**THE COALITION OF WOMEN FOCUSED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

**Sierra Leone**

**Strategy for women’s peace, security, and political participation**

**Acronyms and abbreviations**

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

HRC: Human Rights Commission

IMC: Independent Media Commission

LRC: Law Reform Commission

MGCA: Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs

MH: Ministry of Health

MLGCA: Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs

MPED: Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

SCS: Sierra Leone Correctional Service,

SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

**Acknowledgements**

1. **Introduction**

In the landscape of post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone, women's involvement in the political and social sphere has taken on paramount importance, marking a turning point in the country's history. Historically relegated to subordinate roles, they have emerged as key players in the national reconstruction process, challenging stereotypes and redefining their role in a changing society. One of the most striking examples of this commitment is the adoption of the Equal Opportunities for Men and Women Act in 2019, a major milestone in the fight for gender equality. It resulted from an assiduous campaign by determined women's groups, demonstrating their growing influence in political decision-making. Another important milestone is the initiative to introduce gender quotas in government and political institutions that aim at guaranteeing a minimum representation of women. These efforts are not just a response to the challenges of reconstruction but also embody a profound change in Sierra Leone's governance and social structure. This is heartening since "there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women," as stated by Kofi Annan in 2026.

These advances are not without their challenges. Women in Sierra Leone continue to face considerable cultural, socio-economic and security obstacles. Nevertheless, their perseverance and unwavering commitment to bringing about meaningful change are inspiring. Their relatively growing participation in politics and public affairs is a promising sign for the country's future. By recognising and supporting the vital role of women in society, Sierra Leone can look forward to building a stronger, fairer, and more resilient nation. It's a transformation that's not just limited to post-conflict reconstruction but extends to redefining the country's future, placing women at the heart of peacebuilding and sustainable development.

* 1. **International context (international and regional commitments)**

Sierra Leone's international and regional commitments have profoundly impacted the development of community policies and actions to protect women from violence in conflict and promote their active participation in peace processes. These commitments have not only strengthened the country's legal and institutional framework but have also fostered awareness and attitude change at the community level, contributing to the creation of a more equitable and peaceful society.

From the international to the regional level and without being exhaustive, the country has shown commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted in 1979, the Beijing declaration and platform for action adopted in 1995, as well as a series of resolutions from 1325 to 1960 to shape the eminently decisive role of women as peacemakers. Facts have also shown the country’s commitments to the 2003 Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Protocol). As a Member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Sierra Leone supports the regional harmonised vision that has mainstreamed gender equality into ECOWAS’ strategies reflecting the aspirations and engagements.

However, despite these commitments, one reality remains: the gap between aspirations and their tangible implementation. Each commitment, while laudable, faces cultural, financial, and political challenges. Therefore, essential work remains to transform these commitments into lived realities.

* 1. **Brief National and Local Overview (Legal, institutional, policy existing frameworks gaps, challenges, opportunities)**

Sierra Leone, a country marked by decades of conflict, is at a crucial turning point in its history, seeking to fully integrate the gender dimension into its political structures and peace-building efforts. Although its legal framework, notably the ratification of CEDAW and the adoption of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE), is a step forward, much remains to be done to harmonise and concretise these commitments in national laws and policies. Similarly, some of the existing laws need revisions and reforms.

In the institutional arena, the government's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Program, with its 13 ambitious objectives covering various sectors, is a commendable initiative. It is complemented by the efforts of many other national, regional, and international partners that must be highlighted here. However, the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives remain hampered by a lack of resources, political will, and awareness.

On the political front, despite enacting laws such as GEWE, which institutes a 30% quota for women's representation, transforming political norms to favour greater participation by women remains a challenge. For example, beyond the parliament, women's participation remains low in many nominative positions and the security sector, among other sectors. Party structures, often rooted in patriarchal traditions and power dynamics, are reluctant to fully integrate women into leadership roles.

Obstacles are not limited to law enforcement or political structures; they are also rooted in cultural and traditional norms that limit women's active engagement in the political sphere and peace support operations. Women in rural areas or affected communities are more exposed to those cultural and traditional norms. Transforming these norms requires political will and consistent awareness-raising and gender-focused education at all levels of society.

Given the above, Sierra Leone has a favourable basis for developing and implementing targeted initiatives. The government's Women's Equality and Empowerment Program is a foundation which can be built by the national women's coalition to stimulate greater participation by women. The availability of many national, regional, and international partners, such as UNDP and UNWOMEN, among others, provides a good background to leverage. Moreover, regional and international experience offers valuable lessons that can be adapted and applied to the local context and help to achieve significant results.

In summary, Sierra Leone has begun its journey towards gender equality in political parties and peace support operations, knowing that this path will be paved with persistent challenges. Success will depend on commitment at all levels, political will, and concerted action to transform laws, policies, and deep-rooted cultural and traditional norms and attitudes.

* 1. **Methodology and Guiding Principles of the development of the strategy** 
     1. **Methodology**

***Participatory Consultations***: The active participation of women at all levels is crucial to ensure the strategy's legitimacy and that the proposed solutions meet their specific needs and challenges. This democratic approach ensures that the strategy is rooted in the reality experienced by Sierra Leonean women in cities and rural areas.

***Literature review*:** This ensures that the strategy is based on evidence and lessons learned from similar initiatives, both nationally and internationally. It helps avoid duplication, learn from others' successes and failures, and integrate best practices.

***Multi-stakeholder collaboration***: The complexity of issues relating to peace, security, and women's political participation calls for an integrated approach. By involving various sectors of society, the strategy's development ensures that interventions are comprehensive and broadly supported.

***Periodic Evaluation and Review*:** This method is essential to ensure the strategy's responsiveness. The political, social, and economic environment constantly evolves, and the strategy must be flexible to adapt to these changes.

**1.3.2. Guiding principles**

***Inclusivity:*** This principle is fundamental to ensuring that the strategy reflects the diverse experiences and perspectives of Sierra Leonean women (urban and rural, literate and illiterate, young and elderly). Inclusiveness strengthens the relevance and effectiveness of policies and initiatives.

***Transparency*:** Transparency is essential to building trust between actors, enabling citizens to monitor progress, and holding actors accountable.

***Accountability*:** Establishing accountability mechanisms ensures that the commitments made in the strategy are translated into concrete action. It also helps to maintain momentum and ensure continuity of effort.

***Sustainability*:** Initiatives should not be short-term solutions but aim for long-term changes that will survive beyond the strategy's implementation cycle.

***Respect for human rights*:** The strategy's focus on human rights ensures that it contributes to realising women's rights and empowerment, in line with Sierra Leone's international obligations.

***Adaptability*:** A rigid strategy risks becoming obsolete in a changing environment. Adaptability allows us to adjust to specific sub-contexts and new circumstances, ensuring the strategy's continued relevance.

1. **Understanding the state of women’s participation in peacebuilding and public affairs**
   1. **Situation Analysis (national and local perspectives)**

* **Women’s Socioeconomic Wellbeing**

In Sierra Leone, socio-economic development for women is hindered by various factors. Historically, men have had greater access to education, contributing to a national adult (15 years and above) female literacy rate of 41% in 2022 against 56% for adult males. This gap has particularly affected women, limiting their access to information, education, and economic opportunities despite their significant economic contribution. Predominantly employed in the informal sector, women's roles often involve food production, processing, marketing, and handicraft trade. Nevertheless, the rise of women entrepreneurs positively impacts economic growth and job creation.

Women in Sierra Leone also face gender-based inequalities and violence, affecting their social and economic welfare with heart-breaking consequences in rural areas and most affected communities. Salary disparities are common, and in areas like Kono, women's agricultural produce is sometimes stolen, adding to the challenges of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and harmful cultural and traditional practices. Systemic discrimination, including restrictions on land ownership and financial autonomy, further impedes women's progress. Facts have shown that their security and political engagement are intrinsically linked to their economic and financial independence, underlining the need for initiatives to promote economic empowerment, such as training programs, access to funding, and developing entrepreneurial skills.

The government has introduced the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) to assess development funds and mobilise national revenues towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender mainstreaming is key to this initiative, and understanding the barriers to women's participation in resource mobilisation and leveraging their economic potential is crucial for the framework's effectiveness.

* **Women, Peace, Security and Social Cohesion**

In Sierra Leone, where women are the majority, their resilience and strength are particularly evident in rural areas. Women in these regions have endured immense hardships, including sexual assault, physical violence, and other atrocities during the civil war and health crises like Ebola and COVID-19. In these rural communities, women play a crucial role not only in family and community life but also in agriculture and local economies, often while facing limited access to resources and decision-making.

Their active participation in conflict prevention and management is vital, underscored by their commitment to peace and social cohesion. Sierra Leone’s alignment with the global Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, including implementing 30% women in peace missions and adopting two[[1]](#footnote-1) successive national action plans for Resolution 1325, reflects this commitment. These actions demonstrate the country's recognition of women's essential role in peacebuilding and governance, including in rural settings where their influence is deeply rooted in community structures.

The recent elections saw significant involvement from the Eminent Women Peace Mediators group, supported by UNDP and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. They established an "election situation room" to monitor and address electoral violence against women, enhancing post-election peace and social cohesion. However, challenges remain, particularly in rural areas where women's organisations often lack synergy, coordination, and awareness of national action plans on Resolution 1325. This highlights the need for increased awareness and strategic planning for women's involvement in peacebuilding, especially in rural Sierra Leone, which is underrepresented in national dialogues and policies.

* **Women's Democracy, Good Governance and Political Participation**

Women make up 52% of the population of Sierra Leone. Their increased representation in decision-making is heartening. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE Act) mandates 30% representation of women in the public and private sectors and political positions that benefit governance and democracy. A study[[2]](#footnote-2) involving 400 participants across Sierra Leone revealed that men (59,64%) and women (62,28%) perceive women as less corrupt, suggesting that their involvement could lead to more integrity in governance. On the ground, women face many opposites and counterarguments that need to be mapped and countered properly to create an enabling environment for women's participation.

Following the implementation of the GEWE Act during the 2023 general elections, there has been notable progress in women’s representation: women now constitute 30.4% of parliament members, 34% of local advisors, 14% of mayors, 29% of deputy mayors, and 31.25% of cabinet members. However, obstacles like electoral violence, cyber harassment, and insufficient support within political parties persist. The 30% quota has sometimes resulted in rivalry between genders, and financial constraints during campaigns remain significant challenges for women.

* **Women’s Health, Sexual based violence**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a significant issue that undermines the stability and peace of Sierra Leone. This violence manifests in both physical and structural forms and is deeply ingrained in society. The prevalence of gender inequalities throughout the country exacerbates this issue, with women being more likely to be illiterate and suffer extreme poverty. Current legislation, in particular the Abortion Act of 1861, does not allow pregnant women, even rape victims, to have an abortion unless the pregnancy is life-threatening. In 2022, the President announced that a bill decriminalising abortion had been approved and introduced to the National Assembly for discussion and adoption.

‘’Sierra Leone has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, with 717 mothers dying annually for every 100 000 live births as of 2019 (DHS, 2019)’’[[3]](#footnote-3). The main causes of maternal death are bleeding, infection, high blood pressure and complications related to childbirth. In 2019, following a series of cases of violence involving underage girls in the country, President Julius Maada Bio declared rape and sexual violence a "national emergency". Call centres dedicated to sexual violence have been set up. A hotline (116) has been set up to enable people to report cases of sexual violence. Many national, regional, and international partners have constantly invested resources and efforts to accompany the government. The country has also tightened its legislative measures to prevent and punish sexual violence. In partnership with international organisations and NGOs, the government of Sierra Leone must work to improve the health of women and children by creating health infrastructures throughout the country. Without welfare and an environment free of sexual based violence, women can’t effectively perform political participation. This strategy is therefore also highlighted for consideration.

* **Women, Agriculture and Climate change**

Agriculture is the backbone of Sierra Leone's economy. It accounts for more than half of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Women make up a large proportion of the workforce in this sector. According to UN Women, they hold 70% of agricultural jobs. In the recent past, land management was governed by customary law. To correct this injustice against women, in 2007, the law on the devolution of power was passed. This law made it possible for women to own land titles. Unfortunately, it will not be very effective, as customary law continues to be applied, and discrimination remains.

In 2022, another law ended decades of insecurity for rural women. It introduces provisions that enable women to own land titles. The new law states, "Any customary law that excludes, restricts or prevents women from owning, holding, using, transferring, inheriting, succeeding to or dealing with land subject to customary law is void". And thanks to the 30% quota introduced by the law on gender equality and women's empowerment, women can sit on land committees. However, the widespread climate change problem facing humanity is having a severe impact on the women of Sierra Leone, who are essentially dependent on natural and agricultural resources. With climate change, women are forced to work harder to secure income and resources for their families.

* **Socio-cultural barriers to Women's participation in peacebuilding and security**

Gender inequality in Sierra Leone is fuelled by harmful cultural practices, in particular, female genital mutilation and child marriage. Sierra Leone has a high rate of female genital mutilation. Nine out of ten girls and women are mutilated. Female genital mutilation is a severe violation of women's human rights and physical integrity. Civil society and international institutions have urged public authorities to take legislative measures to ban that harmful cultural practice for decades. On the ground, the authorities seem undecided on this issue, and due to that, a drafted bill prohibiting the practice on girls aged 18 is waiting to be debated by the National Assembly.

As far as child marriage is concerned, according to United Nations figures[[4]](#footnote-4), around 39% of girls in Sierra Leone marry before the age of 18, and 13% marry before the age of 15. These statistics make Sierra Leone one of the countries with the highest rates of child marriage in the world. In 2007, the country adopted the Children's Rights Act, which sets the age of marriage at 18. However, enforcement of this law remains challenging due to factors such as lack of awareness, deep-rooted cultural norms, and limited resources to enforce the law. Among others, these are socio-cultural constraints that place women under domination and punishments that limit the expression of their potential.

* **Stakeholders mapping and networking.**

At the community and regional level, women's networks and alliances work in certain districts, including Kono, Bombali, Pujehun, Makeni, and the Western Zone. At the national level, many women's organisations promote gender equality, women's peace, security and political participation, peacebuilding, and women's empowerment. They were particularly active during the general elections in June 2023. Among others, we can list Women's Forum Sierra Leone (WFSL), Women in Media in Sierra Leone (WISMAL), The 50/50 group, the group of Eminent Women Peace Mediators in Sierra Leone, Women in Need of Development Sierra Leone (WIND SL), etc. Considering all the ongoing efforts, this strategy is not supposed to start from scratch. However, the major challenge that threatens their interventions is the lack of synergy and coordination between them. Launching the Coalition of women-focused civil society organisations is a great step that can also support responding to the need for synergy and coordination for better impacts.

Regarding the Government and other institutions, Sierra Leone has created two separate ministries to implement its actions favouring women and children: The Ministry of Gender and Child Affairs (MGCA) and the Ministry of Social Affairs. In addition, several state institutions are involved in promoting women's peace, security, and political participation in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. These include the National Security Office and the Commission for the Registration and Regulation of Political Parties.

* 1. **SWOT[[5]](#footnote-5) Analysis**

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| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES | OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| * Existence of legal frameworks promoting women’s peace, security, and political participation. * Increase in the number of women in parliament and local decision-making bodies. * Women have the right to own land. * Women's determination to participate in the democratic process is evident. | * High illiteracy rate among women. * Lack of internal funding policies for political parties. * Lack of voter education. * Lack of coordination between CSOs working for women's peace, security, political participation, and involvement in peacebuilding. * Early girl-child marriage of women. * Lack of funding for women's economic activities. * Level of women's involvement in informal sector activities. * Marginalisation of women in the decision-making process within their party. * Tensions between women within organisations. * Voting centres not adapted for disabled, elderly, and pregnant women | * Wide range of strategic partners * Genuine political will from leaders to advance the rights and empowerment of women. * Confidence in women from a large part of the population. * Existence and gradual implementation of a wide range of legal instruments. * Implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment policy in various sectors. | * Youth unemployment and delinquency in certain districts, * Radicalisation and incitement of young minors by political actors. * Dependence of NGOs on external funding * Non-operation of the law on digital technology. * Persistence of sexual and gender-based violence. * Effects of climate change on women contributing to low agricultural yields and food insecurity. * Ban on women being supreme chiefs in certain regions. |

* 1. **PESTEL[[6]](#footnote-6) Analysis**

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| Domains | Factors | Effects | Opportunities/ measures |
| Political | Government's political will. | After forty years of resistance, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE) has been adopted. | Recent general elections have increased the number of women MPs and local councillors. |
| Strong domination of men on the political scene. | Over 60% of senior positions are held by men. In political parties, women have no decision-making responsibilities. | The government must facilitate the required measures for women to access prominent political party governance positions.  Public funding for political parties may be an option to enable women to overcome the economic challenges they face during electoral processes. |
| The brutality of the political process. | Violence erupts during and after elections, and many women are humiliated, abused, and intimidated. | Women must be protected during and after elections. Brutality risks discouraging women from becoming involved in the electoral process. The government must also take steps to punish the perpetrators of such violence. |
| Economic | Strong presence of women in the informal sector | Women's economic activities generate low incomes | The government must initiate programmes to finance women's activities, making them self-sufficient and enabling them to leave the informal sector. |
| The Economic violence | Despite adopting the law authorising women to hold title to land, this right is denied in some localities. | Economic violence compromises women's economic emancipation. We need to ensure that the standards laid down are applied and continue to raise awareness in communities. |
| Social | Low level of education | Women who do not attend school do not have access to education, economic opportunities or an understanding of the issues involved in women's political participation. | Making education accessible to young girls and creating literacy programmes for women. |
| Perpetration of harmful cultural practices and sexual violence. | Sexual violence, early girl child marriage and genital mutilation compromise the well-being of women and girls and affect their physical and mental health. | Raising awareness among traditional authorities to eradicate these practices. |
| Youth unemployment. | Being idle, young people indulge in alcohol and banditry. They are more prone to acts through violence during the electoral process, especially when they are paid to do so. | Develop policies to reduce poverty and youth unemployment. |
| Weak material and organisational capacity of women's rights-focused groups. | Civil society organisations lack a shared strategic vision and action plan. | Strengthen the operational and organisational capacities of women-focused civil society organisations. |
| Technological | The insecurity of cyberspace. | Candidates, especially women, are victims of cyberbullying, threats, and gender-based violence. | Empower the anti-violence unit to implement the 2022 law on cyber security and make it a genuine tool for democracy. |
| Environmental | The effects of climate change on women. | Women in Sierra Leone are more vulnerable to climate change than men. Access to water and other natural resources on which they depend. | Involve women in local, regional, and national climate decision-making and train them in resilient farming techniques. |
| Legal | Lack of a legal framework for female genital mutilation | Genital mutilation is carried out daily, causing victims to fall victim to the powerlessness of the State. | Adopt the revised draft of the 2007 law banning genital mutilation of girls under the age of 18. |

1. **Rational, goal, objectives, and guiding principles for the strategy**
   1. **Rationale**

Despite its significant progress since the end of the civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone is at a historic crossroads in terms of women's full participation in peacebuilding, security, and political life. It is crucial to ensure women's participation at all levels of decision-making. The essential role played by women as agents of change and peace during and after the conflict in Sierra Leone deserves to be recognised, consolidated, and reinforced.

Moreover, studies such as Caprioli's in 2000 have shown that gender mainstreaming in peace and security processes is the best way to ensure lasting peace. Furthermore, women's participation in political life is not only a means of achieving gender equality but also of enriching debates, perspectives, and solutions to national challenges.

* 1. **Goal**

This strategy aims to achieve **a Sierra Leone where women are central to efforts to consolidate peace and security and where they participate fully in political life**.

* 1. **Objectives**

There are four main strategic objectives:

1. Contribute to an enabling environment free of all forms of violence against women and girls.
2. —Strengthen the capacities of central and decentralized members of the coalition of women-focused civil society organisations and other key stakeholders.
3. Increase the level of women’s meaningful participation in governance and in Chiefdom, district and national level peace and security architecture.
4. Reinforce women’s contributions to secured and peaceful communities.
   1. **Strategy Guiding Principles**

This strategy for women’s peace, security and political participation is based on the guiding principles below:

***Put women and girls’ peace and security at the heart of programming:*** The best interests of women and girls, including peace and security, must remain central through women-focused CSO interventions.

***Target institutional and organisational development of Women-focused CSOs through vision-driven, better coordination and delivery: A vision-based management approach for the women's coalition, rather than a project-driven management approach, should integrate the efforts of the various communities, including the most affected,*** to advance women's issues.

***Adopt a specialisation and labour division approach, ensuring community-led participation from all targeted districts:*** Reflecting the diversity of experiences, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities across Sierra Leone, communities must be involved in designing policies and programmes with a lead role in implementing this strategy.

***Ensure zero tolerance for*** ***all forms of violence and all barriers impeding women and girls’ participation:*** All kinds of barriers impeding women and girls’ participation, their peace and security must be fought by all and with all required means.

* 1. **Strategic Framework**

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| **Objectives[[7]](#footnote-7)** | **Sub objectives** | **Strategies** | **Proposed keys actions** | **Responsible / targets** |
| 3.4.1. Contribute to an enabling environment free of all forms of violence against women and girls. | 3.4.1.1. Promote zero tolerance of all forms of violence that hinder women's participation in the promotion and consolidation of peace and security. | **Awareness and education campaigns:** Implement comprehensive awareness campaigns to educate the public about the negative impacts of violence against women on peace and security. | 1. Organize workshops and seminars in schools, universities, and communities focusing on gender equality, women's participation in peace and security, and the impact of violence against women. 2. Develop and distribute informational materials, such as brochures and posters, that highlight the consequences of violence against women. 3. Launch media campaigns using television, radio, and social media platforms to spread awareness about the issue. | The coalition of women-focused CSOs targeting the public and key stakeholders. |
| **Advocacy and lobbying for strengthened legal frameworks and law enforcement:** Engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts to influence the development and strict enforcement of laws and regulations that punish all forms of violence against women. | 1. Conduct thorough research and analysis on existing legal frameworks and law enforcement practices to identify weaknesses and areas for improvement. 2. Advocate and lobby for the enactment or amendment of laws to ensure stronger protections against violence towards women and more severe penalties for perpetrators. 3. Call for more specialised units within law enforcement agencies to handle cases of gender-based violence | The coalition targeting: MGCA, MH,  SCS, HRC, Justice Sector, Development Partners, |
| **Support services for survivors:** Contribute to accessible and well-resourced support systems for survivors of violence. | 1. Contribute to setting up crisis centres or shelters that offer safe housing, counselling, legal aid, and medical care for survivors of violence. 2. Implement a toll-free hotline for reporting incidents of violence and seeking assistance. 3. Organize skill development and economic empowerment programs for survivors to facilitate their independence and recovery. | The coalition, in partnership with MGCA, MH,  SCS, HRC, Justice Sector, Development Partners. |
| 3.4.1.2. Advance Justice for Women | **Community engagement and empowerment:** Engage community leaders, men, and boys in fighting violence against women. | 1. Facilitate community forums and discussions involving men and boys to address cultural norms that perpetuate violence against women. 2. Collaborate with local leaders and influencers to develop and implement community-based initiatives that empower women, such as microfinance schemes, vocational training, and leadership development programs. | The coalition targeting key stakeholders and community leaders |
| **Promoting gender equality**: Equal rights and opportunities for women | 1. Raise awareness on specific issues faced by women about equal rights and opportunities. 2. Encourage and support women to chase leadership positions in business, politics, security, and community organisations. | The coalition targets key stakeholders in the public and private sectors. |
| **Encouraging education** for girls and women | 1. Advocate for scholarship offers or financial assistance to make education more accessible in the most affected communities. 2. —Support adult women’s literacy programmes tailored to provide basic education skills and address as women’s needs to empower them for effective political participation. 3. Support voter education targeting girls and women to increase their understanding of electoral processes. 4. Celebrate success stories of educated women to inspire others. | The coalition targets all the key stakeholders in affected communities and required ministries and services. |
| 3.4.2. Strengthen the capacities of central and decentralised members of the coalition of women-focused civil society organisations and other key stakeholders. | 3.4.2.1. Promote a vision-driven national coalition of women-focused Civil Society organisations. | **Supporting a coalition** of women-focused civil society organisations through capacity building | 1. Create and launch a coalition of women-focused CSOs with national and decentralised coordination and leadership. 2. Provide the coalition with a strategic plan that defines shared vision, goals, and objectives. 3. Conduct capacity building to the coalition leads on leadership and vision-driven management to change from the project-driven approach. | The coalition supported by UN Women, UNDP, and World Vision… |
| **Assessing the progress and challenges of the coalition** to celebrate achievements and adapt strategies. | 1. Conduct periodic assessments of the coalition’s efforts toward its vision, goals, and objectives. 2. Set up a system for regular progress reporting toward the vision, goals, and objectives. 3. Share the progress, successes and lessons learned with the public, policymakers, and donors to gain more support, resources, and visibility. | The coalition supported by UN-Women, UNDP, World Vision, MGCA, IMC… |
| 3.4.2.2. Ensure inclusivity by reducing the disconnect between women. | **Adopting diverse representation and leadership levels** to benefit from all women’s experiences | 1. Make a conscious effort to include women from diverse backgrounds and locations throughout the coalition’s coordination organs and initiatives. 2. Strengthen the vision-driven management and leadership skills at the coalition's local, regional, and national levels through capacity-building programmes. 3. Produce and update the list of the unique challenges faced by the various groups of women living in the affected communities. | The coalition with support from UN-Women, UNDP, World Vision, MGCA, MLGCA, IMC |
| 3.4.2.3. Improve partnership, networking, fundraising, and resource sharing. | **Improving the partnership, networking, and fundraising** continuously. | 1. Intensify regular fundraising means and events to sell the coalition’s vision and collect core funding for its achievement. 2. Prioritise activities connecting with policymakers, stakeholders, and other organisations and movements to expand the coalition’s reach and increase its influence and impact on the ground. 3. Ensure the coalition's sustainability through adequate core funding, sustainability fund, planning and resources management in line with its constitutions and strategic plan. | The coalition with support from UN-Women, UNDP, World Vision, MGCA, and Development partners. |
| **Promoting equitable resources and opportunities** **allocation** to reduce disparities. | 1. Plan frequent activities to reach out to underrepresented groups and communities through a conscious ‘’No community behind’’ approach in planning and implementation. 2. Provide rooms for regular check-ins to assess and gather information on the coalition’s inclusivity efforts. | The coalition with support from  development partners. |
| 3.4.3. Increase women’s meaningful participation in governance and Chiefdom, district and national level peace and security architecture. | 3.4.3.1. Contribute to building inclusive institutions and advancing gender-sensitive reforms. | **Lobbying and advocating** to advance policies and provisions for women's political participation and representation in Sierra Leone. | 1. Advocate for fully implementing and assessing required 30% quota law reforms. / Lobby and advocate for complementary institutional policy reforms, including cultural/traditional institutions aiming at a 30% quota for all institutions. 2. Conduct community dialogues to understand and transform the weak support women received from their peers. 3. Support media to provide equitable and appropriate coverage for female political candidates and issues important to women. 4. Identify champions and leverage on their support to influence community perceptions, norms, and practices regarding women's roles in politics and peacebuilding. 5. Conduct a mapping of all defenders/promoters of their arguments and where they use them against women’s political participation. The findings will be used to counter them and advance women’s political participation. | The coalition targets key stakeholders like MGCA, Parliament / Female Caucus and key parliamentary oversight committees, Council of paramount Chiefs, Development partners |
| 3.4.3.2. Enhance women’s and girls’ capacity for significant security, political participation, and representation at all levels. | **Increasing capacity-building initiatives with opportunities for practices and allies’ mobilisation** to improve women's political and Security participation and representation in Sierra Leone. | 1. Recruit, train, and mentor women cohorts nominated by various political parties, institutions and CSOs for better political participation and representation. 2. Launch/support the cluster of husbands and champions supporting wives/women for political participation. 3. Provide training for women on required political skills, *including fundraising; campaign strategy and political communication technique; political analysis and development to understand and address critical issues; legal and governance aspects of politics, including electoral laws, party rules and parliamentary procedures; conflict management and negotiation in political area; online and digital skills for modern campaign and impact…* 4. Organise Community events to celebrate women performing positions such as town chiefs, section chiefs, members of chiefdom committees, parliamentary members, and decision-makers as a means of breaking the barriers. | The coalition targeting key stakeholders like MGCA, Council of paramount chiefs,  Development partners |
| 3.4.3.3. Mainstream gender sensitivity in political parties and decision-making positions. | **Monitoring to increase women’s participation** in parties, security committees and other governance committees in the country. | 1. Collect data on women’s political participation and decision-making positions to track progress and identify needed improvements. 2. Identify and award the best political parties or lead decision-makers promoting women's participation at community and national levels. | The coalition targets key stakeholders like MGCA, ministries, the Independent Media Commission… |
| 3.4.4. Reinforce women’s contributions to secured and peaceful communities. | 3.4.4.1. Empower women for decision-making roles related to security and peace efforts. | **Ensuring required capacity building** for women from different backgrounds to perform decision-making roles during security and peace efforts in SL. | 1. Conduct capacity building on *c*risis management, conflict prevention, resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding for women in the most conflict-affected communities. 2. Support women’s involvement in conflict resolution and peace negotiation through local and national peace initiatives and infrastructures. | The coalition targeting MGCA, Local councils, |
| 3.4.4.2. Promote conflict prevention/management initiatives by focusing on the WPS agenda. | **Fostering peaceful co-existence in communities,** districts, and at all levels, as well as exploiting the values of WPS and gender equality. | 1. Organise yearly ‘’WPS Dynamic talks’’ in each of the most affected communities to document the progress and challenges and air the findings or submit them to decision-makers at all levels. 2. —Organise joint conflict analysis sessions in the high-risk hotspot communities to update and address the root causes of conflicts. 3. —Track and assess government commitments and efforts to address the root causes of conflicts and women’s participation in security and peace processes at all levels. 4. Advocate for the full implementation and localisation of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP) on the UNSCC’s Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). | The coalition in partnership with key stakeholders like MGCA, MPED, MLGCA, Local councils,  Independent Media Commission, Development Partners, ECOWAS, AU, |

* 1. **Strategy implementation and coordination mechanism**

**The implementation of this strategy for peace, security, and women's political participation by the Sierra Leone National Coalition of Women focused CSO requires the involvement and contribution of various institutions and structures listed below:**

**State institutions:**

Parliament

**States ministries**

Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs (MGCA), Ministry of Health (MH), Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs (MLGCA), Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED), Minister of Justice (MJ), Minister of Basic & Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), Minister of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE)

**State national commissions.**

Independent Media Commission (IMC), Law Reform Commission (LRC), Human Rights Commission (HRC)

**State-specific services.**

Sierra Leone Correctional Service (SCS), Gender Mainstreaming and Field Services, Gender-Based Violence Services

**Local authorities**

Chiefdoms, Council of paramount chiefs, Local councils

**Civil Society Organisations:**

Women-focused coalition of organisations, Women-Focused organisations, Women-led organisations, Other civil society organisations (CSOs)

**Implementing partners and other technical and financial partners:**

* UN Women, UNDP Sierra Leone, World Vision, and other development partners

**The coordination mechanism for the strategy** lies on various actors from the operational level to the high levels of the state.

**The Coalition of Women-Focused CSOs,** which brings together the main women-led organisations (WLOs), women-focused organisations (WFOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Sierra Leone, will provide the required **operational coordination** of the strategy. Its national and district structures and member organisations will serve as consultation, cooperation, and process coordination platforms. That proposed coordination platform will be strengthened by advice and technical support from the state national commissions, specific services, and other required resources. The Women-Focused Coalition (WFC) will develop a resource mobilisation plan to address the resource challenge for effectively implementing this strategy. The funding will mainly come from the development partners, the government, and the private sector. In addition, focusing on a vision-driven approach rather than a project-driven approach will support the sustainability of the coalition.

**The consortium of implementing partners comprised UN Women, UNDP Sierra Leone, and World Vision, as well as other development partners,** are technical and financial partners. Their support to the coalition is key for the coordination and the mobilisation of funds and all required actors. They will be critical in creating a bridge for collaboration with all state actors and decision-makers.

**As high-level decision-making places, the state institutions (Parliament and others) and state ministries** are part of the implementing stakeholders to target. Depending on their thematic and specific mandate, they will play critical roles in support of the coordination platform by providing state support and responses to women’s peace, security, and political participation issues.

Setting up a coordination mechanism for Sierra Leone's peace, security and women's political participation strategy requires a holistic approach that integrates vertical structures (from local to national level) and horizontal structures (between different sectors and actors). Here is an example of a coordination mechanism:

* **Steering Committee (SC)** to ensure overall strategic direction and alignment with national policies.
* **Coordination Secretariat** to operationalize decisions, coordinate stakeholder activities and serve as a focal point for communication.
* **Thematic Working Groups** to address specific areas of the strategy, such as sexual violence, political participation, capacity building, community involvement, etc.
* **Community Consultation Forums** to ensure the participation and representation of local communities, particularly women.
* **Dialogue with International Partners** to leverage on international assistance on national priorities.

1. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge management**

To implement this strategy, the Coalition of Women-Focused CSO will seek expert advice to develop guidelines for specific priority objectives and areas. The specialist supports assessing progress, outcomes and impacts through a practical and detailed M&E framework. Through regular coordination meetings with relevant stakeholders and assessment initiatives, the coalition will progressively improve data collection to build an evidence base habit and learn how change happens.

The monitoring of the strategy will be coordinated at different levels (National, Regional, and Local) and will be guided by the key considerations below:

* + Evaluating whether the strategy implementation has achieved its four objectives and ten sub-objectives.
  + Evaluating whether the implementation is leading to the desired vision and effects.
  + Detecting improvement areas to guarantee the achievement of the strategy’s objectives.
  + Learning from programmes and activities that are being implemented and generating information and knowledge to design future better interventions.
  + Formulating better decisions for broader policy implications about women’s peace, security, political participation, etc.

The various indicators for monitoring this strategy will be developed around its ten sub-objectives grouped into four main objectives. They will be primarily qualitative, with some quantitative indicators.

The Data will be collected from all possible and relevant sources through different agencies: Sierra Leone police, the judiciary sector, the Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and other institutions that can provide information relating to women’s peace, security and political participation and representation.

The variety of data to collect and manage in implementing this strategy requires a robust data storage and management system for the Coalition of Women-Focused CSO serving as coordinating platforms.

1. **Conclusion**

In conclusion, developing this strategy for Peace, security, and women's political participation marks a decisive step towards realising an inclusive and shared vision by the coalition of women-focused CSOs in Sierra Leone. Its relevance is rooted in various facts and research highlighting the crucial importance of women's inclusion in sustainable peacebuilding. The empirical evidence presented in Caprioli and Boyer's (2001) study demonstrates that societies that promote gender equality tend to be more peaceful and stable.

The strategy proposed addresses the systemic challenges identified that hinder women's peace, security, and participation in Sierra Leone through four objectives detailed in 10 sub-objectives and 46 possible activities and initiatives. By targeting those objectives and activities, the Coalition of women-focused CSOs in Sierra Leone can contribute to pave the way for sustainable stability and development of the country.

1. **Annexes**
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4. Ranking from UNICEF child marriage data, February 2017, available

   at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. and sub-objectives (If required) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)