

# Peace, Security and Development Update

# Women in Security

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# Introduction

This edition is focused on the role of women in Sierra Leone's security sector. Women constitute an important segment of the country's population, with a crucial role in maintaining peace and democracy. Despite making up 51.3 % of the country's population women have been poorly represented in Governance prior to, throughout and after the nation's decade long war. This situation or trend needs to be reversed.

Most of the articles in this issue have been written by women who are practitioners in the security sector or civil society activists.

We hope that this edition will contribute to more nationwide acknowledgement of the valuable role women play in security.

*Dr. Osman Gbla*

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Front cover photo: As part of the Strengthening Citizen's Security project, Conciliation Resources developed a 'Security Analysis' course for University students. Assistant Inspector General of Police, Kadi Fakondo, lectured during the course and is standing with students.

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# Involving Women in Community Policing

Kadi K. Fakondo, Assistant Inspector General of Police



There are a lot of ways that Police community relations can be enhanced and the Community Policing approach is still being tested in a number of Police departments worldwide. The approach is based on the assumption that the police must involve the community in a practical way in its mission so that the Police and public co-operate to prevent and solve crimes. This strengthens the notion that all citizens have some responsibility for the

maintenance of order and law enforcement and to improve the overall quality of life in the community.

The Sierra Leone Police has evolved from a Police Force to a Police Service. As a service organization the Police are required to develop approaches conducive to winning the confidence of the public. Hence, a reciprocal partnership between the Police and the public to secure law and order is crucial.

Research has highlighted a number of clear advantages to hiring and retaining women in law enforcement agencies. This research demonstrates that women officers rely on a style of policing that uses less physical force and are better able to facilitate the co-operation and trust it requires in implementing a community policing model. Also, strong inter-personal skills are essential for

defusing potentially violent situations. The emphasis of traditional policing on physical strength is also being increasingly challenged due to a growing awareness that good policing is less about controlling a situation through physical force, than about preventing and defusing violence through good interpersonal communication for which women are very good.

Moreover, the presence of female police officers also improves the understanding and response of law enforcement agencies to crimes against women, such as domestic violence, harassment, sexual assault (rape), and trafficking. This makes it imperative for women to be involved in community policing so as to promote gender equality and empower women.

### **The Challenges**

- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the HIV-AIDS pandemic; many girls are forced into child marriages, some before the age 15.
- Women and girls also suffer from physical and sexual violence, with little recourse to justice and protection.
- Children are trafficked internally from the regions with little or no intelligence provided to the appropriate authorities for a follow-up on the whereabouts or welfare of these victims.

### **Achievements in the Sierra Leone Police Reform**

Involving women in Community Policing is a process of educating them on their human and legal rights. By providing them with this awareness they can better inform and care for the less-privileged women within their communities in Sierra Leone. The Police are now seen working with women through the Local Police Partnership Boards (LPPB). This initiative by the SLP has been applauded as we see women being part of the executive, fully participating in decision-making processes within their communities.

A community that is not fully open is not democratic, is not sensitive to women's rights and is a recipe for conflict. The Police and women are flag bearers of peace, which is why the partnership is a must if community policing is to be considered successful. War takes unfathomable toll on a country's women. Invariably, women bear greater responsibility for children, the elderly and the larger community and for this reason the Police has been seen to be engaging women in the peace-building process at all stages.

The Police are made fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in maintaining law and order. The drive to achieve this can only be reached and sustained with the involvement of women in the community. The Local Council elections of 2005 and the recently concluded elections saw the role women played in achieving a peaceful election. The Police and Women's groups advocated for non-violent elections. Women in the media, together with Police officers, educated communities on the benefits of a peaceful election. Women can be subjected to attacks and intimidation at the Polling Stations for which their personal security can be at risk and for this reason the Police, through the LPPB meetings educated women on their human and constitutional rights which in turn they disseminated to other women in their respective communities. Women in the Media,

working with the Police have been powerful advocates for publicising how conflict impacts on women and how women impact on conflicts.

Previous UNAMSIL Female Peacekeepers (CIVPOL) brought to women in the rural communities a better understanding of the Police's roles and responsibilities and the support expected from women within communities. We, the female officers of the Police, also benefited from this experience and we are proud that Sierra Leone is now participating in Peacekeeping Missions. By the 18th of December 2007 four of our female officers were sent on a Peacekeeping Mission in Sudan.

The effects of conflict on women and children can be devastating. This is an area where the Police have involved women in community policing by working with them to counsel victims of sexual exploitation and abuse through the Family Support Unit (FSU). Women within communities have often encouraged victims to report all sexual and other related cases to the police. This is why the most popular unit in the Police as far as women are concerned is the FSU.

Women in communities have been good at providing intelligence to the Police to ensure a safe and secure environment for the safety of their families and we in the Sierra Leone Police continue to work with these women.

### **Recommendations**

Women can contribute to combating crime through the community policing framework by raising public awareness through advocacy. This may include talking to community groups, youth religious groups and politicians about physical, sexual violence and other forms of discrimination against women. Appeals could also be made through the media by having community women participate in radio programmes and town hall meetings to sensitize the public about these ills and to encourage them to report all cases of abuse and exploitation to the police.

It is also clear that despite the challenges, the police can make a difference by continuing to involve women in community policing. If women are to participate fully in brokering peace, in decision making, in post conflict reconstruction and maintenance of law and order, it is important that they work in partnership with the Police at all levels. It is for these reasons that women in communities, (Police women and other gender activists) should be involved in community policing so that they can articulate and address the problems affecting women.

Women are often among those most acutely affected by conflict, though they frequently have little or no role in creating the situations in which they find themselves. It is important to know the impact conflict has on women's lives in practical terms and how, as women we can participate in regulating information for which we are simultaneously subjects and producers.

# Women in Security

## Policy Development, Planning and Coordination

Watta Kamada, Office of National Security

### What is National Security?

Traditionally, national security has been defined as “defending the state’s security against external military threats”. In essence, this is referring to physical security notably that of military power. However, the contemporary approach to national security is trying to provide answers to a circle of threats namely, the state’s existence which includes the security of the individual citizens, territorial integrity and independence, security, economic aspects and demography, stability of the regime and strategic interest of the state.

Realising that all of these are important for the effective functioning of the state, and cognizant of the fact that in the past, state security institutions in Sierra Leone were politicized, leading to the break down or total collapse of the above tenets, thereby plunging our nation into a gruesome ten year war, there was the need for the creation of an institution that would coordinate the security sector to ensure Sierra Leone’s National Security. This led to the establishment of the Office of National Security (ONS).

### The Office of National Security (ONS)

This office was established by the National Security and Central Intelligence Act (NSCIA) of 2002 to serve as Secretariat to the National Security Council (NSC) and to coordinate intelligence and security in Sierra Leone. The ONS is headed by the National Security Coordinator who serves as security adviser to his Excellency the President of Sierra Leone, Chairman of the National Security Council Coordinating Group (NSCCG) and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). The office has seven directorates, two of which are headed by women.

The National Security architecture of Sierra Leone comprises of the Office of National Security, Central Intelligence and Security Unit (CISU), the Police, Armed Forces, Prisons, Fire Force, Immigration, National Registration Secretariat and key MDAs.

### The Role of Women in National Security

The role of women in the security of Sierra Leone cannot be overemphasized. Women suffered greatly during the decade of war; their children and husbands were killed, they were raped, tortured, maimed, left homeless and abandoned.



In Sierra Leone, women have come to play a crucial role throughout the sector, through mediation and advocacy during and after the war. We are thankful for the Convention on the Eradication of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) recommendations and UN Security Council Resolution 1325, all of which give global legal authority to governments to empower and guarantee the rights of women for full participation in all decision-making processes. Whether conscious or unconscious of the UN resolution, with the cry of women around the country for gender equality and empowerment, the security sector of Sierra Leone has moved from the traditional notion that the role of women should be restricted to secretaries, cooks and personal assistants or other lower ranking personnel, to regarding them as colleagues who could also become senior officers within the sector. The pattern of recruitment and promotion of women in the institutions is now largely based on competence, ability, qualification and general output rather than sex, patronage or nepotism.



Despite the open door policy on recruitment, training and promotion within the sector and the fact that several women are working at almost all levels of the Security Sector, their inclusion at the decision-making levels is still relatively low and they are mostly under represented or not represented at all at national, provincial, and district security committee meetings. Strives by Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) to institute the Community Women's Early Warning System is therefore a laudable venture. However, this has to be linked with existing Government structures, especially the Provincial and District Security Committees (PROSECS & DISECS) and the Local Police Partnership Boards (LPPBs).

Currently, within the security sector, women are at strategic levels, but there is a significant imbalance. Within the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), out of ten Assistant Inspector Generals only two are women. Within the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), out of five Brigadiers there are no women. Of seven Directors within the ONS, there are two women. The Immigration Department is lucky to have a woman as its head, the Chief Immigration Officer (CIO). The Prisons Department and National Fire Force also have very low representation of women in their management.

Looking closely at the meaning of national security, it is seen to be the business of the people of Sierra Leone and these people are not just men, but women and children. Therefore, the need for the participation of women in all aspects of state security is crucial and indispensable. Women form the bedrock of the Sierra Leonean society; they are actors like their male counterparts, and when conflicts ensue, they are the most vulnerable. Women should not be seen as rivals, but as partners in post conflict recovery, development and peace building. I strongly believe that the global trend of gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive approach to security fully applied in the Sierra Leonean context will enhance sustainable development.

We should not lose sight of the new phenomenon in national security: the Private Security Companies, which employ both men and women. They should also be considered in any approach used by government and donors within the Security Sector Reform framework because of the important role they play in protecting lives and property in both public and private sector institutions, an activity complementing the role of the Police.

## Policy Development, Planning & Coordination

Security Policy development, planning and coordination for the security sector are the responsibility of the Government of Sierra Leone, supported by development partners. Civilian monitoring and oversight is provided by the National Security Council (NSC) and National Security Council Coordinating Group (NSCCG). The NSC, which is headed by His Excellency the President, is the highest forum for the consideration and determination

of matters relating to the security of Sierra Leone. Within the policy framework it is supported by its executive committee, the NSCCG headed by the National Security Coordinator. In terms of policy formulation, planning and implementation, all major security sector institutions are consulted.

The Sierra Leone Security Sector has no specific policy on gender mainstreaming as it tends to be neutral in its approach to security issues, including capacity building, coordination, budget formulation and allocation, policy formulation and implementation.

In 2003 the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), supported the Government of Sierra Leone to conduct the Security Sector Review; a broad and open process of consultation done to determine what could be regarded as threats to the security of Sierra Leone. The report for this review was published in March 2005 and acknowledges, among others issues, the marginalization of women, youths and the physically challenged as a prioritized threat to national security. In addition, the report recommended that the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs should take the lead in expediting the implementation of the Women Action Plan and ensure the provision of quality education and job creation commensurate with skills training and speedy adoption of CEDAW.

The review culminated in the production of a Security Sector Reform Implementation Programme (SSR-IP). However, a significant gap between the Review and the Implementation Plan is that the Plan has made no explicit mention or reference to the Review's recommendation on women and therefore no prioritized plan of action for that purpose was factored in to the implementation plan. The implementation of the SSR started in 2006 and will continue to focus on transforming the capacities of the security sector institutions through:

- Policy and legislative reforms, training and the provision of adequate logistics
- The establishment of an effective partnership and coordinated inter-agency security mechanism which would include prevention, monitoring and oversight systems.
- Rehabilitation and construction of current infrastructures, including family accommodation units for security personnel.
- Promoting community early warning responses, aimed at reducing the incidence of smuggling and trafficking in humans and drugs
- Creating greater awareness among policy makers and the wider civil society on the negative consequences of not implementing the recommendations of the SSR for conflict prevention and poverty reduction.

The aim is to achieve all of these in a coordinated fashion to preserve resources. All these aspects of the SSR have been embedded in the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) – Pillar 1.



Another important focus of the SSR-IP is to ensure a collective sub-regional approach through the Mano River Union, ECOWAS and African Union to conflict prevention, resolution and peacekeeping.

The National Security and Central Intelligence Act 2002, which brought the ONS and Central Intelligence and Security Unit (CISU) into existence, enacted three years before the security sector reform process, like many other Acts of Parliament has no special provision for women. It has left the security and intelligence service an open field for the “fittest to survive”. Recruitment procedures warrant personnel to be spotted and recommended. In that vein, women have the right as well as men to be both “talent spotters” and spotted. Subsequently, movement to decision-making level within the institution from the point of recruitment is purely based on merit.

Despite this apparent transparency shown, ONS/CISU has continued to lose female staff and the disparity is glaring. It is, however, difficult to determine women’s reasons for leaving, although some have attributed it to lack of incentives, low remuneration, lack of guarantee for physical safety, long hours of work etc. There is no visible networking among women within the security sector who have only meet at civil society or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) level. The SLP, who have gained tremendously from the UN Reform and have the requisite training and resources to promote women’s concerns, seem to be at a distance from other security sector institutions. It is hoped that a common ground upon which future discussions determining policy priorities, services and programmes for women can be achieved and sustained.

## The Way Forward

- A gender-sensitive approach to the security sector reform process in Sierra Leone, similar to the 30% quota stated in the TRC recommendations for female representation in Parliament, should be given priority.
- Women should be included in peace negotiations, early warning provision mechanisms and Peace Keeping operations (as Indian Police are in Liberia).
- Continued and increased Government commitment to the implementation of UN Resolution 1325.
- Heads of security institutions should be fully engaged and sensitized on the need to implement the UN Resolution 1325 and other international and regional instruments for women’s empowerment.
- Empowerment of the next generation of women to pursue careers in security through support (those in institutions of learning) in the form of scholarships.
- Improved partnership and links between security institutions and NGOs, UN and civil society on gender-related security issues.
- Unity and collaboration among women in the sector, through experience sharing programmes like conferences and workshops.
- Provision of incentives for women in the security work place for retention.

## Conclusion

I want to express my delight over the fact that security has become a key area where NGOs, civil society and donors can engage Government on issues pertaining to the empowerment of women.

With the formulation of the National Security Policy, it is crucial that partners and donors dialogue with the Government (precisely, NSC, ONS, NSCCG) to ensure gender sensitivity within this policy and all other national security programmes that may follow. I want to take this opportunity to tell our men, our colleagues, our brothers, that women are not trying to “overplay” their rights but to simply ask for a common understanding, a level playing ground for all no matter the gender. I also want to encourage other women to stop dwelling on our weaknesses and lack of numbers, but to learn to trumpet and propagate our successes and capabilities. The few who have made it to the top must continue to serve as shining examples to the future generation of women in the “Land that we love, our Sierra Leone”.



In December 2007, the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) Sierra Leone organised a sub-regional conference on 'Women in Security: Challenges and Opportunities' in Freetown. The conference was a component of the Strengthening Citizen's Security project and supported by the project's multiple partners.

The conference was designed specifically to create space for Government security sectors, civil society organisations and community representatives from Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia (Mano River Union countries) to analyse the barriers that exclude women from the security policy formulation and implementation process and to map a way forward for effective involvement of civil society and particularly women in security issues.

In his opening remarks Sierra Leone's Minister of Defence, Pallo Conteh, expressed the interest of Government to "reinforce women's role in security" as part of the "broader goal of empowering women which is one of the avowed aspirations of the President, Ernest Bai Koroma". In acknowledging women's role in security he went on to say "we have learnt that peace and security depends on the rapid response to early indications of conflict...which requires imaginative strategies, creative and flexible approaches to which our women folk have always taken the lead and yet the potential contribution of women in the sub-region remains severely under-valued. This, in my view, is what this sub-regional conference aims to address".

Presentations and plenary discussions focused on understanding current security sector structures and women's involvement in relationship building, community policing and national security policy making. Participants discussed current security concerns and shared experiences on the reality of the security infrastructures interface with

Recommendations specifically called for a forum on MRU countries' customs and immigration policies to advocate for a cohesive policy that would reduce significant insecurity and exploitation of women trading across borders.

In addition, women proposed the creation of structured links between women's groups and the security sector to encourage women to report security threats in their communities.

As advocates of peace it was stated that women's groups, across the MRU, need to collaborate more, particularly in helping stimulate dialogue and peace along the borders.

MARWOPNET were nominated as the representatives to present a strong statement, produced by conference participants, to MRU Heads of State on:

*Security Concerns and Recommendations of Women in the Mano River Union Countries.*

the local population and the gaps between theory and practice. Concerns common to the three countries were women's insecurity around border crossings, gender-based violence, early pregnancy and barriers to women's involvement in decision-making processes. Evident is the need for Governments and civil society to work together to effectively respond to these issues.





*"Women are often among those most acutely affected by conflict, though they frequently have little or no role in creating the situations in where they find themselves. It is important to know the impact conflict has on women's lives in practical terms and how, as women we can participate in regulating information for which they are simultaneously subjects and producers".*

*Assistance Inspector General of the Sierra Leone Police, Kadi Fakondo*

Above: Gloria Nelson-Williams offers her view as representing the Armed Forces Wives. Below: Participants from the sub-regional conference on 'Women in Security' join hands to sing MARWOPNET's anthem and songs of peace.

# The Role of Women in Peace, Security and Development

Marcella Macauley, Campaign for Good Governance

Women's role in peace, security and development in Sierra Leone involves more than the rhetoric of equity and fairness or the 30% quota which has been the buzz word in the gender discourse in the country. It is about acknowledging and accepting the reality of what women can do to make the three interlinked processes of peace, security and development work. It is about active participation and assuming more leadership positions as decision makers.

We all know the role women played to end the civil conflict in Sierra Leone. They were not just victims but also peace ambassadors. The creation of groups such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) for example is a pointer to this claim. They took a sub-regional approach to ending the conflict which was the very initiative needed to address the upheavals escalating in the Mano River Basin. Thus by using this as a starting point for analysis it is clear that women's involvement helps improve the quality of agreements reached for achieving peace and increases the chances of success in implementing such processes. Therefore if women were peace makers they should be part of the process that consolidates the peace.

Currently women constitute 52% of the population in Sierra Leone. So they are not just a group to negotiate inclusion and participation with but a centrality of the development discourse and legitimate actors in all the post-conflict processes unfolding. Logically, if more than half of the population is excluded from developmental peace and security processes then the realization of poverty reduction becomes questionable. It must be emphasized that reconstruction works best when women are planners and implementers and not mere beneficiaries.

## Women's Role in Nation-Building

Invariably women are contributing directly or indirectly to nation-building. The contribution of the Sierra Leonean woman to development becomes manifest in the home, food productions systems and hence their contributions to the informal economy. For instance, women are seen as performing well as teachers or lawyers. In recent years, more women's associations have been formed at the grassroots and national levels, taking advantage of new political openings, performing new and emerging roles in politics and decision making. This was clearly seen in the charisma and astute leadership of our current Chief Electoral Commissioner, Christiana Thorpe. Women are also pressing for an expansion of their economic and social opportunities and the advancement of women's rights. As a result of these energetic efforts to organize and articulate their concerns, women are making their voices heard in several quarters. By improving their own positions they are simultaneously strengthening the society as a whole as well as enhancing the country's broader development prospects.

## Obstacles to Progress

There are still major obstacles which limit the active involvement and pursuits of women in our society. There is need to look at development from a more pragmatic point of view. In Sierra Leone and Africa as a whole, our minds have been skewed and our attitudes molded to see a woman as fit for the household and taking care of the children particularly in the rural communities. It cannot be disputed that women tend to be industrious and businesslike, pursuing with purpose what they have set their minds to do. However, modern African society must change its perception of women being just a wife and mother, desirable as this may be, it is only one option for womanhood.



Left: Young women and men debate on security issues during the SCS project 'Security Analysis School'. Right: Search for Common Ground personnel interview Police about security procedures prior to Sierra Leone's 2007 Presidential Elections.



We need to build the social structures that will empower women to be more effective in post-conflict reconstruction. Women need the confidence and require platforms to contribute more positively to development and security. This brings to mind the next big step for advancing the position of women: there needs to be avenue for capacity building, skills training and expanding the opportunities for them to more fully develop their leadership roles; as inclusion devoid of performance cannot contribute to development.

As the country struggles to survive with dismal political and economic indicators, together with the spread of HIV/AIDS, the material conditions in which most women live and work continue to deteriorate. These circumstances are however not peculiar to Sierra Leone or to African woman, but of global concern which has gained considerable momentum in the last decade.

It is against this backdrop that over 3000 women converged in Dakar in 1994 to attend the African Women's Preparatory Conference. The aim was to articulate an African position for the Beijing Fourth Women's World Conference. The resulting African Platform for Action identified several priorities. These included combating the increasing poverty of African women, improving women's access to education and health services, with a special focus on reproductive health, addressing women's relationship to the environment, increasing the

involvement of women in the peace process, advancing the legal and human rights of women, highlighting the special concerns of the girl-child and mainstreaming gender concerns within economic and development policy making by disaggregating data along gender lines. The Dakar Conference also noted the emergence of numerous women's groups and NGOs in Africa and the increasingly concrete expression of their organizational potential.

Similarly the Beijing Conference that followed in 1995 stressed the empowerment of women as one of the central development goals of the 21st century. It adopted a Platform for Action which called for mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation and monitoring of all policies and programmes including development programmes. It committed countries to design their own specific programmes and activities in consultation with Women's groups and other NGOs to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

Since then what have we achieved in real terms for women to take on a more holistic and result oriented role? There needs to be the space, political and otherwise, to articulate women's aspirations. The men need to let go and open the decision making platform to accommodate more women, not only traditional men but particularly urban elites. It is only then that we will see meaningful balance in the efforts towards progress and stability.

In real terms however, there has been insufficient political will and unsustained commitment to meet the needs and interests of women both by succeeding governments and local authorities. There are a number of openings from the policy level which commitments can be translated into real achievables in Sierra Leone. Some of which are

- The provisions of the Lome Peace agreement which emphasized special attention to the needs of women and the importance of their inclusion in strategic decision making positions so as to enable them to play a central role in the country's reconstruction process.
- The adoption of a National Policy on the enhancement of women on gender mainstreaming in 2001.
- The establishment of a Gender Ministry though poorly resourced.
- The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the Sierra Leone Government in 1998.
- The provisions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report which highlighted the plight of women during the conflict and recommended the 30% quota representation for women in parliament.
- The passing of the three Gender Bills on the eve of elections.
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) recognise the fundamental role of women in development, with the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments being a key indicator in measuring progress on women's empowerment.

More effort needs to be given to the inclusion of women, particularly in political positions, as the number of female Parliamentarians has dropped. The three lead political parties have their safe havens and strongholds around the country. If they were really committed to women's

inclusion 30% safe seats would have at least been allocated to vibrant women who would have been convinced that they would eventually win the elections. Furthermore among the recent Presidential nominees only 3 were women.

However all these efforts have not been translated in to better living and working conditions for women. This hampers the country's development by excluding the perspectives, skills and dynamism of more than half of the population. Without meaningful commitment in the form of policy changes and the provision of resources to deal with the root causes of women's condition, there cannot be a breakthrough in the development and renewal of the country.

I would like to briefly flag a final point on peace consolidation. One area where we need to pay attention is insisting on full accountability on the actions against women during the conflict. There needs to be a workable transitional justice system to ensure that accountability is essential to convince fighters that there is no impunity in acting against women. There have been heinous crimes committed, especially sexual violence, against women during the war. Today discussions around reparations for war victims are on-going, but how are we going to ascertain those women who were sexually abused. Reconciliation should therefore be thorough in order to heal the wounds of a whole section of society that has continued to live and remain silent victims

In conclusion, I believe women lack an outlet for proper manifestation to help secure peace and nurture development. A series of obstacles hamper meaningful and proactive participation and sustained engagement in the processes. The gender debate needs to be reconfigured. Development, Peace and Security must be viewed with a gender lens that would visualize women in equal terms.





FAMILY SUPPORT UNIT  
BO POLICE STATION



The Sierra Leone Police's Family Support Unit (FSU) offers an essential support to women and children.

# The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces' (RSLAF) Approach to Women and Security

Brigadier Alfred Nelson-Williams, Deputy Chief of Defence

In October 2000, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 proposed, amongst others, a framework to address women's security issues at the local, regional and international levels. Broadly, 1325 recommends that the UN Security Council, UN member states and civil society should endeavour to address four important issues; first, need for the participation of women in all decision-making and peace processes in conflict states; second, the importance of integrating gender perspectives in training for peace keeping operations; third, the obligation to protect women from gender-based violence in conflict zones and fourth, the need to mainstream gender in to UN reporting systems and programme implementation mechanisms.

The effect on women during conflict has been devastating. More than a third of Sierra Leone's population were displaced and were living in camps or had fled to other locations. The fighting served to increase the overall burden placed on women. These women became the ones on whom the survival of the family depended. During the war women consciously and deliberately refused to join the RSLAF. Now, at the end of the war the military has made huge strides to ensure the inclusion of women in all issues affecting the sustainability of peace within the country at large. To leave women behind in the restructuring RSLAF processes is not only to violate their right to participate but also to undermine the very objectives of such a crucial phase, namely sustainability and equitable development. Without women, there can be no peace and development.

In recent years, the role of women in military around the world has been rapidly growing and changing. In Sierra Leone, there have been policy adjustments

regarding recruitment, training and retention, guided by the roles they are expected to play in the RSLAF on gender equality. We have achieved significant increases in women's participation and have done so through the use of quotas – a form of affirmative action in favour of women. We have maintained the academic criteria but the recruitment base has been restructured to accommodate more women, in some cases, standards in physical fitness have been lowered. It is important that we take cognizance of the departure point for putting in place sexual harassment policies in the RSLAF. Critical mechanisms to monitor genuine problems and address them have been put in place.

The success of this challenge from a diversity perspective is important to national security and must be done correctly from the start. Dialogue, discussion, seminars and workshops with women advocacy groups have been encouraged to create awareness in our female soldiers and opening up the institution to women in the civil world is enhancing better civil-military relations. Efforts are being made to attract qualified women to be commissioned so that they can adopt leadership roles in order to actively participate in decision-making at the higher commands. Currently, the most high-ranking woman in the RSLAF is a Colonel. We look forward to having more women rise to Generals and even command the entire force.

The RSLAF will soon start deploying for peace keeping operations in conflict zones. Having high-ranking female officer observers, negotiators and unit commanders is a laudable idea. Achieving this requires a positive civilian perception about the military. Engendering the human security of our country is thus very essential.

# Round-Table Discussion

## *The Role of Women in Peace, Security and Development*

As part of the Strengthening Citizen's Security project, the Centre for Development and Security Analysis (CEDSA) organised a Round-table discussion in October 2007 with the theme of *The Role of Women in Peace, Security and Development in Sierra Leone*.

As an interactive forum for civil society and the security sector, this round-table drew participants from academia, civil society groups and the security sector. A lead paper presented by Marcella Macauley (Campaign for Good Governance) focused on the benefits, opportunities and challenges for women contributing to sustaining national peace and their involvement in the security sector.

Statements were made by key personnel from civil society and the security sector, specifically: Sierra Leone Market Women Association's President, Marie Bob-Kandeh; Assistant Inspector General of the Sierra Leone Police, Kadi Fakondo; Office of National Security, Watta Kamanda; the Deputy Director General of Gender, Fatou Kargbo and Graceland Counseling Services' Coordinator, Bondu Manyeh. Charles Silver (Lecturer, Fourah Bay College) was the discussant and offered views on the presentation and statements that stimulated constructive discussion.

Summarising the recommendations, participants noted that for women to contribute significantly to peace, security and development in Sierra Leone, the following issues must be addressed:

- Sufficient political will and sustained commitment to meet the needs and interests of women
- Increased political space to articulate the aspirations of women
- Translation of policy initiatives into better living and working conditions for women
- The mainstreaming of gender issues in all facets of peace, security & development, including institutions like 'Prisons'
- Marginalization of women in security institutions, particularly the Armed Forces
- Validity of cultural dimensions in the marginalization of women should be publicly discussed
- Increased encouragement and empowerment of women to effectively participate in security issues
- District Security Committees' (DISECS) capacity to sensitise and educate women on current local security structures

## Centre for Development and Security Analysis

Centre for Development and Security Analysis (CEDSA) is a strategic research institution established in 2000 with a view to consolidating peace and contributing to long-term socio-economic and political stability in post war Sierra Leone. The Centre's approach seeks to ensure a more critical and informed intervention in contributing towards a stable, peaceful and thriving socio-economic and political environment in Africa.

### Our Vision:

An African continent developed in a secure, stable, democratic and peaceful environment.

### Our Mission:

To contribute to the realisation of sustainable development, peace and stability in Africa through informed research, capacity building and advocacy work.

## Conciliation Resources

Conciliation Resources is an independent charity with over a decade of experience working internationally to prevent and resolve violent conflict, promote justice and build lasting peace. Our practical work is guided by the needs of people living in countries affected or threatened by war. Conciliation Resources have been working in the West African region since 1997, supporting community-based organisations in their efforts to transform conflict, bringing together traditional and modern methods of peacebuilding.

### Our Goals:

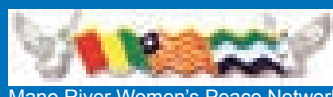
- Support people
- Provide opportunities for dialogue
- Influence Governments
- Improve peacemaking practice
- Challenge stereotypes

The Peace, Security and Development Updates are part of a pioneering *Strengthening Citizen's Security* project that aims to bridge some of the gaps that have historically discouraged civil society's involvement in security. This project brings together the diverse experience of partners; Conciliation Resources (CR), Centre for Development and Security Analysis (CEDSA), Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) and Search for Common Ground's-Talking Drums Studios (SFCG-TDS). The Strengthening Citizen's Security project is funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID).

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Centre for  
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Mano River Women's Peace Network

