



**NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN NATION BUILDING AND  
GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN ACTIVISM IN THE RESOLUTION  
OF SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT**

**M.A. THESIS**

**Lukhman Mohamed KABBA**

**Nicosia**  
**July, 2023**

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KABBA**

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**MASTER THESIS 2023**

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## Approval

We certify that we have read the thesis submitted by Lukhman Mohamed Kabba titled **“Examining the Role of Women in Nation-Building and Governance: A Case Study of Women Activism in the Resolution of Sierra Leone Conflict”** and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of International Relations.

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that all information, documents, analysis and results in this thesis have been collected and presented according to the academic rules and ethical guidelines of Institute of Graduate Studies, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced information and data that are not original to this study.

Lukhman Mohamed Kabba

...../...../2023

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I sit and look back the past two years and say it was worth it.

**Lukhman Mohamed Kabba**

## **Dedication**

Seven (7) years ago I became a person with disability and it has not been a beautiful ride. Coming to a foreign land to study meeting different people; the racism, the discrimination has really been on another level, but my disability has been my inspiration because every time I see the scars, every time I limp, every time I hold a crouch, I realize there is a reason for me to continue the fight, to rise above the ashes; as I write this in tears, I dedicate this achievement to my disability. It has been a struggle for the ages but I praise Allah. To my relentless father, you are my model, to my mother, you are my blessing. I finally want to dedicate this work to my Dr. and motivator, Saffie P. Fornah, thank you for the motivation.

Alhamdulillah! It only by faith I made it thus far.

## **Abstract**

### **Examining The Role of Women in Nation-Building And Governance: A Case Study of Women Activism in The Resolution Of Sierra Leone Conflict**

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**M.A., Department of International Relations**

**Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Recep Bülent Şenses**

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This paper examines women's role in society; more specifically in national service. The paper will take a look at the role women play in state affairs such as conflict resolution in which the study will use Sierra Leone as a case. The study will take a look at the negative effect of the conflict on women and the challenges women faced particularly due to tradition, and despite all of that, they were a significant aspect of the resolution of the eleven (11) year bloody civil war in Sierra Leone. The study will look at a brief history of the conflict and of the country itself, how the conflict started, and the course of the conflict, and will also take a look at the status of women before, during, and after the conflict. Furthermore, the study will look at how constructive women have been in governance and nation building, and recommend further how they should be more involved in national politics. Because of the study site's distance and lack of funds for traveling purposes, questioners will not be involved as there will be no time and resources for first-hand investigation, so the study will be based on qualitative empirical research. This thesis argues that the relentless effort of women during the conflict and to see the conflict come to an end shows that they are capable of being part of and have every right to be involved in nation-building and governance.

**Keywords:** governance, nation building, conflict resolution, tradition, national politics.

## ÖZ

### **Ulus İnşasında Kadınların Rolünün İncelenmesi Ve Yönetişim: Kadın Aktivizminin Bir Vaka Çalışması Sierra Leone Çatışmasının Çözümü**

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**Temmuz, 2023, 117 sayfa**

Bu yazıda kadınların toplumdaki rolü incelenmekte; daha spesifik olarak ulusal hizmette. Makale, kadınların çatışma çözümü gibi devlet işlerinde oynadığı role bir göz atacak ve çalışmanın Sierra Leone'yi bir vaka olarak kullanacağı bir göz atacaktır. Çalışma, çatışmanın kadınlar üzerindeki olumsuz etkisine ve kadınların özellikle gelenek nedeniyle karşılaştıkları zorluklara bir göz atacak ve tüm bunlara rağmen, Sierra Leone'deki on bir (11) yıllık kanlı iç savaşın çözümünün önemli bir yönüydü. Çalışma, çatışmanın ve ülkenin kendisinin kısa bir tarihine, çatışmanın nasıl başladığına ve çatışmanın seyrine bakacak ve ayrıca çatışma öncesinde, sırasında ve sonrasında kadınların durumuna da bakacaktır. Ayrıca, çalışma kadınların yönetim ve ulus inşasında ne kadar yapıcı olduklarına bakacak ve ulusal politikaya nasıl daha fazla dahil olmaları gerektiğini daha fazla önerecektir. Çalışma alanının uzaklığı ve seyahat amaçlı fon eksikliği nedeniyle, ilk elden araştırma için zaman ve kaynak olmayacağından sorgulayıcılar dahil olmayacaktır, bu nedenle çalışma nitel ampirik araştırmaya dayanacaktır. Bu tez, kadınların çatışma sırasındaki amansız çabalarının ve çatışmanın sona erdiğini görmelerinin, ulus inşası ve yönetişiminin bir parçası olma yeteneğine sahip olduklarını ve her türlü hakka sahip olduklarını gösterdiğini savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** yönetim, ulus inşası, çatışma çözümü, gelenek, ulusal politika.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

<b>AFF</b>	African Feminist Forum
<b>AFG</b>	Agenda for Change
<b>AFRC</b>	Armed Forces Revolutionary Committee
<b>AGI</b>	African Gender Institute
<b>APC</b>	All Peoples Congress
<b>ATR</b>	African Traditional Religion
<b>AWMS</b>	Anne Walsh Memorial School
<b>BWL</b>	Bantu Women's League
<b>CDF</b>	Central Defense Force
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CRC</b>	Convention of Rights of Child
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSW</b>	Commission of Status on Women
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
<b>DIMINCO</b>	Diamond Mining Cooperation
<b>ECOMOG</b>	Economic Community of West African State Monitoring Group
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>EFU</b>	Egyptian Feminist Union
<b>EO</b>	Executive Outcomes
<b>FAS</b>	Femes African Solidarity
<b>FBC</b>	Fourah-Bay College
<b>FCC</b>	Freetown City Council
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>FSLWO</b>	Federation of Sierra Leone Women's Organization
<b>FSSG</b>	Freetown Secondary School for Girls
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GDD</b>	Gender Disaggregated Data
<b>GITTS</b>	Girls Industrial and Technical Training School
<b>HIV</b>	High Immune Virus
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court

<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of Red Cross
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IO</b>	International Organization
<b>IR</b>	International Relations
<b>MARWOPNET</b>	Mano River Women's Peace Network
<b>MDA</b>	Ministerial Departments and Agencies
<b>MGHS</b>	Methodist Girls High School
<b>MPs</b>	Members of Parliament
<b>MRU</b>	Mano River Union
<b>MSWGCA</b>	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
<b>NCDHR</b>	National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights
<b>NCSLW</b>	National Congress of Sierra Leone Women
<b>NDWO</b>	National Displaced Women's Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NGSP</b>	National Gender Strategic Plan
<b>NPFL</b>	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
<b>NPRC</b>	National Provision Ruling Council
<b>OAU</b>	Organization of African Unity
<b>ONS</b>	Office of National Security
<b>PACER</b>	Promoting A Culture for Equal Representation
<b>PR</b>	Proportional Representation
<b>PSC</b>	Parliamentary Service Commission
<b>RSLAF</b>	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
<b>RSLMF</b>	Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces
<b>RUF</b>	Revolutionary United Front
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual Gender-Based Violence
<b>SLA</b>	Sierra Leone Arms
<b>SLAUW</b>	Sierra Leone Association of University Women
<b>SLCWILP</b>	Sierra Leone Chapter of Women's International League for Peace
<b>SiLNAP</b>	Sierra Leone National Action Plan
<b>SLPP</b>	Sierra Leone People's Party
<b>SLWF</b>	Sierra Leone Women's Forum

<b>SLWM</b>	Sierra Leone Women's Movement
<b>SLWMP</b>	Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace
<b>STDs</b>	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
<b>SWGCA</b>	Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affair
<b>TRC</b>	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMSIL</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugee
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UNOMSIL</b>	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
<b>UNPSiL</b>	United Nations Peace-Building Office in Sierra Leone
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>UNSCSL</b>	United Nations Special Court for Sierra Leone
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USL</b>	University of Sierra Leone
<b>WAND</b>	Women Association for National Development
<b>WANEP</b>	West African Network for Peace-Building
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WIL</b>	Women in Leadership
<b>WOMEN</b>	Women's Organization for Morally Enlightened Nation
<b>WRGA</b>	Women's Rights Global Activists
<b>YWCA</b>	Young Women Christian Association

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### Background

Since the dawn of time, women have always been on the receiving end in society but certainly not on their own terms. The struggle by women to be involved in governance and nation-building is seen to be one of the fights for the ages. In countries like the United States of America (USA), the fight for women's rights began in the early 19th Century and although they have emerged successful in most of their endeavors, they are still in the battle to be at the helm of affairs (The Women's Right Movement, 1848-1917). However, in the late 19th Century, women in all parts of the world have already set up a structure to secure legal, political, and economic rights. In Africa, it was only in the late 20th Century that women took the awareness in fighting for their rights and involvement in state matters, but it is important to know that this late awareness is attributed to colonialism, since then, women's activism has been one of the stories making the headlines in Africa with series of strikes, protests, and demonstrations to show their solidarity for one another and their determination to take their rightful place in society (Minna Salami, 2022). In Sierra Leone, women have already started their fight for equality and inclusion even before independence, but the fight was not as successful after the conflict, because it was only after the conflict that the nation saw their importance in the political and governance realm in the country.

The last twenty years have seen the rise of public diplomacy in the history of Africa which can be attributed to the unavoidable intervention of International Organizations of which the United Nations (UN) is the primus of all organizations that have been diplomatically involved in the region over this period. This can be connected to various reasons ranging from excess poverty, high infant and mortality rate, bad governance, and restoration of democracy, but most of all the uprising of bloody civil conflicts in the region. The involvement of various international organizations in these countries has distinctively supported local groups' efforts in gaining national diplomatic recognition and their incorporation in governance sectors and nation-building; such groups are women's organizations. Since the colonial period started coming to an end in the 1950s and nationalism had taken a foothold in Africa, and Sierra Leone was one of the countries that gained independence in that

period in 1961, the struggle for power between state elements and the strive for better living conditions by the general populace due to bad governance became the order of the day; as high levels of corruption and the violation of human right by the government against the governed was at its darkest hour. All of these saw the rise of a series of national strikes by civil societies, and nationwide strikes by citizens in the late 1980s, all these took center stage, and in the wake of all these menaces and instabilities led to an 11-year brutal civil war which started on the 23rd of March, 1991 and officially ended on the 18th of January, 2002. It claimed the lives of over fifty to seventy (50 to 70) thousand people and over one million people which was half of the population got displaced. The country went into a complete breakdown and was almost declared a failed state in the middle of the 1990s because of the destruction of major infrastructure and services and security instability (Gberie, 2005, pp. 6). The conflict in Sierra Leone was recorded as one of the bloodiest civil conflicts to ever happen in the history of Africa. Before going further, the study will take a brief look at the history of Sierra Leone and how the conflict came into being.

### **A Brief History of Sierra Leone (The Case Study)**

Sierra Leone as a country officially the Republic of Sierra Leone informally call SALONE was founded in 1462 by a Portuguese Sailor Pedro da Centra. The country is located in the southeast of the Atlantic coast of West Africa. It is bordered by Liberia to the southwest and Guinea to the north (Ali Joe A.D, 1990). It has a total of 71,71740 km<sup>2</sup> (27,699.89 miles) and currently has a population of 8,385,158 ([www.worldmeters.info](http://www.worldmeters.info)). The capital and the largest city is Free Town, the country is divided into five administrative regions which are subdivided into 16 districts. It is a constitutional republic with a unicameral parliament and a directly elected president who serves 5-year per term. The country became a crown colony in 1808 colonized by the British and gained independence on 27th April 1961, it also officially became a republic in 1977 when it had its first ceremonial president (Ali Joe A.D, 1990). Because of its multiethnicity, it is also a multi-religious country with every individual having the right to practice whatever religion they wish, the largest ethnic group in the country is the Temne who occupy the northern part of the country with 35.5% of the population, and the second largest is the Mende with 32.2% of the population; it is important to know that Sierra Leone was also part of the African countries that experienced the horror of slavery during the trans-Atlantic slave trade

and at the time of the abolition of slavery, Sierra Leone was also part of the countries that slaves were shipped to resettle (Luke, H.C. 1910); these settlers came to be known as the Kriol and they now constitute about 10% of the population (World Population Prospect, 2021). However, there are other minority ethnic groups that sum up the total population of the country.

**Figure 1: The Map of Sierra Leone**



Source: World Atlas, [www.graphicmaps.com](http://www.graphicmaps.com)

This map shows the boundaries, the peninsula, and the landscape of Sierra Leone. It also illustrates the conflict zones where rebel forces and government forces fought to seize control over natural resources.

### **A Brief History of the Civil Conflict in Sierra Leone**

International Relations theories such as Marxism have shown that colonialism and imperialism are the horrors that basically led to the underdevelopment of countries of the south gap due to the exploitation of their sovereignty and their natural resources (Pevehouse J C W, Goldstein J S, 2017). The colonial history of countries like Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, as a classical example, shows that colonialism is one of the reasons that directly and indirectly led them to the dark days of war which caused the helpless and vulnerable ones such as women and children to suffer a great deal. The suffering experienced by women during the civil conflict inspired them to actively take part in bringing the conflict to an end; through which the way was paved that geared them toward ascertaining equal rights in Sierra Leone.

Since the country gained independence in 1961, so many corrupt activities by the government such as the misuse of public funds, abuse of human rights, and trespassing of the democratic rights of the citizens, etc., were the consistent order of the day in the country and as a result of these, an 11year brutal civil war broke out in the nation. The war saw the death of at least 50,000 to 70,000 people and half of the population was displaced and amputated. The conflict started on 23rd March 1991 and ended on 18th January 2002. It all started when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Corporal Foday Saybana Sankoh with support from the special forces of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) intervened in Sierra Leone in an attempt to overthrow the government which was led by President Joseph Saidu Momoh at the time, the coup attempt failed and led to a brutal civil war that lasted for 11 years (Gberie, 2005).

What Led to the Conflict: the civil conflict in Sierra Leone can be attributed to various reasons ranging from embezzlement, human right violation, injustice, high level of poverty due to the misuse of public funds by government officials, and the violation of the democratic order in the country, nevertheless all this can surmount to one reason in a compound nature which is corruption. However, the reason for the conflict is based on two main reasons, which will be briefly discussed below.

### **Political Course**

After the country gained independence in 1961 from the British government and following the death of the first prime minister (Sir. Milton Margai) in 1964, the political atmosphere in the country became known for its excess corrupt practices such as mismanagement, election violence, abuse of civil and human right, misappropriation of public funds, to name but a few, this led to weak civil society, low standard of education and living conditions which led the overrun of domestic crimes. By the beginning of 1991, a shared part of the population especially the youths, were already dissatisfied with the governance system, and the disgruntled youths were attracted to rebellious messages from the RUF, this caused many to join the organization. After the passing of Sir. Milton Margai, his brother Albert Margai took over and he did not put interest in public affairs but instead use the state as a tool for self-promotion and even use the military to suppress the masses and their democratic rights (Gberi, 2005, pp. 26). After the reigns of Albert Margai, Siaka Stevens took over in 1968, and by then Sierra Leone was a constitutional democratic state, but he held on to power for 17 years and it was mostly called the “17 years Stevens rule of a plague of locust” which destroyed and undermined every state institution including parliament, justice department, and the finance sector (Ayittey, George B.N, 2010). He ended up stepping down in 1985 and was succeeded by Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh who was a well-known incompetent leader and kept the status quo. During his tenancy, he welcomed the spread of unlimited corruption which brought the country to a complete economic breakdown; this causes the state to be unable to pay civil servants and manage the affairs of the country which got the masses disgruntled (Gberie, 2005, pp. 45), at this rate, by 1991 Sierra Leone was ranked one of the poorest countries in the world.

### **Diamond and Resources Course**

The Eastern and Southern parts of Sierra Leone notably Kono and Kenema districts are rich in alluvial diamonds. Since the discovery of diamonds in the 1930s, it became a critical part of the ongoing form of general governance, corruption, and personal benefits by government officials at the expense of public services, institutions, and infrastructure. Countries with an abundance of natural resources are characterized by lower levels of development is known as “The Resources Course” (Auty, Richard M. 1993). The discovery of diamonds in Sierra Leone led to the civil war in several ways.

Unequal Benefits: the revenue generated from the mining of diamonds in Sierra Leone was not shared nationally on an equal scale. The ordinary Sierra Leoneans were not realizing the benefits of their national treasures, which frustrated the citizens. Revenues from the nation's diamond mining cooperation (DIMINCO) were used for personal enrichment by government officials. By 1984, the government lost control of the diamond mining areas due to major riots by citizens and this caused the pulling out of the mining cooperation, this caused the resource to be smuggled illegally from the country by foreigners. This brought turmoil among the citizens and caused the first major riot in the first half of the year 1990 in the Kono district. By the time the National Provision Ruling Council (NPRC) took power through a "coup de tat" with the goal of combating corruption and returning state funds to the state, the smuggling of diamonds by high-ranking government officials and riots by the citizens was already out of control. The killing of foreign nationals residing in mining areas and part of the mining companies started and was never going to stop. Most parts of the mining areas were under the control of rebellious civilians who had caused bloody riots and killed many, both citizens and foreigners alike (especially Lebanese and Israelis) this called for the government to start sending military troops to those areas. With the control of these mining areas in the hands of rebels, they were able to gain support from other countries in acquiring sophisticated weapons, it is important to know that the connection between diamonds and the war was that it was easily extracted and provided the means for violence between ordinary citizens, government, and the rebels (Gberie, 2005, pp. 184).

As earlier stated, women's activism and their involvement in national affairs had already started before the country gained independence but their recognition saw the light during and after the conflict due to their relentless effort in helping bring the war to an end. The study is going to show how women used the conflict in Sierra Leone to showcase their ability in participating in state matters and fight for their independence in the economic, domestic, and political spheres.

### **Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study**

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world and among the top 50 countries with the highest rate of domestic violence against women and girls. According to the health survey and demography in the country, about 61% of the

women in the country are said to be domestically abused, they also have one of the highest female mortality rates in the world (Martin & Koroma, 2021). A critical look at the status of women in Sierra Leone shows that even though women have been showing their importance and fighting to be recognized nationally and strengthen their rights domestically, it shows that the issue of gender inequality and domestic violence is still a serious problem in the nation (Risha Khosla, 2021). The recent rise of Feminism and Feminist Movements in international relations (IR) has been spectacular; in other words, it shows that women in most parts of the world are still fighting to gain the utmost recognition they crave and deserve in society; which Sierra Leone is one of those countries.

The main problem and purpose of this thesis are to know about the sidelining and discrimination of women both domestically and nationally before the civil conflict. The marginalization of women in the country can be traced to the historic days of the pre-colonial era. One main problem of women in those days which is attributed to cultural practice is the act of sexual abuse; for example, “if a man sexually assaults a young girl, the only punishment the man will get is that he would be forced to marry the girl or the woman which in logical thoughts is not a punishment but rather a benefit to men”. Again, it is not until 2007 that women had property rights in Sierra Leone. In the time of colonialism, only one woman was known to be associated with the ruling class and her name was Ella Koblo Gulama. As a ruler in that period, she was known for her valor which gave her a certain influence in the colonial administration. It is important to know that the British never placed a female colonial representative or governor in charge of Sierra Leone during the colonial era which is a clear manifestation that aside from Sierra Leone, women were not always allowed to showcase their ability to prove that they can give a meaningful contribution in society and development. Throughout the colonial period and even after independence, it was not even a handful of women were involved in governance, the bulk of the women was subjected to minimal labor which was mostly substance farming and petty trading; women took a lot of part in providing for the household on the economic basis but they were still short in financial security. During this horrible period, an average woman would work 16 hours per day and only get up to three meals per day (Zack-Williams. A, 1995).

All of this happened because there was a normal African saying that “the place of a woman is in the kitchen” which has long been the order of the day, it is

important to know that some communities in the country still follow that adage. Before this time, young girls were forced into early marriage, and many were brutally raped with no consequences, this trend followed when the civil war broke out in the country. The fighting forces brought terror upon women thereby abducting them and forcing them to become part of the fight, some were forced to become wives of rebels, and others were brutally raped and murdered; among the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), it was published by the Human Rights Watch paper in 2003 that around 275,000 women and girls which is around 55% of the female population at the time of the conflict in the country were said to be sexually abused. Another painful tragedy that happened to women during the conflict was that there were many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that arrived in the country with the face of coming to the aid of women and children but as it was, many of these NGOs turned out to become perpetrators and sexual predators against women. The camps that were set up by these so-called organizations to rescue women did not turn out not to be the safe haven that it was supposed to be, this is because the situation in the camps forced women and young girls to batter their bodies in order to gain access to the facilities that were supposed to be available to them at a free cost. (UNFPA, 2007). Countless exploitations happened to women during the conflict and when I put together all the exploitations that were done to women before and during the conflict, I will be obliged to say the light of women has seen its dark days.

The discrimination of women has been an integral part of the history of Sierra Leone. This history shows that women have been poorly represented in the political and governance aspect of the country all because of the traditional male socio-political dominated globe. However, one of the main reasons for this is because of the high rate of illiteracy among women in the country; this causes their rights to always face violation, and due to the little or no access they have to resources. However, these barriers did not limit them from being part of attaining lasting peace and development in the country which is going to be the primary purpose of the thesis.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

Women have long been ignored in Sierra Leone and mostly the world as a whole. Therefore, the aim of the research is to examine how the activism of women contributed to bringing the civil conflict in Sierra Leone to a peaceful resolution and

also to show their capability in taking a full part in sociopolitical activities in the country. The objective is to advocate for the total inclusion of women to be part of the day-to-day running of the state. However, the overall aim and objective of the thesis are to study the situation of women during pre-conflict days, their contribution to bringing lasting peace to the nation, and also to show how handy they have been in governance since the end of the conflict. That is why the thesis is going to stretch through the following areas:

- A literature is going to cover women's lives after independence and before the conflict will cover the basics of how women activism started in Sierra Leone, and will also cover their roles during the conflict and the various interventions with their role during the peace processes.
- The work will also go through the antics of the conflict and how it affected the women of Sierra Leone.
- The work will talk about feminism in international relations, it will give a brief rundown of how feminist movements started in Africa stretching down to the aspect of feminism in Sierra Leone.
- From the discuss of feminism, the work will show how important women have been in the country over the years, which will look at their role in politics and governance.
- The work will finally talk about the continuous advocacy of the rights of women in Sierra Leone and will give recommendations on the increased involvement of women in the affairs of the state.

### **Importance of the Study**

The study can be used by women's advocacy and peacekeeping groups around the globe because the work will discuss about the means and the relentless efforts the women in Sierra Leone used to enhance stability in the country. These means can be of future use to peacekeepers and peacebuilders in conflict areas around the world. Students of peace and conflict studies, international relations, and diplomacy can gain insight from the study. The study also intends to be a motivation to women in the country and other parts of the world to continue fighting for their rights to be fully included in politics and governance and also their rights to stop being domestically violated and harassed sexually; because it is obvious that their still parts of the world and even regions in the country of study (Sierra Leone) where

women are still been sidelined or maltreated. Moreover, it is also expected that this research will be of benefit to women's international and national representatives in areas of negotiation in conflict zones.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

An obvious limitation of the Study is that the research will not be able to get firsthand information from people that had a firsthand experience of the conflict and the women who practically took part in the conflict and the peace process, this is due to the lack of financial resources. The thesis is generally going to be based on women and women's organizations and bring to the fore their effort employed during the conflict to achieve peace. The whole scope of the study is going to revolve around the peace effort and the progress made by women during and after the conflict and this scope aims to show a reason for the increased inclusion of women in governance.

### **Methodology**

The research is a cross-sectional analysis of the role of women in conflict management and conflict resolution. The research is based on qualitative empirical analysis which is why it involved the use of a wide range of published materials and official documents used to provide a factual understanding of the background of the conflict as well as looking at concerns and criticisms of how the matters of women were handled before, during and after the war.

Since the research is based on qualitative, the study is going to talk about the most important groups that were directly involved in the resolution of the conflict and also discuss specific women that started women's activism in Sierra Leone.

Materials are going to be based on publications, newspapers, chapters from books, and online official documents. This is because the study will be based on secondary data.

Since the study will be based on qualitative form, there will be no questionnaire and no formal interviews; first-hand witnesses might not be available due to passing (death) and limited resources to locate those still alive.

Since the research is qualitative, it is going to be based on content analysis thereby analyzing documented information from secondary sources.

## **Thesis Structure**

Chapter One will deal with the background of the study where the work will take us through a brief history of the country (Sierra Leone), a brief history of the conflict, courses of the conflict; the chapter will also discuss the aims and objective of the study, the problem statement and purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, research, questions, hypothesis, nature of the study, and the gaps identified in the study since there is a big gap in the gender balance in Sierra Leone.

Chapter Two incorporates a literature review where the history of women's activism will be discussed in which we will get to know the position of women in the country after independence and before the conflict. The conflict in Sierra Leone got intense to the point it had various interventions from foreign troops, the study will look at the role women played in the assistance of these troops during the various interventions. The chapter will go further to look at the role they played in managing the conflict and give an in-depth discussion of the role they played in bringing the conflict to an end. It is important to note that it is not only the women in Sierra Leone that were involved in the advocacy for peace in the country; women around Africa played a great role in ensuring peace in the nation, this chapter will also discuss the role women around Africa played in supporting the women in Sierra Leone. Since the study is mainly going to focus on the most important of the women's groups, the chapter will end its discussion by giving an overview of how the rest of the various groups collaborated in achieving a common goal: peace.

Chapter Three will discuss how the effect of the conflict on women in Sierra Leone which will be divided into negative and positive effects.

Chapter Four will take a look at the rise of feminism and feminist groups after the conflict in Sierra Leone. it will look at their goals, achievements, and failures with their reasons over the years in governance. The chapter will go further to look at the increased role of women in governance and politics in the country.

Chapter Five will go through a conceptual analysis of the study and give recommendations as to how the expansion of women's rights and involvement in governance and nation-building is important for any nation.

## **Research Questions**

In light of the inquiries that were made that eventually led to the independent variable which is the thesis topic, the following questions came through.

1. What was women's status before the war broke out in Sierra Leone? That is post-independence Sierra Leone
2. How did the conflict affect the women of Sierra Leone?
3. What were the significant contributions by women in enhancing lasting peace in the country?
4. How well have women thrived over the years? That is women in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

### **Hypothesis**

The main research hypothesis is that "if women in Sierra Leone are involved in governance, politics, and state matters, there will be more development and sustainable peace".

### **Gaps Identified in the Study**

One of the gaps identified in the study is that women before the conflict were not given adequate opportunities to show their capability in the development of the nation. This caused many women to be left out of society as the lack of exposure and formal education left a staggering number of them as illiterates.

Another gap identified in the study is that women's fight to be fully involved in governance and politics has been ignored in the nation; even though they have somehow been considered and have been occupying state positions, the matter of domestic violence and sexual crimes are still a great menace against women and girls in the nation.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

The literature review of this work is mainly based on the research done by previous researchers which is secondary data, and the study is going to be arranged into several units stretching from a background study of the rights of women after gaining independence, their contribution in managing and ending the conflict.

#### **Introduction**

The absence of good governance and equality has been the reason for the occurrence of violent conflicts in many parts of the world including Sierra Leone. As stated in chapter one, women were seen less in society, and they were given little or no responsibility in the country especially when it comes to politics and governance. It was a society where women were stereotyped with their counterparts (men) having all the advantages. However, that happened until the outbreak of the conflict when women showed how important and how impactful they can be in the nation. It is of empirical knowledge that the struggle for the improvement of the rights of women and their involvement in nation-building, national politics, and governance has been a long-standing fight in countries of the world of which Sierra Leone was not an exception and is still on the fight to improve on the rights of women. Although in today's Sierra Leone, women do not carry a lot of mantles of responsibilities, they are involved in national politics and governance unlike before the civil conflict. The civil conflict in Sierra Leone harmed the lives of women, but as a wise man will say "in every situation, there is an opportunity". This is so for the women in Sierra Leone, the conflict brought them the opportunity to showcase themselves so that they can also be part of the nation-building and national process which one will say they have done so well and have been of great impact to the development of the nation. Since the study is also talking about conflict and conflict resolution, it will be wise for us to throw light on what conflict and conflict resolution is all about.

#### **What is Conflict and Conflict Resolution?**

According to the Cambridge University Press (2009), conflict is defined as a disagreement between two parties that are conscious but not rational. It comes as a result of terms and agreements, needs, or obligations of the parties involved (Michael

Nicholson, 2009). These wants can be relatively practical signed under contracts and the breach of that contract might bring about the outbreak of conflict between the parties involved. Conceptually, this can be an intense disagreement with parties of either intrapersonal which is a conflict within the same boundary or state, and/or can also be a disagreement of interpersonal nature which is one from separate boundaries or states (Putnam & Poole. 1987, p. 552). Conflict escalates when there is no common ground to be found between parties; that is, whether from the same vicinity or not. In the case of the conflict in Sierra Leone, it was of an intrapersonal nature because the war was fought between the government and rebel groups formed within the state. It is not an easy task to resolve a conflict, especially one that is bloody or that of combat in nature, nevertheless, where there is conflict there is a need for conflict resolution.

From a general notion, if there were no conflicts or disagreements between parties whether states or individuals, there will be no need for settlement or resolution, but however, because there is conflict there is a need for conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is the method that is used to bring a disagreement between two fighting parties to an end. According to Forsyth, D.R. (2009), conflict resolution is the process that is involved in the facilitation of bringing a peaceful ending to a conflict. This is said to be done through frequent and purposeful communication between parties and the committee responsible for creating the means for common ground between the conflicted parties; these groups are otherwise known as mediators or commonly can be called third parties. Aside from the presence of mediators in the resolution of a conflict, there are other groups known as advocates. These advocacy groups use different methods to help bring resolution to conflicts. The methods are devised in ways to reduce violence in the conflicting sights thereby trying to achieve a desire for change and enhancing ways to help bring parties to the negotiating table; since one of the favorable ways conflicts can be resolved is through negotiation in which everyone can get their desired goal. This position of advocacy was the position of the women of Sierra Leone.

Given the various parts women took during the conflict, it is of utmost importance that they are to be regarded as primary actors when it comes to state matters and they also showed that in the management and prevention of conflict, they must be brought into the fold as early as possible. Over the years, women

themselves all over the world have actively been taking part in the managing and resolution of conflicts by getting involved in activities starting from grassroots efforts including the involvement of humanitarian assistance, demobilization and disarmament, child and health care, the exchange of hostages and the use of traditional conflict management approaches such as conscious building based on open discussions (Alemie, Mandefro, 2018). They have often stretched their roles to a wider political agenda, clamoring for a representation of women in politics in all parts of the world. However, it is important to know that before the outbreak of the conflict in Sierra Leone and women took the opportunity to step in and help bring it to an end thereby showing their importance in the country, their lives were not as half a bit glamoured as how it is in present-day Sierra Leone; this is going to be discussed below.

### **Women in Post-Independence Sierra Leone: (Women's Pre-Conflict Life)**

Gender discrimination against women has been one of the oldest stories in the history of mankind, from religious, domestic, to national levels. Sierra Leone is a small country in West Africa, it has often been overlooked when it comes to the problem of women's rights. Men have always used their trousers to send the women at the back when it comes to handling public affairs. Before this time, women have never had their say in society, they have only been subjected to domestic labor, and like many African countries, they have been deprived of many rights such as the right to education which made most of them to be illiterate, they were deprived of economic rights like the right to own landed properties, economic properties, and the acquisition of inherited properties, they were deprived of the right to free speech, to allow them to say their minds and express themselves publicly and in most occasions, they were also deprived of their right to speak up domestically, most importantly, they were also deprived of their right to vote (Khosla, 2021). One would say Sierra Leone is one of the many countries where the light of women had seen its dark days. The life of women in Sierra Leone after the country gained its independence in 1961 from the British can be described as a life of many complications as they were deprived of many rights especially the right to participate and compete in public or national affairs and sidelined by their counterparts. These complications can be discussed in various subheadings.

### **Politics, Governance, and Women in Post-Independence Sierra Leone:**

The right to vote and be voted for is one of the main and most important rights of every citizen in a nation because it has to do with the person choosing whom he or she will make his or her social contract pact. This was one of the most important rights that women were deprived of in Sierra Leone. Even before independence, Sierra Leone had already started exercising democratic elections even though they were not general elections because before finally becoming an independent state, they were under the indirect rule system under the British colony. The indirect rule system is the system where the colonized country will have a prime minister in the country running the affairs of the state with other elected representative members but directly reporting and taking instructions from their colonial masters; in which the case of Sierra Leone was Britain (Naseemullah, 2016). Despite the fact that women make up a significant number of the population even in those periods, they did not have as much representation as they should have been entitled to as citizens of the nation, even the term lower cannot be used to describe the representation of women in the governance process. However, the political history of Sierra Leone cannot be explained without the inclusion of women in it, this is because, in the colonial days even though men were still at the forefront of political affairs, some individual women were able to attain high positions in the nation especially when it comes to traditional politics and party politics as well. Women like Ella Koblo Gullama who was a renowned traditional ruler during the colonial days of Sierra Leone and the likes of Nancy Steele who was the founder of the women's wing of the All People Congress Political Party (APC) in 1960; that was just before independence, also, in 1957 when the country had a parliamentary election, four women ran for parliament in which they all won their seats but two of them were protested against from taking their seats (Tadros, 2014). However, after the country gained independence, the participation of women in politics decreased. The struggle for power in the state became a fight between men which saw women pushed at the back and their representation became low even at the traditional level. By 1967, only two (2) women were allowed to run for parliamentary elections, and by 1970, out of eight-one (81) chiefdoms in the country, only ten (10) were led by women (Marrow, 1986), this caused the voices of women to go unheard or silenced. Global development policies have shown the importance of women's involvement in national, regional, and local leadership positions, but many still have doubts about

why women should matter in these affairs, but it is important to know that the involvement of women in these matters will enhance collaboration, strengthen democracy, ensure positive response between ethnic boundaries, and project a more sustainable future. However, women's low participation in politics in post-independence Sierra Leone cannot be overemphasized and is attributed to certain disadvantages that going to be discussed below.

### **Lack of Education and Training**

Sierra Leone was granted full membership in the United Nations on September 27th, 1961 just after the country had its independence. As a member of the UN Sierra Leone falls under the jurisdiction of countries that must uphold the UN charter on the convention that every member state must eliminate gender discrimination against women both domestically and nationally (Rogers, 2011). This was the Charter and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, it is either the men who have square-pegged total authority around themselves who forgot to obey the charter or they distinctively thought it fit that women are not fit to be in the role they are supposed to be in.

It is of great importance to know that there was a big gap in the educational system between men and women and this cannot be overemphasized as the literacy rate between men and women in those days was 10 to 1 percent. Women and girls faced extreme gender inequality and were denied their right to go to school (Castillejo, 2009). Despite Sierra Leone being the first country to have a university in the whole of Sub-Saharan West Africa in 1827, FourahBey College (FBC) now known as the University of Sierra Leone (USL), it was only in 1938 that a woman graduated from the university and her name was Latilewa Hyde-Foster (Africanvoice, 2017). Again, aside from the country having the first university in the Sub-Saharan region, it also had one of the oldest schools particularly meant for girls in the region which was the Anne Walsh Memorial School (AWMS) established in 1849 but still girls were prevented from going to school. There were also other girls' schools that were established along the line such as the Methodist Girls High School (MGHS) in 1880, the Freetown Secondary School for Girls (FSSG) in 1926, and the Koidu Girls School in 1952; all their schools were established by the colonial masters (British) to improve the public life of women, the reality was that women were only lowly educated because most of them only attended secondary school without having a

tertiary education which would have given them the required qualification to be competitive (Rogers, 2011). The society was primitively controlled by men and they had a saying which goes “The school of a woman is in the kitchen and on the farm”. United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (1989) reported that an average woman in Sierra Leone worked up to 16 hours a day and a bulk of them only survive on one or two meals per day. A bulk of the women’s population was illiterate, which impeded their ability to take an active part in politics and governance in the state, and without tertiary training, it was impossible for them to have quality and high-paying jobs that would have given them financial boosts to facilitate political campaigns.

### **Religious Beliefs**

Sierra Leone is a country of multiple religions having Muslims, Christians, and the Ancient African Traditional Religion (ATR), all with different beliefs and practices. Religion was a great setback in women’s political participation. Unlike Christianity, like the protestant who over the years have encouraged the involvement of women in politics and governance, Islam like the ATR was one religion that stood against women’s involvement in politics and general leadership. The belief in Islam and ATR only supported women to be housewives and mothers, and condemn any form of free speech from them. These religions heavily discriminated against women from being formally educated or involved in public activities, especially those concerning governance, and politics. Men had a shallow belief that if women were allowed to compete in leadership, they will see men as their equals and even look low on them (Rogers, 2011). Over the years in the international system, it has been observed that it is not only democracy that has caused the clash between Western states and Islamic states; gender inequality against women in Islamic states has also been a major cause (Norris & Inglehart, 2002), this is because, generally, Muslims argue that Islam forbids women to take part in governance and politics. In light of the ATR, women were only limited to farm and housewife roles, the only public affair they were allowed to participate in was the traditional society that they had to initiate girls into before marriage which is nowadays known as gender mutilation. Men worked very hard to put women out of competition using all sorts of ideologies that women are weak, emotional, and indecisive. These prevalent ideologies became a stigma even among the women themselves that they never believed they can be

major players in society (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003). It is important to know that to this day most women are still affected by that stigma.

### **Traditional Ideologies**

Connected to the African Traditional Religion (ATR), cultural factors have been of great importance in the determination of women's participation in politics and governance. Even though women had their secret societies, men still used secret society propaganda against them in order to sway them from being part of the leadership process in their various communities. It was stated that for one to be part of governance, they must be part of a male secret society such as the Poro, Gbangbani, and the Oje society which are male traditional societies. This greatly affected women's involvement in politics (Rogers, 2011). Traditions are customs and beliefs that are inherited and passed on from generation to generation.

### **Women and Economic Empowerment in Post-Independent Sierra Leone**

Income disparity between men and women was one of the major hindrances to the progress of women in Sierra Leone. The economy of Sierra Leone, after the country gained independence, grew by some percentage due to the strong mining and agricultural production. There was not much inflation and the country's currency was very strong in terms of the exchange rate. This continued until the first half of the 1970s when the world went into the great depression (oil shock), there was pressure on the rise of prices, and the exchange rate raised to a substantial amount; by the end of the 1970s, the economic growth slowed down due to the fall of the output in the mining sector and the agricultural field, all of these coupled up the high rate of corruption by the government in the country saw to the collapse of the economy which is still a problem in present-day Sierra Leone (Bangura, 2010). With an economy like this, and with the majority of women not having the level of education that will get them a well-paid job, the poverty rate among women was staggering. Many girls dropped out of school and were forced into early marriages. As stated in the previous heading, the main activity women were engaged in was predominantly small-scale farming which most of the produce was meant for home consumption, and in the business sector, a bulk of the women in Sierra Leone were only petty

traders dealing in agriculture products at daily markets. In the northern part of the country, most of them also did “Gara Dying” and “cloth weaving” which was a lucrative business but most of the major sales of it were done by the men of the house because it was mostly exported to neighboring towns and also across the border to Guinea (a neighboring country to Sierra Leone).

Poverty has always been a widespread affair in Africa and Sierra Leone is not an exception. However, according to the Marxist school of thought in international relations, the high rate of poverty in Africa and other former colonial territories is due to imperialism and colonialism (Pevehouse J C W, Goldstein J S, 2017). The poverty in the country was rooted was also attributed to the excess rate of corruption and mismanagement in the country. Galtung (1969), defined poverty as the outgrowth of structural violence resulting from a particular social system that limits individuals to meet their full potential. In the case of Sierra Leone during post-independence, women are the ones that mainly fall short of this shattered social structure. The social structure is masked in structural violence that is built into the system to restrict the progress of certain individuals through the distribution of power, again which is strongly connected to the issue of women in post-independence Sierra Leone. Talking about the restriction of individual capability, one can connect the discrimination of women in post-independence Sierra Leone to the “Capability Approach” through which poverty is a primary factor that leads to the deprivation of individual capability; which is simply talking about the absence of options that limits the individual to make choices for themselves in the case of their progress (Sen, 1999). However, the striking limited access to resources and income in the case of women in post-independence Sierra Leone is attributed to several factors that will be discussed below.

### **Limited Property Rights**

Property rights come from a social ideology that determines how economic resources can be owned and used (Alchian, 2008). These properties can either be land, houses, or other assets that can generate income. In those days in Sierra Leone, the property contention was mainly on land because land was the most valued property anyone could wish for; and that was because of the massive agricultural and mining operations that were in the country and about 70% of the population depended on agriculture as their livelihood. In post-independence Sierra Leone, the

ability to own a piece of land comes from the relations of the household or the community. As land tenure is defined as the set of social relations that allows one to own and show how one can use land (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997), in those days, this social relation does not apply to women. Women face total discrimination in the ownership and use of land, they can only have access to land if the husband if she is married, father, or brother whether younger or older if she is not married permits it. Even when the husband dies a wife does not have the right to obtain any property; all properties will be inherited by the brothers if the dead husband never had a son this was because women were also seen as properties in those days and she also will be inherited by the immediate elder or younger brother of her late husband (McFerson, 2012). It is important to know that in those days' women constitute the largest group of agricultural laborers but they never had full access to land or land on their own. It is also important to know that in those days, farmland ownership comes in two folds; one in which the land belongs to the community wherein if a person wants to make use of the land permission must have to come from the community authorities; in this case, women were never given the right or permission to use the land, work can only work on community lands after the husband if she is married, or in the case where this is not married, she can only access it through the father or brothers. The other system of ownership is the family which it was obvious that women can never own land in the family system. With this kind of limited access and inequality to property rights for women in post-independence Sierra Leone, there was widespread poverty among them because they had to depend on their husbands and male family members for everything even access to property, this was what made it very difficult for them to have the kind of economic power that is needed to run political campaigns and contest for leadership positions. However, it was only in 2007 that certain laws were passed that gave women the right to own or inherit property (McFerson, 2012). It is however important to know that even at that still in most parts of the country especially in the suburbs where women know little or nothing about their rights and importance in society due to the level of illiteracy in those areas, women are still being bullied by men when it comes to inheritance and acquisition of property.

### **Patriarchal Structure and Marriage**

Generally speaking, even in present-day Sierra Leone, lineage plays an important role in the family system and these were set roles that existed from ancient times. However, in post-independence Sierra Leone, these roles became a fundamental cause for the lower status and high rate of poverty among women in society. In those days, the wife and children especially the female children were at the mercy of the family. Women had little or no control nor influence when it comes to decision-making, every decision was made by the men on their behalf. The socioeconomic platform in those days provided the means for great gender inequality (McFerson, 2012). Marriage in those days in Sierra Leone was not a comfortable place for women, especially those in the interior of the country but it was made compulsory for them to do it.

The marriage system in Sierra Leone was predominantly polygamous where men had the unchecked right to marry as many wives as they can carry unlike now when it is technically prohibited under a penal code that can cost a man to spend up to ten (10) years in prison (Gender Bill, 2007). However, it was much more prevalent in the upline areas. The polygamous system of marriage caused women to have few opportunities because the more wives a man had, the more children which means a larger family to provide for; one will understand that this will make it difficult for a woman in that situation to save enough for herself. A woman had to work as twice as hard to sustain herself, as stated previously that UNICEF found out that by the late 1980s, an average woman had to work for about 16 hours and survive on at least one or two meals per day (Zack-Williams, 1995). Again, the high fertility rate of women in marriages contributed greatly to their high poverty rate because this made them become lazy and look old at an early age, depriving them of many opportunities to improve their lives.

### **Women and Gender-Based Violence in Post-Independence Sierra Leone**

Gender violence against women is one of the oldest stories in the history of mankind. In every part of the world from ancient times to the present day there is one way or another other some sort of abuse done against women. Women have always been considered as the weaker sex; this reason has made them to have always been vulnerable to violent men. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) against women has been one of the most prevalent acts against women, it is recorded by the UN that every day in every part of the world, one (1) out of three (3) women dies from abuse

or at least experience either physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. Gender-Based violence refers to any act directed at an individual based on their gender, there is mostly done against women because it originated from inequality, the abuse of rights and power, and harmful customs and traditions. As stated above, Gender-Based violence (GBV) has been and still is a serious violation of human rights and it is a life-threatening health and protection issue (UNHCR, 2018). As it is still a burden in Sierra Leone, a close look was taken into the status of women and found out that the issue of violence against women is not a today problem but has been a problem even before independence, however, the study is only going to talk about the issue of Gender-Based violence in post-independence Sierra Leone. During this period, women faced all sorts of violence from men such as physical domestic abuse, sexual violence (rape), mutilation, and more. The study is therefore is going to discuss below some of these acts of violence that were done against women and the repercussions that the perpetrators faced.

### **Sexual Violence (Rape) and Domestic Violence**

Incidents of sexual violence against women have long been part of human history and have been a sensitive global issue. It has been one of the major causes of the high rise in unwanted pregnancies which has led to abortion thereby causing a staggering number of teenage and child death around the world. It has also been a major cause of the high rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) such as the Human Immune Virus (HIV/AIDS) which is known to be a deadly disease. Sexual abuse is very predominant in Africa and according to a survey done by the Women's Right Global Activists (WRGA), it is one of the causes of the high rate of prostitution globally (WRGA, 2016). The record of sexual violence in Sierra Leone after the colonial period was a menace. Women were raped with little or no consequences to follow especially in the inner regions. Historically, if a man sexually assaults a girl, the only punishment the man will get is that he would be compelled to marry her or the woman which in logical thought is not a punishment but rather a benefit to men. even in the urban areas which in those periods was only the capital city (Freetown), families of victims who were sexually abused prefer not to speak about it or report to authorities, they prefer settling it in the family way which is to take compensation or marry the victim off to the perpetrator. This is because even the

national laws were not rigid enough to punish sex offenders and the process involved was slow and time-consuming.

Domestic violence involves a variety of life-threatening activities that torture or intimidate one's intimate partner. It involves the beating of women in marriage, economic deprivation, hard labor, and even sexual abuse (Woodlock, 2017). However, in post-independence Sierra Leone, the predominant domestic violence against women was economic deprivation, beating, and hard labor. As was stated in the previous heading from a survey made by UNICEF, in the 1980s an average woman had to work up to 16 hours a day (Zack-Williams, 1995) which is a clear manifestation of hard labor and with all this hard work, they were deprived economically. The rights of women in the household and marriages were limited and they had no voice. Women were beaten by their husbands to stupor without any reparation. Women were never protected from these sorts of things as they were considered as a property of their husbands. However, even though nowadays there are rigid laws in place to combat the issue of domestic violence against women, it is still in occurrence in the country.

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Some people will argue that it is a religious act of Islam, while others will argue that it is a traditional practice, nevertheless, whichever dimension one stands it is a brutal act in the eyes of the international community. In Sierra Leone, Female Genital mutilation has been a predominant social activity for women but it is a brutal act because it involves the partial removal of female genital parts for non-medical reasons that will lead to a lifetime injury, sickness, or death (WHO, 2022). It is important to know that it is occurring in the country and there are no penal laws for this action; however, the difference between now and the post-independence period is that in those days women do not have a say in deciding whether to take part in it or not, it was totally a customary issue and girls were forced into it; while nowadays, there are laws which dictates that it must be up to a girls consent to take part in the process or not.

### **A Brief Discuss on Women Who Made Their Mark in Politics and Governance in Pre-Conflict Sierra Leone**

Even though it was a hard nut to crack in a society with male dominance, there were women who stood their ground to be recognized in politics and take part in governance. The history of some of these women is going to be briefly discussed.

The study would start with an incredible woman whose name was Nancy Dolly Victoria Steele. She was one of the few women in post-independence Sierra Leone who were able to climb up the ranks in the political sphere. She was born to middle-class Creole parents in Freetown the capital of Sierra Leone in 1923 and did primary and secondary education in the country. With the great promise that she showed in her early school days during the colonial period, she was immediately granted access by the British government to study in England where she studied nursing. She got married to a Caribbean husband in England and had a son and a daughter. After the death of her son, she returned to Sierra Leone and continued practicing her trade (nursing); at the time, the labor market was steep and workers were not getting paid adequately which caused her to become a labor activist. She started sensitization among workers and was a leader in planned labor strikes in the country. With her progress in activism, she entered politics and joined the All People's Congress Political Party (APC) in 1960 becoming the first woman in the party. With her boldness and thirst for equality and recognition, she formed the women's wing of the APC in 1961 to further the cause of women's involvement in politics and governance in the country (Denzer, 1987). After her exploits in the political realm, she started gaining national and worldwide recognition; she was immediately chosen to become the leader of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women (NCSLW) where she made a great impact and stirred the cause of women in the nation (Abadi, 2002). When the APC took won the first general election and took power in 1967, she became an alderman in the Freetown City Council (FCC), and after the death of the mayor of the municipality of Freetown, she was chosen as an acting mayor, however, it was never stated how long she held the position for; but in 1978, she became the only woman who stood for parliamentary position during the parliamentary election because by that time Sierra Leone was under a one-party dictatorship state, but she never won the seat in parliament. She went silent for a while after the Sheika Stevens APC government gave up a long tenure of holding power but surfaced again when the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) who were a breakaway from the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) took power through a junta coup in 1997 of which she was a member. During this time, she continued

serving again in the Freetown City Council but this time as a direct advisor to the mayor of the council. With the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the AFRC was removed from power and the capital city. The captured members of the AFRC of which she was among were prosecuted and condemned to death in 1998. However, after the signing of the Lomé agreement in 1999, she was released from prison. She immediately flew to England again to live with her daughter. She later died in England in December 2001 of heart disease and was flown to Sierra Leone to be buried in 2002. After going through all nukes and crannies of this woman of impeccable qualities of stewardship, one will say she was a force to reckon with.

However, apart from Nancy Steel, other women were very active in politics, governance, and nation-building in Sierra Leone; the likes of Adelaide Casely-Hayford who played a significant role fighting for women's rights in the capital in 1915, founder of the Girls Industrial and Technical Training School (GITTS) in 1923, and fought for the right of women to vote which was given to them in 1930 (Denzer, 1987).

Another was Constance Cunnings-John who was the first African woman to become a mayor of a municipality. She was elected the mayor of the municipality of Freetown city council in 1938. There she was when she formed the Market "Women's Union" and the "Washer Women's Union". She was the founder of the Sierra Leone Women's Movement in 1952 when women's activism strongly started in the country, and she was also the founder of the Elenore Roosevelt Preparatory School for Girls in Freetown.

Another woman to be considered is Frances Wright. She became the first lawyer and magistrate appointed by the government in 1943. After making waves in the Bar Association, she then entered into politics where she got the position of advisor to the British High Commissioner and was considered one of the champions that fought for the rights of women in Sierra Leone (Hakim, A. & Sherwood, M, 2003).

All these women fought for equal rights of women in Sierra Leone, however, all of them made their mark in the colonial era by then the British government was giving an equal platform to all gender in the country; which makes them different from Nancy Steel who fought her way through all odds after the country gained

independence when men took it upon themselves to sideline women in the country from states matters and place them backward.

### **A Brief History of Women's Activism in Sierra Leone**

Women's activism started as early as the 19th Century in places like the U.S. and by the late 19th Century, it has taken a grip in almost all parts of the world. In Africa, women's activism started in the early 20th Century and Sierra Leone was one of those African nations that had women who stood up to fight for their place in society. The history of women's activism in Sierra Leone dates far back to the time when women like Adelaide Casely-Hayford in 1923 started supporting women's education when she found the Girls Industrial Technical Training School (GITTS) in order to help women become literate and gain employment for them to be independent economically, but it all started in 1915 when she took up on the fight for women's right to vote which she succeeded in achieving in 1930. This followed suit by other women such as Constance Cunning-John, and Frances Wright, down to the reputable Nancy Steele in the 1960s. However, it was only after the civil conflict that women's activism took a foothold in the country.

Nevertheless, in 1951 women took to the street in a staggering number of about ten thousand (10,000,000) in a rally to protest the high cost of living in the country and also to increase market levies. These women were led by Hannah Benka-Coker who was one of the founders of the Freetown Secondary School for Girls (FSSG) (Steady, 2005). It was in the aftermath of this protest that the Sierra Leone Women's Movement (SLWM) was formed by Constance Cunnings-John in collaboration with the market women of Sierra Leone. The strive of the movement was based on a variety of things that were of much importance to women. These things include trading rights, education for girls, and even adult education for women. One of the most important things that they clamored for was the opening of a farmer's bank for women since in post-independence Sierra Leone a bulk of the population of women were farmers, especially those in the upland areas and the majority of those in the city that were traders deal on the agriculture produce from the upland areas. The goal was to start a cooperative society for women in the farming sector in order for them to gain financial security and independence. The movement went across the whole country inclusive of all tribes. One major advantage they had was they had their own publication newspaper of their own

which aid their message to move across the country and even in some parts of Africa (Bangura, 2012). With their successes, politicians and political parties start seeking their support and attention, but it was the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP); the first political party in the nation with the leadership of Milton Margai; the first Prime Minister of Sierra Leone that was able to gain their support (Hakim, A. & Sherwood, M, 2003). In 1960, the movement was changed into the Federation of Sierra Leone Women's Organization (FSLWO).

With the progress of the SLWM, other women's activist groups started emerging like the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW). This group was formed on the 14th of February, 1976. Its main motive was to support and expand the work of the SLWM in advocating for girl child education, gender equality, and women's empowerment thereby seeking the education of women to the highest level. However, from their humble beginnings, they went on to become one of the main champions among the women's groups that contributed to attaining sustainable peace in the country.

However, women's activism got to its peak during and after the conflict. in the wake of the year 2000, just after the Lomé peace agreement was signed between the RUF and the government of Sierra Leone, women did not just relax because they played a role in getting the conflicted parties to seat at the negotiation table, they also took it upon themselves to see that both parties abide by the agreement that was met. One famous action that they took was to perform a demonstration against the RUF leader because his troops were still at large refusing to disarm and demobilize. This famous action went a long way as it saw to the mobilization of citizens to come out in numbers to protest against the rebel leader (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004).

### **Liberal Feminist Perspective**

Liberal, Marxist, Radical, Critical, and Post-structuralist approaches are identified by the conventional classification of feminism (Steans, & Pettiford et., 2005). Based on the nature of this research, liberal feminist strands are the best approach for addressing or evaluating the endless strive by women for their inclusion in governance. Due to the major goals of their fight over the years such as the pursuit of gender parity, the fight can be characterized through the lens of liberal feminism. Even though there have been a wide variety of discussions, criticisms, and arguments over the numerous facets of feminism, each has significantly added to the field of

research. Whatever way one may look at the concept of feminism, whether in a good or bad way, one thing is for sure: everything in life has both good and bad aspects. Equal treatment for all genders is a goal of liberal feminism. Education, voting rights, sexual harassment, rights to contraception and abortion, as well as accessible health care and childcare, are some of liberal feminism's central concerns. Liberal feminist claims look at the institution of marriage and the legal system governing divorce and property laws, advocate for women's ability and rights to participate in public life, at the very least through suffrage, and challenge practices that deny women access to the same high-quality education and professions as men (Ackerly, 2001). Liberal feminism believes that educating women improves society as a whole. Liberal feminism is different from revolutionary thoughts because its goal is to modify political and social structures rather than overthrow them; this is done to ensure that women and other oppressed groups may advance on an equal footing with men by giving them a secure environment in which they could thrive. Liberal feminists are more focused on helping women break down barriers that have kept them from obtaining positions that were previously only open to men. The total exclusion of women from conventional theories and practices of international relations has been questioned by feminist thinking from the beginning. The absence of women in national and international scenery is shown by the fact that before this time, women were somehow or totally not included in decision-making processes and by the presumption that the impact of international relations on women's everyday life is little or negligible. In addition, the inclusion of feminism in international relations and its contributions may be understood via their dismantling of gender as both a set of socially constructed identities and a potent organizing principle. The political climate on a worldwide scale was impacted, with repercussions on the lives of men and women. Mainstream IR was proven to be gender-blind by feminism (Smith, 2018). Feminism is one of the critical theories of international relations because the aim of critical theories is to redirect the facets of mainstream theories in IR.

### **The Role Women Played During the Conflict (Women's Role During Various Interventions)**

The civil conflict in Sierra Leone escalated to the point that the government lost control of the situation and had to seek foreign troops' intervention. However, before delving into the discussion of the various interventions in Sierra Leone, the

study will briefly discuss the origin and concept of military interventions by foreign forces in foreign states.

**What is Military Intervention: An International Relations Perspective:**

The basis of international relations lies in the use of Power, the battle for supremacy, and the use of force or none at all. During the cold war, it is known by all that the international system was divided into two blocs; the eastern bloc where lies the Soviet Union, and the Western bloc where lies the US and its allies. During this period the international system was bipolar and the main contention was embedded in trade and economic relations, there was somehow no military contention at stake. However, at the end of the cold war, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, rising powers started emerging and the vulnerability of states was inevitable, this called for a new international norm to be introduced in global relations. With this call, international security relations came up with two prototype swings. The first one was when policymakers started to rethink embracing military intervention as a legal foreign policy tool on the petition to support humanitarianism. The second one was when the human security approach was introduced to study matters related to security. In contrast to the traditional security approach which revolves around state security, this new concept gave importance to the protection of humans (Batool, 2022). Therefore, military intervention is a power relation between states which involves the movement of forces of one or more countries into the land or water jurisdiction of another country, with the aim of altering and determining the political structure and dynamics of that particular state in conflict but within the boundaries of the laws of the state in question and a specific period of time. It is important to know that intervention can come in various forms, whether economic, humanitarian, or military (Finnemore, 2004). However, as far as the study is concerned, it is only going talk about the military aspect of intervention.

As stated earlier, the various interventions in the conflict in Sierra Leone came as a result of the government losing its grip on the nation. The first intervention was that of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which was a combined group of soldiers from west Africa in which the majority were Nigerians, this happened in 1993. The second intervention was that of the Executive Outcomes; a private military group from South Africa employed by the government of Sierra Leone with the financing of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1996. The third and final intervention was combined with both

military and humanitarian efforts were the British intervention and a special group formed by the UN called the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in the years 1999 and 2000 respectively. However, these interventions were considered the most tactical and structured interventions in the conflict in Sierra Leone. During this time, women played a very important role to see these interventions successful. The study is going to discuss these interventions in various subheadings and the role women played in them.

### **The Intervention of the Executive Outcomes (EO)**

When the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), which was engulfed in the conflict between 1992 and 1994, hired the South African mercenary organization Executive Outcomes (EO) to conduct military operations against the RUF forces in Sierra Leone, this marked the beginning of outside forces getting involved in the conflict. EO was given a three-part mission:

- Give the government back control of the mineral and diamond mines.
- Find the RUF headquarters and destroy it.
- Manage an effective publicity campaign to persuade the people of Sierra Leone to back the government rather than the rebels. (Woods & Reese, 2008).

In August, the year of 1995, the Executive Outcome (EO) and the nation's military came together in a joint operation in an effort to eliminate the RUF. Within a few months, the combined forces could restore order to the capital city and reclaim the important mineral mines in the countryside of the Kono district, thereby putting pressure on the RUF to lay down arms. As elections were the basis on which they grabbed power, the government's military victories gave them the breathing room to advance toward elections. The Junta reluctantly chose the month of March in 1996 as the date for the national elections, but Captain Strasser, the head of the Junta, quickly tried to sabotage the election by changing the constitutionally mandated age limit for the presidency from 45 to 30, which was more in line with his own age. This attempt resulted in his overthrow by Brigadier Julius Bio, his deputy, in a nonviolent uprising.

The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), led by Ahmed Tejan Kabba, won the election, which was staged by the Bio Government, ushering in Sierra Leone's first head of state to be chosen through a direct election. The Kabba government's initial

responsibility after taking power was to carry on the Bio government's peace negotiations with the RUF. The sides eventually came to an agreement on at least 26 negotiation topics as the peace process went on for the following eight months. However, discussions came to an end when the RUF called for the vice presidency and the departure of all foreign forces, including the EO battalions. The new government hired EO to launch a second operation to seize the RUF headquarters close to Bo, the province seat and biggest city in southern Sierra Leone because RUF forces had broken the cease-fire agreement during peace talks. The RUF headquarters were located and destroyed in October 1996 by soldiers from the EO, SLA, and Kamajor (a civil militia group from the south and east of Sierra Leone), and Sankoh conceded military defeat. On November 30, 1996, Sankoh ratified the Abidjan Peace Accord. Although it may be argued that EO's involvement in the crisis in Sierra Leone did not truly bring a stop to the fighting, The 1995–1996 interventions were successful in meeting their intended goals. The highly trained EO force's assistance tipped the scales of power and gave the NPRC a win it could never have obtained on its own. "EO offered Sierra Leone a feeling of stability during this vital moment," said Canadian General Ian Douglas, a UN negotiator (Woods & Reese, 2008).

**Women's Role in the Intervention:** More crucially, it was an initial, although brief, an attempt at a negotiated resolution of the issue that may have served as the foundation for a longer-term agreement. The participation of this fighting organization provided the breathing room that Sierra Leonean Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and politicians used to promote the polls, however, they didn't directly take part in the decision to hire the EO because it was a decision made solely by the government of the NPRC. Women's organizations like Women Organization for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN) and other Women's Forum were among these CSOs.

These women seized the initiative and plunged themselves into the election campaign after realizing that the military dictatorship had only given a half-hearted return to civilian authority. This led to the first consultative meeting for good governance, known as the Bintumani 1 conference, being held. Less than a month before the election, in January 1996, the women had a direct confrontation with the military administration, which had suggested delaying the vote on the grounds that the RUF was willing to negotiate (Abdullah, 2006).

They insisted on a modification of the original date could only be made at another Bintumani Conference. Thus, a second Bintumani Conference was held, when women confronted troops outside the building and pressured participants within the building. Elections were approved by an uneven margin on February 12th, 1996. In a nutshell, it is safe to say the role played by women helped the government not to go into battle with itself due to the fact that the junta regime did not want to hand over the country again to a democratic civilian government, which if that should have happened would not have helped the EOs mission in the country (Abdullah, 2006).

### **The Intervention of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)**

The November 1996 Abidjan Agreement aimed to stabilize Sierra Leone. However, it denied the RUF any representation in the Kabba administration, which was one of the things the RUF wanted; to be part of the government. Not achieving that goal never satisfied the RUF; as a result, by mid-1997, the civil war had returned to Sierra Leone. In the wake of the return of the war, some of Sierra Leone's West African neighbors began a series of external military operations through the Economic Community Military Observer Group (ECOWAS), the military wing of the organization (ECOMOG).

ECOMOG's first acts in the country were actually in August of 1990 when it participated in the civil conflict of Liberia to help Sergeant Samuel Doe's government there put an end to the Charles Taylor-led rebel force. In May 1992, ECOMOG soldiers entered Sierra Leone for the first time. To cut off Charles Taylor's Liberian rebels' spring of provisions and manpower, they tried to close the border with Liberia. ECOMOG also had a supply base at the Lungi airfield, which is located to the north of Freetown and had guards placed in strategic locations around the nation to protect their supply routes to the south. However, they quickly got tangled in helping the government of Sierra Leone fight against RUF soldiers that were receiving backing from Liberia. In May 1997, the Nigeria-backed Kabba administration was deposed, placing ECOMOG in the middle of a nation whose new military government requested their departure. This put the future of Sierra Leone in jeopardy. This caused ECOWAS to call for a regional meeting in Abidjan in July 1997 and October in Conakry that same year. The meeting was held between the

junta regime called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) led by Major General Johnny-Paul Koroma, the international community, and ECOWAS. This meeting came as a result to find ways in resolving the conflict, however, the AFRC came to an agreement to restore the civilian government on the 23rd of October, 1997 in Conakry. However, the junta government backslides on the agreement thereby not reinstating the government it had overthrown, and by November 1997 it was obvious that military intervention was the only way to overthrow the AFRC and install a legitimate government. As a result, ECOMOG soldiers were redeployed in Sierra Leone again in early 1998; their primary mission was to dislocate the AFRC and reinstate the democratic government in which they succeeded. Actions were taken against the ex-junta regime by the reinstated government; some were executed while others were sent to prison for longer terms (Ali, 2005).

Following the Conakry Agreement, the Kabba government executed several of its commanders, and Sankoh was given the death penalty in absentia, which enraged the AFRC/RUF members and fueled their desire for retribution. This served as a catalyst for the AFRC/RUF to reorganize, mobilize, and train fresh recruits. These recently mobilized soldiers, who included women and children among their abductees, returned to Freetown in January 1999. ECOMOG soldiers were in dismay and were not able to hold the entrance locations due to understaffing and a lack of professionalism. The AFRC/RUF gangs ransacked the city for two weeks, plundering, raping, murdering, and amputating victims. During this time, the ECOMOG were still in the country and they were ruthless in fighting the rebels with their ruthlessness they were able to drive back the rebels from the capital city. The international community once more interfered to arbitrate talks between the government and rebels due to the severe civilian suffering and the risk of more suffering if ECOMOG soldiers left Sierra Leone without a peace agreement of some sort. Representatives from the United Nations, the US, the UK, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) were dispatched to Lomé, the capital of Togo, to discuss potential solutions to the problem in Sierra Leone (Abdullah, 2006). A partial military victory by one side; followed by a peace deal, however, the deal was a broke peace deal, this is because, despite all the concessions that were given to the rebels in the agreement, they attacked again.

**Women's Role in the Intervention:** Women didn't significantly contribute directly to the ECOMOG intervention. However, later on, during the Lomé Peace Negotiations, which were a major event, women would play a prominent part. The ECOMOG intervention's origin. Many women only watched the discussions from the outside but however, two of the delegation's negotiators one from the government and one from the RUF were female. As one reference to women in the Peace Accords of 7 July 1999, Article 28, states: "Given that women have been particularly victimized during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development programs, to enhance women's participation in the post-conflict restructuring process," the presence of women during the peace discussion may have enhanced the acknowledgment of their position in that process (Diop, 2009). Interestingly, though, despite the fact that it is believed that female fighters made up roughly 12% of the entire armed forces throughout the conflict, the Accord made no mention of them (Diop, 2009), which I would say was unfair.

### **The Intervention of British Forces and UNOMSIL/UNAMSIL**

As stated earlier, after the Lomé peace agreement in 1999, upon all the concessions that were given to the rebels they attacked the country again in 1999 and 2000 respectively; this attack called for a drastic response by the international community. The intervention of the British forces and the UN was both military and humanitarian intervention.

In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1181 on July 13, 1998, the United Nations launched its first intervention to monitor the demilitarization in the country, the team composed of seventy military personnel to observe the process for a half-year period (six months). The confidence that followed ECOMOG's effective removal of the AFRC group junta and the restoration of the government led the UN to activate this mission, known as the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). In accordance with the terms of the concessions made in Conakry, it was to participate in the restructuring of the government's security forces and to oversee ECOMOG's efforts to neutralize the RUF and AFRC fighters. When the RUF started going on the offensive to reclaim Freetown the major city of Sierra Leone, this operation was hastily evacuated because it had failed to achieve any of its objectives.

In order to help with the implementation of the July Lomé Peace, the UN Security Council authorized the second wave of intervention on October 22, 1999, under Chapter VII. Agreement. The ECOWAS proposal for greater UN involvement to guarantee that all parties uphold the provisions of the Lomé agreement, as was previously indicated, and the Nigerian declaration of an approaching pullout from Sierra Leone served as the catalysts for the event. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a mediation and observing mission with two hundred and ten monitors and six thousand military troops, was established after Resolution 1270. Unlike the UNOMSIL mission, which was merely a monitoring force, UNAMSIL had substantial military power, though it was only allowed to use it to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence while taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone and ECOMOG (UNSCR 1270, 1999, para. 14, p. 3). UNAMSIL's main objective was to make sure that everyone complied with the requirements of the Lomé accord. In order to do this, it intended to keep an eye on the disarmament process, support the government in resettling Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea and Liberia, and supervise the disarmament process.

With the UN taking charge in Sierra Leone, ECOMOG was withdrawn from the country. With this, a significant security gap was left after ECOMOG withdrew in late April 2000, which the UN Intermediary forces were unable to fill. The RUF took advantage of the circumstance and intensified its assaults against UNAMSIL. 500 UN soldiers were captured by the RUF in May, this automatically caused the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program to collapse thereby causing the arrival of the British forces (Woods & Reese, 2008). The British soldiers contributed to the capital's protection and helped to establish the circumstances that allowed the 500 "lost" UN soldiers to be released. As a buffer against the RUF onslaught, troops were also sent to secure the nearby airport before being spread out around the city and its surroundings. The engagement of the British forces against the RUF had a deterring effect on them which one could say saw to their expected end (Woods & Reese, 2008). The goal of the British intervention was to provide pro-government troops with capacity-building support so they could sustain the achievements made in terms of security and peace. The British helped the

disorganized Sierra Leone Army in this regard by providing technical training and support.

A criminal rebel group known as the West Side Boys, which included ex-members of the SLA, RUF, convicts who had been freed from Prison following the 1997 coup, and regular citizens who were recouped by the RUF, also abducted 11 British soldiers in August 2000. This led to the British second intervention, which many views as the pivotal move that ultimately helped put the war to a close. After many failed rounds of discussions with the rebels, on September 10<sup>th</sup> that year, the British forces hurled an operation in an effort to rescue the abducted British personnel; the operation was called “Operation Barras”, which resulted in the deaths of many insurgents, including young boys and girls, and the capture of others, including their commander, Foday Kallay (Gberie, 2005).

**Women’s Role in the Intervention:** As was previously indicated, the main goal of the UN involvement in Sierra Leone was to make sure the conditions of each peace accord were followed by all parties to the war. This included keeping an eye on the disarmament process, looking into the warring sides' violations of human rights, enabling refugee resettlement, and helping the government build its security system. The UN's mission did not anticipate that women would play such a crucial role in attaining these goals, despite the fact that it would depend on many other stakeholders, including the government and several fighting groups. However, women turned out to be the most effective pressure group that applied pressure on non-cooperating groups, especially the intransigent RUF, bringing attention to the realities of the security situation in Sierra Leone.

Women in rural and urban areas rallied from the very beginning of the war and for many years before to denounce the atrocities committed by rebel troops and appeal for peace. Women persisted in applying pressure to various parties to the conflict, sometimes using extreme tactics. Particularly after the Lomé Accord was signed, this was true. A delegation of senior ladies sought to meet with RUF commander Sankoh after realizing the RUF was still breaking the terms of the peace deal. They were harassed and ridiculed after they arrived at the RUF premises. The ladies jointly pulled up their skirts, knelt down, and exposed themselves to Sankoh and the other RUF officials out of irritation and contempt. In Sierra Leone, a woman acting in this manner is seen as to be the most extreme display of disdain and denunciation made by one group towards another (Diop, 2009). Sierra Leoneans

were inspired by the bravery of the women who took action. Sierra Leoneans were required to protect the honor of women, respect them, and join them in denouncing the crimes of the RUF. On May 8, tens of thousands of Sierra Leoneans marched to the RUF Leader's house with banners bearing slogans like "No Violence Sankoh," "Enough is Enough," and "Sankoh: Our People are Dying." The mob could not be kept away from the residence by UNAMSIL forces. The residence was attacked with rocks, bottles, and sticks. Sankoh was prepared for the demonstration since he had RUF men at his house to provide security. Armed citizens and troops in the crowd exchanged gunfire with these RUF soldiers after they started fire on the mass, sparking a fight. The crowd murdered several RUF members, and the home was plundered and robbed. By the end of the day, numerous civilians had been injured and quite a few civilians had been killed (Diop, 2009). In the fight for peace, the women's actions and the ensuing public protests played a crucial role, which led to Sankoh's arrest.

Women also played a major part in the Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR) process, which was essential to UNAMSIL's mission during the UN involvement in Sierra Leone. Women and girls were failed by the process itself. Being categorized as dependents. Their true experiences were not taken into account, and they were not eligible for the rewards given to combatants. Women, both individually and collectively, became crucial to the reintegration of former fighters, especially those who were not eligible for official programs. They were not to be discouraged or halted. According to Mazurana and Carlson, several mothers whose kids died during the conflict opened their homes to children that were former rebels (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004, p. 4-12). Others put aside their personal grief and gave assistance on the grounds that "the kid ex-combatants would have nothing constructive to do if left abandoned. This would be a danger to a flimsy peace (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004, p. 23). One survey found that 55% of ex-combatants who responded thought that women in communities had a big part to play in helping them reintegrate. This percentage was greater than the 20% and 32% reported by traditional leaders or international aid workers, respectively. They said that women offered direction, shared scant resources, and perhaps most significantly aided in the facilitation of training and education. The most fundamental necessities, such as childcare, clothing, and food, were also assisted by them (UNFEM, 2008-2009). However, Women, many of whom had experienced discrimination in the

predominately male powered dominated Sierra Leonean society, took advantage and seized the moment of each foreign involvement to showcase their significance in managing the conflict in Sierra Leone, even though the role of women was not foreseen in each of the numerous interventions by foreign forces. Their contributions to each of these intervention stages were essential to altering the conflict's physical terrain which turned out to be of great influence thereby convincing the RUF to keep to their side of the bargain in the Lomé peace accord.

### **Women's Role in Managing the Conflict**

It is of an empirical knowledge the most horrific civil wars in the history of the world; from the time of ancient Rome down to the days of Alexander the Great have mostly targeted women, this is because women are more vulnerable in conflicted societies. Down to these present days women are still at high risk of being targets in civil conflicts around the world and Africa is one of the most notorious places of such. Human rights and gender equality are two very important aspects of conflict management. As a result, it is crucial that efforts to prevent or manage disputes include women early on as active participants in all phases of managing the conflict. However, before going further to discuss the topic at hand, it will be best for us to highlight what conflict management is all about.

**What Conflict Management is:** The technique of managing a dispute involves reducing its bad aspects while maximizing its constructive ones. Conflict management is meant to enhance group learning and results, such as the capacity for success in an organizational context. When a disagreement is handled well, it can lead to better group results (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). The process of managing conflicts is voluntary. It provides speedy conflict resolution methods and gives people closest to the problem influence over the solutions. The following strategies can be used to handle conflict:

- Conciliation
- Facilitation
- Mediation
- Arbitration

However, the study is not going to discuss the above-mentioned methods of conflict management. Nevertheless, as the definition of conflict management goes,

because women were closer to the conflict, that is them being in the country, they used the opportunity to gain influence over the conflicted parties (RUF and the Government) thereby proffering solutions to solving the issue. Women's participation in conflicts generally and in what happened in Sierra Leone particularly has been extensively discussed over the years since the end of the conflict and the study is going to throw light on the many that have been discussed on the matter.

Among the methods of managing a conflict, most of the work done by women in management of the conflict in the country was basically based on facilitation which in managing conflict is the means used to bring people together, especially the conflicting parties in order to understand each other's objectives and figure out solutions to the problem at hand, which in the case of these women was what they did during the intervention of the Executive Outcomes. As earlier stated in this study, the intervention of the EO was to help the then-military government (NPRC) to push back the rebels who were closing in on the capital and with success, the military regime would have to return the state back to the civilian regime, but as we know, the military government never wanted to do that which would have led to the government fighting itself which would have been catastrophic for the nation. This was when women showed the skill of facilitation in managing the situation by organizing a conference in the capital city known as the Bintumani-1 conference which was meant for both the military and the civilian side of the government structure to come together and find a way for them to achieve their goals and enhance a way forward toward good governance and peace-building, and this, however, proved successful because, at the end of the day, they were able to persuade the military to conduct a national election which brought back the country under a civilian rule (Abdullah, 2006).

Another thing that the women did in managing the conflict was actually done by a group of women known as the Sierra Leone Women Forum (SLWF) even though the original objective for the creation of this group was networking for the Beijing conference, due to the adverse effect of the conflict in the nation, especially on women, the forum decided to play a crucial role thereby helping in the management of the conflict. By taking this lead, they became the umbrella of all women's groups in the country. They started by organizing the women together; the first groups to be organized in working together were the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP) and the Women Organization for a Morally

Enlightened Nation (WOMEN). They gave the torch to these groups to spearhead demonstrations, campaigns, and rallies for peace and democracy. They rallied women all over the nation to appeal to both the government and the rebels to bring the conflict to an end. Several requests were made by these women to the international community for them to apply pressure on the conflicted parties to come to the negotiation table (Abdullah, 2006).

Women once again interceded in managing the crisis by organizing a march to the residence of the rebel leader (Foday Sankoh) in order to directly appeal to him to call off his troops and negotiate with the government and the international community which again proved successful and led to the Lomé peace agreement, however, after the agreement, Sankoh felt not satisfied so he started attacking the interior of the country; this again led these women to stage a demonstration again against Sankoh that finally led to his capture. Sadly, this demonstration saw many women dead and injured because the RUF guards at Sankoh's residence opened fire on the women and the mobs that joined the demonstration (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). The capture of the rebel leader was a big step toward the end of the conflict and one could agree on giving credit to women for their valor in creating the demonstration that led to the exposure of Sankoh which saw to his capture.

One group that contributed immensely in resolving the conflict was the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) which was formed on February 14th, 1976 to advocate for girls and women's empowerment and access to quality education. During the conflict, they were responsible for the setting up of camps to rescue women especially pregnant women and young mothers who had given birth during the difficult time and had no safe place to stay. Their campaign and advocacy during the conflict encouraged other women in hiding to come out and join others in the peace advocacy and cause those women that are part of the perpetrators of the conflict to break away from them and join them in their fight to attain peace. These women strive brought hope, ensuring stability could be found and shared among everyone in the nation (FAS, 2000, p. 8). However, the SLAUW were not the only women's group in the country that was taking part in the consolidation for peace, for this reason, they projected to other groups that they meet regularly to interact, share information, and collaborate in cases of common concern. These other women's groups were, the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Women's Association for National Development (WAND), and the National Organization for

Women (NOW), aside from these groups, individual women were also working towards the same goal; women such as Haja Isha Sasso, Omo Benjamin part of the leadership of the Labor Congress, and Alice Conteh of the National Displaced Women Organization (NDWO). These groups of women were the backbone of the country's strive for peace and stability.

### **Women's Role in Resolving the Conflict**

The resolution of the civil conflict in Sierra Leone took many turns; from one peace treaty to another. There were three peace treaties involved in the conflict of Sierra Leone which was the Conakry, Abidjan, and Lomé peace treaty, but however, it was only two that were considered more important which were the Abidjan and the Lomé peace accords. The role of women in resolving the conflict started during the agitation for a democratic government in the country rather than a military rule. This was done because they thought a democratic government could bring the country to peace which was not immediately achieved but yielded fruit in the end. When the country finally had a civil government, was when the first peace agreement was arranged in Abidjan the capital of Ivory Coast. However, this peace never lasted which called for another peace agreement; the Lomé peace agreement the capital of Togo.

Much was not done by women in the Abidjan peace agreement as at the time (1996) after the general elections, only 5 women were elected into parliament out of 80 parliamentary seats and 2 as ministers out of 25 ministerial positions, and one of those ministries was created that year which is the ministry of social welfare, gender and children's affair (Abdullah, 2006). This thwarted the space women needed in the process of bringing the conflict to an end. Nevertheless, since that particular peace deal did not hold for long, women and women's groups did not give up the fight for peace in the country as it presented an opportunity for another peace treaty; because of this, the study is going to base its discussion now on the Lomé peace accord.

**The Role of Women in the Lomé Peace Accord:** Women were crucial in helping the nation have its first successful democratic elections, which cannot be emphasized enough. This was made possible because of their strong backing for the elections. The Abidjan Peace Agreement was negotiated amicably. Femes African Solidarity (FAS) group maintained that women had not yet been adequately mobilized to take part fully in peace discussions at the time of the Abidjan Accord's

completion and that they still needed a lot of improvement. After everything was said and done, there were a number of reasons why the peace agreement's execution fell short of its full promise. The RUF's refusal to disarm prior to the withdrawal of Executive Outcomes, the South African private military company contracted by the government of Sierra Leone, was one of the main factors. Because of this failure, a new nongovernmental organization (NGO) called "The Campaign for Good Governance" was established in July 1996. Its mission is to raise the participation of citizens in the governing of the state in an effort to create a more democratic thereby keeping the masses well informed; so as to create a state that can support gender equality. When Ahmed Tejan Kabba's freshly elected government was deposed by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), women's fortitude was further put to the test. Women's groups like Women's in Action, Women in Need, Women's Accord, etc. continued to grow throughout this time. These women's organizations planned large-scale protests and acts of civil disobedience that essentially paralyzed the nation and made life very challenging for the junta. It was a successful attempt. All of these women's efforts were successful in getting ECOWAS to step in, and it was this intervention that, thankfully, led to the return of democracy in March 1998. These crucial roles that women played in re-establishing peace in the nation attest to the Kigali Declaration's assertion that women are effective at resolving conflicts. The Declaration demanded that society recognize women's historic responsibilities in promoting peace and their rights to equal participation in all peace efforts, including early warning systems and prompt responses at national, regional, and worldwide levels (Badmus 2009, p. 827).

The Lomé Peace Accord, the final of the several peace deals in the Sierra Leone war, was mediated by the UN and the International Community in July 1999 after Tejan Kabba's democratically elected government had been reinstated. The representatives that took part in the peace talks included two women. However, several additional Sierra Leonean women who served as representatives of the women's organizations were also there as spectators; their presence may have prompted the peace pact to recognize that women were war victims and so required particular consideration (Lomé Peace Accord, 1997, Part 5, Para. 2). This was to enable them to play more roles in the reconstruction and rebuilding of the nation. However, even though they had a small number of representatives in the peace agreement, they took it upon themselves to see that the conflicting parties adhere to

the agreement that met. If we are going to talk about what way women took it upon themselves to see that the parties held up to the agreement, it is important for us to know what was in the Lomé peace treaty. The study is going to give an outline of some of the important things that were implemented in the agreement and later discuss how women help enforce the treaty.

The Lomé peace agreement was signed on the 7th of July 1999 between the government of Sierra Leone and the RUF leader Foday Sankoh. The agreement came about due to the recall of the ECOMOG forces. The agreement was signed in Lomé the capital of Togo. The agreement contained 37 articles and 5 annexes.

### **Implementation**

- It included commitments from both parties to end hostilities.
- To re-establish the commission of consolidation of peace. The commission was called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
- To restart the disarmament of the rebels. The program was called the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program.
- Provide for the integration of rebels into society.
- Granted amnesty for Foday Sankoh and the RUF stakeholders and followers.
- Allow the RUF to become a political party.
- The international community sends observers and monitoring groups to Sierra Leone. This was what brought about the formation of UNAMSIL.
- Sankoh was offered the position of vice president and chairman of the Commission of national resources and reconstruction development.
- However, the agreement had not wanted to be signed by the Un commissioner of human rights because of the amnesty given to Sankoh and co.

Women were steadfast to see that these agreements were implemented. One major implementation of the accord that women played an important role in accomplishing was the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program. Especially in the area of reintegration of ex-female rebels all over the country particularly those that were not fortunate to be part of the official process, many women who have greater opportunities provided shelter for displaced women and ex-rebel women and children alike some of those who lost their children during the conflict went to the extent of adopting ex-child rebels as their children in order for them not to be left on the street because that might result to excessive criminal

activities in the country hence they do not have a fix-aboard. Aside from providing homes for displaced women and children and also ex-rebels; both women and children, they provided technical assistance to them by giving skills training. They coordinated with organizations like Caritas; an organization connected with the Catholic mission that came to the country after the conflict to provide skilled job training to unfortunate persons affected by the war, most especially women and teenage girls (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004).

Women also played a crucial role in the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation process. It is important to know that most of the items that were in the Truth and Reconciliation program were basically related to women, this is because of the gender discrimination and violations against women before and during the conflict, most of the acts in the TRC implementation were to ensure that victims of sexual violence get adequate care and treatment both psychological treatment and treatment for other diseases, the ending of gender discrimination thereby enhancing gender equality and domestic violence against women; all these and more were among the acts for the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation program. Since these highlighted things are concerning women, they took the charge to see that these demands of the TRC program in favor of women are met. Since rural women are the most likely to be abused, women's advocacy networks took the opportunity to sensitize women in rural areas by creating educational and training workshops funded by IOs in order to give empowerment to rural women and create economic stability for them, since education and finance are some of the major things that women were deprived of in the country. The women's advocacy groups also took the responsibility to work with civil societies and regional gender rights organizations to put pressure on the government in order for them to constitutionally increase the right of women and pass laws in parliament that will help combat the issue of gender discrimination in the country. This act bore fruit as it saw the government pass three gender bills in parliament in 2007; one of these bills was the property rights bill which was an everlasting existential problem for women in Sierra Leone. They also supported in giving canceling or moral support to women that were brutally affected during the conflict when giving their testimonies to the United Nations Special Court of Sierra Leone (UNSCSL), because most of these women were devastated and traumatized (Amnesty International, 2009). In the aspect of nation-building and boosting the country's economy, many women reorganized

themselves to partake in large-scale agricultural projects; one such group was the Kholifa Women's Farming Development Association, a group found in the Tonkolili district in the northern province of the country, they were sponsored by the Red Cross. These women raised awareness and advocacy on the importance of agriculture mostly for women that were just integrated into society during the DDR program.

The effort of women to bring peace to a war dammed country was unmatched when you critically compare their effort to how they were treated in the aforesaid male powered dominated society, many up to this day still refuse to recognize the effort they put in helping bring peace to the nation and agree they are a force to contend with and should be given more opportunities to take part in state matters, but yet they are still contemporary challengers to their counterparts.

### **The Contribution of Women's Groups Around Africa**

It is important to know that the struggle for peace by women was not only fought by the women of Sierra Leone, but they also had tremendous support from women around Africa, such organizations as Femmes African Solidarity (FAS), Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP) in collaboration with the Sierra Leone chapter; all these groups played a significant role in the struggle for peace in Sierra Leone, but of course, as stated earlier, the study is only going to emphasize the most important of them all and general analysis on all of them. Among these groups, the most important is the FAS; they played a direct part in the process of bringing stability in Sierra Leone. Their intervention in the country came through the invitation of the women groups in Sierra Leone in 1997 after the 1996 Abidjan peace agreement failed. These women worked closely with the groups in Sierra Leone putting measures that were not only in achieving peace but achieving lasting peace and measures that will see women take their rightful place in the country during post-war (FAS, 2000). The study is now going to discuss below the great contribution the Femmes African Solidarity (FAS) group played in Sierra Leone.

### **Femmes African Solidarity Group in Sierra Leone (FAS)**

The Femmes African Solidarity group received an invitation from two of the women's organizations in Sierra Leone fighting for peace. These organizations were

Women Organized for Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN) and the Sierra Leone Chapter of the Women's International League for Peace (SLCWILP). This invitation came in 1997. Upon their arrival in the country, they worked closely with various women's groups most especially with the Women's Forum the umbrella association for all the women's organizations in the country. Their main focus of advocacy upon their arrival in the country was for peace and good governance (FAS 2000). While their efforts upon arrival could not achieve peace, they placed measures that could be of benefit to women in the case of the end of the civil conflict. Before going further with the discussion of what this notable group did in Sierra Leone, it will be of great importance for us to know the origin of the FAS and why it was created.

The FAS was formed in 1996 in Geneva by African women in leadership. Its main goal was to foster stability among women and empower them for the purpose of governance and peace-building. Their belief was that every woman is capable of achieving greatness and recognition in society. Their education towards women was to create awareness in them that they can be primary elements in society and the civil services. Their creation and vision brought a new chapter for women in post-colonial Africa, because of their vision, it enforces a new social order that ensures respect and equal right for women in societies around Africa. Hence the time of their formation was the period wherein various African countries were at war, for example, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone as well; they focused their attention on educating women on how they can be instruments of change and actors that can gear a nation towards peace and stability which will put them in the limelight to be recognized and incorporate them in politics, nation-building, and Governance.

However, to continue their work in Sierra Leone, many of these women's organizations came together as a delegation to learn more about how women are involved in the peace process. The intention was to spread this study throughout Africa, particularly to individuals who live in conflict- or war-torn areas. The First Lady of Sierra Leone, the Vice-President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Gender and Children Affairs, and representatives from Local Government and Community Development stakeholders participated in the discussion

(FAS, 2000). The group also spoke with women working in the marketplaces and in camps for displaced people. Following conversations with this set of people, as well as media interviews, the delegation reached the following conclusion:

“In Sierra Leone's peace process, women played a crucial role. They gave up a lot by spontaneously gathering and protesting in an effort to advance democracy in the nation. Their accomplishments at Bintumani I and II received high praise. They also came to know that women desire to have a role of leadership and support in the nation” (FAS, 1997).

The evaluation above highlights the part women took in Sierra Leone, as indicated by a sect of women who had previously held moderate social standing. They developed into a formidable force that resisted the efforts of those who attempted to sabotage the peace process. The greater participation of women paved the way for a significant future role in Sierra Leone's peace-building efforts. However, because the Abidjan peace agreement was not able to hold on, the war break out again, and this put the work of the FAS in Sierra Leone to a standstill, but once the country had a breather in 1998, they resumed their efforts to let the voices of women be heard. During this period, they played a great role in helping the groups they worked with in Sierra Leone to organize a conference “the National Consultative Conference for Peace in Sierra Leone. The conference was to work with the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights to be able to reason with communities around the country and find a way forward to attaining sustainable peace in the country. This was done by forming a program known as the National Program for Sustainable Peace and women were the front runners of this program. It was also during this period that the FAS brought up the initiative that women must stand for more representation in the government and also advocate against the under-representation of women in the government (FAS, 2000).

Finally, it was the FAS that brought up the initiative that was undertaken by the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) to help women that gave birth during the war by creating camps around the country because the war almost completely breakdown the infrastructure of the country which made better medical facility unavailable. They supported the sensitization campaign put up by women in order to persuade women that wanted to join the rebels and those that are already part of the rebels to rather join them in the fight to end the conflict

(FAS, 2000). It is unfortunate to say that the study found out that their time in the country was short but was however impactful.

### **An Overview of the Collaboration of Women's Groups in Sierra Leone**

The literature review shows the ugly way women were treated in Sierra Leone but however, but they never cower in fear when the country needed them to stand up. The chapter has shown how women rallied themselves in order for the country to achieve sustainable peace. The collaboration of women in the country can never be overemphasized. Their networking saved a lot of vulnerable lives during the conflict. There is no debate that before the civil conflict in Sierra Leone, women have always been on the receiving end with little or nothing to contribute due to the gender inequality in the country at the time, and it is also of note that the involvement of the women in the war is complex as they are classified as captives and perpetrators, but it can also be stated that women played an important role in the consolidation of peace during the war and in the peace negotiations that were held. Women's groups both nationally and around Africa played an important role in accessing peace and stability in the country. The activism of women all started with the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP) which paved the way for other women to join the fight. Their collective activism gave hope for success in achieving peace. Their activism became instrumental when they succeeded in playing a great role in transiting the nation from a military regime to a civil regime thereby taking the country back to maintaining democracy. It was then they started believing in themselves and that they do more and be more instrumental in achieving peace and maintaining democracy. Although their role in the signing of the Lomé peace treaty was never emphasized, they never gave up on giving their distinguished support to the peace of the nation as they continue to play a great part in the implementation of the treaty, especially in the DDR program and the TRC program.

Even though children and women are the most negatively affected ones in the conflict, they continued giving their support to the maintaining of peace, law, and order in the nation. This was done by creating forums for community sensitization and community policing. Their experience during the conflict, peace-building, and nation-building, led them to believe in themselves on how much they can succeed in politics and governance; and their continued activism planted the roots which will eventually grow for women to have a greater part in decision-making on a national

scale. However, as much as it was a sad experience for the women and the nation as a whole, with so many losing their lives, families got displaced, and many being amputated, the conflict paved the way for women's recognition in the nation. As the literature review has discussed the role women played in managing and resolving the conflict, in the next chapter, the study is going to discuss how the conflict-affected women.

## CHAPTER III

### The Effect of The Conflict on Women

Since the literature review already showed the status of women in pre-conflict, how they contributed to ending the conflict, and of course; how they contributed to the management of the conflict during its happenings, this chapter of the study is going to examine the effect of the conflict on women from the negative to the positive aspect. It is going to cut through by providing an in-depth analysis of the vulnerability of women during the conflict and will also look at women in security on a feminist and gender perspective in international relations which will go through briefly on the poststructuralist perspective of gender relations in security. Finally, the chapter will look at how the conflict raised their status in society.

Africa has recorded some of the bloodiest civil conflicts in the 20th Century. The likes of the Rwanda genocide; one which its brutality cannot be compared to any civil conflict in Africa. Nevertheless, aside from those countries, the civil conflict in Sierra Leone has also been recorded as one of the bloodiest civil conflicts in Africa, with the involvement of war crimes such as extreme torture, abduction, rape, mass civilian killing, amputation, and many horrific atrocities. The conflict brought about humane conditions in the country such as the widespread of Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs), cholera, malaria, typhoid, and many more diseases that are of great threat to human existence. It is important to know that everyone in the country suffered a great deal during the civil conflict; men, women, and children alike, but women and children faced a great ordeal during this period and it is basically because they were the most vulnerable ones in the country, however, the study's only focus is based on women.

Women were the most targeted ones in the conflict with hundreds of them sexually abused and thousands of them killed. Married women were taken from their husband's homes living their children behind to go and become bush wives and even some to become part of the combatants. Women who refuse to join were brutally raped in turns before their families and later killed. Young teenage girls were abducted from their parents to become child soldiers this is mainly because the rebels used them as human shields, they were also introduced to using hard drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, brown-brown (a local name for opium in Sierra Leone), and many more. However, the aforementioned are not the only things these abducted

teenage girls were used for; they were also used as sex slaves by rebels who do not have bush wives, the virgins were said to be used as voodoo workers because it is believed in African tradition that it helps in combat, some stories that were told randomly even suggests that these girls were also trafficked out of the country to be sold as prostitutes.

The Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program was not able to assist everyone in the country because the main purpose of the program was to provide financial and moral support to displaced persons and ex-combatants, this caused so many women and girls to be left in the street unassisted which ended up causing the high rate of prostitution and female criminal activities in the country.

Nevertheless, much has been said about the effect of the eleven-year civil conflict on the lives of women in Sierra Leone, but however, every situation whether good or bad have opportunities for advantages and vice-versa. This can be related to the effect of the conflict on women in Sierra Leone. The study is going to talk about how the conflict affected women negatively and positively. The negative effect of the conflict can be stretched through; women and girls as bush wives, the brutal killing of women, massive sexual violence against women, and women as rebels or combatants. The positive aspect will talk about women's militarism which will discuss the involvement of women in the military and police force and will also discuss the rise of women's status in society. In the case of the military aspect, it is important to know that women had a dual position in the conflict, this is because, after the conflict, it was found out that women were victims as well as perpetrators of the conflict. In that vein, the chapter is going to give a distinction of the positionality of women when it comes to the aspect of combat. Although the majority of these women did not fight of their own will, at the end of the conflict during the disarmament process they were all seen as perpetrators of the conflict.

### **Women and Girls as Bush Wives**

This was one of the famous things that women were known for during the conflict. As earlier stated in the introduction, women were taken from their marital homes and girls were abducted from the homes of their parents to become sex slaves and wives to rebels in the bush. The rebels (RUF) were loosely occupied and they were separated into camps with each camp having a grand commander that owns a whole house or compound to himself. The capturing of women during the war was

normally done during attacks on various communities. After every attack, the looted properties and captured civilians will be presented to the commander of a particular unit whose responsibility is to allocate the looted resources and captured victims. The captured women are shared among the top-ranking officers to become their wives and teenage girls are also shared among other lieutenants to become their sex toys, this was basically how women and girls became the wives of rebels commonly known in the country as “bush wives”.

Becoming a commander’s wife gives power and command to that particular woman within the unit of her husband. When the commander (her husband) is not around in the camp, she automatically takes control over the soldiers of her husband. She was always in constant communication with her husband; this is because she was responsible to select and send troops to the front in case of an imminent attack. She was also responsible to distribute weapons among the forces, especially to young boys and girl fighters when it is time to raid small villages and towns for foodstuffs. She was also responsible to choose the most loyal soldiers that will go for spy missions because as a woman with their seductive qualities, she will know who really is loyal to their course. As stated above that the commander is responsible for the sharing of looting properties and captives, this was another important role played by the wives of rebel commanders when the commander is not around. Basically, she was the direct representative of the commander when they are not in the camp. However, the study found out that some women who were wives to rebel commanders used these opportunities to protect little girls in the camp from being sexually abused by the soldiers because the rebels captured even girls from age six and above. This is because little girls were under the care of these wives as personal attendants, those that were not attached to a wife of a commander normally attach themselves to boys in the camp, this was to protect themselves from being raped or shared from one man to the other, and also for them to be able to secure their survival because if a girl does not belong to a commander’s wife, it will be difficult for her to gain access to food or a better place to sleep. Those who were unlucky were always abused or became prostitutes in the camp just to ensure their survival.

However, all the control that they had in the camps was done under strict supervision and not of their own free will. Bodyguards were assigned to them and they escorted them on their every move. They were not allowed to leave the compound even with their guards, their movement was strictly restricted in the camp

or the compound of their husbands (the commander), it is important to know that even inside the house they were manned by guards who were little girls and boys with guns and heavily drugged for them to be unreasonable and wild; all these were done to prevent the escape of these captured women, their escape will be of detriment to the camp as it will lead to the camp's exposure to government troops.

Also, this position and control do not normally last for a longer period of time, this is because whenever the rebels succeeded in capturing a particular community, the new captive women and girls will replace the old ones and this means doom for the old wife. Upon replacing them, the old ones were sent to the front line to fight or left alone by themselves to be used and abused by those rebels who do not have wives on their own. In some cases, some of them become slaves to carry loads of the rebels, this is also because the rebels were always on the move from one community, town, or village to another (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). Notwithstanding, the above explained was just a part of what happened in rebel camps where there was law and order. It is important to know that not every camp of rebels were under the control of a commander, some camps were not manned by any top-ranking officer this is because the RUF were scattered all over the country. If a woman gets captured in such camps, it will be bad for her because she will face multiple sexual fits of abuse until a top-ranking rebel officer or commander claims her which among the rebels was seen as an act of pity; however, if this never happens for that particular woman she will be violated until they get tired with her and kill her. It was also found out that most of the wives of the rebel leaders became killers themselves, although according to their explanation during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), it was said that they did it under the forceful command of their bush husbands and it was obeyed in order to survive (Cullen, 2020). The capture of women and girls turning them into bush wives was perilous and left a negative impact on their lives that somehow became a problem in building human and national security in the post-conflict era. Being the wife of a rebel means losing one's family whether once a wife or a child to parents. It also means losing one's dignity and self-esteem. It brought a nightmare to the lives and families of women. The abduction of women and children caused so many families to be broken, to this present day, some families are still reliving the nightmare of losing their daughters and women.

### **Brutal Rape and Mass Killing of Women**

As one of the dimensions of an armed conflict (killing), the civil war in Sierra Leone was no exception to that. A killing spree in Sierra Leone saw the death of at least 50,000 to 70,000 people and it was estimated that at least half of this number were women (UNFPA, 2006), this is because women were vulnerable and cannot adequately defend themselves. However, most of the women's killings came from brutal sexual abuse or after the refusal of becoming a bush wife. With not too much extension on the massive killing of women during the conflict, much has been said about the brutal torture and rape of women and the study is going to try to lay emphasis on it.

Throughout the eleven-year civil armed conflict in Sierra Leone, girls, especially teenagers and adolescents, suffered severe sexual violence from individual to gang rape. The critical aspect of these war crimes against women was that it was not only done by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) who were the perpetrators of the conflict but these atrocities were also committed by pro-government forces and as well peacekeeping and interventional forces. Women were tortured and raped with different equipment such as sticks, pistols, rubbers, rifles, etc., and the crime of sexual violence against women was generally classified as horrific and inhuman. One of the worst aspects of these rapes was that pregnant women were raped and did forced delivery on them to know the sex of the child which was seen as a bet between the perpetrators, this led to the loss of lives of many women and the brutal rape led to the destruction of the genital and reproductive organs of many as well. During the conflict, hundreds of young women were kidnaped and turned into sex slaves shared among their captives. Since the attack by the rebels in Sierra Leone to the end of the conflict, it was estimated that at least almost 1,000 women and girls were sexually violated by rebels, civilians, as well as government forces. The inclusion of civilians and government forces in the act made women to be in more danger than they could have anticipated (Human Right Watch, 2002). It was also included in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that sexual violence was also perpetrated by peacekeeping forces in the country.

However, even though the rebels were not the only ones involved in the atrocity of sexual violence in the country, they were the ones that committed the

most horrific of sexual acts against their victims. They carried out a series of torturous sexual acts on women varying from gang rape to using weapons on the genital parts of their victims. These sexual violence acts were mostly done during attacks or after capturing a town or village. Women were abducted and taken to rebel camps where they will be subjected to being raped repeatedly; this lasted for years and those who could not survive sometimes took their own lives or got dead during the course of being violated repeatedly. It is important to know that not all women were taken to camps, some of them were raped and battered in front of their families and then killed, especially those whom their families tend to fight or the victim refuses to go with the rebels. Even though the rape was indistinctively shared among women, it was recorded that most of the girls that were captured and raped by the rebels were found to be virgins. During a special survey made by the Human Right Commission and the revelations of atrocities that were done during the conflict, women talked about how they were raped along with their daughters that were barely 15 years of age. They explained how up to a dozen of rebels will take turns raping them. Their daughters that were virgins were raped both in their sex organ and anally which caused them to have severe bleeding and their organs to prolapse, some survived the pain but could no longer control their bladder unless after the conflict catheter producer was done on them and many died from the pain (Human Right Watch 1999).

The rape of virgins was not the only horrific sexual violence act rebels did against women; it is sad to know that rebels also raped pregnant women. In the northern part of the country, women reported during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that they were raped during pregnancy by rebels and this did not stop on the basis of individual rape but also gang rape. It was reported that most of the pregnant women that were raped during the conflict happened when they were on the run with their families and in their homes in front of their husbands. As stated earlier, the most devastating aspect of this crime was that after the raping of a pregnant woman, she will be forcefully delivered by the perpetrators in order for them to know the sex of the child, this disgusting act caused the death of many pregnant women during the conflict (Human Right Watch, 2000). Aside from forcefully delivering pregnant women, rebels also subjected women to forced abortion, it was also revealed during the TRC that rebels after raping young pregnant women (basically from one month to three months), forced them into abortion with

unsterilized needles and knives, those that refused were killed on the spot and even those that agreed to go along with the demands of the rebels died during the act as a cause of excessive bleeding, some of them that survived the procedure had medical complications that ultimately led to their death during the course of the war or after (Human Right Watch, 1999). The sexual violence that women faced during the conflict in the hands of the rebel forces which includes the RUF who was the umbrella force of the rebel groups, the AFRC, and the West Side Boys was something that one will never wish to revisit but it is however important to be talked about in order for people to know that violence that was waged against women in the course of the conflict in Sierra Leone.

It was earlier stated that the sex atrocities committed during the conflict were not only done by rebels, it is important to know that these atrocities were also committed by these forces that were meant to protect the defenseless mainly women and children; these forces including the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), the Civil Defense Force (CDF), the ECOMOG, and UNAMSIL. Although there were not many reports on the sexual violence act committed by these above-mentioned, it was however reported that they were involved in these acts. In the aspect of the SLA and the CDF, they were not able to get many reports on them because, at a point, it was difficult to distinguish between the rebels and the SLA, because most of the SLA disguised as rebels in order for them to infiltrate rebel camps and vice versa. This caused civilians not to be able to know the fact about the rape atrocities caused by soldiers. In the aspect of the peacekeeping and interventional forces, many atrocities were also not reported on their side, but however, they also contributed to the rape and sexual violence of women and girls in the country. It was recorded by the Human Right Commission that these forces used their influence to have unwanted sex with women, most of the influence used was the promise of special protection and food availability for their families because during the conflict hunger was at its highest range in the country. Some girls here are said to have been raped and killed by the intervention forces when they were caught on spying for the rebels. Nevertheless, most of the revelations about peacekeepers and intervention forces were unfounded and therefore not prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of justice on the bases of war crimes and human rights violations (Human Right Watch, 2002). The effect of these series of sexual violence against women during the course of the conflict in Sierra Leone was and is still a menace to the general population of the

country, as this led to the rampant spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) mainly HIV/AIDS in the country and also the cause of widespread prostitution in the country since most of the women and teenage girls that were subjected to sexual violence had lost their families and most of them were not fortunate to be attended to during the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program.

### **Women as Combatants and Girls as Child Soldiers**

This particular curve in the conflict has somehow been hard to explain. It is no deniability that women were not part of the RUF, in fact, during the Lomé peace accord one of the main representatives of the RUF was a woman. The unsolved aspect of the involvement of women in the conflict is that during the DDR process, it was difficult to understand if those women that were among the rebels were perpetrators of their volition or if they were forced to become part of the perpetrators, nevertheless, the dimension of women by most researchers of the conflict saw women as victims and perpetrators of the conflict.

However, various research showed that women and girls were not part of the fighting force of the RUF of their volition, they were all abducted and in order to survive decided to become part of the perpetrators. It was recorded that girls from the age of 9 to women around the age of 35 were abducted to join the RUF. These women received basic military, especially in the aspect of shooting and rekeying (spying). Before their indoctrination into the RUF, they were repeatedly abused and dosed with all sorts of narcotic drugs in order to destabilize their brain and from that point they were armed with rifles and other ammunition. Mostly, girls that were from age 9 to 15 were said to have been made to kill their parents as part of their training which was meant to strengthen their hearts and enable them to kill anyone. Women part of the RFU fighting forces were sent as spies in the form of civilians to locate the position of the government forces and a lot of them were sexually violated and killed in the process. Women were also used by the RUF on the frontlines as human shields especially young girls because government and intervention forces would hesitate to attack women and children due to the international laws of war and war crimes. It was estimated that about 44% of the RUF that were killed during the conflict were women and girls and at least 7,000 to 8,000 of them were part of the RUF fighting force in which all of those that were interviewed during the TRC claimed to have been abducted (Mazurana, Carlson, 2004). The conflict saw women become fighters as it was against the customs and tradition of Sierra Leone for a

woman to be part of a military force in post-independence Sierra Leone, in any case, it will be of great essence for us to know that during the colonial era, there was one woman that was a leader and a warrior ruling in the Mende Tribe lands by the name of Madam Miyoko. Nevertheless, women were not only fighters in the RUF forces during the conflict, it is important to know that women also became part of; and fighters in pro-government forces during the conflict.

### **Women in the Civil Defense Force (CDF)**

The civil defense force was created in 1997 by civilians in Sierra Leone. However, it is believed that civil forces had already started working in the country as early as 1993 with the rise of a group known as the Kamajors in the southern part of the country, nevertheless, their operations were only within their communities and it was not until in 1997 with the collaboration of different groups around the country such as the Tamaboro's from the Kuranko ethnic group from the northern part of the country, the Gbethies from the Temne ethnic group also from the northern part of the country, the Donso's from the Kono ethnic group in the eastern part of the country, and as earlier stated, the Kamajors from the Mende ethnic group from the south of the country, that it came to be known as a militia fighting force in the conflict (Hoffman, 2010). They were formed as a result of soldiers from the SLA reneging thereby joining the RUF. It is important to know that these groups are male secret societies in their various regions and it was known that their members had mystical powers. With the SLA soldiers joining the rebels, they needed to protect their various communities and towns, so they came together to form militia groups which came to be known as the CDF. They played a significant role in defending the country by supporting the SLA and intervention forces, especially the Executive Outcomes and the ECOMOG in the recapturing of the capital city when it was taken by the AFRC/RUF rebels, however, after the conflict, they were demobilized and indicted for war crimes by the ICC. One of the factors that they were indicted for was the recruiting of young children and women into the force as fighters which is a war crime according to international law. During the TRC and the hearings in the United Nations Special Court of Justice in Sierra Leone, officials of the CDF claimed that it was only men that were part of the force, testimonies from women showed that women and young girls were also part of the CDF, and not only that they were part of the force, majority of them were forced to join the force.

The two major groups in the CDF were the Kamajors and the Gbethies. As stated above, according to testimonies given during the trials and the commission, a lot came to light on the involvement of women in the CDF. It came to be known that women were recruited into the force for various purposes such as being part of ceremonies and leaders of rituals, especially virgin teenage girls, some became cooks and medics, and others even went on to become commanders and frontline fighters, nevertheless, some testimonies stated that male members of the force used girls as their wives against their wish which is sexual violence. However, there is also another dimension in the recruitment of women into the CDF which shows that some women that joined the force did so at the request of their husbands or fathers who were part of the force, this was normally done against the wishes of women and it was attributed to the male dominance of the society (TRC Report, 2004). It was stated that the initiation of women and girls into the CDF came as a result of the growing number and attacks of the RUF in various parts of the country. Another way women and girls got involved in fighting for the CDF was through donations, it is known that homes in every community were forced to give a representative from their families, and some homes that did not have sons had to donate the women in their homes because testimonies stated that homes were burnt down by the CDF if they refuse to give their daughters and will forcefully drag the women and girls in that home to be initiated into the force. This was one horrific act during the conflict which made most international conflict commentators describe the war in Sierra Leone as one that is senseless because those that were meant to protect the weak and vulnerable ones turned out to act the same way as the rebels (RUF).

It is important to know that the CDF was a very barbaric force, apart from the fact that they were convicted for crimes connected to the violation of women's dignity, they were also involved in several inhuman practices such as cannibalism and human sacrifice (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). They were known to capture civilians from communities, especially young boys and girls that were virgins in order to use them for rituals of protection. The rituals were done by cutting off their private parts and removing their heads from their bodies thereby draining the blood in buckets. The blood was said to be used for drinking and washing their bodies; as it was mentioned in the previous lines, this was one reason why they forced families to give young virgin girls to join the force because they were known to be clean and pure to conduct these ceremonies. The private parts and organs of the victims were

eaten raw by the leaders of the force, it was known to protect them from bullets and enable them to disappear when cornered.

However, most of the victims that were used for these rituals were women because they were the most vulnerable ones in communities. These roles that women were forced to assume in the CDF got many to face discrimination and stigmatization among their fellow women after the conflict because they were seen as devilish and brutal. The CDF was dissolved by mandate of the United Nations Special Court of Sierra Leone in 2003 followed by the prosecution of its leading members most notably Samuel Hinga-Norman who was later convicted in 2006 for war crimes according to Article (111) in addition to Protocol (11) of the Geneva Convention but was also pardoned in that same year (Patriotic Vanguard, 2006). Even though the Civil Defense Force was created in the defense of the civilians in Sierra Leone; when one takes a critical look at the dynamics of their actions, one would see that they later became a threat to the defenseless populace in the country in which this group women were the majority.

### **Women Militarism**

History tells us that women had started taking part in military capacity since ancient times in the 4th Century CE. In ancient Asia in China, it was known that “Li Xiu” after the death of her father the emperor of China became the first woman to lead an empire to battle and as such, she was victorious. This was followed by other women such as “Xun Guan” who at the age of thirteen led a military defense in the city of Wancheng (Mayor, 2014, p.420). In Africa, back in the 12th Century lived a legendary queen named Moremi Ajasoro of Ife in Yoruba land in Nigeria. She became famous by leading the fight in defending the Ife kingdom against the Ugbo who were another tribe from the east of Nigeria and she was successful in defending the kingdom of Ife (Miano, 2021, p. 91-100). However, in modern days women were restricted from getting involved in military matters; in places like the U.S, it was only in the early 19th Century that women began joining the military when the first woman known as Loretta Walsh joined the U.S Navy in March 1918, nonetheless, it was only in 1948 that it became a legislative ruling for women to be formally enlisted in the army, it is of importance to know that countries like Russia had already women enlisted and rose up to the ranks of colonel in the Russian light Calvary (Sowers, 2003). This brief historic context shows that women have already

shown their might in involving in state affairs and defense. With this brief history, the study is going to take us further to know a little about the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and when women start becoming a part of the army.

In post-independence Sierra Leone, the army was known as the Royal Military Force but after independence and when the country officially became a republic in 1971, with the National Reformation Council as the government of the country, the Royal Military was reformed and changed into the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and in 1995 it was renamed into the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) (Sierra Leone Armed Forces Assessment, 2008). That being said, the Sierra Leone military started enlisting women into the army in 1978 but they were not meant for field duties; their services were only for cooking, sowing, and other so-called female-related duties, it is of great importance to know that one of the fourteen women that were enlisted during that period ended up becoming a one-star general in the Sierra Leone army by the name of “Brigadier General Kestoria Kabia” (Amelia Thatcher, 2010). This study is going to draw up a feminist perspective of militarism in Sierra Leone but before delving into that the study is going to take a brief look at what militarism is in international relations.

### **A Brief Look at Militarism in International Relations**

In recent times, militarism has not been too much of a big deal in International Relations; however, this might be attributed to the rise of the so-called new wars. Before this time, militarism was commonly known to be an ideology in the context of raising the standards of military foundations thereby portraying its values in society. Another perception of militarism can be linked to the attitude of resolving conflict in a military manner with an institutional perspective that centers between military and political institutions (Stavrianakis & Selby, 2013, p. 12-13). However, one reason why militarism has received little attention in IR I because of the shift in security policies since the formation of the UN and the UN Security Council which brought an end to wars of aggression against states by bringing up collaboration of interstate defense and security, in another light, since the cold war ended security and defense matters shifted with the rising of issues of human, global, and environmental security. This shows that the case of militarism loose guard in the international scenery due to the liberal perspective indoctrinated in the world system which removes the power politics of realism which gives authority to states over

other states. According to international relations theorist “Kaldor” even though she does not give much comments or thoughts about Africa, she states that the new wars are different from the old scenario of stated-centric wars because as earlier stated, the end of the cold war brought about improvement in technology which increases the interconnectedness between states (Kaldor, 1999). This technological improvement reduces the discus of militarism in international relations; with the advancement in communication, transportation, and information has led to the decrease of attention toward conventional armies in the new wars, thereby enabling the networks of states and non-state actors such as paramilitaries which includes diplomats, leaders, multinational cooperations, organized crime syndicates, private militaries, international organization, and so on; to be the frontrunners in security matters which makes it no longer a state matter but a global affair. From this point, the study is now going to take a brief look at women’s militarism in Sierra Leone from a feminist perspective.

### **Women’s Militarism in Sierra Leone (A Feminist Perspective)**

As stated in a previous heading in this chapter, after the country gained independence in 1961 right up to when 1971 when it became a republic, women first entered the military in 1978 an estimated number of fourteen, but as stated they were not involved in proper security issues. However, it was not stated when women got involved in the fight during the conflict but it is obvious that they took part in the fight for both sides (the RUF and the Government).

This feminist perspective on the militarism of women in Sierra Leone will examine their participation in the conflict and look at how they survived. Feminist account of armed conflicts do not only focus on the impact or effect of conflict of women they also explore the ways in which women acted during armed conflict even though the so-called traditional ideology sees men as the primary actors of armed conflicts. As such it is important to know that women are essential actors in conflict in cases of being forced to partake as we see clearly in the forced combats activities done by women in the RUF and the CDF. Nevertheless, it has be seen that women have various dimensions in armed conflicts, they can be spies, smugglers, and messengers whether for one side or both sides of the conflict; they can also be middlemen or broker of peace when it comes to the aspect of negotiations and rebuilding thereafter (Williams, 2007, p. 110).

So much was never said about women being part of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) during the conflict, their aspect as combatants was only emphasized in their involvement with the RUF and the CDF; that is why this part of the study is basically going to discuss the activism of women during war as a means of bringing the conflict to an end. Traditionally when one talks about militarism what comes to mind will be a fight with arms and ammunition orchestrated by men but in the case of a feminist perspective, it discusses the actions or fights that are done without the use of arms and ammunition in order to win a battle thereby achieving peace. The fight by women in Sierra Leone cut across various standpoints which range from their actions during the conflict to ensure the democracy in the country is not broken, their collaboration in helping women and children, and their endless advocacy in the peace process even though they were not given the credit they deserved, right up to the implementation of the peace agreement by playing a great role in the DDR program and the TRC program. However, talking about the militarism of women in Sierra Leone, it can be seen in two folds which are their involvement in the fight as captives that became rebels and civil defense members, and also their activism. Since the study has discussed their involvement in the fight with the RUF and the CDF, this part is now going to give an overview of their activism.

Even though their situation in the country during the conflict was not that of an appealing one but they endured and embrace the fight to bring lasting peace to the country. Their mobilization across the country and beyond brought hope to those that were on the brink of collapse in the country. Several challenges were taken by women to end the conflict such as nationwide strikes and conventions. Apart from these, women worked behind the scenes by lobbying warlords to end the conflict; one clear example was shown in chapter two when women took charge to visit the leader of the RUF (Foday Sankoh) to plead with him to call off his troops. That being said, they also lobbied with the military that seized power in 1995 to hold elections and hand over the government back to civil rule in 1996, all this was done to preserve the democracy of the country. Aside from lobbying, they also engaged in countrywide sensitization to persuade citizens in refusing to join the rebels and also set up networks that build access to get women that are involved in the conflict to persuade them in giving up fighting. They managed to bring women from outside the country to help them in the fight for peace in the country such women as Femmes African Solidarity (FAS) which the study has already talked about and the Mano

River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) a female organization comprised of women in countries around the Mano River Union (MRU) States (Amina Mama & Margo Okazawa-Rey, 2012, p. 97-123). Nevertheless, it is of essence to know that upon all the activism they did to help bring the conflict to an end, they were given little accolade for their job, however, they still did not give up the fight to see a society free from gender discrimination and inequality. After going through the nook and cranny of the diplomatic military activism shown by women to end the eleven-year conflict in Sierra Leone shows women can be of great importance to the development of any nation if they are fully involved in governance, politics, nation-building, and peace-building.

### **Women in Security in IR: A Feminist Perspective (The Gender Approach to Security)**

The marginalization of women has not only been on the national level, meaning in the aspect of national affairs in nations such as governance, politics, nation-building, peace-building, as well as security. In the aspect of security, if we take a close look at the trajectory of the conflict in Sierra Leone, we will observe that women were never talked about in the aspect of security in the country. Because the research was never able to get firsthand information and the secondary data that was gathered never gave any clue of any major role played by women in the country in the aspect of security, in fact, the only deliberation that was done on the aspect of women in security during the conflict was on combat and the major areas that were stressed on were the aspect of combat which in fact they were said to be forced in with no or little amount of training. The study earlier told us that before the conflict there were only fourteen women that were enlisted in the Sierra Leone army which is clearly a gender-biased enlistment when one takes it to assessment. However, it is important to know that it is not only on a national scale that women are being marginalized but also in the international scenery.

The field of security in the international landscape is one in which women have been seriously marginalized through the lens of the so-called gender structure which has made them to be invisible on the terrain mapped out by the historically dominant traditional masculine perspective. However, over the years, this traditional gender disparity has been outlined, questioned, and resisted by critical theorists of feminists' gender approaches within the field of security of liberal feminism

perspective in international relations, however, other pundits have questioned this move of liberal feminists on why they strive to bring women into the fold of security, but these liberal feminists' have also counterattack these critiques by outlining the importance of women in the security of what they call the unique subjugation of women as a way of gearing political programs (Peoples, Columba, 2008). In light of these critiques against the liberal feminist standpoint on bringing women into the fold of security takes us back to a comment made by a famous woman; the former first lady of the United States of America: Eleanor Roosevelt and I quote "often great decisions come from and taken by in bodies either full of men or completely dominated them that any alternative proposed by a woman is shunted out" (Peoples, Columba, 2008). Eleanor Roosevelt was the first lady of the US from 1933 to 1945. The façade of this statement is not a hidden story as since the dawn of time the dramatis personae in the realm of world security order have always been populated by men starting from soldiers, diplomats, security civil servants, etc., and up till now there is still global gender inequalities when it comes to security aspect as it is termed as a man's world.

One major thing that is mostly less understood is that conflict creates an impact on everyone regardless of their gender. Therefore, it is an incumbent proposal that should be taken into account by the so-called men's world that women should be part of security affairs because as a matter of fact, conflict creates more impact on women especially the negative aspect than men in which the conflict in Sierra Leone is seen as a clear example. It is important to know that conflict primarily targets women as in conflict women are subjected to various human rights violations such as sexual violence, forces slavery, human sexual trafficking, prostitution, mutilation, and sexual torture; which is one of the reasons of the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of justice as these above-mentioned acts as described as war crimes and crimes against humanity. These are all crimes that were committed against women in Sierra Leone during the conflict, the worst part of it is that even the government fighting forces were involved in such crimes, which brings us to the conclusion that if women were intensively involved in the security apparatus of the nation in that period vulnerable women would have gained the adequate protection that they deserved. It is of essence to know that it is for this purpose that women rose up in activism to bring the conflict to an end in their own manner of militarism. As stated before in the previous heading on the militarism of

women in Sierra Leone that the feminist perspective of conflict does not only focus on the impact of conflict on women but also on the impact the creates on the conflict which has already been explained through women's activism in the feminist militarism aspect through their effort of negotiation between the conflicted parties.

At this point, this aspect of the study will end by conceptualizing the poststructuralist approach to gender balance in security which tries to advocate for the visibility of women in security. However, there have been many criticisms of the poststructuralist approach to women in security because they try to eliminate the traditional grounds that the patriarchal system was mounted on but the works of writers like Tickner see the importance of the poststructuralist perspective in the sense that if the people of the world fail to speak for and on behalf of women will only further the activism of those who propagated approaches in IR out of the experience of men (Tickner, 2001). From this point, one can see that the main contention of poststructuralism is the emancipation of women thereby furthering the argument of the struggle for women's rights and equal representation in an effort to end the traditional patriarchal system because the continued accreditation of this traditionally biased system will later be unable to deal with the manifestation of uprisings, especially in the national level. This is clear support for liberal standpoint feminists in the pursuit of the liberation of women. However, when considering the contribution of poststructuralist feminists in security studies it is important to know that we are not dealing with a singular approach to the problem because the theory contains numerous standpoints or works associated with it. Nevertheless, we were able to take on the position of the liberal and standpoint feminists which the study has briefly deliberated on.

### **The Rise of Women's Status in Society**

The study has previously briefly discussed the status of women before Sierra Leone gained independence from the British and from a point of critical view on the issue it shows a great disparity between the pre-independence and post-independence eras. It would be said that women never had complete rights or equality in the pre-independence era but they were at least respected and given the chance to take part in state affairs; a clear example can be shown when women were given the right to vote by the British government as early as 1930. If one takes a close look at that particular scenario and compares it to the post-independence era, one could even

argue that if women had not been given the right to vote during the colonial period, it would have been more difficult for them to get after independence. However, no matter how one looks at the situation of women whether colonial period or not, it is obvious that since ancient times women had to fight and struggle for everything they want; nothing has ever come easy on their part, especially when it comes to equality with their counterparts. After the country gained independence, women had to undergo more struggle to be recognized in society but they seized the opportunity the civil conflict gave to them. During their endless campaign to bring sustainable peace to the country, they also used those campaign platforms to advocate for equal rights, inclusion, and adequate representation in governance and politics.

The Lomé peace accord addresses issues of women, their rights, and inclusion in the day-to-day affairs of the nation. Property rights and marriage rights were parts of the major issues that were discussed during the Lomé peace agreement; due to that, in 2007, the first set of property rights laws was passed by the government in parliament, and in 2009, the strengthened the marital right laws in favor of women and also in 2007, increased laws and punishment were put in place for domestic violence acts against women (Constitution of Sierra Leone: Gender Violence Act of 2007). Notwithstanding, these were only based on the gender violence and discrimination aspect. In the aspect of politics, even though women are still underrepresented in parliament and government cabinet such as ministerial positions, they are however better off than pre-conflict women in Sierra Leone because their representation in politics and governance increased by a margin more than before. With much advocacy and the intervention of international organizations, girl's right to education became improved, a fight that started with the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) in 1976, this improvement saw girls have free primary and secondary school education in the country and also brought the opening of various vocational institute around the country with women having the upper hand than men in joining these institutes.

After the conflict, the country held another general election on the 14th of May 2002 in which the Sierra Leone People's Party won by 70% but that was not the main headline because for the first time, women won up to 18 seats out of 112 seats in parliaments (National Electoral Commission, 2002), women also had increased government cabinet ministerial position in the country; women held 5 ministerial positions out of 28 ministerial positions in the same year (Sierra Leone.org, 2002),

this was a straight clear improvement of women in the political and governance arena in the country just after the conflict. From the peace agreement, the road to gender equality was mapped out.

However, even though the above-mentioned was seen as an improvement after the conflict, it was still not enough improvement compared to the effort they made in partaking in the resolution of the conflict. They still face many difficulties in engaging in public life and are still somehow muscled by men in terms of government and political positions in the country, because if one takes a close look at the number of seats in parliament one will see that as an improvement from the previous status of women but one will also see that it is a clear-cut underrepresentation of women in government parastatal. Since the end of the eleven-year brutal civil conflict, there have already been up to four democratic general elections in the country with a fifth one at the corner in this present 2023 that will happen take place in June but the trajectory will show that women are still underrepresented in the country,

## **Conclusion**

The trajectory around the effect of the conflict on women is one of the different dimensions this is because one can see that the conflict paved the way for women to get their voices to be heard in the nation nevertheless, women suffered the most in the conflict; another dimension that has yet to be concluded is the participation of women in the conflict, some researchers have classed women to be perpetrators of the conflict while some have classed them to be victims however, when one look into the basics of the conflict, one will find that they were of both parties. The issue of excessive sexual violence against women during the conflict is one that led to the destruction of many young lives in various ways, which one of them is a major crisis in present-day Sierra Leone which is prostitution; the act of prostitution since the end of the conflict has been alarming and the number of girls is staggering most of this is due to the displacement of families or the loss of one's family. Also, the capture of women and girls from their homes to be taken as bush wives shattered so many families that up to the present day are yet to reconcile with themselves. The war brought a devastating effect on the lives of women that will be discussed for ages to come. However, inequality and gender discrimination against women are still in the country and the world at large although at a low percentage

compared to pre-conflict conflict in Sierra Leone. As stated earlier in the introduction of this chapter, in every situation whether negative or positive as an international relations scholar, there must be the need to see the benefits in a particular situation. One might say if the conflict had never happened, society would not have seen the importance of women in getting involved in state matters and women might not have had the chance to showcase their virtues in governance, nation-building, politics, and peace-building. This has also seen their involvement in security affairs and the enlistment of women in security sectors in a staggering number in recent times. Nevertheless, the next chapter is going to discuss at length how women have thrived in the country after the civil conflict.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Women And Governance in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone Their Successes and Contributions to Development a Feminist Perspective**

Hence, chapter three of the study has discussed the effect of the conflict on women in Sierra Leone in the negative and positive dimensions and concludes with the rise of women in society. Therefore, this chapter of the study is going to deliberate on women's participation in governance since the end of the conflict and will also take a close look at their activism in the country in relation to the fight for equality and non-gender discrimination.

The decade-plus-long civil war in Sierra Leone left a devastating mark on the lives of its citizens, most especially women and children. However, as the study's main focus is on women, we will look at how women have thrived in the country since the end of the war. As the study already discussed in previous chapters how women were treated in society and how undervalued they were compared to men before the civil conflict, this chapter's aim is to show if the odds have balanced in favor of women or if they are still on the fight to be recognized in politics and governance. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that their lives are much better than before because the civil conflict opened platforms where they showcased their ability in nation-building, governance, most especially peace-building. In this chapter, the study is going to take a look at feminism in international relations and the rise of feminism in Africa and Sierra Leone to be specific as it is the contention of the study. This will look at the activism of women in the country since the end of the war and how far they have succeeded in partaking in public life. It is important to know that since the end of the conflict what other women that were cowering behind the scenes saw their fellow women achieve during the conflict gave rise to more women's activism in the country thereby creating the platform for several more women's advocacy organizations and networks to crop up. In the past years, women have been significant players in the development of the nation from various aspects of governance and national affairs and this chapter is going to show their increased role in politics and governance in the nation. That being said, it is also of essence to know that even though they have been striving to show how important they can be in society, they are still lagging in various aspects of the state due to the same old story of men muscling them, this issue as earlier stated has given the rise of other women's

advocacy groups such as the 50-50 group which is a non-political women's advocacy group, Rainbow Sierra Leone, which is a law enforcement agency meant to fight crimes against women such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, the 30% quota group, a women's political advocacy group advocating for women to have at least 30% shares in the government, especially in parliament and presidential cabinet positions. Nevertheless, even though they are still fighting to have an equal share of the spoils, it is safe to say the darkness in their light is reducing bit by bit with the involvement of international organizations helping in the advocacy for women in the country and the government have also been given green light to increase the appointment of women in higher positions in the state. However, in a nutshell, they are still not giving up on the fight to be at the helm of affairs.

### **A Brief Discuss on Feminism in International Relations**

Since the focus of this chapter is going to be based on women's activism in governance, it will be of the essence for us to discuss which perspective is feminism in international relations. Gender equality has been given the name feminism. Feminist studies found a place in the field of international relations in the late 1980s because of the flexibility of theoretical debates in a field that had previously been heavily prejudiced in favor of gender concerns. In order to further their research in this field, feminists in international relations draw on a long tradition of feminist thought that at least stretches back to the 18th century. Just as there are numerous strands of other ideologies, there are various strands of feminism, and this is reflected in what is often referred to as "feminist international relations". These many streams of feminist thought in the area of international relations, however, are not surprising given the various strands of feminist philosophy. Liberal, Marxist, Radical, Critical, and Post-structuralist approaches are identified by the conventional classification of feminism (Steans, J. et al., 2010). Based on the nature of this research, liberal feminist strands are the best approach for addressing or evaluating the endless strive by women for their inclusion in governance. Due to the major goals of their fight over the years such as the pursuit of gender parity, the fight can be characterized through the lens of liberal feminism. Even though there have been a wide variety of discussions, criticisms, and arguments over the numerous facets of feminism, each has significantly added to the field of research. Whatever way one may look at the concept of feminism, whether in a good or bad way, one thing is for

sure: everything in life has both good and bad aspects. Equal treatment for all genders is a goal of liberal feminism. Education, voting rights, sexual harassment, rights to contraception and abortion, as well as accessible health care and childcare, are some of liberal feminism's central concerns. Liberal feminist claims look at the institution of marriage and the legal system governing divorce and property laws, advocate for women's ability and rights to participate in public life, at the very least through suffrage, and challenge practices that deny women access to the same high-quality education and professions as men (Ackerly, 2001). Liberal feminism believes that educating women improves society as a whole. Liberal feminism is different from revolutionary thoughts because its goal is to modify political and social structures rather than overthrow them; this is done to ensure that women and other oppressed groups may advance on an equal footing with men by giving them a secure environment in which they could thrive. Liberal feminists are more focused on helping women break down barriers that have kept them from obtaining positions that were previously only open to men. The total exclusion of women from conventional theories and practices of international relations has been questioned by feminist thinking from the beginning. The absence of women in national and international scenery is shown by the fact that before this time, women were somehow or totally not included in decision-making processes and by the presumption that the impact of international relations on women's everyday life is little or negligible. In addition, the inclusion of feminism in international relations and its contributions may be understood via their dismantling of gender as both a set of socially constructed identities and a potent organizing principle. The political climate on a worldwide scale was impacted, with repercussions on the lives of men and women. Mainstream IR was proven to be gender-blind by feminism (Smith, 2018). Feminism is one of the critical theories of international relations because the aim of critical theories is to redirect the facets of mainstream theories in IR.

Critical international relations theories brought the incorporation of gender analysis into the realm of IR because, as stated before, mainstream theories completely neglect the discuss of gender and gender relations, although critical IR theorists are yet to divulge on the topic as expected. Critical IR feminist theorists outrightly see the imbalanced relationship between genders as a practical form of oppression, in that light feminists do not intend to reduce men and women to a sheer outcome but to navigate the organization of women and reconcile with the gender

hierarchy, this is to normatively aspire for the empowerment of its subjects. Critical IR feminists pride themselves on the reflection of power in the vein to campaign against the historical social structure (Ackerly & True, 2006).

However, even though anti-feminists are calling feminism an anti-globalization movement because it is trying to restructure the global social order in pursuit to secure global justice, this will force mainstream theories to map out structures and ideologies that in my own perception will be fitting for a proper and equal social order. Nevertheless, in a nutshell, the purpose of feminism is not to redesign the natural order of gender balance in the world but it sets out to create a pathway for the full integration of women in politics, governance, peace-building, and nation-building both nationally and internationally, and not to forget, to give women the platform in expressing their self in the advocacy for domestic rights and protection.

### **The Rise of Feminism in Africa**

As the study has briefly discussed the purpose and origin of feminism in IR, it will now take us through the rise of feminism in Africa, how it has thrived, and the successes of feminist movements in Africa. Many will see the word feminism as un-African because, in a proper African setting, women and their rights are being regarded as a thing of so-called; that is to say, it is a thing of less importance, however, this is one significant reason why feminism is an important movement in the African continent. Africa is one place that has always been ranked among the lowest when it comes to gender disparity with a high rate of domestic violence against women, poverty, and the struggle for scarce resources which in this case men always tend to bully women, and so on. The concept of feminism in the field of academics might not be seen as African and with all truth, it never started in Africa, nevertheless, it is important to know that women from ages that were never talked much about have started feminist movements way back in Africa in the light of protesting against the infamous patriarchy system of domination.

However, the origin of feminism in Africa can be traced back to the early 19th Century with women like Adelaide Casely-Hayford in 1923; a Sierra Leonean woman who not only fought for women's rights in Sierra Leone but was also an important activist in the campaign for Pan-Africanism, she was famously known as the "African Victorian Feminist". The early 19th Century will also take us far back to

1918 in South Africa to a women's organization known as the Bantu Women's League (BWL), a group that was founded by a not much-talked woman who goes by the name Charlotte Maxeke. She formed the Bantu Women's League for the purpose of protesting at the time when the colonial masters placed a law that women should carry pass or official documents, the protest was known as the Women Anti-Pass Law Campaign in South Africa (Alistair Boddy-Evans, 2018). Also in 1923, in the north of Africa, women had also started showing off their shine with the formation of the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) by Huda Sharaawi a group that was formed in the wake of women fighting for liberation from their counterparts. Al, these were followed by other movements in various parts of Africa such as Mozambique, Guinea, Angola, and Kenya; these were places by the time where women struggled head-to-head with their male counterparts for control of states affairs (MASFROPOLITAN, 2013). The above explained was just the start of feminist movements in Africa as it was the springboard that led to the steadfastness of women in the campaign for equal participation in politics and governance, and also to be liberated domestically.

Modern African feminism took center stage in the years 1975 to 1985 in the wake of the United Nations decade for women. This brought a brighter light to the feminist activities of women's movements as it paved the way for the widespread of feminist movements all over the continent and the diaspora as a whole thereby allowing their expansion in legislative policies and also in the cultural sphere. With the aim of cracking through the glass ceilings that have served as a barrier between them and success, the rise of strong African feminists such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie a Nigerian woman who was notoriously called the "happy African feminist woman", since 2012, she has been a strong advocate for girl's education rights and the fight against gender violence and sexual abuse, most importantly, she has been advocating for a higher rate in women's employment. Notwithstanding, other groups rose in Africa to join the cue in fighting for women's equal participation; groups such as the African Gender Institute (AGI) and the African Feminist Forum (AFF) to name but a few (MASFROPOLITAN, 2013).

African feminism was coined from the insight African women took from women in Europe and America in an effort to address issues affecting women all over Africa. These issues range from economic, domestic, and public life matters or political and governance matters. However, even though they have found it difficult

to overcome the negativities thrown at their personalities and conquer their adversaries, it is safe to say they have succeeded a long stretch from where they started. Interestingly, African feminism has got different dimensions which include, Motherism, Nego-Feminism, African Womanism, and so on (Nkealah, Naomi, 2016). Even though it is only in the early 19th Century that African feminism came into the spotlight, as earlier stated, it is of utmost significance for us to know that the resistance by African women to the traditional power structure goes back in time and can be related to the ages of human struggle for freedom and this period of women resistance can be called “Proto-feminism”. This can be justified by quoting a famous radical feminist by the name of Patricia McFadden who says and I quote “feminism is not an event that is just emerging now. It is embedded in the oldest memories of human consciousness of freedom” (McFadden, 2001).

### **A Brief Discuss on Feminism in Sierra Leone**

A small country found along the coast of West Africa with high rate of poverty and government corruption is also known for its tolerance of gender inequality. Feminism in Sierra Leone is a doll word so for basic understanding, it is commonly known in the country as women’s movement. Since the chapter has taken us through feminism from the international perspective as well as in the African dimension, it will only be right for us to go through a little bit on feminism in Sierra Leone which is the study site.

However, model feminism can be seen in Sierra Leone, it is not a hidden fact that it is one of the few countries in Africa where women started the march for equal participation in society and liberation. As was stated in the previous heading of this study that a Sierra Leonean woman by the name of Adelaide Casely-Hayford, in 1923 was one of the women who started the advocate for women’s rights in Africa as a whole. One of her famous successes was her campaign for the voting right of women which she achieved in 1930, not to forget her relentless advocacy for girl child education which saw to the building of a vocational institute for girls which she was the direct pioneer and also the construction of a girl’s school. Notwithstanding, she was not the only woman in the history of feminist movements in the country; other women like Constance Cunnings-John, and Frances Wright, all made their mark in the colonial period in the promotion of women’s empowerment in education, politics, and economic strength. Also, there were women’s organizations during the

same period, although they were not many, they were strategic in the promotion of women in society, one such group which has been mentioned before in the study is the Market Women's Union which played a great role when the global economic strife (the great depression) hit the country and the Sierra Leone Women's Movement (SLWM) another group that made a great impact in the labor strife in the country around 1951. After the colonial period, many women were not so involved in the struggle for equal participation, but there was one; the famous Nancy Steele whom I regard as the woman who picked the torch from her predecessors to further the course of gender balance in the country. The late 1970s saw the formation of women's groups in Sierra Leone for the advocacy of women's right to education, one such group is the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) which also has been intensively talked about in this study.

In this paragraph, the paper would have used the word modern feminism in Sierra Leone, but when one takes a dive into feminism in international relations perspective, one would classify modernity into medieval and contemporary modernity. In that case, the paper will class the discussion in the previous paragraph as medieval modernity. Contemporary modern feminism in Sierra Leone is not of a big difference from that of medieval modern feminism. However, there are a series of advancements in the women's movement of nowadays in Sierra Leone, that may be attributed to the involvement of international organizations in their fight. With the support of foreign organizations that sympathizes with their plight, they have succeeded in balancing the scale a bit in favor of them much more than it was before. The intervention of foreign sponsorship in education and training from international organizations like the UNHCR which has done tremendously well over the years since the end of the conflict to the present day in supporting women and girl child education, by giving international scholarships to girls in order to study abroad, and mostly supporting girls in primary and secondary education which is their foremost purpose (UNHCR, 2021). In the area of economic stability, their relentless advocacy has paved the way for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support them in various aspects of business, most especially in the agricultural sector; by creating credit loans for female farmers and supporting them in strengthening their cooperative societies with donor funds (IMF Technical Assistance Report, 2022), this has led series of microfinance agencies to allocate loans in supporting women owning small scale enterprises in the country. again, the Poverty Reduction Strategy

Paper (PRSP) that was drawn after the conflict to foster poverty alleviation programs in the country gave more attention to women in the agricultural and fishing sector in the country, these and more have helped in boosting the economic capacity of women in the country.

In the area of politics and domestic issues, their activism has led to the strengthening of several laws that protect women in the country from crimes of rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. This was a success through the formation of groups such as the 50-50 group which the study will talk about in-depth in another heading. The political sphere has seen the uplift of women in it since the end of the conflict. In a nutshell, feminist movements over the years have gained a stronghold in the country. However, there are still so many struggles and concerns women are still facing, especially in the domestic and governance area because women have still not achieved the strive to get at least 30% quota in the political arena of the nation. Nonetheless, the study is going to discuss in further headings the difficulties women are still facing in Sierra Leone.

### **The Implementation of the UN Resolution 1325 and 1820 in Sierra Leone**

The UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 covered the basis of the effect of the civil conflict on women and girls. The 31st of 2000 saw the adoption of Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. This was to ensure that the effort posed by women in maintaining peace and stability with security agenda at all levels in the country was to be acknowledged; this was a crucial prerequisite in the first United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR). The passage of this Resolution got the unwavering support of the women and the government as well in the country. In June 2008, UNSCR 1820 was passed. It was the first to acknowledge the impact of sexual violence caused by the war on world peace and security. It recognized that the creation of peace and justice depended on its exclusion from society's standards. It adds to what UNSCR 1325 stated about what was required to achieve a wave of lasting peace in many respects (UNIFEM Security Council on Women 2008, 2009). The resolution emphasized on the full effort women played in the resolution of the civil conflict. This supported women in leadership and emphasized on the response to sexual assault associated with armed conflicts. It also enabled the judicial to establish accountability systems against gender discrimination in the country.

The Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) in Sierra Leone created a purposeful and concerted endeavor to put concepts and provisions in place to see the full action of the Resolution in the country. In this vein, a task force was created which comprised of thirty-five persons to ensure cooperation and inclusion in initiatives in the enactment of the Resolution. Within the framework of Sierra Leone, a National Action Plan committee (SiLNAP) was created; this was to foster a regional dialogue which resulted in the identification of many key topics, this resulted in the inclusion of people at all levels including local chiefdoms. This resulted in a massive progress in less than five years which led to the implementation plan of the resolution from 2010-2014. In the process, five structures were created to achieve the following overarching goals.

- Reducing violence against women and children while working to reduce conflict (SGBV).
- Defending and empowering victims and those in need, particularly women and girls.
- Increased prosecution of offenders and victim rehabilitation.
- Improving women's involvement and representation, and efficient coordination.
- Implementation, which includes continuing resource mobilization, oversight, and analysis.

(The National Action Plan for the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) & 1820 (2008), 2009).

In 2010, the National Action Plan was finally launched by President Ernest Bai Koroma who was the then president of Sierra Leone, that year also marked the 10-year anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 and 1820. The complete execution of UN Resolutions became feasible with this launch. These resolutions allowed to include the gender approach in the debate for changes in institutions, strategic programs, and plans at national and regional levels, as well as creating a more important part for women to play. This represented a significant accomplishment in both avoiding and mitigating the ongoing consequences of the civil war on women and girls.

### **Women, Politics, and Governance in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone**

The study had already shown us the role of women in politics, governance, and nation-building in pre-conflict Sierra Leone; that is, their roles in public life in the

post-independence era. This area of the research is going to tell us about their increased role in politics after the conflict due to their famous activism in the process of bringing the conflict to an end.

The experience women gathered in conflict management and the various roles in the peacebuilding process brought them together in light of political action in a very extraordinary manner, this opened the means for them to have a better part in the sociopolitical realm in Sierra Leone. The high level of violence that was done to women during the civil conflict gave rise to their demands for increased participation in politics and governance. In any case, the staggering number of deaths and displaced population gave space for women to hold certain positions at the time, starting from the domestic aspects by becoming family heads, to the local level by becoming community heads and even gaining an increasing role in local government. This relatively gave autonomy to women there is a possibility for them to have access to political power and equal representation in terms of gender relations. It is important to know that during conflicts, most especially civil conflicts, the roles between men and women can adversely change and will mostly be in favor of women as they will become heads of families which gives them the experience to be in charge of affairs.

However, before going into the nuke and cranny of women's increased role in politics and governance in post-conflict Sierra Leone, it is of major importance for the study to take a brief look at the political system of Sierra Leone. The country has three layers in its governance system. The first layer is the formal national government which is comprised of an elected parliament and an elected president, the second is the local government which is comprised of a district council located at the district headquarters with ward committees at the community level, these areas are governed by elected counselors and ward committee chairpersons, and the third is the customary level which is comprised of a chieftom structure, it operates at a local level with direct supervision from the local government but has its regulations from the central government (Castillejo, 2009). Nevertheless, in each of these aspects of the governance structure, women have faced marginalization before this time, and even nowadays they still face a series of stumbling blocks, but they have proven relentless in the struggle for gender balance.

Women's progress in politics in Sierra Leone emerged just after the civil war when the country held its first post-conflict general elections in 2002. Since the

country achieved peace, there have been four democratic general elections in the years 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2018 respectively; with another election around the corner due to take place in June this year 2023. The 2002 elections saw the representation of women in government increase by a margin than before. In that national election, 18 women became members of parliament out of 124 parliamentary seats; it was seen as a great progress compared to the previous election held during the conflict in 1996. However, in the 2007 elections, the number of parliament representatives by women dropped to 16, even though the drop was not of a great margin, it was nevertheless a setback in women's strive for more representation. However, this drop was attributed to the country returning to the so-called traditional majoritarian system. This is a system that obviously discriminates against women in public life because it has to do with the idea that men can incur more population than women, thereby political parties resulting in choosing more men in terms of election representation. In terms of the presidential cabinet, there were only two women in ministerial positions (Castillejo, 2009). The same reduction happened in the 2012 election which occurred on the 17th of November, 2012, as the number of women was reduced to 16 in 2007, it came down to 15 female members of parliament in 2012 out of 121 seats in the House (Women in Parliament, 2012). Surprisingly in 2018, the number of female parliamentarians rose again to 18 out of the 124 seats that were in contention (Women in Parliament, 2018). This back-and-forth in the number of women representatives in the House of Representatives (parliament) is a shred of clear-cut evidence to show that women have got so many barriers holding them to having equal representation but as stated before, they are still relentless in the fight. According to USAID in 2020, women constitute 52% of the population in Sierra Leone but only have about 20% representation in the government. If one compares the percentage to a pre-conflict era in Sierra Leone, one will find it progressing, but in actual fact according to the trend of feminism around the globe, it is nothing but a mere quota for women.

However, since the end of the conflict, prominent positions have been given to women in government in the Sierra Leone. One major example was the appointment of Chief Justice Humu Hawa Tejan Jalloh in 2008, this was followed by another woman being appointed to a very prominent position as National Electoral Commissioner a woman by the name of Christiana Thorpe in 2009. One other major female appointment that was made in 2010 is one that has gone down in the history

books, this appointment made Sierra Leone become the first country to appoint a female as a brigadier in the military in the sub-region of West Africa, she goes by the name Brigadier Kestoria Kabia. This was done in an effort to promote and encourage women in security.

Africa is known for its muscling when it comes to civil society and this area is one of the aspects in which women's political action is being facilitated. The country in question (Sierra Leone) is known to have a weak civil society but in any case, has a growing civil society platform, especially after the civil conflict. Civil societies play an important role in the politics of Sierra Leone. The rise of feminist groups in the country after the civil conflict has been overwhelming. They create more capacity and impact especially at the local level of governance than formal state institutions because of their adoption of human rights advocacy, and gender equality advocacy, all in the lens of good governance, this is because, where there is equality, there is obviously a prospect for good governance (Castillejo, 2009). Civil societies have been ridiculously strong in their agenda for the promotion of gender equality and equal representation in government. From another angle, civil societies have been the greatest backbone in the fight for changing gender norms in the male-dominated society of Sierra Leone. Nonetheless, many women have managed to break the barriers of gender norms and get into formal politics but they still face a lot of barriers in the political realm of the country. The study will go further by discussing an example of a woman who has climbed the leather of politics in Sierra Leone to the highest level but at the end of the day was muscled by men in her political party.

### **Honorable Dr. Veronica Kadie Sesay**

She was born a Sierra Leonean on the 4th of March, 1949. She is a politician, feminist, and pro-democracy advocate. She is a member of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) and served as minister of trade and industry from 2002 to 2007. She is also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and founder of the Leone Consulting and Advisory Agency of Trade, investment, and Development. She graduated from the University of Sierra Leone in 1973 with BA (Hons) in English Language and Literature, she also earned a MA degree in Literature at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom and also got a Ph.D. in applied linguistics at the University of London.

She lectured at the USL for 20 years and became the first woman to head a commission in Sierra Leone by becoming the chairperson for the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights (NCDHR) where she spent 6 years. With her feminist tendencies, she championed local campaigns for women to take an active part in politics, with all these accolades, she became the first woman vice presidential candidate for the SLPP in 2012, however, she lost the elections. In other areas of her political achievements, she entered parliament in 2005 even though she was still a minister, this happened because of the proportional Representation system (PRs). This is the system where subgroups of an electorate are reflected proportionally in the elected body. She will eventually go on to win her first parliamentary elections in 2007.

From 2007 until the present, she has run in and won several elections for the Sierra Leone Peoples Party. In the legislature, Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay has served as chair of a number of committees, including those on trade and industry, fisheries and marine resources, and information and communications. She has also worked on a number of legislative committees, including those for local government, tourism, cultural affairs, finance, and economic development. She now serves as the Head of the House Committee on Commerce and Industry, as well as on the boards of the Public Service, Information and Communication, and Selection Committees. She is also a member of the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC). As a member of the Sierra Leone delegation to the ECOWAS Parliament, Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay serves on the committees for administration, finance, budgeting, and audit in addition to being a part of the association for female parliamentarians in the organization. She took part in a training session on strengthening the capacity for female MPs in March 2013 at the House of Commons in the British Parliament. She also attended the Women in Parliament conference held in Belgium in October 2014. In May 2018, she won the position of President of the Parliamentary Female Caucus. She has been working tirelessly to see that affirmative action is codified into law in her capacity as President of the Female Parliamentary Caucus. With the help of the UN family, she organized a retreat with the Female Caucus and her supportive male Champions to discuss the future and clear the way for the affirmative action Bill to be passed. Shortly after the retreat, a round table discussion with civil society and the necessary stakeholders took place in the Parliament building.

She worked to have the Women's Peace and Security Resolution 1325 ratified and signed into law on February 14, 2019. Also, in March 2019, she spoke about the women's peace agenda at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) summit in New York. In addition to attending training sessions on leadership and governance, Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay has represented the Sierra Leone Parliament at a number of international conferences, seminars, and workshops ([parliament.gov.sl](http://parliament.gov.sl)). However, despite all these mouthwatering achievements made by this outstanding woman, she was still muscled when she tried to contest for presidential candidacy in her political party (SLPP), this did not go down well with many women in the country.

Women's aspiration to be fully involved in politics has gained momentum over the years with the support of different faculties ranging from international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to national organizations which derive support funds from international donors, however, the state itself, with all its proposals to support women's aspirations in politics has been somewhat futile because there has been no laudable venture made by the state to facilitate women's participation in politics. It is important to know that with all the obstacles women are facing to take an equal part in public life, the above-discussed woman is a clear example showing that there are women who have one way or the other broken the barrier in the political realm. However, the minority of women who have managed to do so still lack a lot of training because the primary support women get is for them to get elected, but once they get elected, they lack the support to enable them to perform effectively in many ways such as the taking up of leadership positions and mainly to influence decisions in the government (Castillejo, 2009).

A significant tipping point occurred with the 2002 presidential election. That marked the ending of the country's decade-long civil conflict. One could already sense the start of a peaceful resolution in Sierra Leone's environment. This was an opportunity that was seized by women, who participated in record numbers during the election, in which some of them it was their first time casting their ballot. Internally displaced women were urged to register and vote through the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children's Protection Partnership office in Sierra Leone. Women shared the opinion that internally displaced people must ensure that, with the help of the Women's Commission, their involvement enables women to participate in national decision-making. This, according to them, would contribute to the maintenance of peace in Sierra Leone. They said that when a

woman votes in a free and informed manner, she recognizes the public role she can and should play in ensuring the welfare of her society in the long run (Diop, 2009). After going through all the phases women have been in the struggle to end gender discrimination in both public and domestic aspects, one can say it is only hoped that the effort that has been put in by women in the fight ends up seeing the light of the day.

### **Women's Continued Advocation for Increased Participation in National Affairs/Politics**

This study has discussed lengthily the aspirations and advocations of women in Sierra Leone. It is seen through the research that the role of women even though it is still not as they want it to be, and as a feminist, it is not as it should be, it has however increased through the years compared to post-independence and pre-conflict days. In the literature review, the study discussed the activism of women during the conflict and also talk a little about women's activism in post-independence and pre-independence days. This part of the study is going to give a rundown on the activism of women through activist groups since early post-conflict days to present-day Sierra Leone. After the civil conflict, even with the intervention of international organizations in issues concerning women such as domestic violence, gender discrimination, and unequal representation, all these menaces done against women reduces to a certain manner but it is still the same old story because there is still ongoing acts of domestic violence, gender discrimination and unequal representation in the country. This has caused the crusade of women to continue on a large scale. Several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and activist groups are in the fight to raise the awareness of women from urban to rural areas in the country. These groups have been significant in breaking the barriers that stand between women and their male counterparts; however, this part of the study is going to go further by discussing some of these groups.

### **50-50 Women's Advocacy Network in Sierra Leone**

The 50-50 women's advocacy group is a non-governmental and non-political or partisan group that supports women's aspirations in politics no matter the political

background of a person (woman). The group is one of the earliest 21st Century feminist groups in Sierra Leone and the West African sub-region as a whole, it came into being in the year 2000 pioneered by volunteered women whose aims were to see that women's involvement in the peace process was recognized, but in the long run, it ended up becoming a national organization fighting for the rights of women to gain equal representation in politics in Sierra Leone. They support women through capacity building and give political incentives to women who are about to get into politics; they also give strong support to women who are already in political positions such as parliamentary positions. As a non-partisan group, they try to connect women in politics for them to work together to be able to achieve a common goal which is to support one another in their various political endeavors and mainly to speak with one voice thereby making their concerns to be heard in the government (Castillejo, 2009). As their objective is to provide gender balance in the country's political atmosphere, since their establishment, their massive support for women in politics has seen at least 3,000 women trained for both local and central government positions over their two decades of existence. With their collaboration with other women's groups, they do not only provide moral and technical training support; they also provide financial support to female candidates who do not belong to political parties (independent candidates) to support them in elections both local and general elections (Abdullah, 2010). However, this group over the years has been working tirelessly on a series of projects to support the aspirations of women in Sierra Leone.

One of their main projects is the 30% quota project which is aimed at getting a permanent 30% representation for women in parliament and in the local council. This aspiration started in the year 2004 because after the 2002 elections, even though the number of women that contested in the 2002 elections (156) was greater than previous election during the civil conflict in 1996, which was only 65 women, only 14% of the entire parliamentary members were women (Abdullah, 2010). The government was sympathetic to the plight of this group of women but were not able to get what they want from the government and still are not able to achieve the 30% they crave, however, they were strongly involved in the 2004 local government enactment in 2004 and for this reason, the state government in collaboration with the local government, especially with respect to ward development committees and the local government service commission, stipulates that at least 50% of the members of these sections in the local government must consist of women. Nevertheless, even

though they were able to achieve this in the local government area, they still continued the advocacy to get the 30% quota in the state government (parliament), it is important to know that after all these years they still have not been able to achieve this aspect of their activism, but recently with their uphill efforts, the present government recently this year on the 20th January 2023 passed a landmark bill which mandates that 30% of the workforce and in government positions in the country must be comprised of women, this bill also added the maternity leave of women from 12 to 14 weeks in which the president (Julius Maada Bio) states that:

“The period will give new mothers the chance to bond with their newborn babies and start a family. He continued by boldly saying the future of the country must be aligned with a feminist perspective and everyone in governance must do all they can to see women gain equal representation in all forms of public life in the country” (Macaulay, 2023).

One good thing about this bill that was passed is that as we know every law that comes into being in its early days will be tested; and for this law, anyone who tries to contradict this law will be brought to justice by the state. These include organizations, companies, and even government agencies, etc. will face the music if found wanting.

The 30% quota project was not the only project that was designed by the 50-50 advocacy group. Another major project they have been embarking on is the Women in Leadership (WIL) project which started in 2003 and ended in 2006. Unlike the 30% quota advocacy project, the WIL project aimed at promoting women in all works of life in Sierra Leone, this project with the effort of women was supported by Oxfam GB; an international charity organization from Britain founded in 1942 to fight against the injustice of poverty and inequality among gender and social structures. The WIL project aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of women in all areas of public life from politics to business and education thereby reducing the poverty and illiteracy rate among women in the country, hence the civil war took most of their families and their livelihoods. In the area of politics, they targeted the local council sector with the aim of increasing the number of women in the local council sector. This project saw 370 women from all over the country received training in different capacities within that and out of these 370 women, today 116 of those women that benefited from the WIL project are in governance in both local and state capacities of government. It is important to know that these

women came from different ethnic backgrounds and regions in the country, this clearly shows that the program is not of a discriminatory type as it projects to enhance the progress of women from all over the nation (Oxfam, 2008). However, this project faced many obstacles or barriers, one of which is the notorious patriarchal-dominated society in the country. Even though the number of trainees the project benefited was overwhelming, especially when one put into consideration the fact that the country was just recovering from a long and brutal civil conflict, the turnout was still not as expected because many women who wanted to take part in the project were stopped by the husbands and their communities' heads some could not even make the venture to register for the project (Oxfam, 2008). The problem of males taking advantage of females in Sierra Leone and the world as a whole, one will say has brought the regression of many lives, families, communities, and even countries as a whole.

Another project that has been facilitated by the 50-50 women's advocacy network over the years, is the Promoting a Culture of Equal Representation (PACER) project. Like the Women in Leadership (WIL) project, the PACER project is also funded by Oxfam GB. This project came up after the WIL project started crumbling in 2006, so one will say the PACER project is a replacement for the WIL project.

### **Promoting a Culture of Equal Representation (PACER) Project**

As stated above, the WIL project failed so there was a need for another project to promote the agenda for equal representation for women. The first two methods of the initiative aim to boost the number of women serving in local councils and in parliament. The insight gained from the WIL project pursues the need to make it possible for women from all socioeconomic levels to succeed in leadership roles and how to help women who have been elected to office serve their constituents well. In addition to advocating and mobilizing people to support the right of women to run for office, activities including offering targeted training to potential candidates in public speaking, campaigning, communication, leadership, and fundraising were embarked on. In the advent of the PACER project, it was predicted that the quality of governance in Sierra Leone would increase, which will benefit the nation's development and poverty-reduction policies overall because of the increasing involvement of women in governance positions. It also assists women representatives in realizing their leadership potential. It was intended that when more

women are seen as leaders, they will serve as role models and aid in transforming perceptions around gender roles and gender discrimination. One other major objective of the PACER initiative was to convince the Sierra Leonean government to put in place legal measures to encourage more women in positions of authority, particularly by introducing an allocation of seats for female candidates which was known as the 30% quota representation campaign, this was done in collaboration with other networks and organizations of the civil society promoting electoral reform in Sierra Leone. It was acknowledged that further reforms, such as a lowering in the formal financial criteria for running for office, must also take place in order for this to happen. Lastly, the initiative seeks to increase 50/50's potential to become a powerful advocate for gender equality in politics and representation through training, human resource recruitment and development, coaching, fundraising, and strategy creation (Oxfam, 2008).

### **Chapter's Conclusion**

It has not been an easy journey for women to be recognized in the sociopolitical realm in Sierra Leone. In a country where half of the female population is cumbered with illiteracy, one could always say it has been a perilous journey. However, from what the study has gathered, it has shown that even though the tides have not been on their side, they have somehow managed to weather the storms of inequality and violence against their personality (women). With the invention of various women activist groups agitating for the rights of women in the country, most especially the 50/50 group, progress has been made so far. If we take a look at the sociopolitical position of women from pre-conflict days to the present day, with the tremendous efforts placed by these feminist movements in the country, significant achievements have been made as we discussed in the study about the number of women that have been involved and appointed to prominent political and governance positions in the nation. Nevertheless, there is still a need for more improvement in the area of giving women more access to political power which can only be done by the government approving the 30% political representation for women in parliament which has been a fight for the ages. With all that has been discussed in this chapter about feminist movements striving for gender equality in various parts of the world, it is safe to say that women's rights must be a paramount goal in every nation in order to attain more development, prosperity, and most

especially peace and stability; because they can always serve as tranquilizers between conflicting parties in a state as we saw their part played in the resolution of the civil conflict in Sierra Leone.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter is going to give a brief conclusion based on the entire work of the research and will go further by giving recommendations based on the findings on how to improve and strengthen women's activism in Sierra Leone and the world as a whole.

#### Conclusion

The thesis research and analysis lead to the conclusion that Sierra Leone's deadly civil war, which began in March 1991, was brought on by decades of poor administration, widespread corruption, political abuses, and persecution of those who disagreed with the government. The incidents in this history are grave violations of human rights of which Women and girls were the biggest victims of systematic abuse during this horrifying incident of cruelty and abuses of fundamental human rights in Sierra Leone. Numerous research has conclusively shown that the dark experiences of women and girls were inextricably related to their social level. The social structure in Sierra Leone was very patriarchal. Women have experienced pervasive assault, poverty, and exclusion from positions of authority. These circumstances were a byproduct of cultural norms formed through time in a politically and economically male-dominated society. As the study continued, the research showed that amid the civil conflict, women stopped being only victims but took up roles as agents of peace and also became active fighters in the conflict thereby becoming combatants. With the creation of women's civil society organizations, which inspired and motivated the population (women in particular) to demand peace, democracy, and an end to hostilities, women's involvement in managing the war in Sierra Leone became increasingly apparent. Notable in this regard were the pivotal contributions that well-known women's organizations performed. Some of these women's groups include Women Organized for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW), and so on.

The chain of events that shaped the trajectory of the battle served as proof of the women's group's efforts' effectiveness. These included the widespread protests across the country in February 1995 that forced the NPRC junta to make peace a

national priority, leading to the signing of the first cease-fire agreement; a conference that involved shared discussion where the women representatives in the conference spoke their mind in a form of letter to the RUF leader calling for an end to the conflict; which resulted in the Bintumani I, II, and III consultative conferences. The studies also point out the relentless effort made by women in the electoral process during the conflict, which included voter education, and encouraging people to register and participate in voting. Serious peace talks were to start after the inauguration of a president who was democratically elected. As a result, the Abidjan Peace Accord and later the Lomé Peace Accord, which was mediated by the UN and the International Community, was signed. The reintegration of former fighters into communities around Sierra Leone was largely facilitated by women, who also promoted peace and assisted in the security sector by engaging residents in community policing, which involves educating them about their legal, human, and constitutional rights. The research went further to show that even though the participation of women could not have been foreseen in each of the involvements by the various foreign forces, women who had previously faced discrimination in the predominately patriarchal Sierra Leonean culture, exploited each opportunity. The circumstances created by the intervention phases highlight their significance in the control of the war in Sierra Leone. Their contributions to the conflict's transformation throughout each stage of involvement were essential for the RUF to finally sign the Lomé Peace Agreement. Additionally, the study went further to discover that the period of historically significant activism by Sierra Leonean women made them become powerful political forces during which they came to start assuming prominent roles in the nation and gave them the empowerment, and influence to build more space for themselves in politics after the conflict. This was later demonstrated in the general presidential and parliamentary elections of 2002, 2007, and the local council elections of 2004 and 2008, when women that were mobilized and nurtured by the 50/50 Group and other women activist groups in the country played a significant role in the elections.

However, it is unfortunate that women are still struggling in both public and domestic life in Sierra Leone. Notwithstanding, over the years, the government of Sierra Leone has made sure to improve various sectors of gender inequality. This can be shown in the passing of various bills in the House of Representatives (parliament) such as the ratification and signing of women-specific international human rights

statutes; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) are two major examples. In addition to passing legislation safeguarding and enhancing the status of women, the government has continued to show its commitment to fostering equal access for men and women at all levels by making a concerted effort to guarantee successful execution. In order to promote gender laws, the MSWGCA was created and introduced in November 2008 as part of a systematic roll-out strategy. Additionally, a comprehensive National Gender Strategic Plan (NGSP) was developed, outlining six priority concerns that are in line with the second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for the nation, known as the "Agenda for Change" (AFG). The NGSP outlined this execution of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 as a critical approach.

Sierra Leone as a nation has seen many horrors that placed it backward since its discovery; from slavery, and colonialism, to a barbaric civil conflict that lasted for 11 years and left a devastating effect on the minds and memories of its citizens, with the destruction of major infrastructure and services, the country was almost brought to a breakdown at that particular period. Aside from the conflict, in recent times, the Ebola virus that struck the nation did not only diminish the population but also left a crack in the nation's economy. The country was still in economic recovery when the Corona Virus again struck. All these pandemics that struck the nation not only deplete the economy but also put so many developmental projects undertaken by the government to a standstill because the nation's resources had to be concentrated on providing intensive medical care for its citizens. Nevertheless, since the country gained independence from its colonial masters in 1961, the democracy of the nation has always been on the edge; this is because aspects of democracy such as freedom of speech, and the right to information, have not been fully met by the government with the muscling of civil societies, and as well journalists. Notwithstanding, the governments that have ruled over the years have also failed to provide the basic necessities for the citizens such as a proper water supply, guaranteed electricity services, transportation, communication, and improvement in the education sector. All these and many more are at a high rate of scarcity in Sierra Leone. with all these failures that the country has seen over the years, the coming general election which is due this year on June 24th, 2023 is an opportunity for the masses to use the ballot box to let their voices be heard and will also be an opportunity for the incoming government to improve on matters of equal right and equal representation between

men and women in the country. As a developing nation, equality among gender will send a positive signal to the international scene, eventually attracting international stakeholders' attention. This will surely be a booster for development in many areas, especially in the economic sector. It is not a secret that a nation with a strong or growing economy attracts international investors which is good for the citizens as it will provide ample opportunities and fast-track development.

According to the research presented above, it is clear that despite the fact that women played conspicuous roles in the management of the crisis in Sierra Leone and the process of establishing post-conflict peace, women still confront the enormous challenge of overcoming patriarchy in Sierra Leonean society. To enable women to reach their full potential and protect them from exploitation, a lot must be done. Patriarchy prevents women from actively participating in politics, having freedom in domestic life, and making political decisions. For development to take place at a fast pace in the country, and prevent relapse of civil conflict, as we see the role women play in bringing the previous one to an end, gender equality must become a paramount agenda in the nation, therefore, the study will go further to give recommendations to the government of Sierra Leone, the international community, as well as the women themselves.

### **Recommendations**

The study suggests that recommendations are to be made for future readers of this work in order for them to know how to tackle the issues of gender balance in a nation and also to ply the means for a way forward to a more gender-balanced Sierra Leone.

### **The International Community**

It is clear from the role played by women in Sierra Leone's conflict management that men are no longer the only ones capable of handling such tasks. The goal of a society free of the scourges of war, poverty, and gender discrimination will never be realized without the equal and fair participation of women in conflict management, conflict resolution, and decision-making; there comes in the international community.

In the area of job opportunity, international donors that sponsors projects and aid governments especially in third world countries should insist on women's rights

and obligations of government toward major employment for women as this area is one of which women have seen great difficulty and barriers in Sierra Leone. Women's right to occupation should be fully recognized. With the monitoring of various international organizations and cooperation with governments, it is obvious there will be great success. This should include whether women are being able to work not just as teachers and healthcare workers but also in occupations such as government, humanitarian assistance, social services, law enforcement, military, and the media. If women can gain strength in this area, they can be fully involved in politics and governance as limited access to income is one major factor which has hindered the growth of women in the power struggle.

Violence against women should be a priority for international organizations to intervene in. Special funding should be created to support violated women and for sensitization purposes to create more awareness amongst women for them to know their full rights in marital homes as this is one place where women are being extremely violated in Sierra Leone. They should support government in the strengthening of laws to fight violence against women, as it is in Sierra Leone so many women cannot afford to support themselves through legal process which this funding will be of great support.

### **The Government of Sierra Leone**

Much has been said over the years about what and what government should embark on to ensure that the narratives of inequality in the country are changed for the better. However, for the sake of this study, certain recommendations are going to be made especially on things that have been neglected over the years by previous governments.

In the area of domestic equality, the government should revisit laws on the matter, especially the ones that were recommended by the TRC relating to women. According to the commission, the government has not yet taken the required actions to end structural discrimination against women in Sierra Leonean society. Women's life continues to be significantly hampered by discriminatory laws and conventions regarding marriage, divorce, property rights, inheritance, and the management of estates. To address these structural inequalities, institutional capacity-building, legal reform, access to justice, the repeal of discriminatory customary law and practices, the establishment of educational initiatives, and the abolition of cultural norms that

oppress women are all necessary. For the progressive advancement of women in Sierra Leone, the government must ensure that they have access to political, health, and economic opportunities as well as education. In light of the aforementioned, the government should revoke Section 17(4)d of the Sierra Leonean Constitution of 1991. In regards to marriage, divorce, burial, adoption, inheritance, and other matters that affect how men and women interact in the home; this section discriminates against women. The inclusion of this specific clause in the Sierra Leonean constitution poses a significant obstacle to the execution of some of the three Gender Acts' most important sections that are pertinent to resolving some of the systemic institutionalized discrimination against women in Sierra Leone. The clause also conflicts with the clause in the same clause in that it declares invalid any clause in the constitution of Sierra Leone that is discriminatory both in and of itself and in its effect (The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, Section 27 (1)). The inclusion of such clauses in the national constitution worsens the predicament of women in terms of the pervasive discrimination they experience.

In the area of politics and governance, in order to fully ensure the participation of women in decision-making and to address the security concerns of women in post-conflict Sierra Leone, the SiLNAP must be fully implemented, the SiLNAP is an instrument for implementing UN Resolution 1325 and 1820 that was created to foster national equality and agreement. However, for all these to be fully in play, the ministry of SWGCA must get more funding from the government. This will ensure capacity building for women in the country and give them more advantage in politics and governance, especially in their striving to get the 30% quota they are agitating for. Nevertheless, the present government has seen to the implementation of most of the aspects of the 30% quota.

### **To the Women**

The Women's Forum, the umbrella organization for women in Sierra Leone, should maintain a robust network for women's groups. Lack of cooperation and competition among women's objective of influencing the public realm has, regrettably, been threatened by the diversity of women's groups and their differing goals, which has resulted in poor networking among these groups. In order to bridge the gap in gender-disaggregated data (GDD) and conduct proper gender analyses, women's groups should collaborate with the government and UN agencies,

especially UNIFEM and UNFPA. The scope and nature of women's exclusion from leadership positions in Sierra Leone will be understood as a result. Without proper information, there cannot be a successful reaction to prejudice against women.

In this case the women in Sierra Leone should copy from women from other countries. The study will take a look at women's group from other countries in Africa which will be a classical recommendation for women in Sierra Leone. The Libyan Women's Platform for Peace (LWPP) is an organization that puts pressure on the government to give opportunities to women to uphold sociopolitical places within government and society. They started their campaign in 2011 when Muammar Gaddafi's reign ended after decades of abusing his power over the country. The leading effects after the uprising resulted in 35 women joining together to form LWPP. The state of Libya is dangerous and unbalanced, especially for women advocating to eliminate corruption in politics, but in any case, they never gave up their voices. From this point, women in Sierra Leone should continue to advocate endlessly against impunity and discrimination.

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**Appendices**  
**Appendix A**  
**Turnitin Similarity Report**

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN IN NATION-BUILDING  
AND GOVERNANCE: A CASE  
STUDY ON WOMEN ACTIVISM  
IN THE RESOLUTION OF SIERRA  
LEONE CONFLICT(20215171)**

*Yazar* Likhman Mohamed Kabba

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## EXAMINING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN NATION-BUILDING AND GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY ON WOMEN ACTIVISM IN THE RESOLUTION OF SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT(20215171)

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**Appendix B**  
**Ethics Committee Approval**



**BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMALAR ETİK KURULU**

04.09.2023

Dear Lukhman Mohamed Kabba

Your project "Examining The Role Of Women In Nation Building And Governance: A Case Study On Women Activism In The Resolution Of Sierra Leone Conflict " has been evaluated. Since only secondary data will be used the project it does not need to go through the ethics committee. You can start your research on the condition that you will use only secondary data.

Prof. Dr. Aşkın KİRAZ

Rapporteur of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee