrolment in 2004 showed that there were 64% male trainees to 36% female trainees. In the more technical training programmes at the Ordinary National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels, there were 71% male students compared with 29% female students. A composite analysis of the enrolment rate for the 2005/2006 academic year showed that there were more girls, at 61.6%, to boys at 38.4 % (Figure 4).

4.4.10. However, a breakdown of the enrolment figures showed that females are concentrated in the vocational and/commercial sector. Sixty-four percent of females and 35% of males completed vocational/commercial programmes in typing, gara tie dying, catering, tailoring and hair dressing. Many young girls end up taking these courses because they do not have the prerequisite requirements for technical courses, less time is spent studying and these courses provide the flexibility they might need in managing their families in the future.

4.4.11. Although technical training is still largely male-dominated, since 2009 the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), with funding from the Danish International Development Agency, has provided scholarships to 200 girls to study electrical technology, auto mechanics, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and printing, among other subjects that were once seen as the preserve of men.

Figure 4: TEC/VOC Enrolment 2005/2006-2006/2007



Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2009, cited in the Sixth CEDAW Country Report.

Tertiary Education

4.4.12. As shown in Table 2 below, only 28% of women compared with 72% of men were enrolled at the University of Sierra Leone between 2006-2009. More males are enrolled in all

the four institutions except COMAHS, in which 55% of female students were enrolled in both the 2006/2007 and 2008/2009 academic years as compared to 45% of males in the same years. Overall, the percentage of female enrolment in the different institutions, including those offering post-graduate studies, has increased over the years.

Institution	2006/2007			2007/2008			2008/2009		
	% Male	% Female	Total	% Male	% Female	Total	% Male	% Female	Total
FBC¹⁸	80	20	3542	79	21	3722	77	23	3905
COMAHS¹⁹	45	55	953	53	47	1047	45	55	1069
IPAM²⁰	71	29	1567	69	31	1555	67	33	1607
MM CET²¹	NA	NA		58	42	4985	45	55	3447

Source: The University of Sierra Leone, cited in the Sixth CEDAW Country Report.

4.4.13. Programmes that support female students are also extended to the tertiary institutions, where the MEST has adopted a policy of providing scholarships to all female students studying science, mathematics and technology. Female enrolment in non-traditional vocational and technical studies is low, and a sectoral policy to encourage participation has been recommended in the government's White Paper on education.

Notable Interventions in Engendering the Educational Sector

4.4.14. In addition to the aforementioned government policies to promote girls' education, the school curricula have been expanded to include new topics, such as Peace and Conflict Education, Life Skills in Religious and Moral Education lessons and schools' Guidance and Counselling Sessions. Gender-equality concerns, including sexual and reproductive health, are embedded under emerging issues within Social Studies lessons. In addition, non-governmental interventions have been initiated to promote and enhance girls' education in the country, such as the Ambassador Girls' Scholarship Programme sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), FAWE and UNICEF's mentoring programme for girls in the Western Area and Northern Province, and the creation of the Sierra Leone Gender and Education Network (SLeGEN) to provide support to outstanding girls from class 4 to JSS 3 in all examinations,.

Challenges in Reaching Gender Parity in Education

4.4.15. The poor management of the SLeGen unit within the MEST and the absence of a policy framework to back up these outstanding interventions might derail the government's girls' education project, as it could be either marginalised and/or submerged under other issues within the sector. The introduction of Life Skills in the school curricula in JSS3, in a

¹⁸ Fourah Bay College.

¹⁹ College of Medicine and Allied Health Services.

²⁰ Institute of Public Administration and Management.

²¹ Milton Margai College of Education and Technology.

situation where sexual activity²² starts in primary or early secondary school (UNICEF 2010), is extremely late and has a negative impact on the government's gender equality agenda in the sector. However, the greatest challenge for the GoSL's in the education sector is how to integrate the 30% of children of school age who are currently out of the system. Other challenges include a shortage of teachers; a lack of incentives to attract qualified teachers into the profession, especially in the rural areas; inadequate infrastructure and school supplies; poor conditions of service for teachers, which lead to a high staff turnover; a high pupil-to-teacher ratio; and the strong prevalence of volunteer teachers (MDG 2010).

4.5. The Health Sector

The Health Architecture

4.5.1. Sierra Leone's health sector is guided by various international and national policy frameworks, such as the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care (PHC)²³, the Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa, the MDGs and the PRSPs. The National Health Policy (2002) as a post-conflict document focuses on reconstruction, reform and the development of the health sector to meet the challenges in a post-war situation. The primary focus of the document is on reducing the high maternal mortality ratio (MMR), the infant mortality rate (IMR) and the high incidence of communicable diseases such as malaria, respiratory and water-borne diseases like cholera among women and children, who account for most of the in- and out-patients in hospitals. For instance, one in four children under five years reported having a fever and 13% of children under five suffered from diarrhoea in the two weeks before the DHS.

4.5.2. The government launched the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP) 2010-2015 in 2009 to help achieve the health sector priorities identified in PRSP 2²⁴ and the health-related MDGs. The NHSSP aims to ensure the successful implementation of the Basic Package of Essential Health Services (BPEHS)²⁵, so that service delivery can be improved. The goal of the overall package is to ensure the provision of minimal essential quality care for all, and it includes services that have the greatest impact on major health problems, especially maternal and child health. In addition, the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI) for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five years was launched by the President in April 2010. The objective is to provide a package of fully subsidised services free of charge at

²² The mean age for first sex and pregnancy is 14 and 15 years, respectively.

²³ Started in 1980 and is organised at three levels namely, the peripheral health units (PHUs) as the first line of call of the PHC; the district hospitals provide secondary care and are referral points for the PHUs and the regional/national hospitals for tertiary care to support district hospitals and address conditions needing specialised care. This initiative is aimed at bringing health care delivery closer to the communities.

²⁴ The provision of integrated reproductive and child health service, improving nutrition, control of non-communicable diseases; health promotion (water, sanitation and hygiene); and the provision of infrastructure for primary, secondary and tertiary facilities, among others.

²⁵ The BPEHS package includes cost-effective interventions including essential and emergency obstetric care and preventive services such as family planning, immunisations and the provision of insecticide treated bed nets. The longer-term goal is to provide universal access to quality health care for all vulnerable groups.

the point of delivery²⁶. It is expected that within a year of implementing the FHCI, access to health services will increase to 65%.

4.5.3. Furthermore, the government has rehabilitated and constructed health care infrastructure and provided equipment and supplies. Programmes to control childhood diseases and illnesses such as the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) have been strengthened and expanded nationwide, even though Sierra Leone's extremely high MMR and IMR have dropped considerably over the years (see Table 5). Considerably more needs to be done to attain minimum standard of health-care provision. Access to recognised health facilities remains abysmal, with only half of the population visiting health facilities once a year.

Table 3: Trends in Infant and Maternal Mortality Patterns between 2000 and 2010

Description	2000 Level ²⁷	2005 Level ²⁸	2008 Level ²⁹	Target 2015
Child mortality (U5s)	286/1000 live births	267/1000 live birth	140/1000 live births	95/1000 live births
Maternal mortality (MMR)	1,800/1000,000 live births	1,300/1000,000 live births	857/1000,000 live births	600/1000,000 live births

Source: Sixth CEDAW Report, 2010

Gender and Reproductive Health

4.5.4. According to the 2008 DHS, 87% of women received antenatal care (ANC) from health professionals, 72% delivered at home, 25% delivered in health facilities and only 42% of births were delivered with the help of a health professional, while 45% were delivered by traditional birth attendants (TBAs). The report stated that ANC usage is positively correlated to women's education and wealth status, i.e., women with higher levels of education and incomes are more likely to use ANC compared with those having lower education or income levels. The fertility rate in Sierra Leone has not changed much in the last two decades. The number of children per woman between 1980 and 1985 was 5.7, and in 2005, three years before the 2008 survey, it was 5.1 children per woman. Variations in the fertility rate between rural and urban Sierra Leone and among the regions, and between educated and uneducated women, are substantial. Rural women have an average of two more births (5.8) than those in urban areas (3.8). The fertility rate of rural women is almost 14% higher than the national average. Regionally, fertility is highest in the Northern Region, at 5.8 births per woman, followed by the Eastern, Southern and Western Regions at 5.6, 5.0 and 3.4 respectively. In relation to women's educational status, uneducated women's fertility is almost twice as high as for women with secondary or higher educational levels (5.8 against 3.1).

²⁶ The objective is to reduce the high infant and maternal mortality rates and achieve MDG 4 and 5. The initiative involves the provision of free medical care and drugs to targeted population.

²⁷ Sierra Leone MICS.

²⁸ MICS adjusted, MOHS, UNICEF et al, 2007.

²⁹ DHS 2008.

4.5.5. Although family planning is subsumed under Maternal/Child Health Programmes and is geared towards reducing maternal mortality, knowledge of contraception among the population is widespread. The 2008 DHS showed that many women and men aged 15-49 years are well-informed about contraceptive use, and 74% of women compared with 83% of men stated that they are aware of at least one method of contraception. Thus, it is surprising that contraceptive usage among married women is extremely low, at 8%. Among married women in the urban areas, contraceptive use is 16% compared with 5% in the rural areas. Contraceptive usage among Sierra Leonean women is low because of traditional resistance to modern forms of contraception and men's perceived need to control women's fertility in order to ensure fidelity. A married woman who dares to use contraceptives without the consent of her husband could be accused of promiscuity and might be divorced. Furthermore, family planning services are very expensive and not within the reach of most women. Like fertility rates, contraceptive use has a strong positive correlation with educational attainment and wealth. Thus with Sierra Leone's high poverty and low literacy levels, the country will continue to experience low contraceptive usage for a long time.

Challenges in Engendering the Health Sector

4.5.6. Although significant progress has been made since the end of the war, especially at the policy level and in the reduction of MMR and IMR, the health sector still has a considerable number of challenges to overcome in order to meet the needs of the population. Among these are reductions of fertility levels and of inequalities in access to health care services between rich and poor households, low contraceptive usage, user fees in health facilities, a lack of equipments, and supplies and poorly trained and unmotivated staff. Furthermore, the lack of a Gender and Health Policy bringing together all women's health issues and concerns constrains efforts towards achieving a successful woman-focussed health agenda, especially in family planning and HIV/AIDS and STDs prevention. Despite these challenges, the GoSL is optimistic that it might achieve MDGs 4 and 5 thanks to the introduction of the FHCI Initiative in April 2010.

4.6. The Infrastructure Sector

4.6.1. The infrastructure sector includes water and sanitation, energy, transportation (feeder and trunk roads and ferries) and Information Communication Technology (ICT). Basic infrastructures in all sectors in Sierra Leone are in deplorable shape, as a result of the massive destruction that took place during the civil conflict. Poor road networks, a lack of safe and sustained water supply and a lack of electricity supply are the hallmark of this sector.

4.6.2. Access to safe and sustainable water sources is extremely poor. Only 51% of households nationally obtain drinking water from improved sources. Over half (57%) of water collection is done by women, followed by girls at 14%. In relation to sanitation, only 11% of households have access to improved and private toilet facility. The most common toilet facility in Sierra Leone is open-pit latrines. Overall, an estimated 3.43 million Sierra Leoneans do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities.

4.6.3. Less than 10% of the population have access to electricity. About 87% of energy usage in the country is biomass, in the form of firewood and charcoal. More than 80% of the population use fuel wood or charcoal for cooking. It is women and girls who are responsible for collecting wood and fuel for domestic consumption. They have to walk long distances, which leads to fatigue and endangers their physical security and health.

4.6.4. The existing transport infrastructure is dilapidated, inefficient and expensive. It affects both men and women. Due to women's multiple socio-economic activities and high population ratio, they are more disadvantaged than men in accessing markets, farm inputs and agricultural extension services.

4.6.5. The ICT policy launched in January 2011 focuses on, among other matters, how to include women in the country's ICT agenda. The policy aims to create awareness about the use and benefits of ICT for women, create resource centres nationwide to train and encourage greater access to ICT for women, set up Internet access points throughout the country targeting women, use the capabilities of the Internet and e-commerce to facilitate women's access to business and entrepreneurial opportunities and finally, disseminate national, regional and international policies, conventions and activities on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Challenges in Engendering the Infrastructure Sector

4.6.6. The poor state of Sierra Leone's infrastructure sector increases women's workload in their role as caregivers and home managers. For example, they spend a disproportionate amount of time managing preventable water-borne and skin diseases, and food poisoning from contaminated water sources, or treating water to make it safe. Poor and expensive transport facilities hinder women from engaging in economically profitable activities and accessing social and economic opportunities, such as schools and hospitals, markets, credit facilities, farm inputs, extension services and the like. Additionally, inadequate sanitation and waste-management systems affect the environmental health of communities and further overburden women.

5. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

5.1. Governance and Decision Making

5.1.1. Unlike some post-conflict countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique and Uganda, where AA or gender quotas have been instituted to promote women's participation in governance and decision making, such initiatives were opposed in Sierra Leone until 2010. On the celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March 2010 in Moyamba District, the President of Sierra Leone, Mr. Ernest Koroma, issued a presidential apology to women for the atrocities they suffered during the war³⁰ and promised to institute a gender quota in the 2012-17 electoral cycle. Since the war was declared officially over in 2002, Sierra Leone has had two national elections, in 2002 and 2007. Female participation at the parliamentary level increased from 5 in 1996 to 18, or 14.5% of parliamentarians, in 2002³¹ and decreased slightly in 2007 to 16, or 13.5% parliamentarians³². However, women's increased level of participation in politics was not reflected in ministerial appointments or in committee chairships at the parliamentary level³³. Unfortunately, the GoSL's promise of a quota for women was not reflected in its December 2010 cabinet reshuffle; only two women are in the 26 member cabinet (Health and Sanitation and Tourism and Culture). As shown in Table 6,

Box 2: Affirmative Action

As Head of State I apologise for the wrongs wrought on women, as Commander-in-Chief I ask for forgiveness for the armed forces, as Fountain of Honour and Justice I pledge this country's commitment to honour, protect, and defend the rights and aspirations of the women of this country. As a Sierra Leonean man, I urge all men of this nation to stand by women to defeat these long-standing injustices suffered by more than half of our population....**we will adhere to women's demand for a 30% quota in Parliament and other significant areas of governance;** our judiciary is today headed by women, and it is our belief that this singular fact will make the interpretation and implementation of justice reflective of the deep commitment of women to justice, equal rights and equal opportunities.

the participation rate between women and men in governance and public decision-making spaces is wide at all levels of society. Apart from the electoral commission category, women's participation rate declined considerably in 2009 from its 2002 level. Changes in the electoral process, from first-past-the-post system to proportional representation as a post-war strategy, was advantageous to women as their numbers increased from 5 (6.5%) in 1996 to 18 (14.5%) in 2002, because the 1996 and 2002 elections were based on proportional representation. Female representation dropped in the 2007 election with the reintroduction of the first-past-the-post system to 16 women (13.5%).

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Women in Political and Leadership positions 2002 and 2009.

Political office	2002			2009		
	% Male	% Female	Total	% Male	% Female	Total
Voter (general elections)	50.4	49.6	2,327,974	NA	NA	NA
Presidential Candidates	87.5	12.5	8	100	0	
Cabinet Ministers	87.7	14.3	21	90	10	20
Deputy Ministers	70	30	10	86.9	13.1	23
Parliamentarians	85.5	14.5	124	86.3	13.7	124
Paramount Chiefs	84.7	15.3	124	93.3	6.7	149
National Electoral Commission (Chief & Provincial Commissioners)	100	0	5	60	40	5
High Court Judges	N.A	N.A	N.A	44.4	55.6	9

Source: National Electoral Commission (NEC), cited in the Sixth CEDAW Country Report.

5.2. Gender and Local Governance

5.2.1. Local governance and the decentralisation reform programmes started with the enactment of the Local Government Act in 2004 and the local council elections in 2004, which ushered in the first democratically elected local councils in the country since 1972. To enhance women's participation in decision making at the local level, section 95 (2c) of the Local Government Act 2004 provides that within every district, the Ward Committees pursue a statutory 50/50 gender balance in the election of its 10 members. As part of the ongoing decentralisation process, each Local Government Council has a Gender Committee to undertake local-level initiatives to promote equality between women and men, as well as protect the rights of women and girls. However, most of these committees are not well-funded and are marginalised in the Councils' operation.

5.2.2. Women's participation rate and electoral success increased considerably in the 2008 local government election from its 2004 level. While 107 women contested the councillorship elections in the 2004-2008 electoral cycle, 221 women were councillorship candidates in 2008. This increase was due to the intense mobilisation and sensitisation efforts of various women's NGOs to get women to contest the 2008 election. They raised funds and provided both material and technical support to ensure women's competitiveness during the elections.

Table 5: Women in Local Governance

Political office	2004		2008	
	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female
Councillors	86.3	13.7	81.1	18.9
Chairperson of Local Councils	94.7	5.3	100	0
Deputy Chairperson of Local Councils	89.5	10.5	84.2	15.8
Paramount Chiefs	92.6	7.4	93.3	6.7

Source: National Electoral Commission, cited in the Sixth CEDAW Country Report.

5.3. Gender-based Violence

5.3.1. Rape, sexual slavery and other gross acts of abuse that women endured during the civil war resulted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations that the prevention of GBV should be included in Sierra Leone's post-conflict development architecture. This resulted in the enactment of the Anti-Human Trafficking law, the Domestic Violence Act and the Child Rights Act. As part of this process, the Sexual Offences Act and the Matrimonial Causes Bill are awaiting both cabinet and parliamentary approval. In addition to these legislative initiatives, the GoSL has established various institutional mechanisms to advance the process.

5.3.2. In 2002 the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) was established, and currently 41 units operate nationwide. The FSUs are specialised units attached to police stations, which have the mandate to investigate all forms of abuse against women and children. The National Committee on Gender Based Violence (NAC-GBV), comprising the UN system, national and international NGOs and the MSWGCA, was established in 2009, and a National Referral Protocol for Child Victims/Survivors of SGBV has been developed. The MSWGCA is completing a Referral Pathway for all categories of victims of SGBV in the country.

5.3.3. These interventions notwithstanding, the rate of prosecution and conviction is low because domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse are surrounded by a culture of silence. In most cases matters are settled within the family by elders, as it is considered an aberration by the community to involve 'outside parties' such as the police or social services in mediation. It can therefore be argued that because of this attitude, time will be needed for the current massive campaign on domestic violence to bear fruit.

5.3.4. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) is widespread in Sierra Leone. Estimates vary, but the UN Draft Common Country Assessment 2009 puts the figure at over 90% of 15-49 year olds. Apart from the Creoles in the Western Area, all other ethnic groups engage in the practice. Despite the high prevalence, the government does not have a clear policy on FGM/C and there are no laws explicitly banning the practice.

5.3.5. Sexual abuse and exploitation of girls, especially in JSS, is prevalent within the school system. According to research from a study on school-related GBV by Concern Worldwide in 2010, teachers were the main perpetrators of violence against pupils. Students who refused the advances of teachers were physically and/or verbally abused, raped or coerced into sex and driven out of class or given low grades (Concern Worldwide, 2010). It was noted that the problem is directly linked to poverty, as girls from poor households succumbed to offers of money, gifts or higher grades. In spite of the high prevalence rate of sexual violence, the reporting rate was low because victims felt ashamed and feared that reporting would lead to further stigmatisation, blame and retribution (ibid).

5.4. Environment

5.4.1. Sierra Leone has serious environmental challenges; namely, land and forest degradation due to mining and slash and burn agricultural farming, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, loss of bio-diversity, pollution of fresh water resources and coastal area degradation. Currently about 8,000sq km of land lays bare in the north as a result of overgrazing and bush fires, creating ecological change. Deforestation leads to drought and soil erosion and affects the livelihood of the poor, especially women and girls, who have to walk long distances to gather fuel wood for cooking.

5.4.2. These challenges notwithstanding, the GoSL's environmental-management system developed a set of fragmented initiatives until 2008, when the Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency (SLEPA) was established. As part of efforts to address the country's many environmental concerns, in 2009 the GoSL decided to strengthen SLEPA with the requisite staff to enable the agency carry out its mandate successfully.

5.4.3. SLEPA is currently formulating an environmental policy that will integrate the interests and needs of women, as part of meeting the country's sustainable-development goals. In the meantime, women are being trained in sustainable water and land management as part of the agency's community-based natural resource management programme.

5.5. HIV/AIDS

5.5.1. The national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate rose from 0.9% in 2002 to 1.5% in 2005 and has stabilised at this rate.³⁴ Although this is a success story in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV transmission is not yet under control, as only 52% of the HIV/AIDS sufferers have access to anti-retroviral drugs (HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan, 2010). According to the 2008 DHS, the current national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 1.5% among the population aged 15-49 years shows a gender and residential divide. The prevalence rate for men is 1.2%, while for women it is 1.7%. The high rate among women is directly linked to their subordinate status in society. Their lack of education and gainful employment, and the pressures to survive, lead women to engage in commercial and transactional sexual relationships. Also, the patriarchal culture that legitimises male dominance does not allow women to either negotiate or demand safe sex or question the fidelity of their partners.

5.5. 2. Urban areas have a higher prevalence rate of 2.1%, compared with 1.2% in the rural areas. High unemployment rates, a large youth population and risky behaviour were highlighted as the main causes of the rapid increase in the prevalence rate in the urban areas. The DHS further stated that although 69% of women and 83% of men have heard about HIV/AIDS, only 17% of women and 28% of men aged 15-24 years have comprehensive and accurate knowledge on HIV/AIDS prevention.

5.5.3. Although the HIV prevalence rate among pregnant women attending ANC is 3.2%, which is significantly higher than the national prevalence rate, a declining trend has been observed over the years, from 4.4% in 2007 to 3.5% and 3.2% 2008 and 2009 respectively. HIV/AIDS prevalence among other groups, such as miners, men having sex with men (MSM) and fishermen is estimated at 1.13%, 7.5% and 3.9% respectively. Some 40% of new HIV

³⁴ GoSL was presented with the MDG Award on HIV/AIDS in 2010 based on this statistic.

infections are from people in multiple-sex-partnership relations; 39.7% are commercial sex workers and 15.6% are from discordant monogamous relationships.

6. DONOR INTERVENTIONS

6.1. The African Development Bank (AfDB)

6.1.1 There are 11 ongoing operations in Sierra Leone, with a total value of UA 108.41 million. Infrastructure has overtaken the social sector as the most important segment in terms of the number of projects and commitments, accounting for UA 66.56m (61%) of the portfolio. The social sector accounts for UA 17.0m (16%). Agriculture accounts for UA 14.85m (14%) and Budget Support (Multi-sector) UA 10.0m (9 %). Within the infrastructure sector, transport accounts for 42%, water and sanitation, 41% and energy/power 17%.

6.1.2 The AfDB has ensured that most of the projects within its current funding cycle in Sierra Leone are gender-responsive and take on board the needs and interests of women and girls, particularly in the project areas. For example, the gender impact of the Three Town Water and Sanitation Project is to improve access to safe and reliable water supply, and the Lungi-Port Loko Road will among other things, enhance women's leadership skills by including them in decision-making structures and sensitising men and boys to improve their participation in water and sanitation hygiene, reducing the time spent on water collection from 60 minutes currently to 15 minutes per trip by 2015 and improve access to markets, health centres, schools and farm inputs.

6.1.3 The AfDB and the European Union, WB, and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), agreed to work jointly towards strengthening their commitment to gender equality. They undertook a gender assessment to define how their organisations and programmes succeeded in promoting gender equality in Sierra Leone. The outcome of this collaboration was a joint Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Action Plan. The overarching goal is to ensure that gender is integrated into core development practice to enable women and men have equal access to opportunities, participation and resources. The expected outcomes are: i) entrenched gender-equality practices in the respective field offices, ii) a strengthened GoSL that delivers effective gender-responsive policy and programming, and iii) the creation of a technical pool of human resource in Sierra Leone that will strengthen and support gender capacity building. This assessment was part of the recent trend among Development Partners to align and harmonise their strategies in the country. This shows the commitment to the Paris Declaration recommendations.

6.2. Other Donor Interventions

As a fragile state, Sierra Leone is largely dependent on donor support to undertake most of its reconstruction activities. Thus, various international development agencies, including the UN family, WB and bilateral agencies such as DFID, Irish Aid, USAID and the European Union, are actively engaged in supporting the state's gender-mainstreaming efforts. At the same time, some agencies provide support to many local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) in the country, contributing immensely to the development and implementation of the various policies and reforms that have taken place in post-war Sierra Leone. A list of donor interventions appears in Annex 1.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Gender inequalities persist in key sectors ranging from the economy and access to resources, education, agriculture and health, although progress has been achieved in social indicators as Sierra Leone has moved from 180 out of 182 countries in the UNDP's Human Development Index in 2009 to 158 out of 178 countries in 2010, and asset-based poverty declined from 67.5% in 2003 to 61.6% in 2007,. Furthermore, women are still marginalised in governance and politics at all levels of society, environmental management, infrastructure development, and HIV/AIDS, and the low rate of prosecution and conviction of sexual and gender-based violence cases show that much more needs to be done in mainstreaming gender in policy and programme interventions. Thus, the following recommendations to the GoSL, the AfDB and other donors are a step in the right direction.

7.2. Recommendations to the Government of Sierra Leone

Key Recommendations

7.2.1. The GoSL and non-state actors should embark on a massive sensitisation campaign and awareness raising activities to change section 27 (d) of the national Constitution;

7.2.2. Budgetary support for the implementation of the SILNAP and the National Gender Strategic Plan should be increased;

7.2.3. The GoSL's focal and advisory institution MSWGCA should be strengthened with the necessary technical expertise, logistics and training to enable it undertake its coordinating role, and the capabilities of related sectoral programme staff from other ministries and GDOs should also be strengthened to effectively mainstream gender in their work;

7.2.4. The African Development Bank is to assist Statistics Sierra Leone to institutionalise a sex- and age-disaggregated data-collection process in each ministry's research and planning department to track the effects of policies and programmes on women, men, girls and boys and identify gaps and offer solutions as necessary;

7.2.5. The GoSL should increase spending on social services that benefit women and girls whilst implementing general pro-poor policies such as creating equal opportunities for women and men in accessing employment, education and health services to accelerate poverty reduction, as results worldwide have proved that investing in social services will enable the realization of the MDGs.

Education and Training

7.2.6. Develop a policy framework to guide the coordination of the various girls' education initiatives to increase enrolment, retention and completion rate from primary to tertiary education, whilst developing a strategy to integrate the 30% of school going-age children who are out of the system;

7.2.7. Increase the teacher-pupil ratio, provide adequate infrastructure and school supplies, motivate teachers including with the provision of incentives such as improved conditions of service, higher salaries, and necessary facilities to attract and retain qualified teachers especially to remote rural areas.

Health

7.2.8. Formulate and adopt a gender and health strategy to bring all the different issues on women's health under one framework to ensure effective gender mainstreaming of policy and programme interventions;

7.2.9. Address the low contraceptive usage rate among women as a way to reduce fertility, raise the age at first birth and improve awareness of HIV/AIDS and STD infections among adolescent girls and boys.

Agriculture

7.2.10. Given women's centrality in agriculture, the Women in Agriculture and Nutrition (WIAN) unit should be enabled to carry out its mandate to allow women access to markets, credit, farm inputs and extension services, thereby increasing their productivity and income levels;

7.2.11. The Land and Inheritance Bills should be revisited and amendments made to include women's rights to inherit and dispose of land.

Employment and Financial Access

7.2.12. The government should build on the NaCSA initiative of giving priority to women in disbursing loans and formulating a gender-sensitive MFI lending programme and business skills development; also, the *Osusu* system, the traditional rotating-credit scheme that is the financial lifeline of rural dwellers -- especially women -- should be formalised, well-resourced and enhanced to become a viable, effective and efficient as well as a sustainable source of credit;

7.2.13. Research and documentation on the role of women in the informal economy should be undertaken, and a policy framework on the sector should be proposed with the aim of increasing women's participation in the formal sector. Since the sector is the main employer in Sierra Leone, comprehensive research and analysis of the gender dimension of the informal economy is needed to understand its contribution both to economic growth and poverty, the reasons for its growth, the benefits if any, the constraints faced by operators, the ways to make the sector more responsive to the social and economic needs of operatives and finally, the ways to get its operatives away from the sector to the formal economy. The study should also determine how to promote the economic viability of the informal sector;

7.2.14. Research on factors contributing to the poverty of female headed households in Sierra Leone should be conducted to inform social protection interventions.

Infrastructure

7.2.15. The government should provide infrastructure that reduces women's time poverty and increases their well being. These infrastructure improvements should involve women as stakeholders to ensure effective management and equitable distribution and enjoyment of services by all members of the communities.

Cross-Cutting Themes

7.2.16. Women's groups and development partners should lobby and campaign for the government to adhere to the 30% gender quota in the 2012-17 electoral cycle;

7.2.17. Ensure that the links between HIV/AIDS, SGBV and FGM are clearly articulated and integrated into all programme interventions in general and the health sector in particular.

7.3. Development Partners

7.3.1. The gap should be bridged between commitments at the international level and implementation at the field level by increasing financial and technical expertise in gender and social development projects and programmes;

7.3.2. The inclusion of social/gender development experts should be ensured in all in-country programme and implementation teams to guarantee women's and men's equal participation in and benefits from project outcomes;

7.3.3. The gender coordinating group should be revived as the platform to strengthen the aid coordination in this sector and to act as a pathway to drive the process of achieving the gender-related MDGs, especially MDG 3.

7.4. Recommendations to the African Development Bank

7.4.1. The AfDB should help the GoSL establish a sex- and age-disaggregated data system to ease data analysis for policy design, planning and programme intervention;

7.4.2. As a coordinating partner of the DFID Gender Assessment initiative, the AfDB should ensure that the social-development expert(s) in the Sierra Leone Field office has the technical expertise to engage effectively with all projects so that the positive gendered impacts of projects are not sidelined during implementation;

7.4.3. The AfDB should help the GoSL strengthen the capacity of programme managers throughout the civil service by providing periodic technical training in gender analysis and programme management in order to ensure that projects are gender-responsive. For example, the Decentralisation Secretariat should be supported in implementing its newly adopted Gender Strategic Framework 2011-13;

7.4.4. The Bank should use its comparative advantage in private-sector development to mainstream gender in Sierra Leone's burgeoning private sector by providing technical assistance and resources for the development of gender-sensitive packages and by sensitising all stakeholders to the constraints women face in accessing financial services, and provide capacity-building programmes and projects to address the situation;

7.4.5. AfDB is to engage in GBV interventions as much more needs to be done in mainstreaming GBV issues in policy and programme interventions;

7.4.6 The Bank should try to make all its projects gender-responsive by taking on board the needs of women and girls and boys. For example, the Bumbuna electricity and Matoka road projects should be revisited to provide opportunities for women to gain employment and assess the gender impacts of these projects on household income and access to social services.

Annex 1

Other Donors' Support for Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Donor	Areas of Support/Intervention
African Development Bank	Provides direct funding for projects mainly in infrastructure (transport, agriculture, energy and water and sanitation). Social-sector projects include some poverty reduction and social protection projects.
World Bank	Provides direct funding for key projects, budget support for activities targeting poverty reduction and analytical advisory services to ensure social accountability in project execution and management.
UNFPA	In addition to its reproductive and sexual health mandate, UNFPA is actively engaged in the NAC-GBV Committee and funds the gender budget initiative.
UNICEF	Largely supports the government in its many interventions aimed at addressing gender imbalance in education and health. In education, it assisted in developing a national strategy on girls' education, a Code of Conduct for teachers and mentoring programmes for girls, among other items. In the health sector, it supported the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in the procurement and distribution of vaccines and in communication and mobilisation activities to ensure the successes of these campaigns
UNIFEM	UNIFEM coordinates the UN Joint Vision Programme 17, which incorporates all women-specific programmes in the country. UNIFEM supports policy development to ensure they are gender-responsive. It also Supported the MSWGCA in developing the National Gender Strategic Plan, especially in ensuring that it is aligned with CEDAW, and is working to get UN Resolution 1325 into policy discourse and programmes.
DFID	DFID is committed to promoting women's rights and gender equality. The agency supports organisations working on reproductive health to reduce maternal and infant mortality, increase girls' education, eradicate violence against women, promote women's political activities and assemble gender-disaggregated data for planning.

Donor	Areas of Support/Intervention
	DFID has, for example, funded the International Rescue Committee's Rainbow Centres, providing comprehensive treatment for victims of sexual assault and working with the MSWGCA in implementing the Gender Acts adopted in 2007. A host of local and international NGOs including OXFAM, the National Democratic Institute, and Campaign for Good Governance, 50/50 benefitted from DFID funding to strengthen democracy and women's political empowerment at the local and national levels during the last electoral cycles.
UNDP	UNDP provided support for the enactment of post-conflict gender legislation and supported female candidates through local NGOs during the 2007 and 2008 elections. It continues to support women's political participation and empowerment within Programme 17 in the UN Joint Vision and is working on a gender profile on Women in Governance.
Irish Aid	Irish Aid supports various institutions such as the Human Rights Commission, UNICEF, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Trocaire, and Christian Aid in promoting gender issues in governance and health. In collaboration with other donors, supported the GoSL's free health-care programme. This has resulted in a significant reduction in maternal and child health and an increase in the number of women accessing health facilities. IRC with Irish Aid has supported the NAC-GBV programme and their Rainbo centres.
FAO	The FAO office in Sierra Leone seeks to ensure women's participation and empowerment in all of its programmes. In particular, it seeks to enhance the government of Sierra Leone's capacity to incorporate gender and social-equality issues in agriculture, food-security and rural-development programmes.
USAID	USAID's works directly with implementing partners in many sectors such as peace and security, economic growth and health-sector reform. Its earlier focus was on improved local governance through its Promoting Agriculture, Governance and Environment, PAGE Project in four districts. In 2011, it supported women, minority groups and the disabled in a voter-registration drive in preparation for elections in 2012.

Annex 2

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Annex 3

Map of Sierra Leone

