

**Sierra Leone/ West African Workshop on  
*Women in Parliament***

British Council Offices, Freetown, Sierra Leone  
5-7 February 2002

*Collaborating Organisations*

*Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs; Ministry of Development & Economic Planning Sierra Leone, Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, National Democratic Institute, British Council – Sierra Leone*

**WORKSHOP COMMITMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A VISION OF SIERRA LEONE WOMEN:**

We, the women of Sierra Leone, look forward to the day when:

- 50% of holders of all public offices including parliament and candidates, are women.
- Every eligible woman is on the electoral roll.
- Every registered woman votes on polling day, making her own independent choice.
- Every woman can walk into a registration centre which is accessible and convenient for her, be it a market, clinic or school.
- Every woman who is pregnant, taking care of a baby or young child, is elderly or disabled, gets priority treatment when she registers or votes.
- Every woman candidate, campaigner or voter, is safe from sexual harassment or any form of violence, pressure or threats.
- Every woman MP knows that a political agenda without gender equality ignores half of the electorate.
- Every woman knows that if she decided to stand as a candidate, she will not face opposition or stigma from family, friends and the community.
- Every woman candidate is sure that the media will report not on her view in the mirror, but on her views on the needs of the community.
- Every woman will have equal access to a good education, good health and employment opportunities and productive resources, and will be thus better equipped to take a leading role in politics.
- Every woman should be free from domestic violence and sexual abuse so that she can function with pride and confidence as a leader.

- Every woman will become so economically empowered and benefit from poverty reduction strategies that she will be in a stronger position to function as an independent political actor.

#### **COMMITMENTS MADE AT THE WORKSHOP:**

##### **His Excellency, the President of Sierra Leone, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, in his opening address said:**

We are committed to supporting and promoting all initiatives aimed at mainstreaming gender into national policies and programmes in line ministries, as defined by the National Policy on gender mainstreaming developed by the Ministry of Gender Affairs.

We have women Paramount Chiefs, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, a woman Deputy Speaker of Parliament, but only 10% women in parliament. The Commonwealth target for women in Parliament is at least 30%. The target of women in Sierra Leone is 50%. Greater participation of women in politics is imperative. The extent to which we succeed in achieving a smooth transition to a stable democracy will depend on whether we have gender equality in politics.

I urge every Sierra Leonean woman to register so she can be on the electoral roll and exercise her constitutional right to vote on polling day. We have also made it clear that women have an equal right to become candidates.

#### **Political Parties:**

##### **All People's Congress (APC): Mr. Osman F. Yansaneh, Secretary-General:**

- The Parliamentary Leader of the party is a woman who is performing remarkably well in parliament.
- The APC supports the District Block system as a proportional representation system that is more woman-friendly.
- The APC is prepared to put women at the highest levels, and is committed to placing women at the top of their lists.
- The APC made a commitment to having 30 per cent of women on their list of candidates.

##### **Citizens United for Peace and Progress (CUPP): Mr. Raymond B. Thompson:**

- CUPP's commitment to gender equality is enshrined in the party's 2001 Constitution which states that the Party 'fully believe[s] in the equality of the sexes and is fully cognizant that the talent possessed of the female population would create the enabling atmosphere for the female population to play an equal role in national affairs of our beloved Sierra Leone, and to that

end will encourage women to play an active role in state affairs, particularly, as candidates for elected offices, would nominate a significant number of women for public offices ... ' Women can hold the party to account on the basis of the constitution.

- CUPP is looking for a woman Vice-Presidential candidate.
- CUPP will include women on the party's candidates' list.
- CUPP will nominate a significant number of women to public office.

**Movement for Progress (MOP): Ms. Zainab Bangura, Party Leader and Presidential Candidate:**

- MFP has appointed women to 50% of all party structures.
- Party lists in all Districts will be headed by women and will include 50% of women candidates.

**National Unity Party (NUP): Mr. John Benjamin, Interim Chairman:**

- NUP will nominate 50% of women candidates in each District.
- NUP will use a zipper system in each District Block list.

**People's Democratic Party (PDP): Mr. Osman Kamara, Party Leader:**

- Women have shown during the peace process that they are entitled to play a prominent role in politics.
- PDP has always stood for gender mainstreaming.
- PDP is committed to placing more women on the party list in winnable seats.
- PDP made a commitment to selecting 30 per cent of women and at least 20 per cent practically.

**Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP): Ms. Elizabeth Lavallie, Deputy Secretary-General:**

- SLPP is committed to selecting 30 per cent of women candidates and placing them at the top of the lists.

**United National People's Party (UNPP): Dr. John Karefa-Smart, Party Leader:**

- UNPP is committed to including more women on the party's candidates' list and placing them at the top of the lists.
- The Party Leader invited women to come forward as candidates.

**Young People's Party: (YPP): Mr. Cornelius Deveaux, Interim Chairman:**

- YPP does not have a women's wing because the Party believes in gender mainstreaming.
- YPP is committed to 'One man, one woman' on the Party list

**Peace and Liberation Party (PLP): Rev. Darlington Morison, Interim Chairman:**

- The Party Leader's running mate is a woman.
- PLP will seek to achieve 30 per cent of women if they put themselves forward.

**WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- In order to meet international standards, the Sierra Leone Government must make provision for the following to ensure free and fair elections:
- The right of an individual to vote on a non-discriminatory basis in the forthcoming elections and beyond.
- The right of an individual to an effective, impartial and non-discriminatory procedure for registration of voters.
- The right of every eligible citizen to be registered as a voter, subject only to disqualification and in accordance with criteria established by law that are objectively verifiable and not subject to arbitrary decision.
- The right of an individual to have equal and easy access to a polling station in order to exercise her right to vote.
- The unrestricted right of the individual to vote in secret, and the right to respect the integrity of her choice.
- The right of the candidate to present herself as a candidate for election.
- The right to express political opinions without interference otherwise than permitted by law.
- The right to move freely within the country in order to campaign for election.
- The right to have access to the media in order to put forward political views.
- The right for women to campaign on an equal basis with men and political parties.

Key Stages/ Time Frame	National Electoral Commission (NEC)	Political Parties	Women's Organizations, in partnership with men, young people, international organizations, etc.	Women Parliamentary Aspirants/ Candidates
<b>GENERAL</b>	<p>Appoint women commissioners and registrars as soon as positions become available. In the interim, women should be appointed as deputy commissioners in each of the regions.</p> <p>Initiate and sustain a dialogue with the 50/50 Group, the Women's Forum and TAFWIP to ensure implementation of workshop recommendations.</p>	<p>It is in the self-interest of political parties to be committed to the equal participation of women. International donors require parties to prove that women are an integral of their structures and manifestos.</p> <p>Advocate for the review of regulations regarding the need for candidates to resign from government posts in elections.</p> <p>Appoint women to 50% of executive positions of political parties and mainstream gender.</p> <p>Take action to ensure that the target of at least 50% of women in Parliament is introduced into legislation.</p> <p>Put safeguards into place to prevent sexual harassment, which prevents women from standing as candidates.</p>	<p>Be public spirited (e.g., women's demonstration against Foday Sankoh and the humanitarian activities of women's organizations).</p> <p>Develop a Women's Manifesto, based on the 1996 Women's Platform and post-conflict reconstruction needs.</p> <p>Read the Fundamental Principles of State Policy in the Constitution and party constitutions and manifestos, to help construct women's own vision of national development.</p> <p>Undertake regular and on-going consultations with political parties.</p> <p>Raise awareness in those Districts in which women are not represented as candidates.</p> <p>Monitor NEC to ensure that it acts on its commitments.</p> <p>Intensify advocacy, information sharing and networking.</p>	<p>Develop a media strategy using media such as Talking Drums, which has nationwide radio coverage.</p> <p>Aspirants should demonstrate their leadership abilities through bold activities in periods of national crisis.</p> <p>If you are unsuccessful as a parliamentary candidate, enter local or district government as the gateway to national politics.</p>

<p><b>TRAINING AND MENTORING</b></p>	<p><b>Provide gender-aware election management training for all electoral staff and personnel.</b></p> <p><b>Ensure that training provided to candidates is gender-aware.</b></p>	<p><b>Provide mentors for women parliamentary aspirants.</b></p> <p><b>Provide candidate training, support and orientation.</b></p>	<p><b>Provide training for candidates in confidence building and assertiveness.</b></p> <p><b>Offer the same training should to both women and men candidates.</b></p>	<p><b>Do some self-assessment to identify your strengths, weaknesses and training needs.</b></p> <p><b>Identify a role model or mentor.</b></p> <p><b>Put your training into practice by going out into the community.</b></p> <p><b>Learn from the experiences of successful women politicians.</b></p> <p><b>Take advantage audio-visual aids, resource centres such as at the British Council and NDI and become computer literate.</b></p> <p><b>Visit parliament, observe debates and examine parliamentary archives.</b></p>
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<b>VOTER REGISTRATION</b>	<p><b>Women should be urged to register.</b></p> <p><b>Work closely with UNHCR to ensure that refugees are registered.</b></p> <p><b>Extend the registration period because of the particular difficulties encountered by displaced persons and refugees.</b></p> <p><b>Open more registration centres, especially in places that are women-friendly and where women tend to congregate. Provide separate queues for men and women.</b></p>	<p><b>Encourage women supporters to register.</b></p>	<p><b>Encourage women to register and vote.</b></p> <p><b>Monitor the ongoing registration process and bring any anomalies to the attention of the NEC.</b></p>	
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<p><b>VOTER EDUCATION</b></p>	<p>Ensure that the electorate becomes familiar with gender equality issues which are central to the electoral process.</p> <p>Aim voter education programmes specifically at women.</p> <p>Voter education programmes must explain complex electoral processes in a manner that will be understood by illiterate voters (the majority of whom are women).</p> <p>Voter education workshops must take place at times which accommodate the domestic and economic roles performed by women.</p> <p>Voter education workshops must take place in an environment in which women feel confident that they can express themselves without fear of disruption and ridicule.</p>	<p>Promote examples of successful women politicians.</p> <p>Undertake regular and on-going consultations with women parliamentary aspirants.</p>	<p>Urge women and men to vote for parties that have at least 30% of women on their party lists.</p> <p>Undertake gender-aware voter education.</p>	
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<p><b>CANDIDATE SELECTION</b></p>		<p><b>Identify potential women candidates in each District and encourage them to put themselves forward as candidates.</b></p> <p><b>Ensure that women are placed at the top of Party Lists and use the zipper system of one woman, one man.</b></p>	<p><b>Women's organizations should form a cross-party action group to lobby political parties to put women at the top of Party Lists. They should make this a condition for their assistance in campaigning for parties.</b></p>	<p><b>Work to achieve a leadership vision and a following - political parties will be eager to select you if you command considerable support from your constituency.</b></p>
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<p><b>THE CAMPAIGN</b></p>		<p><b>Political leaders should take a visionary approach rather than using hate, self-interest, and other divisive means as the basis for campaigning.</b></p> <p><b>Make a commitment to appointing 50% of women in Cabinet positions.</b></p> <p><b>Include women in all campaign structures and decision-making positions.</b></p> <p><b>Assign an experienced parliamentarian to mentor women candidates.</b></p> <p><b>Sponsor women candidates' campaigns.</b></p> <p><b>Promote women candidates in public meetings.</b></p>	<p><b>Liaise and support the campaigns of all women candidates (see recommendations on the campaign listed under Women Aspirants).</b></p> <p><b>Create a pool of volunteers to support and assist women candidates.</b></p> <p><b>Fundraise for women candidates.</b></p>	<p><b>Plan your campaign strategy, including your campaign team, defining a timeframe and expected outcomes.</b></p> <p><b>Prepare a budget that is activity oriented, and keep proper records of income and expenditure.</b></p> <p><b>Set up a task force or committee to take care of technical aspects of the campaign, including keeping a campaign diary.</b></p> <p><b>Set up an office.</b></p> <p><b>Develop a checklist and strictly adhere to it.</b></p> <p><b>Put in place a campaign intelligence network.</b></p> <p><b>Know your voters/audience, their needs, shortcomings, and relate to the grassroots.</b></p> <p><b>Network with politicians and influential people.</b></p> <p><b>Ensure frequent use of party slogans, e.g., 'One woman, one man; more women, better politics'.</b></p> <p><b>Ensure wide distribution of party symbols and portrait of candidates.</b></p> <p><b>Target more populated areas, e.g., market places, clinics, places of worship, sports</b></p>
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<b>ELECTION DAY</b>	<p>Ensure that women do not feel intimidated during polling.</p>	<p>Ensure that women are given logistical support to get to polling stations.</p>	<p>Women constitute over 50% of the population. They should use their power on the ballot box to ensure that 50% of parliamentarians are women.</p> <p>Be active on polling day, protecting ballot boxes and ensuring fair voting.</p>	
<b>POST-ELECTION</b>	<p>Review Election Management Procedures to ensure that they promote gender equality.</p> <p>Produce comparative statistical data of male/female voting patterns in the 1996 and 2002 elections.</p>	<p>Women who are elected to Parliament must represent all women, not just themselves.</p>	<p>CPA and NDI should organize gender-aware post-election seminars and training for both female and male parliamentarians.</p>	