**BACKGROUND OF EACH DISTRICT IN THE WOMEN’S PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA IN SIERRA LEONE (WPSASL)**

The Women’s Peace and Security Agenda in Sierra Leone (WPSASL) operates in six key districts across Sierra Leone, working with local civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote women’s participation in peace and security governance, conflict prevention, and gender equality. Each district has unique geographical, cultural, economic, and social dynamics that influence its approach to peacebuilding and women’s empowerment.

**Below is a detailed background for each district, aligning with the overall objectives of the WPSASL initiative.**

**1. Western Rural District**

Strategic Location & Geographical Significance

Western Rural, located on the Freetown Peninsula, is a diverse and strategically important region that connects Sierra Leone’s bustling capital, Freetown, with coastal villages, lush forests, and fast-growing peri-urban communities. The district is known for its stunning beaches, rich biodiversity, and rapidly expanding economy, making it both a center for tourism and a growing urban settlement.

**Role in Peace & Security**

•The rapid urbanization of Western Rural has led to land disputes, political tensions, and social inequalities, requiring community-based conflict resolution mechanisms.

•Women in the district face challenges such as gender-based violence (GBV), limited access to legal protection, and economic marginalization, making it a priority area for advocacy and empowerment programs.

**Economic Landscape**

•The district has a thriving agricultural sector, with smallholder farmers growing cassava, vegetables, palm oil, and fruits, contributing to food security and local markets.

•The fishing industry provides livelihoods for many families, particularly in Tombo and Kent, but climate change and overfishing threaten sustainability.

•Tourism is a major industry, with destinations like Tokeh Beach, River No. 2, and Banana Island attracting both local and international visitors.

**CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN**

•High levels of GBV, including domestic violence and sexual harassment, remain a critical issue.

•Many women lack access to land ownership, limiting their ability to invest in agriculture or small businesses.

•The legal system is underutilized due to limited awareness and cultural barriers, making women hesitant to seek justice.

**WPSASL INTERVENTIONS:**

• Community dialogues on conflict resolution & gender rights.

• Legal advocacy and training for women’s access to justice.

• Economic empowerment programs for women in agriculture and small-scale trade.

**2. WESTERN URBAN DISTRICT (FREETOWN)**

A Vibrant Political & Economic Center

Western Urban, home to Freetown, the capital city, is the political, economic, and cultural hub of Sierra Leone. With a population of over 1.5 million, it is the most densely populated district, bringing both opportunities and challenges in the areas of women’s rights, security, and governance.

**Role in Peace & Security**

•As the seat of government, Freetown plays a key role in shaping national policies on women, peace, and security.

•Despite economic growth, urban poverty, gender inequality, and political violence remain pressing issues.

•Youth unemployment and crime, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), disproportionately affect women and girls.

**ECONOMIC & SOCIAL DYNAMICS**

•The private sector and informal economy drive employment, with many women working in petty trade, market vending, and small-scale businesses.

•The education sector is expanding, yet girls still face barriers such as early marriage, school dropouts, and discrimination in STEM fields.

•Housing shortages, land disputes, and economic inequality contribute to tensions in urban communities.

**WPSASL INTERVENTIONS:**

• High-level advocacy for implementing UNSCR 1325 & 1820.

• Leadership training for women in politics, law enforcement, and civil society.

• Urban safety initiatives, including women’s protection programs.

3**. BOMBALI DISTRICT**

A Key Political & Agricultural Hub in Northern Sierra Leone

Bombali, with its capital Makeni, is one of Sierra Leone’s largest districts, known for agriculture, education, and political influence. It is a critical region for national governance, with strong links to government leadership and economic development.

**ROLE IN PEACE & SECURITY**

•The district has a strong history of political activism, which sometimes leads to tensions, protests, and disputes over leadership positions.

•Women in rural communities face high levels of GBV and economic exclusion.

•Community policing and peacebuilding efforts have played a key role in reducing violence and enhancing security.

**Economic & Social Dynamics**

•Agriculture is the backbone of Bombali’s economy, with rice, cassava, and livestock farming sustaining rural communities.

•The district is home to the University of Makeni (UNIMAK), which fosters education and research on gender and development.

•Women’s participation in local governance remains low, despite increased awareness campaigns.

**WPSASL INTERVENTIONS**:

• Advocacy toolkit training for women’s rights activists .

• Peace walks & community dialogues on conflict prevention .

• Leadership mentoring for young women and local councilors.

**4. KARENE DISTRICT**

Karene is one of Sierra Leone’s more recently delineated districts, characterized by its predominantly rural setting and a landscape that blends hilly terrains with fertile plains. This district is marked by a network of seasonal streams and small rivers that not only enhance its agricultural potential but also shape the daily lives of its inhabitants. The natural environment, with its tropical climate and distinct rainy season, supports a rich biodiversity that contributes to both subsistence farming and small-scale commercial agriculture.

The population of Karene is largely agrarian, with communities tightly bound by traditional values and local governance structures. In many parts of the district, local chiefs and elders hold significant influence, mediating disputes and preserving cultural traditions passed down through generations. The strong sense of community is a double-edged sword—while it reinforces social cohesion and collective action, it can also limit individual opportunities, particularly for women who often face rigid expectations regarding their roles in society.

Economically, Karene is driven by agriculture. Rice, groundnuts, and a variety of vegetables are the mainstay crops, cultivated using both traditional methods and more modern techniques where possible. Livestock rearing also plays a crucial role, with many families relying on small animals such as goats and chickens for both nutrition and supplementary income. However, the district faces significant economic challenges. Inadequate infrastructure—such as poor road networks and limited storage facilities—hampers access to larger markets, while sporadic rainfall and occasional flooding can disrupt planting cycles and reduce yields.

Socially and culturally, Karene is a region steeped in tradition. Vibrant ceremonies, music, dance, and storytelling are integral to community life, reinforcing a rich cultural heritage. Despite the deeply rooted traditional structures, there is a growing movement among local women to assert their rights and participate more fully in community decision-making processes. However, traditional gender norms continue to limit women’s access to education, land ownership, and formal political roles, making them more vulnerable in times of conflict or economic hardship.

The Women’s Coalition in Karene is actively working to bridge these gaps. Through targeted capacity-building initiatives, conflict resolution training, and legal advocacy, the coalition supports local women in challenging established norms and gaining a more prominent voice in community affairs. By enhancing local dispute resolution mechanisms and promoting inclusive governance, the coalition aims to transform Karene into a model district where both women and men can enjoy equal opportunities and a more peaceful coexistence.

**Role in Peace & Security**

•Due to its rural nature, women in Karene have limited access to justice, healthcare, and education.

•Land disputes and ethnic tensions are common, requiring mediation and reconciliation programs.

•Women are underrepresented in political offices, making leadership training a priority.

Economic & Social Landscape

•Agriculture dominates the local economy, with farming communities growing groundnuts, rice, and vegetables.

•Limited infrastructure and roads make economic mobility challenging, especially for women traders.

•Cultural traditions often restrict women’s roles in decision-making.

**WPSASL Interventions:**

• Training women in conflict resolution & peacebuilding.

• Supporting girls’ education & mentorship programs.

• Economic empowerment projects for women farmers.

5. Kono District

Kono is widely recognized as Sierra Leone’s diamond district, located in the eastern part of the country. The region’s rugged terrain and dense forests are interspersed with rich mineral deposits, particularly diamonds, which have significantly shaped the district’s economic and social landscape. While the diamond industry has brought wealth and global attention to Kono, it has also been a source of deep-seated inequalities and social tensions.

The geography of Kono is diverse, featuring a mix of steep hills and lush valleys. These physical characteristics have long contributed to both the allure and the challenges of the district. The presence of extensive forested areas has supported not only mining activities but also traditional agriculture. Many families in Kono engage in smallholder farming, cultivating crops such as rice, cocoa, and coffee to supplement their incomes. However, the benefits of diamond mining are often unevenly distributed, with a significant portion of the population living in relative poverty despite the region’s natural wealth.

In terms of demographics, Kono is a melting pot of diverse ethnic groups, each with its own cultural practices and communal traditions. Community bonds are strong, and social networks play a critical role in the daily lives of residents. These networks are instrumental in conflict resolution, particularly when disputes arise over land and resource rights. Nonetheless, the influx of mining activities has introduced new challenges, including environmental degradation, illegal mining, and conflicts over resource control. The tensions between artisanal miners and established mining interests are compounded by issues of labor exploitation and gender-based vulnerabilities.

For women in Kono, the challenges are multifaceted. Many work in informal sectors or on family farms, yet they are frequently excluded from the formal economic benefits derived from the mining boom. This exclusion extends to decision-making processes related to resource management, leaving women with limited power to advocate for fair distribution and environmental protection. Additionally, the mining industry’s environmental impact—such as deforestation and soil erosion—has had adverse effects on agricultural productivity, further exacerbating economic hardships for rural communities.

The Women’s Coalition is deeply engaged in Kono, striving to address these inequalities through comprehensive advocacy and capacity-building programs. By promoting legal reforms that protect women’s rights in mining and agricultural sectors, providing training in alternative livelihoods, and facilitating dialogue between stakeholders, the coalition is working to ensure that the wealth generated by Kono’s natural resources benefits all members of the community, particularly women who have long been marginalized.

Role in Peace & Security

•Illegal mining activities and economic inequality have led to social unrest and crime.

•Women in mining communities are often marginalized and exposed to labor exploitation and GBV.

•Land ownership issues disproportionately affect women farmers and traders.

**Economic & Social Landscape**

• Diamond mining drives the economy, but only a few benefit from the industry.

• Agriculture is growing, with cocoa, coffee, and rice production expanding.

• Youth unemployment and migration create social and security challenges.

**WPSASL INTERVENTIONS:**

• Legal advocacy for women’s land & mining rights.

• GBV prevention programs in mining communities.

• Alternative livelihood programs for women outside mining.

**6. PUJEHUN DISTRICT**

Pujehun, situated in the southern region of Sierra Leone, is known for its remote and predominantly rural character. This district is distinguished by its rolling hills, expansive farmlands, and river valleys that provide both beauty and a foundation for subsistence agriculture. Pujehun’s relative isolation from urban centers presents both opportunities and challenges for its inhabitants. While the district’s seclusion helps preserve its cultural traditions and natural landscapes, it also limits access to critical infrastructure and services.

The population of Pujehun is largely composed of smallholder farmers and local traders. Despite economic hardships, there is a strong sense of community and resilience among its residents. Traditional leadership structures are well-established, and local councils often serve as the primary means for resolving disputes and organizing community life. This close-knit social fabric has been a critical asset in mobilizing community efforts, particularly in times of crisis or conflict.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of Pujehun’s economy. Residents primarily cultivate rice, cassava, and a variety of vegetables, which are essential for both local consumption and small-scale trade. However, the district’s economic potential is constrained by its limited access to modern agricultural inputs, technology, and transportation networks. These challenges are compounded by periodic disruptions in water supply and infrastructural deficiencies that hinder market access, making it difficult for farmers to achieve consistent productivity and improved livelihoods.

Culturally, Pujehun is vibrant and dynamic. The district has a rich heritage of traditional music, dance, and storytelling that continues to play a central role in community gatherings and celebrations. Women, in particular, have a longstanding history of community activism, often spearheading initiatives for social change and local development. Despite this active participation, women in Pujehun still face systemic challenges, including limited educational opportunities, inadequate healthcare services, and insufficient legal support when confronting gender-based violence or economic exploitation.

In response to these challenges, the Women’s Coalition in Pujehun is implementing a series of targeted interventions aimed at empowering local women and enhancing community resilience. Key initiatives include gender law awareness campaigns, community-based mediation programs, and leadership training sessions designed to equip women with the skills needed to advocate for their rights and participate in local governance. By strengthening local capacities and establishing robust support networks, the coalition works to create an environment where women in Pujehun can thrive, contribute to sustainable development, and play a central role in fostering peace and security.

WPSASL Interventions:

• Gender law awareness campaigns (Devolution of Estate Act, GBV laws).

• Community training on gender rights & leadership ￼.

• Peacebuilding dialogues in remote areas.

**WHO WE ARE**

The Women’s Coalition, established in October 2023, is a robust network of 120 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) across Sierra Leone, dedicated to championing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Our membership is diverse and dynamic, encompassing community-based organizations, national non-governmental organizations, and various specialized networks. Together, we form a unified platform that addresses critical challenges faced by women in conflict and post-conflict settings, as well as issues in peacebuilding and governance.

Our coalition emerged from the recognition that women’s voices are too often marginalized in decision-making processes, especially in contexts where peace and security are at stake. We bring together organizations that work at every level from the grassroots to the national stage to create a cohesive strategy aimed at mitigating conflicts, promoting inclusive peace processes, and advancing women’s rights. By leveraging the unique strengths and perspectives of each member, we strive to:

•Mitigate Conflicts: Develop and implement community, district, and national strategies to prevent and resolve disputes, ensuring that local conflicts do not escalate.

•Enhance Women’s Participation: Empower women to take active roles in peace negotiations and governance, thus ensuring that their perspectives shape policies and programs.

•Safeguard Women’s Rights: Advocate for the protection of women and girls from all forms of violence, while promoting legal and social reforms that support their safety and dignity.

•Promote Governance Reforms: Influence policy and institutional change that fosters transparency, accountability, and gender equality in all spheres of public life.

* Our coalition is built on the commitment that meaningful change comes through collaboration, sustained advocacy, and the empowerment of every woman to contribute to a more secure, just, and prosperous Sierra Leone.

**VISION**

We envision a future where Sierra Leone is a beacon of peace and inclusivity—a society in which every woman and girl can live free from fear, violence, and discrimination. In this future, gender equality is not only a goal but a lived reality, fundamentally embedded in the nation’s governance, social fabric, and economic progress.

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•**Safety and Freedom**: Women and girls enjoy environments where they are protected by strong legal frameworks and supported by responsive community institutions. Every individual can thrive without the threat of violence or oppression.

•**Equal Opportunities:** Access to quality education, comprehensive healthcare, and economic empowerment opportunities are universal. Women are not limited by outdated norms but are given every chance to develop their talents and contribute meaningfully to society.

•**Active Participation:** Women’s voices resonate in all areas of decision-making—from local councils to national parliaments. Their insights and leadership drive policy reforms that address the needs of communities and enhance overall societal well-being.

**•Inclusive Development**: Peace and security are maintained through policies and practices that reflect the needs of all citizens. In this vision, the collective strength of diverse communities propels sustainable development and social harmony.

**Our vision is a call to action:** a future where every woman is not only heard but is a key agent of change, leading the way toward a just and inclusive society.

**MISSION**

Our mission is to transform the landscape of peace and security in Sierra Leone by working holistically and inclusively at every level of society. We are committed to creating environments where women and girls can actively participate in shaping policies and practices that govern their lives, ensuring that their contributions lead to lasting peace and development.

To achieve this, we focus on the following strategic actions:

•**Locally Grounded Interventions**: We design our programs based on the specific needs, cultural contexts, and realities of the communities we serve. Whether at the local, district, or national level, our interventions are tailored to empower women where they are most affected.

•**Inclusive Engagement:** By actively involving women and girls in every step from community dialogues and capacity-building workshops to high-level policy discussions we ensure that their experiences and perspectives inform our approach to peacebuilding.

**•Collaborative Partnerships:** We work closely with community leaders, civil society organizations, government institutions, and international partners. This collaborative approach fosters mutual learning, resource sharing, and coordinated efforts to promote women’s leadership and secure their rights.

•**Empowerment through Education and Training:** Our programs emphasize skills development in areas such as advocacy, conflict resolution, leadership, and legal rights. We believe that by equipping women with knowledge and practical tools, we can help them become catalysts for change in their communities.

•**Advocacy for Policy Reform:** We engage in continuous advocacy to reform policies and practices that hinder gender equality. Our goal is to influence decision-makers to adopt and implement measures that safeguard women’s rights, ensure equitable resource distribution, and enhance overall societal security.

In essence, our mission is to foster a culture of inclusion, resilience, and proactive engagement. By building bridges between communities and empowering women to lead, we strive to create a transformative impact that reverberates throughout Sierra Leone driving forward a peacebuilding agenda that is both comprehensive and sustainable.

**OUR OBJECTIVES & APPROACHES**

Our work is grounded in a clear set of objectives designed to empower women, promote sustainable peace, and transform governance in Sierra Leone. We implement these objectives through a multi-pronged approach that builds capacity, mobilizes communities, and advocates for systemic change.

1. **Strengthening Institutional and Technical Capacity**

•**Capacity Building**: We invest in training and technical support for our coalition members at both the local and national levels. This includes tailored workshops, mentorship programs, and skills development sessions aimed at enhancing the ability of member organizations to drive the women, peace, and security agenda.

•**INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**: By providing modern communication tools, access to digital platforms, and data management systems, we ensure that our members are well-equipped to coordinate activities, share best practices, and monitor progress effectively.

2. **Mobilizing Communities and Enhancing Participation**

•**Grassroots Engagement:** We work directly with communities, districts, and local leaders to raise awareness about peace and security issues. Our goal is to create a broad-based movement where every community member especially women plays an active role in decision-making processes.

•**Inclusive Governance:** By engaging community members in policy dialogues and local governance forums, we encourage transparency and accountability. We facilitate town hall meetings, focus group discussions, and community forums to ensure that women’s voices are not only heard but influence policies and programs.

3. **Promoting Networking Among Women and Girls**

•**Building Solidarity:** We create spaces for women and girls to connect, share experiences, and support one another. This networking not only empowers individuals but also fosters a collective voice that can advocate for broader systemic change.

•**Peer-to-Peer Learning**: Through mentorship programs and networking events, we promote knowledge exchange among women leaders, activists, and CSOs. This dynamic exchange of expertise helps to strengthen leadership skills and encourages innovative approaches to peacebuilding.

**4. Leveraging Collective Expertise and Mobilizing Resources**

•**Collaborative Resource Mobilization**: We recognize that no single organization can address all challenges alone. By pooling our resources whether human, financial, or technical we create a synergy that maximizes our impact.

•**Joint Initiatives**: Our coalition fosters partnerships among members to co-design and implement projects, ensuring that our collective expertise is leveraged toward achieving common goals. This approach also helps to eliminate duplication of efforts and promotes efficient use of resources.

5. Promoting Accountability, Transparency, and Inclusivity

**•Open Governance:** We uphold principles of transparency in all our operations. Regular reporting, open meetings, and feedback mechanisms are integral to our approach, ensuring that all members and stakeholders are kept informed and involved.

•**Inclusive Decision-Making:** Our internal structures and external engagements are designed to be inclusive, ensuring that decisions reflect the diverse perspectives of the communities we serve. This inclusivity is key to mitigating conflicts and fostering a culture of mutual respect.

6. Advocacy and Mediation for Sustainable Peace

**•Policy Advocacy**: We champion the implementation of national and international policies, laws, and treaties that advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Our advocacy efforts include drafting policy briefs, engaging with lawmakers, and organizing public awareness campaigns.

•**Mediation and Conflict Resolution:** When conflicts arise, our trained mediators step in to facilitate dialogue between parties. By focusing on restorative approaches, we work to resolve disputes at the community level before they escalate, thereby reinforcing peace and security.

**OUR PROJECTS**

Our projects are the practical expressions of our objectives. Each initiative is designed to create measurable change in the lives of women and their communities, fostering a culture of peace, empowerment, and inclusion.

**Project 1: Promoting Women’s Participation in Peace Processes**

**Category: Women, Peace & Security**

**OVERVIEW:**

This project focuses on elevating women’s roles in peace negotiations and conflict resolution. Through a series of capacity-building workshops, leadership training sessions, and community dialogues, the initiative empowers women to actively participate in peace processes at all levels.

Key Activities:

•Leadership training modules tailored to peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

•Establishing mentorship networks linking experienced women leaders with emerging activists.

•Organizing multi-stakeholder dialogues that bring together community members, local government, and security forces to discuss and address peace and security challenges.

Project 2: Strengthening Local Capacities for Sustainable Peace

Category: Community Empowerment

**OVERVIEW:**

This initiative aims to build resilience in communities by enhancing local capacities for conflict prevention and resolution. By directly engaging community leaders and residents, the project fosters an environment where sustainable peace is achievable through collaborative action.

**Key Activities:**

•Training local facilitators on conflict resolution and community mediation techniques.

•Establishing community resource centers that offer support services, legal aid, and educational materials on peacebuilding.

•Mobilizing community groups to develop localized peace plans and action strategies.

Project 3: Strengthening Governance Reforms for Women’s Rights

Category: Policy Advocacy

**Overview:**

Focused on systemic change, this project advocates for governance reforms that promote gender equality and protect women’s rights. By working closely with policymakers, legal experts, and civil society, we push for the adoption and implementation of policies that advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

Key Activities:

•Drafting and disseminating policy briefs on gender-sensitive governance.

•Organizing advocacy campaigns and stakeholder forums that bring together government officials, CSOs, and community members.

•Conducting research and impact assessments to inform policy recommendations and track progress.

Project 4: Enhancing Resource Mobilization and Partnerships

Category: Collaborative Development

**Overview:**

This project is designed to ensure that our coalition has the necessary resources to sustain its activities and expand its reach. By fostering partnerships with national and international donors, government agencies, and private sector stakeholders, we create a funding ecosystem that supports our long-term vision.

Key Activities:

•Developing joint funding proposals and grant applications with coalition members.

•Hosting networking events and donor forums to showcase our impact and future plans.

•Creating an online resource hub that facilitates knowledge sharing and collaboration among partners.

Project 5: Advocacy and Mediation for Enhanced Women’s Security

Category: Peace & Security Mediation

**Overview:**

This project addresses the immediate needs of women and girls who face violence and insecurity. Through targeted advocacy and active mediation, we provide a platform for addressing grievances and resolving conflicts in a manner that prioritizes restorative justice.

Key Activities:

•Implementing community-based mediation programs to address cases of gender-based violence and conflict.

•Training a cadre of women mediators who can work at the local level to defuse tensions and build consensus.

•Launching public awareness campaigns that educate communities on legal rights and available support services.

**OUR PROGRAM – DETAILED OVERVIEW**

Our program is an integrated framework that brings together these diverse projects under a unified strategy for promoting peace, empowering women, and transforming governance in Sierra Leone. By interlinking our objectives, approaches, and projects, we ensure that every intervention is both context-specific and aligned with our overarching vision for a peaceful and inclusive society.

•**Integration and Synergy:** Each project is designed to complement the others, ensuring that improvements in policy advocacy, community empowerment, and women’s participation are mutually reinforcing.

**•Monitoring and Evaluation:** We employ robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress, measure impact, and make data-driven adjustments to our strategies. This ensures that every project not only meets its objectives but also contributes to the long-term goals of the coalition.

**•Sustainability:** By focusing on capacity building and local resource mobilization, our program ensures that the changes we initiate are sustainable and can continue to drive peace and security beyond the life of individual projects.