



Young Women In Leadership

Promoting Young Women's Participation in Decision Making, Governance and Politics in Sierra Leone



**SEND
SIERRA LEONE**
Working to promote good governance and
equality of men and women in Sierra Leone



Background

To The Concept Of Young Women Leadership

More than 50% of the world's population are women. Despite the significant role women play in societies, it is evident that patriarchy in politics, lack of resources, and support for young women to assume leadership roles limit their participation in politics and.

Societal expectations and stereotypes, cultural practices, low education levels, poverty, insecurity and gender based violence undermine young women's political aspirations. Young women are underrepresented as voters, political leaders and elected officials in every region of Sierra Leone.

Political parties are the institutions to promote women's political leadership and access to elected office. Unfortunately, their structures, policies, practices and values negatively affect women's participation in decision making, governance and politics. Young women lack influence in party policies and platforms' development. There is limited representation of women on executive bodies in political parties, and there is serious marginalization of women's wings within parties. Political parties are focused on winning elections and because young women have not been part of the formation and management of political processes and structures for so long, and due to low financial contributions that young women make to political parties, it is considered risky to promote young women's participation in governance.

Despite these obstacles, young women in Sierra Leone exhibit confidence and determination to overcome barriers to enhance responsible citizenship, dignified living, inclusive and good governance.

It is critical to raise awareness among young women aspiring politicians, and other members of the Sierra Leone society to promote understanding and address stereotypes that continue to ensure few young women succeed in the political arena.

To bring about a more inclusive, responsive and responsible societies, it is important to work with young women to influence and change the entrenched idea that only men have to be leaders. It is important to remind society and that of men that women's political participation has profound positive and democratic impacts on communities, legislatures, political parties, and citizen's lives, and helps democracy deliver. In order to meet worldwide development goals and to build strong, sustainable democracies, young women must be encouraged, empowered and supported in becoming strong political and community leaders. It is against this background that this action is proposed to disrupt, dismantle and contain the limiting factors of young women's participation in decision making, governance and politics.

Objectives

Of Promoting Young Women Leadership

The overall objective of the idea is to mentor and network young women to achieve more for gender equality in Sierra Leone as effective participants in politics and governance.

The specific objectives are:

- 01** To create a network of young women between the ages of 18 and 35 to increase their participation in politics and governance.
- 02** To develop the competency of young women socially, economically and politically to participate in politics and governance
- 03** To raise the awareness and build allies of men, and politicians to support increase the participation of young women in politics and governance

Project Target

Citizens, Institutions And Structures

The target groups include

- 01** Young women (18-35 years of age) in tertiary institutions who are interested in participating in politics and governance. These young women will be recruited, mentored and educated on politics, community development, political engagement strategies and encouraged to participate in party processes to enhance their electoral successes.
- 02** Young women (18-35 years) who have completed tertiary education and are currently engaged as entrepreneurs; in government agencies as leaders, heads of departments or of teams; in the media, activism, universities, colleges, polytechnics, teachers, and nurses who are interested in participating in politics and governance

03 Partnership with Political Parties Registration Commission, and the NEC to engage and educate political parties to develop strategies to recruit young women into political processes. An MOU will be developed with PPRC and the NEC to work with political parties to take deliberate actions to increase young women's participation in politics.

04 Mobilization and capacity building of the administrative and academic staff of universities, polytechnics, and training colleges in Sierra Leone on gender, women's empowerment in order to mobilize support for the creation of a network of young women to increase their participation in the next elections in Sierra Leone.

Recruiting

Strategies Of Recruiting Target Citizens

01 SEND will publish a Call for the recruitment of young women interested in participating in politics in the newspapers, women groups, CSOs platforms, and social media, about the program. The recruitment Call will request for young women between the ages of 18-35 years with or without experience in activism, or politics who are interested in political and civic participation, and are available to participate in all project activities.

02 Awareness raising forums will be organized in the education institutions targeted on the project content and approaches for recruiting and selecting young women interested in politics to join the network. To enhance this aspect, SEND staff will develop project brochure and flyers explaining the logic of the project and how to join the Network of Women Politicians

03 SEND staff will also use the media (Radio and TV) to educate the general public about the project content and the various recruitment processes as part of the general efforts to share information wide for interested young women to join.

04 SEND will also partner with Restless Development, an INGO specialized in working with youth for the recruitment of young women interested in politics

Applicants who have the political qualification after the various public education activities on the project logic and objectives will be invited for interview and successful candidates will be under go political education and other competency development intervention and are mobilized as a network to work as a unit to enhance their successful participation in politics in the 2023 elections. Recruitment processes will be conducted every six months to bring in new members to be part of the Network.

Expected Results

Of The Proposed Concept

The following outcomes are expected:

01

Increased capacity, commitment and partnership of education, civil, and private sector institutions for the recruitment and support of young women's participation in politics and governance.

02

Increased legitimacy of young women's collective voices in informing political parties and traditional leadership decision-making

03

Increased participation of young women between the ages of 18- 35 as councilors, MPs, and leaders of political parties in the 2023 General Elections.

STRATEGIES FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

Strategy 1

Awareness Raising And Building Partnership With Institutions For The Recruitment And Support Of Young Women's Participation In Politics

Familiarization meetings will be held with education institutions, government agencies, private agencies, female entrepreneurs, young women led CSOs and CBOs, female members of the Sierra Leone Bar association, media (Women in the Media, SLAJ, Print and electronic, station managers of radio and TV stations) to introduce the project's content and approaches to the institutions, and to discuss potential partnership structure with them to support mobilization, education, networking and capacitating of young women to enhance their participation in politics. Apart from developing an MOU with these institutions, this action will organize gender transformative trainings for selected staff of the targeted institutions to enable them understand gender in order to promote inclusion and to provide support for this action. These trainings include gender, Gender Model Family and debates on gender and women's participation in politics and governance in partnership with the student unions.

Strategy 2

Building confidence of young women to effectively participate in decision making, governance and politics

Leadership does not exist in isolation. People everywhere always have needs, wants, distractions, commitments, insecurities and frustrations. Leaders need motivation, political wisdoms and determination to be more in control of their lives and our collective future. Confidence enhances personal sense of power and helps shape talents, energy and creativity towards organizing and taking action to contribute to social and political transformation. The confidence that young women and every leader need is that which comes from knowing themselves and everything they have to offer.

To build such confidence, the action proposes to organize capacity enhancement trainings in partnership with the Eastern Polytechnic to provide young women with the hard and soft skills to increase their participation in politics and governance. They will be trained in the following areas:

1. Democracy, parity and Politics
2. International conventions and national laws
3. Gender, power, and social inclusion
4. Leadership and governance education
5. Emotional and social intelligence
6. Communication, marketing, image building and resource mobilization
7. Use of media and press: presence, voice, and image
8. Personal development: personal balance and time management
9. Campaign planning and financing
10. Voter education, mobilization and wining votes
11. Political education such as teachings on the 48 Laws of Power, the Art of War, and the Team of Rivals to educate young women how to overcome political opponents, dissemble, feign, fight and advance their political cause in the modern political world
12. Risk reduction and protection mechanisms as each of the female MPs elected receive threats on their lives or properties destroyed etc.

SEND will recruit a consultant, preferably a woman to support the development of the Young Women's Confidence Building Book of Action to be used in the various confidence building sessions. Monthly Young Women's Confidence Building School will be organized on the training topics listed above to conduct week long trainings for young women in that region for 22 months from 2019 onwards.

Prior to the Confidence Building School sessions, SEND's project staff in addition to the focal persons for each of the institutions in the region will rehearse each of the training topics from the Young Women's Confidence Building Book of Action and prepare practical facilitation guides in order to deliver the content to the target citizens.

These capacity building activities, will prepare young women with the leadership skills to succeed in their bids for political position in the 2023 elections

Strategy 3

Increasing legitimacy of young women's collective voices in informing political parties and traditional leadership decision-making

This action will empower the young women from public institutions and form the Sierra Leone Network of Young Women Politicians to be dedicated solely to strengthening young women's participation in the political administration in Sierra Leone. They will recruit their members from the various young women's groups. The network will energize working relationship among young women leaders, increase their visibility and amplify their voices on governance issues at community, chiefdom and district levels. The networks are not only tasked with the responsibilities of lobbying leaders, but also to carry out public sensitization activities e.g. to educate other young women at local level on gender issues and policies from the lessons they learned from the Monthly Young Women's Confidence Schools through the development of young women's manifesto, community engagement meetings, radio programs, small grants to support young women's business development and other economic empowerment activities

Strategy 4

Building Allies to enhance support for young women's participation in politics

This action proposes to organize gender trainings through workshops, public forums and through the media to help shape the understanding of both men and women who are political actors on the important contributions of women in politics and governance. Gender and power training workshops will be organized for leaders of all registered political parties, government agencies including education institutions, private agencies, the media, and distinguished entrepreneurs and activists. This will be followed by the establishment and running of the Political Intelligence Forums (PIFs) discussions on rotational basis in all the targeted educational institutions on quarterly, but rotational basis to steer public debates on gender and women's participation in governance and to provide insight for aspiring young women leaders to learn lessons to shape their political action. These discussions will be aired live by SLBC, AYV and Star TVs to profile the events. They will also be streamed live on Facebook, and Twitter, Prior to these round tables, SEND staff and the leadership of the Sierra Leone Network of Young Women Politicians in partnership with the student unions of the various target institutions will hold planning meetings to identify gender and political topics and develop strategies to support the effectiveness of the round tables. These discussions will awaken the consciousness of the nation on the contributions of women and the need for them to be substantially included in governance. Experts from Sierra Leone and

around the world will be brought to those discussions to share their knowledge and to share advice with young women politicians. Specifically, a Gender and Communication Mobilization Officer will be fully recruited, trained and dedicated to effect this aspect of the action.

Intergenerational dialogue forums between current female politicians and the Sierra Leone Network of Young Women Politicians to promote learning and sharing. These forums will serve as platforms for young women aspirants to learn from women already in leadership positions as Councilors, MPs, leaders of political parties, female business leaders of women leaders in government. During these forums young women aspirants will be encouraged to find mentors to guide them in their political aspirations

DURATION OF PROJECT

This action is proposed to be implemented in 2 phases. Phase 1 runs from May 2019 to February 2021 to grow the network of Sierra Leone Network of Young Women Politicians and provide training. Phase 2 will run from 2021 - 2024, scaling up support for the female candidates running in the 2023 general elections and to support them during their first 6 months in office.

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