



MID TERM EVALUATION

NATIONAL GENDER STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2013

July 2012

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AfC	Agenda for Change
BPEHS	Basic Package of Essential Health Services
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DHS	Demographic Health Surveys
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
FBOs	Faith Based Organizations
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHCI	Free Health Care Initiative
FSU	Family Support Unit
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GAD	Gender Affairs Directorate
GIS	Geographic Information System
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GRADOC	Gender Research and Documentation Centre
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GTT	Gender Technical Team
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IPAM	Institute of Public Administration and Management
IPs	Implementing Partners
IRC	International Rescue Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
MTEFs	Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks
MTR	Mid-Term Evaluation
NaC-GBV	National Committee on Gender Based Violence

NPHC	National Population and Housing Censuses
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NGSP	National Gender Strategic Plan
PBF	Peace Building Fund
PEP	Post Exposure Prophylaxis
PHUs	Primary Health Units
PMTCT	Preventing Mother to Child Transmission
PRSP III	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBM	Results Based Management
RH	Reproductive Health
RH&R	Reproductive Health and Rights
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SOP	Standard Operational Procedures
SRH&R	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSL	Statistics Sierra Leone
SWAPs	Sector Wide Approaches
TBA's	Traditional birth attendants
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United National Development Fund for Women
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

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I also wish to recognise the contribution of the evaluation team – the international and national consultants - for working to produce this comprehensive report. A final thank you to everyone who made it possible for us to meaningfully reflect on our strategies and recast our focus to the future of securing a Sierra Leone where gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls will be truly be realised.



Hon. Stephen J. Gaojia

Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

PREFACE

This Mid Term Evaluation report is a product of a thorough review of our National Gender Strategic Plan 2010-2013. We believe that Strategic plans are “living documents” to be reviewed during the plan period so as to optimize on lessons learnt for continued improvement. This is the first National Gender Strategic Plan for Sierra Leone. The test of a good strategic plan is whether people continue to find it a useful reference and guide - this is what we sought to establish through this review.

We pride ourselves for our participatory culture, which enables us remain accountable and transparent. Throughout the process of this review, we adopted open transparent processes: from the recruitment process; to adoption of the work plan for the review; to availing field support and information in Makeni, Pujehun and Kenema and finally hosting a broad based stakeholder validation process to provide feedback on the report findings.

The report has reaffirmed our own internal assessment that capacity building, management and oversight remain our weakest links. Thus in the remaining phase of the plan, we shall rededicate our efforts and invest in building capacity (institutional and human capacity), to strengthen our management and coordination roles with a view of raising the profile of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls nationally. We remain cognizant of the importance of national ownership of the NGSP and acknowledge the low levels of awareness of the plan, thus in the remaining period of the plan, we commit to widely popularize its contents at all levels of government, amongst civil society and development partners.

We are proud that the strategic focus in the plan remains relevant and that its resilience as a tool for framing partnerships with other line Ministries, non-state actors, and development partners remains unmatched. Whilst acknowledging the weak coordination and leadership challenges in the Ministry, this review report confirms that we are largely “On Track” in the implementation of the plan. We commit to implement the recommendations in this report as a way of assuring that the full dividends of the NGSP are realized and enjoyed by the women, men, girls and boys of Sierra Leone.



Hon. Stephen J. Gaojia

Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation Background and Purpose

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) commissioned a Mid-term evaluation of the National Gender Strategic Plan (NGSP) 2010 to 2013 with support from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the plan. The purpose of the Mid-term evaluation was to assess the level of achievement of the Plan through analysing the factors that have facilitated or hindered achievement, and to compile lessons learned so as to inform implementation of the remaining part of the Plan period.

The evaluation sought to assess the following:

- The level of alignment of the plan with national priorities, other ministries' strategic plans and also the Joint UN Vision for Sierra Leone;
- The extent to which the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs has popularized, disseminated and assured effective coordination of the plan as well as any challenges encountered;
- The level of progress made towards achieving the anticipated results of the Strategic Plan including contributing factors and impediments;
- Lessons learnt and best practices in relation to implementation of activities to achieve the strategic priorities articulated in the Plan;
- Strengths and weaknesses of the Plan;
- Finally, to make recommendations on a vision for gender equality and empowerment that will be the basis of future policy for national and international partners promoting gender equality and sustainable development in Sierra Leone.

Methodology

The Mid-term evaluation employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods that included desk review, interviews, focus group discussions and field visits. Qualitative data collected through fieldwork was transcribed and analysed by categorization of themes and content analysis. Using triangulation, secondary data from literature review and primary data gathered from site visits was analysed, leading to the development of this report. A detailed approach and methodology was prepared and submitted as the Inception Report.

Evaluation Findings

Relevance of the Plan

The NGSP, whilst operationalizing the twin policies on Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Advancement, is found to be relevant to the context and priorities of Sierra Leone particularly the Agenda for Change (AfC) which is the national development framework. The NGSP responds to selected national priorities in the Agenda for Change specifically the fourth priority around ensuring sustainable human development through the provision of improved social services. In addition, most of the NGSP themes have been integrated in the proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP III) Agenda for Prosperity 2013- 2017 which has highlighted gender as a cross cutting theme. The NGSP is in line with and upholds the principles entrenched in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, which guarantees equal rights for men and women. The plan has also contributed in responding to some of the pending Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations¹ which aimed at addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, by prioritizing the elimination of laws and practices that discriminate against women, introducing effective measures to address and reduce sexual and domestic violence and securing the government formal and public apology to women for all wrongs that were meted on them during the civil strife by H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma.

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has committed itself and signed onto several international human rights instruments that promote gender equality work such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations Security Resolution Council (UNSCRs) 1325 and 1820; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals, the 1995 Beijing Platform, the African Union Declaration on Gender Equality and Development and the ECOWAS Protocols on Women and Development. The NGSP has acknowledged this international normative framework in guiding its design and to a large extent the six priorities are reflected in some ways in these instruments. The NGSP also responds to the Joint UN Vision for Sierra Leone, of 30th May 2009, which establishes the general framework for cooperation in Sierra Leone and whose overall priority is furthering the consolidation of peace. The Joint vision seeks to continue its work around the promotion of the rule of law, human rights, the rights of marginalized groups, women and children, and to assist in the review of Sierra Leone's Constitution. More particularly, the Joint UN Vision will continue to support the capacity building of Sierra Leone's national security agencies (especially the Sierra Leone Police) in highly specialized policing areas, such as airport and border security, human trafficking, gender-based violence, crime investigation and related fields. The UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone also speaks to the issues identified in the Plan. Through key informant interviews and focus group discussions, the 6 strategic priorities are found to be representing the themes that are critical for Sierra Leone.

¹ The recommendations included: repeal of all statutory and customary laws that discriminate against women. In the sphere of political representation, the TRC recommends redressing the marginalization of women by enacting new laws requiring all political parties to ensure that at least 30% of their candidates for all national and local elections are women; ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women, which entered into force on the 25 November 2005

Design of the Plan

The NGSP prioritises 6 areas of intervention namely:

- Capacity building, Management and Oversight;
- Women’s participation in governance;
- Sexual and reproductive health rights;
- Research, documentation and Information & Communication Technology (ICT);
- Women’s empowerment with specific focus on rural women;
- Gender budgeting and accountability

The design of the NGSP was participatory even though spearheaded by the MSWGCA who required a national reference document to give direction to gender related activities so as to streamline gender interventions nationwide². During the development of the NGSP stakeholders were engaged in identifying key priorities and strategies for the Plan³

The design of the plan is commended for its balanced efforts of focusing at both supply (government ministry, line ministries and departments) and the demand side (consumers and beneficiaries of gender equality interventions).

At the outset, this Mid-term evaluation reveals the important role of baseline data. Baseline data around all outputs was found to be missing yet this would have provided the starting point for the assessment of progress made due to targeted interventions. Thus, the absence of baseline data or targets for the plan has been found to be a serious weakness of the plan and has made it difficult to make a comprehensive assessment of progress. The findings of this Mid-term evaluation therefore are derived from an analysis of how performance indicators have been fulfilled – i.e. level of achievement and is therefore not compared alongside baseline or set/fixed quantitative or qualitative targets.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

This Mid-term evaluation observes that a series of interventions contributing to the realisation of the outputs in the NGSP were undertaken by the MGSWGCA, partners and civil society organisations. These achievements are comprehensively analysed in the body of this report. However, several of the activities undertaken during the period under evaluation were not necessarily derived from the plan - since the consultants established that there were low levels of knowledge of the NGSP. Thus, whilst some progress on outputs are assessed as “On Track” this is not necessarily attributed to the Ministry coordinating those activities – rather to the fact that in Sierra Leone there have been achievements witnessed around these outputs. It is notable however that even where respondents did not know

² Pg. 1 and 2 Sierra Leone National Gender Strategic Plan

³ The participatory process emerged in most key informant interviews as well as focus group discussions in the regions. Pg. 3 Sierra Leone National Gender Strategic Plan

about the Plan, their implementation of gender work corresponded with key components of the plan confirming that there is a commonality around the priority areas to intervene for gender equality work in the country.

Consequently, the consultants conclude that the expectation for the NGSP to provide a clear framework for coordinating national gender responsive programmes was not realised. The low levels of awareness of the NGSP can be attributed to a set of inter related weaknesses that have continued to plague the Ministry⁴ namely: the weak coordination capacity within the Ministry; low visibility of the Ministry particularly amongst other line Ministries reform programmes (e.g. Justice Sector Secretariat Reforms); low resource allocations and other management constraints around “lapses and overlaps in functions and mandates, obsolete regulations that marred effective administration and management.”⁵

In terms of achievements of the NGSP, they are assessed alongside the seven outputs derived from the 6 priority areas. Whilst presenting these achievements, the consultants observe that social transformation work takes time and results cannot be rushed – in addition the participatory approach embraced by the MSWGCA in rolling out this plan requires time and patience to solidify results. An implementation period of 2 years may not be sufficient to optimise the impact of the NGSP and ensure sustainability.

Output 1 is concerned with strengthening capacity for gender mainstreaming and monitoring by 2012. The plan provides three indicators to guide realisation of the output which are: Capacity assessment of the Ministry conducted; Network of gender equity and women empowerment established and a Monitoring and Evaluation plan developed. This evaluation establishes that the delivery of this Output is “On Track” through various interventions such as the capacity assessment⁶ of the Ministry and the presence of networks advancing gender equality which are most active in the regions. Under this output and particularly at the districts, the Ministry’s coordination and leadership role on the gender agenda are greatly visible assuring a relatively consistent and coordinated community roll out of the plan. This experience demonstrates that animating social transformation work at community level generally results to more visible products. It is at community level where ideas/concepts are actualised with beneficiaries and thus demands synergy building amongst actors working at that level. However, the absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the delivery of the NGSP greatly undermines realisation of this output and this probably explains the leadership and coordination weaknesses at national level.

Output 2 focuses on strengthening legislative and policy framework for gender equality and equity by 2012 and to realise this output two indicators are provided: gender related legislations enacted and 30% quota allocated for women’s representation in governance. A series of partnerships with civil society and development partners to popularise the Three “Gender Acts” have been intensified in the period as

⁴ This has been captured in detail in the Report of the Management and Functional Review for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs, spearheaded by the Governance Reform Secretariat and funded by DFID.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ At the time of writing this report, the Capacity Assessment report had not yet been availed to the consultants, hence has not been reviewed.

a basis of linking statutory provisions to communities'⁷ capacities to claim and enforce rights. A variety of models are noted for this purpose which include, hosting radio shows, monitoring of court cases on sexual gender based violence, joint workshops with Ministry representatives, production of popular and simplified versions of the various Acts. However, many respondents cited that there were challenges in implementing/enforcing these legal provisions and also in ensuring that the citizenry invoked their rights under the new laws. The journey to the new quota law has thus embraced a different strategy which emphasises more on stakeholder consultations around provisions and dialogue to anticipate how the "world will look like" once the provisions are enacted and enforced. This has enabled a process of "buy in" on the principle that women's representation is a necessity, whilst the law is yet to be enacted; there is a general understanding that there is a need to transform the profile of representation so as to root democracy and fairness in Sierra Leone.

Output 3 focuses on strengthening mechanisms for addressing gender related dimensions of SRHR. Five indicators guide the realisation of this Output: number of Rainbow Centres established; Review of Section 21 of the Prevention and Control of HIV and Aids Act 2007; CEDAW requirements of SRHR met; Number of PHUs providing PMTCT; Number of centres providing Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) services. The review of the HIV/AIDs law provided an impetus for reflecting HIV prevention programmes in a more gender sensitive manner. The evaluation established that over 300 Primary Health Units were providing PMTCT and PEPs services across the country and thus responding to some of the recommendations by CEDAW.

Output 4 focuses on strengthening mechanisms to reduce violence against women and three indicators guide the realisation of this output: proportion of cases of gender based violence prosecuted per year (disaggregated by sex), the number of FSU's and awareness of GBV. The establishment of a law enforcement mechanism, the Family Support Unit (FSU) to specifically target violations meted out on children and victims of sexual gender violence within the Sierra Leone Police CID department has provided it strategic influence. There has been wide dissemination and popularity about the FSU's. However, FSU's are not found in all sites in the country and hence traditional justice mechanisms are found to be operational in resolving sexual and gender based violence cases (which often do not affirm girls and women's claims/rights). The evaluation establishes that where FSU's are present and whilst a large populace are aware and utilise the FSU's, many do not proceed to prosecute their cases due to varied reasons including delays in securing a medical report and in securing hearing dates. As a result, many victims and their families opt to "compromise" these cases and settle for a monetary consideration to abandon the criminal cases against the perpetrator. Despite this, there has been quite a substantial number of fast tracked prosecutions and secured convictions which hopefully when widely disseminated will begin to demonstrate the seriousness of violating these rights and end impunity around sexual and gender based crimes.

This evaluation establishes that whilst a triple focus on: prosecutions; presence of Family support units and the awareness raising constitute elements of a holistic multi sectoral approach to reducing and

⁷ Women, men, girls, boys, law enforcement institutions, community based organisations

responding to gender based violence, more investments to community structures response mechanisms would be useful to complete the loop to influence behavioural and attitudinal change.

Output 5 is concerned with strengthening capacity for gender analysis by 2012. To realise this output two indicators are provided: the proportion of Ministries monitoring and evaluation systems generating gender disaggregated data and the number of studies, research and reviews with a gender perspective. This component of the plan was not largely rolled out even though there are monthly GBV statistics generated by the FSU. The statistics are not widely disseminated nor analysed to inform other developmental interventions or programmes. The work around this Output is the least notable, perhaps due to the fact that the design of the plan did not facilitate proper monitoring of the results.

The 6th Output is strengthened women's access to land rights, financial services and markets to promote women's engagement in economic life by 2012. The two indicators to demonstrate realisation of the output are: number of women owning viable business and number of recipients of micro credit and other loan schemes disaggregated by sex.

The absence of baseline data on these indicators made it almost impossible to ascertain the level of progress. However, a number of studies are underway through the support of the UN system in Sierra Leone to ascertain women's access to financial and productive services. One of the studies undertaken by UN Women is to assess the quality and impact of financial and productive services on increased levels of income on both rural and urban women; to identify support services available to women in the areas under review including functional literacy; to identify challenges and obstacles encountered by women in their success to financial and productive services as well as to institutions in the provision of these services; and to provide recommendations to enhance women's access to these services.

These studies indicate that there are renewed efforts on the part of development partners to put women issues at the centre stage and to ensure that women are appropriately mainstreamed. With reference to the efforts of the government, there is a Law Reform Commission that is currently studying and interrogating gender issues such as land reform, as a critical element in the country's development efforts. It must be however noted that most women with businesses is not as a result of work done in the gender arena but out of individual effort.

The 7th Output focuses on strengthening capacity for gender budgeting and monitoring by 2012. Its realisation is based on one indicator, namely, proportion of Ministries exercising gender budgeting. Gender budgeting is a novelty in the country's development effort to empower women and ensure access to resources and power. Though a series of awareness interventions and skills building for gender budgeting, both within line Ministries and local councils attest to the importance of the gender budgeting tool.

Sustainability

In terms of **sustainability**, the evaluation team observed that some of the processes and structures emerging from the plan implementation will continue to deliver benefits to project beneficiaries beyond the NGSP life span. This is facilitated by several factors: existence of the Ministry's infrastructure from

national to regional levels; formation of networks at the regional level amongst broad based actors and utilising existing structures at community levels such as Paramount Chiefs and *Soweis*, inter alia.

Some key constraints that have undermined the implementation of the plan include; absence of baseline data and targets; weak coordination mechanisms; capacity challenges as well as the lack of monitoring and evaluation framework. This Mid-term evaluation concludes that the implementation of the NGSP whilst “sluggish” in some parts it is largely “On Track” – since out of the 7 Outputs, 4 are “On track” whilst 3 are “not sufficiently on track”. The implementation of the NGSP requires to be accelerated through a stronger coordination mechanism particularly at the national level to assure Ministry ownership and enhancement of its leadership status as the national machinery for gender equality work.

The recommendations made are organised around key periods: short term which means between 1 and 12 months period; medium term which means 1 year to 3 year period and long term which means a 3 year to 5 year period

Recommendations to the Ministry

Short term:

- Review of the Strategic Framework of the National Gender Strategic Plan so as to upgrade the indicators (currently at output level) to outcome/strategic goal levels
- Update the Strategic Framework within the National Gender Strategic Plan so as to undertake the completion of Strategic Objective 4 which is currently missing the strategic goals on Women’s empowerment around women’s economic empowerment and women and agriculture.
- Prioritise, develop and roll out an efficient monitoring and evaluation framework for the NGSP, designating specific personnel to monitor at regional and national levels.
- Design and roll out a national dissemination and popularisation of the National Gender Strategic Plan to enhance ownership and accelerate the pace of implementation of the plan in the remaining phase.
- Invest in processes and establish mechanisms that will strengthen the Ministry’s leadership and coordination role around gender perspectives throughout all government Ministries, Departments and Agencies for instance by:
 - Establishing a High level technical Inter-Ministerial committee or Task Force that would provide strategic national profiling of gender equality work (informed by the gender focal points).
 - Forging closer partnerships and collaboration with the Gender Affairs Specialist in Statehouse with a view to generating greater political will, visibility and resourcing.

- There is need to fast track the finalization and implementation of Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) Strategic Plan so that all portfolios “model” how to integrate gender in their work namely the Children’s and the Social Welfare portfolio. It is this type of model that would be replicated in other line ministries.
- The recommendations from the capacity assessment report should be urgently released, resourced and fully implemented within a 2 year⁸ period followed by a review of the implementation status for learning and growth.
- The GBV mapping survey undertaken jointly by the Ministry and the International Rescue Committee should be released, widely disseminated so as to ensure a more coordinated response and management mechanism for GBV survivors

Medium term:

- In order to ensure a coordinated sustained action around gender, it is compelling that gender focal persons in line ministries are professionals in a gender discipline with an established set performance targets. They should be accountable to the Ministry on gender mainstreaming results This is in line with the Public Service Commission Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014 that commits to designing a criterion for the recruitment of qualified professionals to become professional heads of MDAs
- To forge and sustain strong linkages of these gender focal points with the Inter Ministry technical committee/Task Force in their work. This will assure gender equality work is institutionalized and that accountability to gender results is attained.
- To re-establish, strengthen and formalize capacity building programmes for Ministry personnel specifically in programme management, monitoring as well as building gender competencies with the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) and the Gender Research and Documentation Centre GRADOC for more strategic and visibly interventions around gender equality and women empowerment
- Advocate for government resourcing for the Ministry and specifically to the Gender Affairs Directorate should be enhanced by at least 7% in the next 2 years and increased to 12% in 5 years.⁹
- The Ministry could develop simplified and friendly minimum standards/tools for the implementation and monitoring of gender sensitive programmes so as to assure consistent gender mainstreaming application throughout the Plan implementation and monitoring processes. Some of these tools include gender analysis frameworks to guide sectoral planning, model minimum gender indicators across sectors, gender monitoring frameworks, templates for

⁸ Change management and reforms language often indicates that the “window period” for any reforms to be rooted is 24 months

assessing gender responsive legislation and policies. Once integrated in project/programme planning, implementation and monitoring a strong culture of gender compliance and gender competencies would emerge.

Long term:

- The utilisation of community groups and traditional leaders as champions for social transformations should be intensified and strengthened in the next phase such as the such as the *Soweis'* leadership, Paramount Chiefs' engagements and the community wellness advocacy groups
- There is need to sustain and strengthen male involvement in the gender equality interventions being rolled out from the NGSP.
- There is need to improve timely and quality reporting at both technical and financial levels to assure smooth and quick funds disbursements from funding and development partners.

Recommendations to funding partners

Short term:

- There is need to continue and increase investments in building social capital within the Ministry for instance through building with capacity building for project management and monitoring. All training opportunities would ensure that gender is a cross cutting theme as well as any other forms of capacity building initiatives
- Towards ensuring strengthened programme accountability and improved reporting, there should be prioritised support for the development of the monitoring and evaluation framework of the NGSP
- For consistency in rolling out gender equality work in Sierra Leone, there is need to design a gender support strategy for both government MDA's and civil society organisations where programme choices and selection are informed by the objectives and strategies of the NGSP
- There should be earmarked and easily disbursed funds to support the specific recommendations made to the Ministry within a 12 month period so as to assure more "energised and focused" Plan implementation process in the remaining period

Medium Term:

- Development partners could set up a designated Gender Basket Fund to assure joint prioritisation and coherence. This can be disbursed through various options such as pass through grants, earmarked funds, pool funding or direct budget support. The support should be accompanied with specific responsibilities around strengthening of the procurement system

within the Ministry so it is strict but simple and with more speedy approval processes throughout the whole chain of accountability

- As part of capacity strengthening, development partners could second personnel alongside strategic priorities for a minimum period of 6 months and maximum period of 2 year period to support the Ministry in reshaping itself to deliver the remaining outputs in the next phase of the plan

Long term:

- There is need to improve disbursement of funds in a timely manner.

Recommendations to civil society

- There is need for more vibrant engagement between civil society organizations and the Ministry at the national level as a key element to *assure* harmony and consistency in implementation and advocacy for gender responsive policy and legal frameworks (as witnessed in the Gender Equality Bill discourse around creation of a Women’s Commission)
- There is need for collective re-induction to gender equality work. Whilst not subjecting the operational work of GM as an academic exercise, there is need to revisit and generate a common understanding around the theory for responding to patriarchy and all forms of oppression amongst civil society actors and Ministry personnel. In this way, national knowledge and understanding of the interconnectedness between diverse forms of subjugation, denial of rights and gender oppression will generate clarity and profile the ministry work more strategically (in terms of authority and resourcing). The civil society advocacy will also be refined so as to generate support and demand for accountability towards fulfilment of the National Gender Strategic Plan.
- Encouraging more male participation on gender related assignments and issues at all levels as a way of leveraging gender on the national political agenda.

INTRODUCTION

National Context

Sierra Leone is located on the West coast of Africa. The country is bordered in the North by Guinea, to the East by Liberia and to the West and South West by the Atlantic Ocean. The population and household census of 2004 puts Sierra Leone's total population at 4,976,871.¹⁰ According to the 2004 census figures, the capital city, Freetown, is estimated to have a population of about 770 thousand people, and another 170 thousand in the rural district of Freetown. It is also estimated that 22% of the population countrywide is between 10 and 19 years old. The percentage is, however, slightly higher in the Western Area accounting for about 30% children/youth.

Sierra Leone experienced one of Africa's most internecine and brutal conflicts that lasted for eleven years (1991-2002). The immeasurable destruction that attended the civil war in terms of infrastructural pillage, human carnage, and the breakdown of law and order that culminated in the collapse of the state cannot be overemphasized. Post-war efforts at rebuilding the battered economy, ensuring security nationwide, and providing essential services such as health care, education, safe drinking water among others continue to be fraught with challenges.

While Sierra Leone has made progress in recovering from conflict since 2002, significant areas of the state and economy remain under-developed. Decades of poor governance and socio-economic collapse from 1970s to the early 1990s followed by the civil war created acute shortage of professional, technical and managerial capacity¹¹ in the public service in Sierra Leone. Although successive governments from 2002 have focused on the restoration of state institutions, design and implementation of national policies, development programmes, strategies and plans, the country still lingers towards the bottom of the human development index.¹² Shortages in human and institutional capacity in critical sectors threaten to undermine long-term development and short-term consolidation of peace. In all of these developments, women and youths are hardest hit by the socio-economic malaise and political exclusion. Women in Sierra Leone are severely impacted by structural discrimination both in law and in custom. Pervasive beliefs that women are incompetent, unhealthy traditional practices, poor negotiating skills and the inability to meet the financial demands of the electorate have led to the exclusion of women from decision making at all levels.

Development of the NGSP

Though a number of gender focused activities have been initiated over the years, no coordinated effort has been put in place. Accordingly, in July 2008, the First Lady, together with the MSWGCA, began to develop a strategic plan. They consulted with stakeholders such as national and international NGOs, members of UN agencies including the Theme Group Gender, local experts including researchers from

¹⁰ See Statistics Sierra Leone's population and household census figures of 2004.

¹¹ It is estimated that more than 30% of the country's professional and educated nationals have left the country. More than 500,000 Sierra Leoneans reside in the USA and UK alone. For details see, the Truth and Reconciliation Report of 2002.

¹² See the Human Development Index of 2010.

the University of Sierra Leone and local community members. They also reviewed relevant legal and government documents, including annual action plans of various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), the national twin policies on the Advancement of Women (2000) and Gender Mainstreaming (2000), the Local Government Act 2004, the 1991 Constitution, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), population reports, reports on gender based violence (GBV), and the three “Gender Acts” of 2007. Lastly, they reviewed international frameworks such as UNSCRs 1325 and 1820; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals, the 1995 Beijing Platform, the African Union Declaration on Gender Equality and Development and the ECOWAS Protocols on Women and Development. The strategic plan aims to serve as a tool for efficient coordination of gender response programs implemented by MDAs and to provide a framework for tracking government/donor policies and budgets on gender related programs. The hope is to provide a strong advocacy and resource mobilization tool for effective gender program delivery in Sierra Leone.

The country’s commitment to gender empowerment and equality is demonstrated in the various steps taken to sign international legal instruments and protocols and in promoting national policies and legislation particularly on Gender Empowerment. On the political front, there has been enormous progress toward the design and adoption of gender related policies and legal frameworks. For example, the development of the 2nd-5th CEDAW report for the attention of the UN Committee on Gender in 2008; the establishment of a National Committee on Gender Based Violence (NaC-GBV) to prevent and respond to GBV related issues in 2009; the passage of the three “Gender Acts” in 2007; the popularization of the AU’s protocol on Human and People’s Rights in 2008; the submission of the 6th CEDAW report and many others. There is a current initiative to respond to women’s demand for the 30% political representation at all levels of governance in Sierra Leone

The government commitment to reproductive health rights witnessed the introduction of the Free Medical Health Care for Children under-5, Pregnant and Lactating Mothers. The scheme is intended to address access to ante-natal to post-natal care, maternal and infant mortality rate, and the high levels of sexually transmitted diseases.

The NGSP is also contributing towards the realization of Sierra Leone’s priorities such as the recommendations of Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report of 2004, which promoted the notion of gender empowerment as the basis for enduring peace in the country; the Agenda for Change (PRSP II) that emphasizes poverty reduction at all levels of society; the MDGs particularly goal 3 which emphasizes the importance of gender equality.-- Gender equality is acknowledged as being a key to achieving the other seven goals of the MDG; and Gender Equality as enshrined in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone chapter 3, section 27 which states; “no person shall be treated in discriminatory manner acting by any law...” Even though the claw back clause Section 27 (4) limits the extent of enjoyment of this non-discrimination provision.

Purpose and objective of the Mid-term evaluation of the Plan

The main objective of this assignment was to carry out the Mid-term evaluation of the National Gender Strategic Plan through a consultative process. The process also sought to build consensus on a vision of gender equality and empowerment that can form the basis of potential future policy that gives clear guidance to national and international development partners on promoting gender equality in the next phase of development.

More specifically, the Mid-term evaluation assessed the following aspects of the programme:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Plan design and implementation status
- Sustainability elements of the plan
- Outcomes/changes
- Lessons learnt

The scope and focus of the Mid-term evaluation covered the following:

- The level of alignment of the plan with national priorities, other ministries' strategic plans and also the Joint UN Vision for Sierra Leone
- The extent to which the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children has popularized, disseminated and assured effective coordination of the plan as well as any challenges encountered
- The level of progress made towards achieving the anticipated results of the Strategic Plan including contributing factors and impediments;
- Lessons learnt and best practices in relation to implementation of activities to achieve the strategic priorities articulated in the Plan.
- Strengths and weakness of the Plan
- Recommendation on a vision for gender equality and empowerment that will be the basis of future policy for national and international partners promoting gender equality and sustainable development in Sierra Leone

Mid-term evaluation design and methodology

The consultants used the logical sequence review approach. This involved a linear input, process and outputs framework that maps out and critically analyzes the connectedness between the strategic plan priorities, goals, objectives, activities, indicators and outputs. In evaluating progress made towards the strategic goals, the consultants juxtaposed information from the Situational Analysis of the Status of Children and Women Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2010 with findings of the current midterm evaluation to measure the extent of changes realized.

The TOR identified the following Mid-term evaluation criteria:

- **Relevance:** Refers to the extent to which the Strategic plan design, strategic goals, priorities and objectives accurately address the identified needs in Sierra Leone.
- **Effectiveness:** Concerns the extent to which the plan priority results were realized.
- **Efficiency:** Refers to how well the Ministry utilized resources to get desired results.
- **Outcomes:** Refers to extent of change realized in the beneficiaries of the identified programmes in the plan
- **Sustainability:** Refers to the extent to which the positive benefits of the plan are likely to continue after expiry of external funding.
- **Lessons learned:** Concerns knowledge that can be drawn from the Plans implementation experiences.

i. Performance criteria

The consultants rated the Plan implementation, performance and progress around the Strategic Priority areas as follows:

- Fully on track (All aspects on track)
- On track (On track according to plan, aspects on track outweigh the aspects not on track)
- Not sufficiently on track (A few aspects on track, but are outweighed by aspects not on track)
- Fully not on track (Very few or no aspects on track)

ii. Area of Evaluation and Evaluation techniques

The evaluation sought to have a national flavor and outlook, but the data collection took place in 4 sites representing all regions of the country: Freetown, Kenema, Makeni and Pujehun. The selection criteria were purposeful and based on the following: nearly equal representation of rural and urban respondents; presence of community based organizations; presence of partners implementing the plan, beneficiaries of planned actions and actors whose thematic focus relates to gender equality and women empowerment and finally most interventions anticipated in the plan such as Female Genital Cutting (FGC) were more pronounced and felt at the district level. Time and accessibility of the regions also influenced selection of regions to be sampled. Thus, one district in each region was selected: Makeni to represent the North and Kono because of similar traditional outlook on women and power relations, Kenema representing the East, Pujehun representing the South and Freetown the West.

Sampling

The following target groups were included in the sample:

- Government Ministries,
- Departments and Agencies
- Civil society organisations
- UN agencies
- Development partners
- Ordinary citizens of Sierra Leone
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

The complete list of respondents is found in Appendix B attached to this report

iii. Secondary sources of information

The consultants reviewed the Strategic Plan, relevant programme documents, progress reports, monitoring reports and other materials such as the log frame and implementation plans among other sources. The consultants also consulted various internet data bases to get information.

Literature/ Desk Evaluation

The Consultants undertook a review of literature including the strategic plan, relevant programme documents, progress reports, monitoring reports and other available materials such as the log frame and implementation plans among others. **Content analysis of pertinent documents**-This involved careful study and synthesis of information contained in various documents captured in the Appendix C

iv. Primary sources of information

The consultants interviewed primary sources to establish the outcomes and the extent to which the plan and its objectives were being realized. The consultants used similar interview guides to ensure respondents responded to similar questions even though probing provided institutional specific information.

Key informant interviews:

This involved conducting in-depth interviews with key respondents from relevant line ministries, civil society organizations, academic institutions, community, traditional and faith based leaders, UN agencies and development partners. A sample was selected from a list provided by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and UNICEF. The key respondents were selected because of their knowledge about the gender portfolio and/or expertise of gender issues broadly.

Focus group discussions:

Focus group discussions were held with three types of respondents: professional staff delivering on the strategic plan at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs, UN agencies collaborating with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs and thirdly recipients of the various programs being delivered under the plan at the district level¹³. The members were recruited from faith based organizations, community based organizations and grassroots based civil society organizations.

Fieldwork

The consultants traveled to various regions for fieldwork. The fieldwork involved focus group discussions with various beneficiaries, key informant interviews, observations as well as documentary reviews.

The Inception Report and its merits

The consultants developed and presented the Inception report which was reviewed, discussed and adopted. This phase of the exercise enabled to the consultants, and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) operate with common understanding and to map out activities as deemed appropriate. The work schedule was deliberated with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and approved with key timelines as follows:

¹³ Tentatively these include members of SMOGE the peer education and role modeling groups, members of the District Youth Officers, maternal health aides

The MTR Calendar with Key Timelines	
Inception Report	31 st May
Field interviews	23 rd May – 6 th June
Research and Data analysis	12 th June – 5 th July
Draft MTR Report	6 th July
Second Draft MTR	
Validation meeting	19 th July
Joint Review and Debriefing Meeting	19 th July
Draft Final Evaluation Report	24 th July

Data Analysis and Report Writing

Qualitative data from the field was transcribed and analysed through categorisation of themes and content analysis. Using triangulation, secondary data from literature review and primary data from the field was analysed, leading to the development of this comprehensive report. The logging matrix facilitated the analysis.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

a) Relevance

The evaluation sought to investigate the appropriateness of the National Gender Strategic Plan alongside national development priorities within the political, economic and social spheres. It also examined the processes leading to the development of the Plan as a first step.

b) Design

The development of the National Gender Strategic Plan was found to have been participative where stakeholders were engaged in identifying key priorities and strategies for the Plan. Participation forms a sound basis for ownership and accountability for the results anticipated in the plan. This evaluation established that whilst several respondents indicated that they had not seen the final hard copy of the plan, most were aware of the process/journey towards developing the National Gender Strategic Plan. In addition, nearly all respondents confirmed that the strategic priorities in the plan correspond to the needs of the country and in tune with gender empowerment and mainstreaming.

The design of the plan is commended for its balanced efforts of focusing at both supply (government ministry, line ministries, departments) and demand side (consumers and beneficiaries of gender equality interventions).

At the outset, this Mid-term evaluation reveals the important role of baseline data. Baseline data around all outputs is missing and this would generally have provided the starting point to objectively assess progress made due to targeted interventions. The absence of baseline data or targets for the plan is a serious weakness of the plan and has made it difficult to make a comprehensive review of progress. The findings of this Mid-term evaluation therefore are derived from an analysis of how performance indicators have been fulfilled – i.e. level of achievement and is therefore not compared alongside baseline or set/fixed quantitative or qualitative targets.

In terms of implementation and monitoring, the NGSP anticipated that it would amongst other things; raise awareness on the issue of gender mainstreaming; provide a framework for the assessment of its achievements and streamline interventions being put in place by national gender related institutions. The absence of a monitoring and evaluation system resulted to the Ministry being unable to systematically track changes/improvements occasioned by interventions, thus some progress being made under certain Strategic Priorities may have not been captured.

c) Alignment

The plan operationalizes the twin policies of Mainstreaming Gender and National Policy on the Advancement of Women and as such is designed and firmly located within the Sierra Leone context¹⁴. It is anchored in on-going national priorities including the national developmental framework of the

¹⁴ The twin policies were developed through a thorough review of both national and international frameworks as captured in Page 4 and 5, National Gender Strategic Plan (2010 to 2013)

“**Agenda for Change**”, and in particular, the fourth priority of *ensuring sustainable human development through the provision of improved social services*. The development framework notes that effective delivery of basic social services is essential for ensuring economic growth and poverty reduction and as such is committed to bringing service delivery closer to the people, by pushing forward the policy of decentralization and devolution of service delivery functions to local councils.

The section on the education sector seeks to improve access and raise the completion rate, especially for primary and junior secondary schools; to improve the quality of education through extensive training programmes for teachers; to provide adequate teaching and learning materials; to improve the conditions of service for teachers especially in remote areas; to provide early childhood care for more children; and to encourage the girl child to attend and complete school.

In terms of health, the major focus articulated in the Agenda for Change is on the reduction of mortality rates, especially for infants and pregnant women. Thus, priority investments towards scaling up the minimum package of essential services, including immunization, utilization of treated bed nets, promotion of early and exclusive breastfeeding, and promotion of hygiene practices as well as making available minimum maternal and neonatal health care systems are proposed. Given the clear links between health and access to safe drinking water, it commits to investing in wells and gravity fed water systems throughout the country. The prevention of HIV/AIDS and mitigating its effects remains a priority of the Government and utilization of the various levels of leadership to play an active role in combating HIV/AIDS. In the medium term, the plan anticipates to develop and implement a health insurance scheme that would improve the quality of health facilities and increase access to these facilities.

In addition, most of the NGSP themes have been integrated in the proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP III) **Agenda for Prosperity** 2013- 2017 which has highlighted gender as a cross cutting theme prioritizing interventions around sexual and gender based violence response and management systems strengthening, women’s political empowerment and securing sexual and reproductive health rights for women and girls.

The NGSP is in line with and upholds the principles entrenched in the **1991 Constitution** of Sierra Leone which guarantees equal rights for men and women, even though the claw back clause Section 27 (4) limits the extent of enjoyment of this non-discrimination provision. Since the import of Section 27 (4) is that discriminatory laws can constitutionally be made in the following cases:-in relation to citizenship; with regard to matters of adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, or inheritance; a law applying customary law discriminatorily in relation to a particular tribe or race; and where the discriminatory law is “reasonably justifiable in a democratic society”. Personal law is the area of law where women and girls experience discrimination most -limiting their political, social and economic rights.

The plan is cognizant of the need to implement some of the pending **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** recommendations¹⁵ which aimed at addressing the underlying cause of the conflict:

¹⁵ The recommendations included: repeal of all statutory and customary laws that discriminate against women. In the sphere of political representation, the TRC recommends redressing the marginalization of women by enacting new laws requiring all political parties to ensure that at least 30% of their candidates for all national and local

by prioritizing the elimination of laws and practices that discriminate against women, by introducing effective measures to address and reduce sexual and domestic violence, and by securing the government formal and public apology to women for all wrongs that were meted on them during the civil strife by H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma.

The NGSP responds to the **UN Joint Vision of Sierra Leone** of May 2009 which seeks to continue its work around the promotion of the rule of law, human rights, the rights of marginalized groups, especially women and children, and to assist in the review of Sierra Leone's Constitution of 1991. More particularly, the Joint UN Vision will continue to support the capacity building of Sierra Leone's national security agencies (especially the Sierra Leone Police) in highly specialized policing areas, such as airport and border security, human trafficking, gender-based violence, crime investigation and related fields.

The NGSP has also recognized some components of the four programmatic priorities in the Joint Vision, which include: the economic integration of rural areas; the economic and social integration of the youth; an equitable access to health services and an accessible and credible public service. In an effort to widen the economic and social opportunities for the rural populace, the Joint vision recognizes the need to invest in bridging the rural urban divide in terms of improving access to markets, social services, justice and information. The sense of youth marginalization which was a significant contributing factor in the civil war has also been prioritized by the Joint Vision through investments for social and economic integration. Whilst, various programmes on reproductive and child health and nutrition aim to reduce maternal and child mortality rates are priority health interventions, the Joint Vision also notes that it will continue to support the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major communicable diseases. The Joint Vision's fourth programmatic priority focuses on public sector reform processes and public accountability which entails interventions around capacity building and systems strengthening.

Sierra Leone has committed and has signed onto **several international human rights instruments** that promote gender equality work such as, the United Nations Security Resolution Council UNSCRs 1325 and 1820; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 1995 Beijing Platform, the African Union Declaration on Gender Equality and Development and the ECOWAS Protocols on Women and Development.

The NGSP has acknowledged and to a large extent (even though perhaps not sufficiently) the six priorities which are reflected in some ways in these instruments, and therefore implying that the GOSL seeks to domesticate some of the GoSL international human rights commitments. For instance, the **Beijing Platform** for action is almost fully covered in the 6 priority areas of the Plan responding to the critical areas of concern namely: women and poverty; women and health; violence against women; the girl child; women in power and decision making; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; education and training of women.

In so far as **CEDAW** is concerned, the NGSP also responds to most of the key themes, for instance by focusing on efforts to reform the legal and policy terrain in so far as equality and non-discrimination is

elections are women; ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women, which entered into force on the 25 November 2005

concerned.¹⁶In so far as adoption of temporary measures of accelerating de facto equality between men and women this has been witnessed with the advocacy efforts around Gender Equality Bill¹⁷. There have also been efforts around modifying social and cultural patterns to remove prejudices as seen through strategic investments with the Paramount Chiefs, *Soweis*, community wellness advocacy groups inter alia.¹⁸ In addition, there have also been interventions around encouraging women's participation in governance through government's commitment of enhancing the 30% quota for women's participation in politics and decision making, including the mobilization and mapping of aspirants in the upcoming elections.¹⁹The NGSP focuses on women empowerment through girl child education, women adult literacy interventions and women economic empowerment as well as efforts to enforce legal protection amongst children in terms of neglect, child labour, violence inter alia.²⁰ Some efforts around improving women's sexual and reproductive health status and rights form yet another strategic priority²¹ whilst focusing on rural women the attention to women and agriculture as well as the outreach modalities to the regions adopted by the MSWGCA's indicates some strategic responses by government.²²The development of legal frameworks to criminalize domestic violence, to ensure widows are not deprived from inheriting property and registration of marriages work towards assuring equality before the law and removing discrimination against women in matters relating to marriage and family relations.²³

The NGSP has also embraced components of the **MDG's** even though the goals are most unlikely to be met. The 6 strategic priorities have integrated some elements namely around all the goals apart from Goal 7 on Global Partnerships. Thus the plan has aspects that address Goal 1 ending poverty and hunger; Goal 2 on Universal Education; Goal 3 on Gender Equality, Goal 4 on Child Health; Goal 5 on Maternal health and Goal 6 on Combatting HIV/AIDS.

d) Leveraging elements in the plan

Whilst the review established there was no baseline survey done to benchmark the Plans achievements, during the life of the plan however, some of these surveys were performed such as the Survey of Women in Top Decision-Making Positions in Sierra Leone²⁴, the mapping of stakeholders working on gender currently being finalised by Statistics Sierra Leone inter alia.

The conceptual basis of the plan articulated in the guiding principles and further elaborated in the Strategic approaches seeks to enhance economic growth and social justice. This plan acknowledges that whilst the pursuit of gender equality is strongly embedded within the framework of fundamental human rights and gender justice, investments in women are recognised as crucial to achieving sustainable

¹⁶ Article 1, 2 and 3 CEDAW

¹⁷ Article 4 CEDAW

¹⁸ Article 5 CEDAW

¹⁹ Article 7 and 8 CEDAW

²⁰ Article 10, 11 and 13 CEDAW

²¹ Article 12 CEDAW

²² Article 14 CEDAW

²³ Article 15 and 16 CEDAW

²⁴ Commissioned by UNDP Sierra Leone

development.²⁵ The strength and potential of this conceptual framework cannot be under-estimated, since they are direct links of expanded opportunities for women, especially empowerment, access to justice, education and income-generating activities, which result to: reduction in population growth; improved health and education of children; easing of environmental pressure; improved nutrition; poverty reduction; and sustainable development confirming that investment in women makes economic sense. Keeping women at the margins of development could prove detrimental to the overall development efforts and goals of the country and this plan is clearly cognizant of this fact.

The design of the plan is commended for its balanced efforts of focusing at both supply (government ministry, line ministries, departments) and demand side (consumers and beneficiaries of gender equality interventions) as captured in the table here below. However some gaps in terms of design are noted particularly under the Strategic Objective 4 on Women’s empowerment where the strategic goals around women’s economic empowerment and women and agriculture are not featured. The evaluation established that due to this omission, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs was not in a position to furnish the consultants with achievements or tangible results flowing from these interventions.

Table 1: Synopsis of the National Gender Strategic Plan

Priorities	Strategy
1. Capacity Building, Management and Oversight	<p>Strategic goal: Improve Coordination Mechanisms for Effective Implementation of the National Gender Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy formulation and implementation, review of gender policies • Strengthen capacity of the MSWGCA’s, national gender machinery to effectively provide strategic guidance and direction for the implementation of NGSP • Develop coordination mechanism for MSWGCA on gender related interventions • Monitoring and supervision of MDAs and other service providers of gender issues • Networking, coalition building and linkages with policy makers, development partners and other key stakeholders • Strengthen Gender officers, local council, NGOs and CBOs • Develop communication strategy to increase understanding of gender issues
2. Women’s participation in Governance	<p>Strategic Goal: Increased women’s participation in governance and decision making at all levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote access to justice for women through information, education and communication • Strengthen and enhance women’s capacity to participate in politics and decision making at all levels • Provide sustainable coaching and mentoring schemes for women to participate in governance and decision making • Advocacy for 30% quota for women as part of the political party code of conduct • Review of discriminatory clauses in the National Constitution and other statutory

²⁵ World Bank, A Strategy for Action

Priorities	Strategy
	<p>instruments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build mechanism for Reproductive Health Literacy • Advocate for 30% quota in appointment in high profile jobs
3. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights	<p>Strategic Goal: Improve Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of the National Committee on Gender Based Violence (NaC-GBV) for effective response to gender based violence • Advocacy for promotion of women’s sexual and reproductive health rights • Formation of SRHR Committees at all levels and operationalize them • Strengthen gender responsive prevention mechanisms in communities • Establish gender responsive mechanisms e.g. free medical treatment and legal services for GBV survivors • Strengthen partnership with implementing partners on HIV to reduce women’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS • Capacitate Traditional birth attendants (TBA’s) on SRHR and referral procedures • Advocate for affordable, accessible and available health services in rural communities • Advocate and lobby for inclusion of family planning in school curriculum • Advocate and lobby for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820 • Advocate and lobby for the passage of the Sexual Offences Act
4. Women’s empowerment	<p>Strategic Goal: Improve Female Access to Education at all levels</p> <p><i>Women and Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalise awareness raising campaign at all levels on the importance of the girl child • Enforcement of the provision of the Child Rights Act • Institutionalise scholarship schemes and incentives to promote girl child education and enforce free education policy for girls in all regions and at all levels • Institute punitive action for men who impregnate young girls. Campaign on violence against girls in an out of school • Promote and support functional literacy programmes for all women (rural and urban) • Building capacity to enable women to actively participate in peace building and search for national security • Institute mechanisms to improve rates of retention of girls in schools <p><i>Women and Economic Empowerment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building to enhance entrepreneurship skills of women • Support policy advocacy and training programmes to enhance economic empowerment • Build their capacity to be guarantors for financial credits to women in order to improve access to loans required to increase capital outlay • Infrastructural development to improve income through access to markets <p><i>Women and Agriculture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy formulation on women’s access control and ownership over land and productive resources • Strengthen women farmers association to claim rights on access to land and

Priorities	Strategy
	<p>productive resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of adequate financial resources/infrastructural development to enhance agricultural production, processing, preservation and marketing for female farmers • Training and campaign for improved access to and control over improved agricultural technology • Provision of extension service for women in agriculture to build their capacity in the use of improved technology (seeds, implements and methods)
5. Research, Documentation and Information Communication Technology (ICT)	<p>Strategic Goal: Improve Quality of Gender Disaggregated Data for Effective management of Gender Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build partnership with Statistics Sierra Leone and national research institutions to generate analyse and disseminate gender disaggregated data on a wide range of issues • Strengthen channels for information sharing between institutions engaged in campaign for gender equality in the country • Promote access to justice through ICT by promoting information sharing procedures that will raise awareness of basic rights among women in rural./remote areas • Strengthen capacity to maximise use of information technology • Develop database using information sourced from Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and the National Population and Housing Censuses • Strengthen the Geographic Information System (GIS) to facilitate gender mapping at all levels: Government, NGO's and the private sector • Capacity building for staff at national and district levels • Development of ICT policy for women at all levels of society to benefit • Research and documentation of GBV related issues at the national level.
6. Gender Budgeting and Accountability Strategies	<p>Strategic Goal: Increase Commitment to Gender Programming through Provision of Funds for Programme Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) committees at national, regional and district levels • Adapt International Women's Declaration on AID effectiveness and gender equality to speak to issues that are of specific interest to Sierra Leonean women • Build capacity of Parliamentarians, City Councils, District Oversight committees, Women organisations on GRB • Advocate for the allocation of resources for gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives • Put in place strong monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress that is being made in the implementation of the strategies and activities outlined.

e) Effectiveness and Efficiency

i. Overview of plan achievements

For both clarity and ease of reference the performance of the programme is presented through a results matrix from which the status of performance can be witnessed

Table 2: Results Matrix

Priority area	Overall Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Target	MOV	Status/Achievements so far
	Gender equality and women’s empowerment enhanced by 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women in decision making positions • % of women Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and Councilors • Gender Development Index • Gender empowerment index 			MSWGCA Report	
	Output					
Capacity Building, Management and Oversight	Strengthened capacity for gender mainstreaming and monitoring by 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity needs assessment of the MSWGCA conducted and implemented • Network of organizations for gender equity and women’s empowerment established • M&E Plan developed 			Assessment report Annual Network report M&E Plan available	An assessment of the capacity needs of the Ministry was carried out through the Peace Building Fund (PBF) in 2009 Gender Donor coordination established and functional. GBV networks present and functional at national and community level Nac-GBV network
Women’s Participation in Governance	Strengthened legislature and policy framework for gender equality and equity by 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-related legislations enacted (to specify at least one legislation to be enacted) • 30% quota allocated for women’s representation in governance 			Acts available Copy of legislation	Draft National Gender Equality Commission Bill 2010. Affirmative Action Bill for minimum 30% quota was drafted in 2011 and a new Bill has been drafted to merge the two above. It is now called

Priority area	Overall Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Target	MOV	Status/Achievements so far
						Gender Equality Bill 2012 Research and mapping of Potential Women Aspirants through the Women's Forum
Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights	Strengthened mechanism for addressing gender-related dimensions of SRHR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Rainbow Centers established • Review Section 21 of the Prevention and Control of HIV and Aids Act (2007) • CEDAW requirements of SRHR met (specify and this will be relevant only if there are issues in General Recommendation 24 of the CEDAW not implemented in Sierra Leone) • Number of PHUs providing PMTCT • Number of centres providing Post Exposure Prophylaxes services 			MSWGCA Report Revised Act CEDAW Report NAS Report MSWGCA Report	Two safe homes were constructed (one in Makeni and one in Freetown). They are yet to be made operational The Act on HIV and Aids was reviewed – to remove provisions of discrimination, stigmatization and decriminalization of pregnant women and girls Strengthened partnership and coordination between the MSWGCA and the FSU to combat all forms of violence National Committee on GBV has been established with multi-sectoral membership. A national referral protocol for child victims/survivors of SGBV developed through wide stakeholder consultations 300 PHUs are providing PMTCT and PEPs services across the country
	Strengthened mechanisms to reduce violence against women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of cases of gender-based violence prosecuted per year (disaggregated by sex) • Number of FSUs • Awareness about GBV 			FSU Report Research Report	There are monthly statistics of GBV cases put together by FSU. 43 FSU's (two additional ones) There is continuous awareness on GBV through IEC materials,

Priority area	Overall Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Target	MOV	Status/Achievements so far
						community meetings and the media
Research, Documentation and ICT	Strengthened capacity for gender analysis output by 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of Ministries M&E systems generating gender disaggregated data Number of studies, research, reviews with a gender perspective 			Ministries report Studies, research and evaluation report	Statistics Sierra Leone has posted Statisticians to MDAs to disaggregate data. Most of the data collected by SSL are disaggregated CEDAW Survey for the writing of the 6 th CEDAW Report; Gender Survey on women in key decision making positions supported by UNDP
Women's empowerment with specific focus on rural women	Strengthened women's access to land rights, financial services and markets to promote women's engagement in economic life by 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of women owning viable business Number of recipients of micro credit and other loan schemes disaggregated by sex 				-
Gender Budgeting and Accountability	Strengthened capacity for gender budgeting and monitoring by 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of Ministries exercising gender budgeting 			Ministries report	A gender budgeting training has been conducted for MDAs, Local Councils and the NGOs. A Gender Budgeting Committee has been established. A circular has been issued by the Ministry of Economic Development

ii. Detailed Analysis of Achievements

This section presents an expanded version of the achievements of the National Gender Strategic Plan assessed against the seven outputs. Most of the activities undertaken during the period under evaluation were not necessarily derived from the plan - since the consultants established that there were low levels of knowledge of the NGSP. Thus, whilst some progress on outputs are assessed as “On Track” this is not necessarily attributed to the Ministry coordinating those activities – rather to the fact that in Sierra Leone there have been achievements witnessed around these outputs. It is notable however that even where respondents did not know about the Plan, their implementation of gender work corresponded with key components of the plan confirming that there is alignment and common understanding on which are the priority areas to intervene for gender equality work in the country.

The low levels of knowledge about the plan were witnessed both at the national level and at the regional district levels:

“I have seen the NGSP but I am not sure it's used – I doubt the level of ownership of the plan and in my view there ought to have been a broader plan, integrating children and social welfare portfolio not just gender”. Justice Sector reform Secretariat *female respondent, Key informant interview*

“...for us, we have not seen the Plan, there is a designate staff member in this Ministry who deals with gender and so she is the only one who knows whether aspects of the Plan have been realised. However, in our forecasting, we are concerned that the rural urban migration has removed the youth from the villages and there is growing concentration of young people in the city, ultimately this brings about social problems including gender based violence, stretched sanitation services..... With the development of the PRSP III we anticipate a closer collaboration under the human development pillar; we need concrete data on the status of women as we develop our national policy on monitoring and evaluation.....” Directorate, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development *male respondent, Key informant interview*

Consequently, the consultants conclude that the expectation for the NGSP to provide a clear framework for coordinating national gender responsive programmes was not realised. The low levels of knowledge of the NGSP can be attributed to a set of inter related weaknesses that have continued to plague the Ministry²⁶ namely: the weak coordination capacity within the Ministry; low visibility of the Ministry particularly amongst other line Ministries reform programmes (e.g. Justice Sector Secretariat Reforms); low resource allocations and other management constraints around “lapses and overlaps in functions and mandates, obsolete regulations that marred effective administration and management.”²⁷

²⁶ This has been captured in detail in the Report of the Management and Functional Review for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs, spearheaded by the Governance Reform Secretariat and funded by DFID.

²⁷ Ibid

NGSP Output 1: Strengthened capacity for gender mainstreaming and monitoring by 2012

Indicators:

- Capacity assessment of the Ministry conducted;
- Network of gender equity and women empowerment established and
- Monitoring and Evaluation plan developed.

Performance Assessment: On track

This Mid-term evaluation affirms the Ministry's own reflection that there is need for strengthened capacity within the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. In the period under review and in line with the Public Sector Reform recommendations, the evaluation team notes that programmatically some strategic steps are being embraced by the Ministry in order to provide a solid foundation for its coordination and leadership role as the national machinery, namely: investing in a comprehensive capacity assessment in terms of skills, knowledge, equipment and other resources; commissioning baseline surveys on key issues related to some of the outputs in the plan; complying with most of the accountabilities outlined in the CEDAW concluding comments and recommendations²⁸ *inter alia*.

“..Undertaking our oversight role is a real major problem, even though we have qualified personnel with relevant Master's degree – they are not enough. In addition, we desire to have higher caliber of gender professionals thus focusing on consistent training but we have no funding to do this. Our efforts to have a strong management information system are undermined as we do not have equipment and funding. When we begin negotiations with development partners and agree on the priorities to be undertaken within a set period of time, this is not forthcoming, they disburse money at their own pace – promises and undertakings are made but they are not timely.”

Senior Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs official, Key informant interview, Female respondent

In so far as the capacity assessment is concerned, it is important to have an informed basis in order to create an enabling environment to lead people to perform better and also become the change agents required for gender equality work. Whilst the capacity assessment report is yet to be released, it is anticipated that it will generate critical information that will assist both the Ministry and other stakeholders – demonstrating clearly how the Ministry experiences and “lives” within itself and secondly how the Ministry interprets, relates with and experiences constraints for delivering on its mandate. Operationally, one of the most visible challenges faced by Ministry staff particularly in the regions is **logistical support** in terms of level of staffing, equipment and transport.

²⁸ Sixth Periodic Country Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The Ministry has also collaborated with Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) to establish a **statistical unit** in the Gender Directorate. At the time of the evaluation the unit was not operational due to staff challenges but this (establishment of the unit) in itself is a positive sign in demonstrating the vision of the Ministry in its efforts to generate and deliver accurate gender disaggregated data for the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan. Sex disaggregated data is particularly powerful for advocacy purposes, producing clear statistical evidence of gender differences and inequality.

At the time of the evaluation, the evaluation team noted that varied capacity building interventions and international exposure forums had been undertaken by key staff in the Ministry, however, it was not established whether a **training** plan had been applied to identify staff and link them with the available capacity building interventions which would assure relevance and sustainability. Most of the capacity building fora were important in strengthening the Ministry in delivering and providing strong oversight on the delivery of the National Gender strategic Plan, such as the Gender and security meeting on UN Resolution 1325 by regional gender officer in Makeni, the Commission on the Status of Women by the Minister and key senior personnel. Some development partners however expressed some sense of frustration as the application of the skills attained were not visible; for instance the data training in Information Management Systems by SSL does not appear to have improved storage and management of data.

The low **absorption rate of resources** by the Ministry was also observed as a factor that undermined the efficiency of Plan implementation and was attributed probably to challenges in approval processes that took longer than anticipated. The sense of “fatigue” or “apathy” amongst Ministry staff that the existing systems cannot be reformed has also generated frustration in requisitioning of funds. Thus, the need to strengthen simpler but strict procurement and approval processes within a set accelerated period of time

The Mid-term evaluation is in agreement with the CEDAW committee’s observation that the MSWGCA continues to suffer from “weak institutional capacity...as the national machinery for the advancement of women. The ...Ministry is chronically lacking in resources and understaffed and does not have the authority or capacity to work effectively.....act as catalyst for and coordinate the use of a gender mainstreaming strategy across all sectors of Government, and at provincial and local governmental levels.²⁹

On the supply side, governments gender mainstreaming and monitoring efforts become more visible with the presence of a **vibrant and energized civil society** sharing a common philosophy around gender equality and women’s advancement. The role of civil society in bringing visibility of the national gender priorities, achievements and constraints cannot be overstated, particularly when the advocacy and monitoring is effectively executed. Whilst not confined to Sierra Leone, there is a general assumption that women’s organizations innately possess similar understanding and interpretations of gender oppression and therefore gender equality work. This evaluation established that the struggle around

²⁹ Article 12, Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Sierra Leone

having a **common vision** and theory on ending inequality, inequity based on social justice is not shared across the board. This is illustrated by some of the respondents remarks captured here below:

...with the emergence of a new culture there is need to locate human rights within a cultural context. Women and girls must respect their womanhood and resist new technologies such as condoms. Why are they using them? Unless they are having arrangements outside their matrimonial bed” Women’s Forum representative, *Key informant interview, Female respondent*

“In my view the women’s movement here is faced with an intergenerational gap in terms of leadership. Hence, my belief as a young woman in so far as affirmative action is concerned is that today we don’t need it. My experience is that we must go and compete with men, no strong woman has been denied any space” *Aminata Sillah, Deputy Commissioner National Youth Commission, Key informant interview*

“Affirmative action is not because women are not strong!, it is about confronting the barriers that women have to overcome due to the patriarchal society they live in – the structural violence that is embedded to discourage women from vying for public office such as being labeled a prostitute, demands that you should and must be married, the expectations that when you seek to vie for public office you have money to dispense with and not your ideology...the list is endless and this why the government should pass the quota bill, the more people get into it politics and public life, the more people get confidence on women’s leadership. Peoples psyche becomes oriented differently to perceive women as leaders in their own right! *Directorate, Gender Research and Documentation Centre Key informant interview. female respondent*

At the level of academia, the Gender Research and Documentation Centre (GRADOC) clearly articulates this disconnect as one that contributes to the continued public vagueness and apathy around the premium gender equality and women’s empowerment for national sustainable development.

NGSP Output 2: Strengthened legislature and policy framework for gender equality and equity by 2012.

Indicators:

- Gender related legislations enacted
- 30% quota allocated for women's representation in governance

Performance assessment: On track

The work around creating stronger legal and policy frameworks is about social transformation – it is centred on the rights based discourse that locates both women and men as rights holders. In view of the fact that discrimination and oppression disproportionately affects women and girls compared to men and boys, engaging in gender responsive law making is about affirming the legitimacy of women's and girl's claims – thus it provides a strong preventive framework by setting standards upon which gender equality and women's/girls rights are formally recognised and accompanied corrective and/or punitive measures that are legislatively anchored.

In line with the international community's commitment to increasing women in decision making the government in the PRSP II stipulates that it will introduce a temporary affirmative action on 30% quota. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs has elaborated on the 30% quota for women in decision making in the National Gender Strategic Plan and the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820.

This evaluation established that the work anticipated in the Plan around legal and policy terrain had a twin focus: firstly it focused on **generating public awareness** at community and household levels in relation to the existing laws that promote gender equality and women's advancement and secondly it focused on the **advocacy for additional laws** to secure gender equality and remove discriminatory provisions.

Despite the presence of the "Three Gender Acts": Domestic Violence Act 2007; Devolution of Estate Act 2007 and the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007, both the MSWGCA's and civil society acknowledged that the laws were not an end in themselves and they needed dissemination amongst communities and community structures so that they are enforced and invoked. The embrace of male involvement in the gender equality and empowerment agenda was also found to be a strategy likely to generate a broader support base particularly working at community levels around negative perceptions about women's rights. The evaluation team observed that the partnerships at regional and district levels comprised of both women and men.

In so far as public awareness on existing laws and advocacy for invoking the rights articulated in the gender sensitive laws, the evaluation established that during the review period the Ministry had heavily invested in partnerships for advocacy. Through interaction at the regional districts, it was found that the Ministry effectively executed its coordination and leadership role amongst diverse stakeholders at the regional levels by securing space for meetings, convening them, monitoring the interventions through

scheduled review meetings and by participating/attending initiatives being undertaken by various civil society organisations.

Strong synergies and collaboration were witnessed during the field visits. A general sense of “who is doing what” emerges very strongly from this evaluation as articulated by respondents in various regions:

“...all of us do our interventions together; we have a lot of synergy and avoid duplicating each other’s work. When we meet here at the Ministry office, we plan together and the government knows what we are doing. We are partners and our Nac-GBV network is a good entry point for us. From this, we have formed other networks such as the “Civil society Forum for Human Rights and Democracy in Sierra Leone.” We don’t look for a place to meet, we normally come here at this desk and we are comfortable...” *Focus group discussion in Makeni, Male respondent*

“..even if the Ministry is constrained in terms of resources, we all “chip” in and jointly host events with them, for instance during the International Women’s Day celebrations, we attend the radio stations and/or convene community meetings to mobilise, popularise and sensitise people on the importance of the women’s day and how the three “Gender Acts” affect our lives.” *Female respondent focus group discussion in Pujehun*

This experience demonstrates that animating social transformation work at **community level** generally results to more visible products. It is at community level where ideas/concepts are actualised with beneficiaries and thus demands synergy building amongst actors working at that level. However, the absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the delivery of the NGSP greatly undermines realisation of this output and this probably explains the leadership and coordination weaknesses at national level.

At the **national level**, a series of joint partnership interventions for public awareness and knowledge building on the laws have been undertaken during the period under review. In Makeni for instance, an illustrated guide on the “Gender Acts” developed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and formerly United National Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was found to be the tool utilised for this sensitisation. There was no evidence that, this concise illustration guide was being utilised in the other sites visited namely Pujehun and Kenema. This poses a question around the consistency or similarity of information sharing and interpretation of provisions in the law and level of depth. In Makeni and Kenema, respondents drawn from civil society indicated that the radio programmes they hosted on the various laws and national policy around gender equality were frequently jointly hosted by themselves and the regional gender officers - so as to assure a consistent message from government and non- governmental organisations.

However, the evaluation found that linkages between the presence of statutory provisions to community knowledge and skills as well as services/infrastructure to facilitate their claims to the protections under these laws were not sufficient. Several respondents observed that despite the presence of the three “Gender Acts” there had not been significant transformation in the manner which citizens live their lives – many do not know that the laws target the interpersonal behaviours and attitudes that violate rights particularly at the household levels particularly in so far as domestic violence, inheritance and succession are concerned.

“.. many victims of sexual violence come to our office particularly young girls, but once they report they are confronted with other secondary challenges such as transport to go to the hospital and get the medical report which costs 30,000 Leones, when they go to the Rainbo Centre sometimes it takes long as the doctor is not present” *Key informant interview, FSU representative Kenema*

“ ...in this area when we are creating awareness of the three gender acts, participants at the workshops tell us that they know there is a law to register marriages but they don’t know where to register it.” *Female respondent FGD respondent*

“ another reason why people are not invoking the law is that there is a general low level of empowerment amongst women, they express that they want to take bold steps but they then falter saying they don’t have the courage to do so, they are afraid”... *Female respondent, FGD Kenema*

The second arm of the work under this output was around **advocacy for new laws** to secure non-discrimination and promote equality. Confronting discrimination, inequality and human rights is a challenge for many governments since it entails negotiating state-society relations which inevitably results to some contradictions and tensions. The strategic goal under this output is to have “increased women’s participation in governance and decision making at all levels”. Thus interventions around this output focused on building knowledge and understanding of how women are systematically disadvantaged on the basis of their identity within formal and public institutions as well as demonstrating the unjust consequences brought about by such discrimination and exclusion.

As at the time of the review most of the **lobbying and advocacy work** has entailed bringing together groups of diverse audiences to reflect upon and understand the importance of legislation that will assure women’s fair representation as a social justice principle and developmental concern.

This has enabled a process of “buy in” on the principle that women’s representation is a necessity, whilst the law is yet to be enacted; there is a general understanding that there is a need to transform the profile of representation so as to root democracy and fairness in Sierra Leone. This work has also been faced with “**backlash**” where women have to face challenges at the household levels as remarks such as the one below demonstrate

“if you want 50/50, then you also bring resources to the home at a 50/50 share...we no longer need to work, you as wives will bring us food and money...as government is giving you free seats” Key informant interview, male respondent

Hence a variety of community sensitisation programmes particularly those targeting men were undertaken jointly by the MSWGCA and the civil society organisations. The evaluation reveals that **engaging men** to champion gender issues particularly amongst communities where perceptions on women’s leadership in formal government spaces is yet to become rooted give it more visibility and attention with the attendant dividend for national action on gender equality and empowerment.

The Consultative process of developing the **Gender Equality Bill** to address and redress gender imbalances and differences in elective and appointive decision-making positions by providing for a minimum thirty percent representation of women and to provide for related matters has expanded the base of support. Most significant about the process of developing the Bill is the Ministry mobilization capacity across the board so as to build “buy in” in the law which is crucial for successful advocacy. In addition, so as to have a strong and **credible basis for advocacy**, the Ministry initiated the gender survey to determine the top women in decision making as well as demonstrating the underrepresentation of women. Through its partners, the Ministry has also been able to engage in other processes advancing women’s representation and this include, the stakeholders meeting on support for women candidates and violence free elections, where civil society, development partners and donors generated a common strategic alliance between groups supporting women’s participation in the 2012 elections.³⁰ Follow up initiatives by various partners, particularly the Women’s Forum, who have undertaken a mapping exercise throughout the country for potential women aspirants as a way of mobilizing them and supporting their strategy for securing political leadership.

As activists we have witnessed growing political will from the government through the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs...for instance their efforts to mobilise at both national and community level during the International Women Day celebrations, we feel they are taking on their leadership role in highlighting the importance of women. In addition, the inclusion of civil society representatives in the government delegations as in the recent Commission on the Status of Women, their support towards implementation of Resolution 1325 as well as engaging many of us in the preparation of the Sixth CEDAW Report. *Female respondent, Key informant interview Women Leaders organization*

In line with meaningfully engaging women in conflict and peace building processes, the establishment of the **Resolution 1325 Secretariat** and the launch of the **National Action Plan to implement Resolution 1325** highlight the significance of this process. The Action plan charts a way of increasing women’s participation and ownership in the peace building process and reconstruction as well as increasing their participation at the policy formulation and implementation levels for sustainable peace in Sierra Leone.

³⁰ March 2012 Consultative meeting

NGSP Output 3: Strengthened mechanisms for addressing gender related dimensions of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Indicators:

- Number of Rainbow Centres established
- Review of Section 21 of the Prevention and Control of HIV and Aids Act 2007 CEDAW requirements of SRHR met
- Number of PHUs providing PMTCT
- Number of centres providing PEP services

Performance assessment: On track

The interventions around this output have largely been successful and achieved. However, noting the absence of the baseline and targets the level of achievement cannot be succinctly stated. It is widely recognised that when women and girls are free from violence, this has a positive impact on their lives enabling them to among other things: make choices on the number and spacing of their children; negotiate for safe sex; not succumbing to harmful cultural practices; whom and how to have safe and pleasurable sex; on their education and that of their children; and on their overall health status and economic status.

One of the critical responses for survivors/victims of violence is the provision of immediate and comprehensive care for survivors to reduce the likelihood of the long term negative effects of sexual gender based violence. The design and implementation of Rainbow Centres seeks to provide this service. The evaluation established that there are three **safe homes** (one in Freetown, the other in Kenema and the other in Makeni). The Makeni one is not operational and has been critiqued by stakeholders in the area as being too distant from basic infrastructure such as electricity, water and sanitation. Its isolated location also provides potential for entrenching stigma. According to the Family Support Unit, whilst the centres provide the much needed comprehensive services, this is constrained as the medical doctors are not always on site yet processing the medical reports requires some urgency for efficient action by the law enforcement arm. The limited free service to survivors of sexual violence and not to survivors of domestic violence also causes some confusion to victims, who then may opt not to pursue the cases as medical reports from hospitals cost at least 30,000 Leones.

Around the second indicator regarding the Review of the HIV legislation, this evaluation notes the partnership and engagement of the Ministry with the National Aids Secretariat and working with civil society for the **amendment of Section 21** of the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Act removing discriminatory provisions relating to “deliberate and intentional transmission of HIV/AIDS virus in September 2011. In terms of women’s empowerment and non- discrimination this is a great achievement as it informs HIV/AIDS intervention programmes. Previous perceptions around criminalisation placed women in sites likely to be prosecuted as they would be the first people in their

relations to know their status³¹ Thus, the evaluation observes that to secure greater protection for women and in order to have sustainable HIV prevention programmes, there is need to invest in laws that empower women by creating societal, legal and financial equality for women as well as criminalising rape.

Through its Children Affairs Directorate, the Ministry has integrated the rights violations and abuse facing **the girl child** as a priority discourse particularly in so far as sexual and reproductive health is concerned. The intensity of vulnerabilities amongst girls reflects the need for continued and intensified interventions for full respect of their rights and strengthened mechanisms to protect and support them. For instance, the statistics reveal that the current rate of teenage pregnancy is high and currently 34% of women age 15-19 are mothers or currently pregnant³² 40% of the maternal deaths are teenagers³³ The interconnectedness of the various factors that trigger ultimate disempowerment are seen with the prevalent discriminatory practices that contradicts government efforts to attain its 6 priorities within the NGSP. This is aptly captured by the input from one focus group discussion

...when you reflect on the life of a girl child, you see the enormous challenges she has to overcome in order to secure her right as a citizen! Let's start with her exposure and ever imminent threat of an early marriage or the practice of FGC which will most likely lead her to engage in sexual activity. Such a girl has no access to any contraceptive or even knowledge about it. Once pregnant, she will most likely have complications during delivery, she will drop out of school – she will be illiterate! What kind of society are we nurturing, one where the women will be illiterate for ever! So the discussion about women empowerment has to start with the girl child going to school and STAYING in school.
Development partners Focus group discussion, female respondent

During the period under review, engaging UNICEF's strength in surveillance studies, a Situation analysis of the Status of Children in Sierra Leone has been produced and widely disseminated.

The Ministry of Education in partnership with the MSWGCA's has also invested in rolling out diverse confidence and self- esteem which has an infrastructure to sustain the interventions. The Sierra Leone Girl Child Education Network (SLEGEN) coordinated by the Deputy Director in the Ministry of Education.

In the period under review, special targeting for **adolescents and young people** occasioned the formation of a Multi-Sectoral Programme for Adolescents' and Young People's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Sierra Leone (2012-2014). The multi sectoral group comprises of five Ministries led by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, namely: Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Ministry of Youth, Employment and Sports. This Multi-Sectoral Programme was developed to respond to the youth bubble as adolescents aged between 10-19 years and young people within the age group

³¹ This is due to routine testing during pregnancy and considering they (women) would be less likely to safely disclose their status to their partner as a result of inequality in power relations, economic dependence and gender based violence within relationships.

³² 2008 DHS,

³³ 2010 RH/MOHS Report

of 20-24 constitute about 30 % of the population.³⁴ This initiative that targets adolescents and young people will serve to empower women and girls and improve their social status and situation.³⁵

A review of the Sixth CEDAW Report indicates positive strides in responding to the recommendation 35 around **maternal and infant mortality**, access to contraceptives and family planning services whilst efforts relating to Recommendation 23 on legislation on **FGC** are largely around generating consensus for a model of response. Towards addressing maternal and infant mortality, the Government launched a Health Sector Strategic Plan 2010-2015 which aims to ensure successful implementation of the Basic Package of Essential Health Services (BPEHS) in order to improve service delivery. The package ensures the provision of minimal essential quality of care for all and includes services that have the greatest impact on the major health problems (especially that of maternal and child health). The BPEHS is available at all levels of service delivery in the district and content is specific according to type of Peripheral health unit (PHU). With the introduction of the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI) in 2010 for pregnant women, children under five and lactating mothers, Sierra Leone is paving its way in protecting mothers and children. During the period under review it was anticipated that more women attend antenatal and postnatal care, opt for institutional delivery, the right to opt for family planning, prevent mother to child transmission of HIV and understand the significance of treatment and care of neonates and children. The Free Health Care Initiative also serves to prevent unwanted pregnancies, hence leading to reduced number of unsafe abortions in the country. In the longer term, the aim is to provide universal access to quality health care for all vulnerable groups. This evaluation established that the implementation of the strategy has been largely constrained by resources and hence not optimally realizing its anticipated goals.

At the community level, the MSWGCA alongside other partners particularly UNFPA, have mobilized traditional birth attendants and women leaders who have been receiving training to encourage pregnant mothers attend health facilities – these groups known as the community wellness advocacy groups are spread throughout the country and at the time of the review 97 wellness groups were in place, focusing on gender based violence prevention and response as well as outreach on sexual and reproductive health rights. Through literature review and in the absence of baseline data, this evaluation is not confident in making an assessment about the reported over 300 Primary Health Units out of 1275 providing PMTCT and PEPs services. However, it is crucial to note however that where these units are available, corresponding quality facilities and equipment are of necessity to ensure there are no stocks out and that in addition a strong LIMS system is in place.

³⁴ Strategic Plan for Adolescents and Young People's Health and Development, 2010-2015/MOHS/MEYS

³⁵ Contribution Cross Cutting Theme "Gender" Sub-Group to the development of the PRSP III Agenda for Prosperity 2012- 2017 “

NGSP Output 4: Strengthened mechanisms to reduce violence against women

Indicators:

- Proportion of cases of gender based violence prosecuted per year (disaggregated by sex),
- The number of FSU's and awareness of GBV

Performance assessment: On track

This output responds to key aspects of prosecution of GBV cases, presence of Family Support Units (FSU) and levels of awareness of GBV. Thus focusing on some of the root causes of sexual gender based violence that emanates from unequal power relations - where laws, policies, community practices and beliefs “conspire” to deprive women autonomy in private and public spheres, higher incidences of domestic and sexual violence are likely to occur.³⁶ The low levels of awareness of the law including the social and economic barriers that GBV survivors face makes it nearly impossible for them to exercise their rights – hence the output intervention around awareness of GBV.

This evaluation established that the **FSU** is popular and widely known for its services. The FSU has become a “household” institution in many districts and the fact that they are located in the Police stations within the CID department sets them apart in terms of influence. This strategic positioning has enabled them gain the public confidence and trust as well as acting as the “watchdog” for child rights and sexual and gender based crimes. To strengthen its capacity for gender crimes investigations and prosecutions, all FSU officers are trained with a standardized manual/guide for gender based crimes (even though the training is rather short) providing all police working at the FSU with the requisite skills and knowledge. Initially the training was a one month course; it was reduced to 2 weeks and not is currently only 1 week training due to resource constraints.

However, FSU's are not found in all sites in the country and hence traditional justice mechanisms are found to be operational in resolving sexual and gender based violence cases (which often do not affirm girls and women's claims/rights). The absence of nationwide legal aid assistance has contributed in limiting women and girls access to justice particularly where they consider their rights are violated and would have wished to pursue the matter in within the formal justice system.

The evaluation establishes that where FSU's are present and whilst a large populace are aware and utilise the FSU's, many do not proceed to prosecute their cases due to varied reasons including delays in securing a medical report and in securing hearing dates. As a result, many victims and their families opt to “compromise” these cases and settle for a monetary consideration to abandon the criminal cases against the perpetrator. Despite this, there has been quite a substantial number of fast tracked prosecutions and secured convictions which hopefully when widely disseminated will begin to demonstrate the seriousness of violating these rights and end impunity around sexual and gender based crimes. It is anticipated that the upcoming Sexual Offences law will provide more clarity on the various

³⁶ Jane Kiragu, Strategic Planning report for the Gender Violence Recovery Centre 2010

forms of sexual violence, the ingredients of the offences and stricter guidance on the courts exercise of its discretion.

Here- below a snap shot of various regions FSU cases captured for 2011 alone to demonstrate their performance and status:

SOUTHERN REGION CASES COMMITTED TO HIGH COURT 2011							
50 PERPETRATORS							
OFFENCES	Rape	Abuse of young girl	Unlawful Carnal Knowledge	Indecent Assault	Wounding with intent	Assault with Intent to Ravish	House Breaking & Larceny
	7	25	5	8	3	1	1
	14%	50%	10%	16%	6%	2%	2%
STATE OF CASE		On-going	Committed				
		7	43				
		14%	86%				

EASTERN REGION CASES COMMITTED TO HIGH COURT 2011			
34 PERPETRATORS			
OFFENCES	Abuse of young girl	Indecent Assault	Abduction
	31	1	2
	91.18%	2.94%	5.88%
STATE OF CASE	Committed		
	34		
	100%		

NORTHER REGION CASES COMMITTED TO HIGH COURT 2011							
34 PERPETRATORS							
	Rape	Assault with intent to ravish	abuse of young girl	child stealing	domestic violence	Unlawful Carnal Knowledge	Harbouring
OFFENCES	2	1	7	1	1	12	2
	5.88%	2.94%	20.59%	2.94%	2.94%	35.29%	5.88%
	Procuration	Sodomy	Adoption	Child Abuse	indecent assault	Abduction	
	1	2	1	1	1	2	
	2.94%	5.88%	2.94%	2.94%	2.94%	5.88%	
	On Trial	Committed					
STATE OF CASE	13	21					
	38.24%	61.76%					

WESTERN REGION CASES COMMITTED TO HIGH COURT 2011							
68 PERPETRATORS							
	Rape	Abuse of young girl	Indecent Assault	Abduction	Procuring	Harbouring	Abuse of a young girl / Incest
OFFENCES	3	53	7	2	1	1	1
	4.41%	77.94%	10.29%	2.94%	1.47%	1.47%	1.47%
STATE OF CASE	On Trial	Committed					
	56	12					
	82.35%	17.65%					

Through this Output the Ministry has been able to have targeted interventions around child protection and **protection of SGBV survivors**. In recognition of the prominent role of the Paramount Chiefs and in order to monitor child abuse cases a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the FSU and the MSWGCA is in place, this places accountability on monitoring and reporting these cases for criminal sanctions. In addition, through initiatives by partners³⁷ and civil society, work on a SGBV Referral

³⁷ This SGBV Referral Protocol is being spearheaded by UNICEF within the child protection domain and now being replicated to include women and girls i.e. all survivors and victims of SGBV

Protocol is near completion whereby sensitization amongst chiefs has been undertaken so that they do not determine sexual crimes rather that they refer them to the FSU. The variety of child rights violations are reported ranging from abandonment, neglect, child labour, violence inter alia. In collaboration with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) the FSU and other stakeholders are set to launch and roll out the Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) for responding to gender based violence incidents.

A visit to the Kenema FSU revealed that many children and parents find the space accessible and the site where their “problems” can be addressed. According to various FSU officials, the citizenry sometime will use the space to seek counseling and advice:

“Sometimes, you will receive a couple and their problems are not related to a criminal matter, rather they want to receive advise and counselingprobably about how to discipline their child, how to relate with one another.....we definitely receive a range of problems that are not strictly legal criminal cases” ...

The evaluation established that through their popularity, they have successfully moved perpetrators to account for their crimes. However despite these they **(FSU’s) continue to face a variety of challenges** in terms of staff capacity, coordination with Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs in availing social workers, linkages and referral from the medical institution and criminal justice system, delays in prosecution and determination of cases – all this result to generating “fatigue” to victims/survivors and their families, hence the emergence of a popular “compromise” culture whereby despite the criminal nature of the SGBV crime, they are settled out of court for meager sums, with insufficient health care or psychosocial responses.

Towards delivering on the awareness component under this output, partnerships with diverse actors have facilitated **growing levels of coordination** at national and district levels. Whilst the NaC-GBV is to gather momentum, there is great potential for this mechanism transforming itself to a stakeholder platform for coordination for the prevention and response to GBV in Sierra Leone.

In delivering on this output as well, interventions by the International Rescue Committee are noted particularly with its project “Let’s Promote Justice for Our Women and Girls in Sierra Leone Project.” The project is also designed to provide technical and advocacy support to the MSWGCA and NaC-GBV to continue advocating for the passage of currently pending relevant legislation, such as the Sexual Offences Bill. The projects will also implement a range of training and legal education activities in the targeted communities to provide information and raise general understanding among community members of their rights under the three “Gender Acts” and related legislation.

This evaluation establishes that whilst a triple focus on prosecutions, presence of Family support units and the awareness raising constitute elements of a holistic multi sectoral approach to reducing and responding to gender based violence, more **investments to community** structures response mechanisms would be useful to complete the loop. Community leaders are often considered as shapers and influencers within communities and therefore they are trusted. In addition they are the custodians of practices that may undermine gender equality and winning their support and understanding is

necessary in the quest of reducing incidences of GBV. The engagement with *Soweis* to champion the rights of girls to education and delayed initiation has made positive inroads including an observed increase in retention levels amongst girls. The evaluation team was able to witness this in Pujehun and in Kenema where teachers and other child rights organisations reported this emerging trend.

“....we are wondering why the programme has now stopped. Other chiefdoms want to be trained and supported to campaign for girls education. I now monitor different chiefdoms and all of us *Soweis* are agreed that until the girl turns 18 years, that is when she can choose whether to undergo it or not. If we find someone circumcising a girl below the age of 18 years, they are severely punished and hence they are not doing it anymore.” *Key informant Female respondent, Soweis leadership, Kenema*

NGSP Output 5: Strengthened capacity for gender analysis by 2012

Indicators:

- Proportion of Ministries monitoring and evaluation systems generating gender disaggregated data,
- Number of studies, research, reviews with a gender perspective

Performance assessment: Not sufficiently on track

This component of the plan was not largely rolled out even though there are monthly GBV statistics generated by the FSU. The statistics are not widely disseminated nor analysed to inform other developmental interventions or programmes.

Gender analysis is an essential element of an overall analytical process that a successful programme of social change requires, thus whilst this NGSP anchors its work on economic development and social justice as key principles, there is no transformation in national resourcing that can occur if trends and dynamics that perpetuate and gender inequality are not known.

The intended deliverables under this output have not been fully delivered and thus an opportunity to ground the gender equality programming alongside the “felt needs/concerns” in a scientific credible manner has been lost. It is hoped that in the next phase of the plan it will be prioritised so as to meaningfully locate gender equality and women empowerment within the core of national development planning. The work around this Output is the least notable, perhaps due to the fact that the design of the plan did not facilitate proper monitoring of the results.

NGSP Output 6: Strengthened women’s access to land rights, financial services and markets to promote women’s engagement in economic life by 2012

Indicators:

- Number of women owning viable business and
- Number of recipients of micro credit and other loan schemes disaggregated by sex

Performance Assessment: Not sufficiently on track

Tracking the success of the Output results was undermined by the types of indicators proposed in terms of their adequacy, measurability and relevance. Under this outputs some of the ongoing interventions include the Land Tenure Reform that seeks to ensure that women for the first time get to own land in Sierra Leone. The issue of land reform is being handled by the established Law Reform Commission that is also reviewing the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. Until the report of the Commission is out and assented to, women will continue to be left out in terms of owning land.

The development of the National Land Policy has seen diverse civil society engage in advocacy processes with the Ministry of Lands, offering new empowering language and securing full commitments of reversing the discrimination in land and property ownership. As demonstrated in a Joint submission by the civil society groups

Excerpts from the Joint Submission to the Ministry of Land on the National Land Policy

“Appropriately reflect discrimination of women with regards to ownership of land in the scope of the policy: *we feel this section can more strongly reflect the high level of discrimination women face with regards to ownership, inheritance and acquisition of land. The phrase “Inequitable Access to Land Tenure” does not adequately reflect the disproportionate impact on women of land rights violations. Women’s unequal, insecure access to and control over land should be mentioned as one of the main problems relating to land tenure. Reference should also be made to the conclusions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which stressed the importance of women’s land ownership: “Securing greater access to land for women through legal reform in the areas of inheritance and land allocation, particularly after the war, is a pressing priority.”³⁸.*

Inclusion of a gender analysis and recognition of women’s central role in farming and household food security: *the chapter on Land access and distribution issues includes, without a separate headline, a section about women’s access to land. Though it captures some of the issues around women’s property rights in Sierra Leone, this can be further strengthened with a contextual analysis of the situation in Sierra Leone with specific reference to the particular barriers. For example the Devolution of Estate Act covers only private individual property and so the majority of rural women living in family property are not protected. Such analysis should also cover women’s access to, ownership and control over land; women’s access to formal and information dispute resolution institutions: and link it to women’s social and economic status and rights.*

³⁸ Report VOL 3B, Chapter Three, p. 129 ff

A number of studies are underway through the support of the UN system in SL to ascertain women's **access to financial and productive services**. One of the studies undertaken by UN Women is to assess the quality and impact of financial and productive services on increased levels of income on both rural and urban women; to identify support services available to women in the areas under evaluation including functional literacy; to identify challenges and obstacles encountered by women in their success to financial and productive services as well as to institutions in the provision of these services; and to provide recommendations to enhance women's access to these services.

In terms of economic empowerment, we as a country and the donors and development continue to focus for on investments in micro credit, but this does not build you to move from trader to business person, one requires some level of education. Collateral is a problem as petty traders don't qualify for loans, or in cooperatives, access to big money is what will propel women as economic actors in the business sector. Female respondent, key informant interview.

These studies indicate that there are renewed efforts on the part of development partners to put women issues at the centre stage and to ensure that women are appropriately mainstreamed. With reference to the effort of the government, there is a Law Reform Commission that is currently studying and interrogating gender issues such as land reform, as a critical element in the country's development efforts.

NGSP Output 7: Strengthened capacity for gender budgeting and monitoring by 2012

Indicators:

- Proportion of Ministries exercising gender budgeting

Performance assessment: Not sufficiently on track

Gender budgeting is a novelty in the country's development effort to empower women and ensure access to resources and power. In 2009, a **gender budgeting workshop**, which attracted local councils, NGOs, CBOs around the country, was held in Kenema. The workshop emphasized that gender budgeting is crucial and requires the ministries and councils to be properly abreast with needed interventions to address gender gaps in sector and local government policies and plans in order to ensure that budget preparation is carried out professionally, reflecting the needs of women and children.

The workshop also observed that gender mainstreaming aims at ensuring a cordial working relationship between men and women on developmental issues adding that the issue of poverty cannot be effectively tackled if gender related problems are not taken into consideration. The workshop reminded the councils that when preparing the annual budget they should make sure that gender budgeting factors are incorporated in their development plans, adding that women are now holding responsible positions as men and that councils are making sure that women's representation is felt everywhere in the entire country.

In so far as the skills for gender budgeting is concerned, return on investment is visible through the government's issuance of **Circular No. 7 and 9** to guide gender responsive resource allocations.

CONSTRAINTS

In rolling out this plan, the MSWGCA experienced some key constraints that intercepted the potential success of the NGSP, such as:

- Weak coordination mechanisms which greatly undermined the rolling out of the plan. Internally the Ministry has acknowledged its challenge of coordination as well as effectively undertaking its oversight role. The plan, whilst realistic, ought to have been accompanied with an institutional organogram describing the coordination mechanisms and clear lines of accountability and reporting system. In the absence of this, implementation of the plan has been ad hoc and most of the reported interventions were not initiated or known by the Ministry – yet it should be the “hub of gender work” in the country.
- Capacity challenges have limited the expected “profile” of the Ministry in spearheading the deliverables in the plan with Line Ministries. The obstacles confronting Sierra Leone’s national machinery resonates with other country assessments³⁹. Largely, the constraints are around inadequate financial and human resources. Since it also handles the other mandates of Social Welfare and Children Affairs it has failed to galvanize the clout to sufficiently influence political and policy decisions that can be adequately resourced. The low resourcing has relegated the Ministry to being largely dependent on development partners for gender work.
- Absence of baseline and targets which fails to provide sufficient “energy” to deliver Plan outputs. Accompanied with the absence of a Monitoring and Evaluation system this has greatly undermined potential for accountability and “showing off” results whereby some may not be tracked.

SUSTAINABILITY

- The existence of a strong infrastructure from national to regional level assures sustainability. The implementation of the Plan would appear to work best utilizing networks at community level that regularly meet and strengthen each other assuring there is no duplication of activities. This model seems to be working and perhaps at the national level the model of NAC-GBV should be replicated alongside other priority areas so as to have thematic groups for each priority area. The level of inclusiveness also needs to be strengthened capturing all invisible groups and penetrate remote regions. Nevertheless this component of the institutional arrangement of the plan is technically sustainable but would function more effectively

³⁹ Pg 25, Jane Kiragu, 2011 Assessment Report of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Services Kenya,

- Focusing on existing structures – Paramount Chiefs, *Soweis*, leaders, community groups assures actions are sustained over time
- The issues or challenges that existed at the time of development of the NGSP still exist today, and therefore provide justification for the socio-cultural sustainability of the plan. Gender responsive interventions and reforms in the legal and policy infrastructure are still sustainable
- National support around the six priority areas is a basis of sustainability as the work is already building on partners work both at national and regional levels

LESSONS LEARNT

Even though the plan is nearly half way some lessons emerge that could be incorporated in the remaining period of the plan. They include:

- The importance of having effective monitoring and reporting systems, since they have the potential to transform perceptions around gender equality work and this is likely to strategically position the Ministry in terms of influence and resources
- The necessity of having a structure to ensure effective coordination of and networking by implementing partners at the programme and national levels for successful delivery and reach of the programme dividends. Such a coordination mechanism would match the NGSP objectives and strategies to the implementing partner’s strategies and activities to ensure coherence.
- The significance of investing on broad based advocacy to secure “buy in” at the community and national level as a basis of generating sufficient pressure for law and policy makers to prioritize reforms for gender equality (as seen with the Sexual Offences Bill and Gender Equality Bill)
- Acknowledging that legal and policy frameworks provide a strong basis for advocacy towards reforming institutions. Even though securing gender responsive laws and policies are not an end in itself. These frameworks provide a basis to intensify awareness and education amongst the public on the contextual, social and historical construction of gender roles, identity and diversities - and how they occasion inequality which is intolerable in a fair and democratic state
- Appreciating that capacity building is an integral part for ensuring delivery of the Plan priority areas and therefore requires long term investments
- The importance of benchmarking before rolling out the implementation as it is critical for an objective standard to measure and to inform the Ministry where variances are occurring - whether progress has been sustained, whether it was only a short spurt of improvement and/or whether improvements have disappeared

BEST PRACTICES

Some of the good practices that should be sustained in the remaining period of the Plan implementation include:

- Sustaining networks - the examples emulated at the regional levels around building synergies and partnerships at community level have dividends. They enable focus on targeted implementation and avoids duplication– it allows for early detection of strategies that are working and those that are likely to fail
- Sensitivity to culture and tradition in rolling out interventions builds confidence and trust amongst communities. Where social transformations relate to sensitive cultural practices, utilizing credible change agents at community level is likely to inform future programming around the theme (as witnessed with *Soweis* and FGC)
- Embracing participatory methods in coordinating various interventions ensures that processes of “value addition” are integrated in the Ministry’s work. In addition it reaffirms the need for collective energies in undertaking social transformation work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made are organised around key periods: short term which means between 1 and 12 months period; medium term which means 1 year to 3 year period and long term which means a 3 year to 5 year period

Recommendations to the Ministry

Short term:

- Review the Strategic Framework of the National Gender Strategic Plan so as to upgrade the indicators (currently at output level) to outcome/strategic goal levels
- Update the Strategic Framework so as to undertake the completion of Strategic Objective 4 on Women's empowerment where the strategic goals around women's economic empowerment and women and agriculture are not completed
- Prioritise, develop and roll out an efficient monitoring and evaluation framework for the NGSP, designating specific personnel to monitor at regional and national levels.
- Design and roll out a national dissemination and popularisation of the National Gender Strategic Plan to enhance ownership and accelerate the pace of implementation of the plan in the remaining phase.
- Invest in processes and establish mechanisms that will strengthen the Ministry's leadership and coordination role around gender perspectives throughout all government Ministries, Departments and Agencies for instance by:
 - Establishing a High level technical Inter-Ministerial committee or Task Force that would provide strategic national profiling of gender equality work (informed by the gender focal points).
 - Forging closer partnerships and collaboration with the Gender Affairs Specialist in Statehouse with a view to generating greater political will, visibility and resourcing.
- There is need to fast track the finalization and implementation of Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) Strategic Plan so that all portfolios "model" how to integrate gender in their work namely the Children's and the Social Welfare portfolio. It is this type of model that would be replicated in other line ministries.
- The recommendations from the capacity assessment report should be urgently released, resourced and fully implemented within a 2 year⁴⁰ period followed by a review of the implementation status for learning and growth.

⁴⁰ Change management and reforms language often indicates that the "window period" for any reforms to be rooted is 24 months

- The GBV mapping survey undertaken jointly by the Ministry and the International Rescue Committee should be released, widely disseminated so as to ensure a more coordinated response and management mechanism for GBV survivors

Medium term:

- Ensure that gender focal persons in line Ministries are professional heads and possess gender knowledge and competencies. This will secure a coordinated sustained action around gender by setting performance targets with scheduled and regular accountability briefs to the line Minister on gender mainstreaming status. This is in line with the Public Service Commission Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014 that commits to designing a criterion for the recruitment of qualified professionals to become professional heads of MDAs
- Forge and sustain strong linkages of these gender focal points with the Inter Ministry technical committee/Task Force in their work. This will assure gender equality work is institutionalized and that accountability to gender results is attained.
- Re-establish, strengthen and formalize capacity building programmes for Ministry personnel specifically in programme management, monitoring as well as building gender competencies with the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) and the Gender Research and Documentation Centre GRADOC for more strategic and visibly interventions around gender equality and women empowerment
- Advocate for government resourcing for the Ministry and specifically to the Gender Affairs Directorate should be enhanced by at least 7% in the next 2 years and increased to 12% in 5 years.⁴¹
- Develop simplified and friendly minimum standards/tools for the implementation and monitoring of gender sensitive programmes so as to assure consistent gender mainstreaming application throughout the Plan implementation and monitoring processes. Some of these tools include gender analysis frameworks to guide sectoral planning, model minimum gender indicators across sectors, gender monitoring frameworks, templates for assessing gender responsive legislation and policies. Once integrated in project/programme planning, implementation and monitoring a strong culture of gender compliance and gender competencies would emerge.

Long term:

- Work with community groups and traditional leaders as champions for social transformation should be intensified and strengthened in the next phase such as the *Soweis'* leadership, Paramount Chiefs' engagements, the community wellness advocacy groups and young people for intergenerational completeness

- Sustain and strengthen male involvement in the gender equality interventions being rolled out from the NGSP.
- Improve timely and quality reporting at both technical and financial levels to assure smooth and quick funds disbursements from funding and development partners.

Recommendations to funding partners

Short term:

- Continue and increase investments in building social capital within the Ministry for instance through building with capacity building for project management and monitoring. All training opportunities should ensure that gender is a cross cutting theme as well as any other forms of capacity building initiatives
- Prioritise support for the development of the monitoring and evaluation framework of the NGSP, towards ensuring strengthened programme accountability and improved reporting.
- Design gender support strategy for both government MDA's and civil society organisations where programme choices and selection are informed by the objectives and strategies of the NGSP. This will guarantee some level of consistency in rolling out gender equality work in Sierra Leone
- Earmark and easily disbursed funds to support the specific recommendations made to the Ministry within a 12 month period so as to assure more “energised and focused” Plan implementation process in the remaining period

Medium Term:

- Set up a designated Gender basket fund to assure joint prioritisation and coherence. This can be disbursed through various options such as pass through grants, earmarked funds, pool funding or direct budget support. The support should be accompanied with specific responsibilities around strengthening of the procurement system within the Ministry so it is strict but simple and with more speedy approval processes throughout the whole chain of accountability
- Second personnel alongside the strategic priorities as part of capacity strengthening for a minimum period of 6 months and maximum period of 2 year period to support the Ministry in reshaping itself to deliver the remaining outputs in the next phase of the plan

Long term:

- Improve disbursement of funds in a timely manner.

Recommendations to civil society

- Intensify coherent advocacy efforts. There is need for more vibrant engagement between civil society organizations and the Ministry at the national level as a key element to *assure* harmony and consistency in implementation and advocacy for gender responsive policy and legal frameworks (as witnessed in the Gender Equality Bill discourse around creation of a Women's Commission)
- Initiate collective re-induction on gender equality work – to establish clarity around the theory of change around patriarchy amongst civil society actors. Whilst not subjecting the operational work of gender mainstreaming and women's rights activism as academic exercises, there is need to revisit and generate a common understanding around the theory for responding to all forms of oppression particularly gender oppression. In this way, national knowledge and understanding of the interconnectedness between diverse forms of subjugation, denial of rights and gender oppression will generate clarity and profile the ministry work more strategically (in terms of authority and resourcing). The civil society advocacy will also be refined so as to generate support and demand for accountability towards fulfilment of the National Gender Strategic Plan.
- Encourage more male participation on gender related assignments and issues at all levels as a way of leveraging gender on the national political agenda.

APPENDICES

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FREETOWN INTERVIEWS

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4	ILO	Munya Hove	Representative
5	UNDP	Adama Thorlie	Programme Analyst HIV / Gender
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7	UNICEF	Rosina Mahoi	Child Protection Officer
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12	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	Jam Jalloh Tasmina Jah	Director, Planning Planning Dept. Director, Budget Bureau
13	National Youth Commission	Aminata Sillah	Deputy Commissioner
14	GRADOC, University of Sierra Leone	Dr Aisha Fofana Ibrahim	Director

15	Women's Forum	Maude Peacock,	Chairperson
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Key informant and Focus group discussion guide

1. What is your level of awareness of the National Gender Strategic Plan?
2. In your opinion, to what extent has the Plan been implemented? Probe each of these areas: Probe: What factors have led to the progress made so far?/
3. Probe: What impediments have slowed progress of the programme?/
4. What are the specific achievements of the Plan? Probe: What factors contributed to the achievements?
5. What are the failures and weaknesses in plan implementation? Probe: What impediments led to the failures or weaknesses? Probe relationship of plan to SiNAP, twin policies and overall implementation
6. In your opinion, is the Plan and its objectives in line with Government or national priorities and programmes? Or how was the programme designed? Probe: Comment on its strengths and weaknesses
7. In your opinion, should there have been other priorities in the plan other than those in the current plan
8. How viable and effective are the partnership strategies with implementing partners and development partners in relation to the achievement of the outcome?
9. What are the institutional strengths and weaknesses in the Ministry as the drivers of the plan
10. To what extent has UNICEF and other development partners contributed to the achievement of the outputs and goals of the plan?
11. What has changed in the context that needs to be integrated in the plan
12. What recommendations would you make to ensure the Plan gains currency/visibility? Or so that the plan is strategically improved
13. What are the lessons learned in the implementation of this Plan?
14. What are the best practices in management and implementation of the Plan?
15. How can the Plan be sustained?
16. Any quick wins that can be implemented by the Ministry for leveraging their work
17. Any other responses/strategic or otherwise