



THE INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY OF MARGRET FODAY, THE YOUNGEST COUNCILOR IN SIERRA LEONE



In the impoverished community of Norgorbabull in Bonthe District, young women were traditionally expected to engage in agricultural labor, marry, and bear children. Margret Foday, a 23-year-old native, defied these expectations and became an emblem of hope and change for women in rural politics.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Born into poverty, Margret's future seemed confined to subsistence farming. Despite these challenges, she completed her West African Senior School Certificate Examination in 2021 at the age of 20. That same year, Margret was recruited by SEND Sierra Leone, an NGO supported by the Irish Embassy in Sierra Leone, to participate in the More Than A Woman project aimed at supporting women's participation in politics and decision-making processes in Bonthe District.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

As a member of the Young Women in Governance Network in Bonthe, Margret underwent extensive training in leadership, advocacy, networking, and community service. She learned decision-making, problem-solving, and strategic planning. These experiences equipped her with the skills and confidence needed to spearhead development initiatives in her community.

POLITICAL AMBITIONS AND CHALLENGES

Facing financial constraints that threatened her educational progress, Margret boldly questioned female political representation in Norgorbabull. Her community's entrenched customs and traditions discouraged women from holding leadership positions. Despite these cultural barriers, she resolved to contest for the position of Councillorship in the June 2023 elections, aiming to represent Ward 130 on the district council.

Margret engaged local authority figures and community members to mobilize support for her candidacy. With the assistance of the Young Women in Governance Network, a supportive campaign was launched, characterized by financial support, active participation in events, and strategic networking.

CAMPAIGN AND VICTORY

Margret stood as the sole female candidate among men in the Sierra Leone People's Party. She held meetings with influential local figures to garner support and leveraged her connections for both moral and physical support during her campaign. Her candidacy was embraced by the party, leading to her being awarded the symbol and favorably positioned on the party list. Ultimately, Margret's campaign culminated in her election victory in the multi-tier elections against opposition party candidates.

ADVOCACY AND IMPACT

As the youngest councilor in Sierra Leone, Margret has been advocating for educational reform in the district, working on initiatives to improve the quality and accessibility of education in her chiefdom. She is also pursuing better healthcare services to address vital needs within her community and the district at large.

Margret's journey is not just about personal success but also about empowering other young women. "I am determined to use this platform to address the issues that are critical for our communities. This includes advocating for long-lasting educational reforms and improving healthcare services. My journey is not just for me but for every young woman who

has been sidelined for decades. Together, we will work towards a future where our voices are heard and our lives are improved," said Margret Foday.

FUTURE PLANS AND VISION

Margret plans to involve her constituents, especially women, in decision-making processes to ensure that the changes she champions align with their needs and expectations. She encourages young women to join the Young Women in Governance Network in the district and looks forward to building partnerships with governmental agencies and the network for resource mobilization and support for her initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Margret Foday's story is an inspiring testament to the power of resilience, determination, and the importance of empowering women in governance. Her journey from an impoverished community to becoming the youngest councilor in Sierra Leone exemplifies the potential for transformative change when women are given the opportunity and support to lead.

