



**WOMEN  
IN TOP  
MANAGEMENT**

**THE SIERRA LEONE CASE**

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**BY**

**VALERIE E. L. WALTERS AND GWEN MASON**

# **WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA: THE SIERRA LEONE CASE**

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**African association for  
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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

- AAPAM** - African Association for Public Administration and Management  
**AFL** - American Federation of Labour  
**IADPs** - Integrated Agricultural Development Projects  
**ICW** - International Council of Women  
**IMF** - International Monetary Fund  
**LPA** - Lagos Plan of Action  
**NGOs** - Non-Governmental Organization  
**NOW** - National Organization for Women  
**SI** - Socialist International  
**UN** - United Nations  
**UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme  
**WAND** - Women Association for National Development  
**WB** - World Bank  
**WMIA** - Women Managers in Action  
**WUCWO** - World Union of Catholic Women's Organization  
**YWCA** - The Young Women's Christian Association.

## **FOREWORD**

The Research on "Women In Top Management in Africa" commissioned by the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) started in August 1992 with six participating countries including Sierra Leone.

After many consultations and reviews it is with pleasure that we present the Sierra Leone Case Study. It has been quite a challenge for the researchers who had to delve into many archives to see what was documented on women and to study policies and laws with hidden discriminatory acts against women. Interviews were conducted all over the country to verify what was documented and to find out what was different and similar in the policies and practices of many organizations where women play some part.

The result is this well documented, intensively researched report which will serve as a very good resource material for women managers not only in Sierra Leone but in Africa as a whole.

**Valerie Walters and Gwen Mason, November 1994**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Finally, many thanks to the funding agency, African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) for giving us the opportunity to do this research. We hope we will be involved in any other research that they may commission.

The Institute of Public Administration and Management Research Team, however, takes full responsibility for the content, conclusion and recommendations contained in this report.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The United Nations, in an attempt to reduce global discrimination against women, initiated a series of conferences, declarations, covenants and conventions most of which were to provide generally acceptable models of legal equality of the sexes. The United Nations decade for women (1975-1985) did not only help to identify and remove some of the obstacles women face but raised the status of women at national, regional, and international levels. It therefore seems ironical that a scholar has referred to the period of 1975-1980 as the most bleak in women's history in relation to men viz-a-viz employment rights and opportunities for top jobs (Gibbs, 1981). It can be said, however, that other studies have come to indicate that the majority of the world's women have been marginalized.

It is an established fact that women have always contributed to the general good, for which they are hardly acknowledged. The practical costs of this bias are the reduced effectiveness of almost every aspect of the development process. Little wonder then that even the Lagos Plan of Action, adopted by African Heads of State and Governments in 1980, acknowledges the key role of women in the search for alternative strategies for and solutions to Africa's economic difficulties. The awareness that women as a vital human resource can change the quality of society for the better is felt globally. Their contribution, however, will only be effective if their participation in public decision-making is maximized. But this is far from the case. One thing that is common to women of all nationalities is that they are faced with problems of accessibility to management jobs. They are grossly under-represented in politics and the civil service especially at the decision-making levels.

As at 31st October 1989, only five out of the 159 United Nations member states had women Heads of State. A total of 99 countries had no woman in ministerial decision-making positions. Studies further revealed that in 50 countries women were completely absent from all four of the highest levels of decision-making. In only four countries did women hold more than 20 per cent of top decision-making positions. Even though many countries have laws and policies which establish equal pay and employment rights, in practice, however, women do not stand an equal chance of promotion. This could be attributed to

the attitudinal and ideological obstacles to equality i.e. society's definitions of status and sex roles.

This state of affairs is relentless in Africa, Sierra Leone being no exception. The Sierra Leone case is such that even with the proliferation of Women Organizations with their corresponding income generating, educational and other activities for women advancement, the participatory role of women in decision-making, especially in the public sector remains minimal. Even the few management positions women hold are more concentrated in the traditionally female social-related fields such as education and nursing. In 1992, only 14 per cent of permanent secretary level positions were held by women. A recent study also revealed that women are highly under-represented in top management positions in both the private and public sectors. It also noted with concern, that there are no women in top management in industry (Mason et al, 1992). In politics, the situation gives rise to grave concern. There are no women in the highest policy and decision-making body viz the Supreme Council of State. This situation needs to be addressed and this can only be effectively done on the basis of a situational analysis of women in top management.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.0 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) for the economic development of Africa by the year 2000 places high priority on the efficient use of human resources as a central factor in the development process. In its policy statement on women, the government of Sierra Leone affirms the importance of total utilization of human resources for optimum development. It is an undisputed fact that for meaningful development, society must harness the participation of all of its human resources. It stands to reason therefore that both men and women (who constitute more than 50 per cent of the world's population) must fully participate in nation building, for positive social change and development to take place. Yet all over the world and in Sierra Leone in particular (as the literature review indicates) women are poorly represented in senior, policy and decision making positions. The problem becomes more complicated as women are required to implement decisions in which they had no involvement in the planning. Their lives may be otherwise seriously affected by these decisions that they were excluded from contributing to.

It is a well established fact that African women perform numerous and vital productive and reproductive roles that have ensured the survival of the African continent even during some of the worst economic and social crises especially during the 1970s and even to the present. In Sierra Leone, women bear the greatest burden of structural adjustment measures which are now in place, yet women have little or no representation in the power centres where critical decisions on the structural adjustments were negotiated with International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Despite this exclusion, women are subsequently expected to bear the burden of implementing decisions in which they neither participated nor were they consulted. Effective implementation of programmes would logically require women's full and active input in policy and decision-making processes at all levels. It is clear that failure to identify concerns of women who constitute about 55 per cent of the population or to respond appropriately to them, represents a considerable loss of national resource; is a major stumbling block to the achievement of national development goals, and also create problems and frustration at the individual level. Addressing this situation becomes

difficult as there is little or no research into the situation or into factors that cause or contribute to it.

## **2.1 JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH**

There is not much difference between women in Sierra Leone and their counterparts in other parts of the world. In Sierra Leone, women constitute half of the nation's population but in the labour market they are found mainly in the informal sector or in low-paying, low status jobs or in unpaid family labour. Notwithstanding the existence of a constitution which stipulates equality for all citizens and several ratified international conventions, women are by far still few in number in decision-making roles in Government, Parliament, Politics, and Public Administration. However, it is seen that in Sierra Leone a National Policy to promote women is gradually evolving.

This research therefore focuses on Women in Top Management and tries to develop a profile of the top woman manager. Women in Top Management is broadly defined to mean those women who occupy the highest position in any public or private sector, organization or institution. In other words, the top manager is conceived as the top three individuals who exercise the ultimate authority and decision-making power in a given establishment. It also includes female heads of department in large organizations of over 200 employees, and board members who also play a major role in decision-making.

The issue of limited access and participation of women in decision-making roles and top management positions is compounded by the Sierra Leonean ethos of patriarchy and the dominance of the male culture. It is therefore important for the study to investigate the extent to which Sierra Leonean culture determines and influences the situation. The fact that few women are to be found in top management positions in Africa is a situation that warrants an inquiry into the reasons and causes as well as possible measures that will redress this situation.

Furthermore, as the literature review so vividly indicates, there exists a lacunae of knowledge and research on the proposed study. Literature on professional women and particularly on women in management is scanty and widely dispersed research is found mainly in the context of women's general role in the rural, social and economic development of the country. There is little emphasis on women in management. There is insufficient information on the actual position of women in Sierra Leone. There is little or no substantive data on the policies affecting women's advancement in management. In other words,

in so far as Sierra Leone is concerned, very little in-depth research and analysis on the subject matter have been conducted.

In view of the fact that every society requires equal participation of both men and women for meaningful development and social change to take place we are convinced that the proposed study is of great importance towards the achievement of this noble goal. It is contended therefore that this research will go a long way to provide the crucial information that will shed light on and will be of critical value in the future formulation and execution of development and management policies and strategies in Sierra Leone as well as in other African countries.

## CHAPTER 3

### OBJECTIVES

#### 3.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The major focus of this proposed research is to identify and determine the critical factors that obstruct the advancement and mobility of women to top management positions in Sierra Leone. The study will also examine policies, organizations, opportunities and affirmative actions and strategies that may enhance women's presence, participation and equality in top management positions in Sierra Leone. Examination of policies will seek to highlight how existing laws are interpreted and influenced by institutional and organizational behaviour to the point where gender discrimination may discourage and even block women from meaningful participation in top management positions.

Secondly, the study aims at examining the extent to which the socio-cultural environment enhances or hampers women's advancement to the top. In this context, factors relevant to prevailing socio-cultural values and the overall socialization process will be examined. This is also with the view to identifying the social costs incurred by women in the process of attaining top positions in management.

Thirdly, the research is expected to generate information on the personal attributes of women who have made it to the top. Profiles of successful women will generate data that could be used to identify constraints encountered by these women in their career advancement and strategies employed to overcome these constraints. Furthermore, the information derived from the profiles of successful women in top management in Africa may be useful illustrations of successful women and the factors that enabled them to get to the top.

Fourthly, the study will examine the extent to which women are represented in top management and how effectively they participate in decision-making. The identification of the presence and participation of women in top management in-so-far as numbers are concerned, may be an indication of the level of their representation and effectiveness in top management. Particular attention will be paid to their job effectiveness as prescribed in their terms and conditions of service as well as their performance in promoting gender parity.

### **3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

From the above four broad objectives, the following specific objectives have been identified:

1. To identify the most critical factors (e.g. forms of behaviour, structural barriers, etc.) that have an adverse effect on women's career advancement and their increased participation in top management positions. In addition, prospects for gender equity and strategies for change will be explored.
2. To establish the strength and weaknesses of government policies and programmes which influence the career advancement of women in top management positions, with a view to formulating support strategies to facilitate increase in the number of women at top management levels and to create support systems that can ensure the continued success of women at those levels.
3. To identify organizational policies needing improvement and suggest strategies that can address constraints women face at individual and institutional levels and in the context of societal values.
4. To examine the extent to which educational/training opportunities pertaining to the advancement of women in top management positions are in place; also to determine the inherent weaknesses of such opportunities and programmes.
5. To identify and assess crucial factors which can enhance women's participation in top management and to present successful strategies and affirmative action, if any.
6. To identify and cluster organizations and institutions which may be active in policy formulation and implementation affecting equal recruitment, treatment and promotion of women in top management.
7. To examine the social costs of reaching top management positions.
8. To identify and examine the extent to which women have advanced in top management positions and the common factors that have contributed to the success of those who have made it.
9. To bring attention to the achievements of those women who have made it to top management positions so that they may serve as role models for other women who are aspiring to those levels.
10. To examine the extent to which successful women in top management are effective or ineffective and the constraints they face in their managerial roles.
11. To examine the extent to which women top managers serve as mentors or models for other women in junior positions.

12. To examine the extent to which women top managers interact with each other and other women in order to overcome their individual isolation and share information.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The available literature on women in top management can, for the purpose of analysis, be categorized into four broad themes:

- i History of International and National focus on Women.
- ii Status of women in top management, with major emphasis on the status quo of women at that level.
- iii Causal factors that enhance or constrain women's effectiveness in to management and,
- iv Strategies to overcome barriers to women's participation and effectiveness in top management.

#### **4.1 HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL FOCUS ON WOMEN**

Discrimination against women and failure to recognize the value of their contribution to society has been common in both developed and developing countries, particularly before the second World War. Cultural beliefs and traditional prejudices often reinforced by laws resulted in their having less access to resources, lower income, less access to credit, education, employment and decision-making positions.

Even though the realization of women as an important human resource had begun to be felt after the Second World War, women enjoyed the right to vote in only 31 countries. The United Nations initiated change in this situation by focusing the attention of governments, non-governmental organizations, academics and individuals on the realities of women's lives and their contribution to society, as well as adopting international instruments geared towards improving the status of women.

The principle of equality of men and women was enshrined in the United Nations Charter and was later inaugurated in many international instruments and national constitutions. The United Nations Commission on the status of women held its first session in 1947 and between that time and 1967, the major thrust of the commission was the definition, legitimization and promotion of international norms and standards to eliminate all forms of discrimination in a number of fields:

- The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage, 1962.
- The International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and on Civil and Political Rights adopted in 1966 did guarantee the rights enumerated in their provisions for men and women.
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The work of the United Nations commission on the status of women culminated when Sierra Leone adopted in December 1979 the convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. This convention having been in force since 1981 is the most comprehensive international legal document to date dealing with the rights of women. The others are not binding on States.

In ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women therefore, a country enters into a legally binding commitment to work for the elimination of discrimination against women. They may decide to embody the principle in their constitutions or in their legislative acts, establish a National Machinery to enforce the principle and abolish existing laws or practices which discriminate against women. Thus a global movement to achieve women's equality had gained momentum by 1979. By January 1991 the Convention had been ratified or acceded to by 101 states. But this world-wide movement had received an important boost earlier when the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 1975 as International Women's year and the decade 1976 to 1985 as Women's decade. The Women's Year Plan of Action became the blueprint for action by NGOs, Governments and Inter-Governmental Organizations during 1976 to 1985.

Although the decade did not automatically result in substantial changes in women's economic, political and social conditions, it had important results. Women's projects, organizations, campaigns and other initiatives came into being and were given important impetus. Many governments did make commitments to improve women's lives by means of legislative, economic and social reforms. A voluntary fund was also established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1976 to offer assistance to women in some of the poorest nations of the world - at grassroots, national and regional levels.

Another important result of the Women's decade was the information gained on the role and contribution of women in all spheres of economic and social activity. Extensive research was promoted by the United Nations system,

NGOs, Government and academic committees which helped in planning action to improve on areas covered by the decade's themes of equality, development and peace, employment, health and education. The decade also saw a lot of conferences and seminars held to promote women's advancement and create the awareness that women were doing a lot more than they were being acknowledged for.

Following the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico which had adopted the World Plan of Action in 1976, a second World Conference for Women was held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1980. It adopted the Programme of Action, which, together with the earlier World Plan of Action, provided the framework for further contributions towards the advancement of women.

A third conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 1985. This was to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade For Women and to develop Forward-Looking Strategies to the year 2000, for the advancement of Women. The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies like the Plan of Action and Programme of Action, addressed not only governments and international and regional organizations but also non- governmental organizations.

An International Conference to deliberate on women's issues thus became periodic and held every five years since the women's year. Although the work of the United Nations in spearheading the improvement of women's status worldwide cannot be disputed, one should not fail to give credit to various International Organizations who either gave considerable attention to women or even dealt entirely with women, to improve their lot. Among them are the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Council of Women (ICW); The International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO); Socialist International (SI); and Christian Organizations like the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA); and the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations.

#### **4.2 STATUS OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT**

Despite regional differences in levels and magnitude, the available literature seems to concur that women everywhere still comprise a disproportionately small percentage of those participating in public decision-making roles, especially at top management levels. Even in the traditionally female-dominated professions women are in secondary positions

relative to men. In a recent study that examined the difference women make in leadership of trade unions, employer organizations and in the leadership roles in public life, it was observed that "women are everywhere absent from, or vastly under-represented, in the leadership of trade unions, employer organizations, in the judiciary, in important professional groupings, high university positions and in leadership roles in the media" (Willis, 1991:5). The paper notes that even in the highly industrialised countries of the North such as Britain, women make only 7 per cent of the senior managers in industry, 5 per cent of the under-secretaries in the civil service, 3 per cent of university professors and 2 per cent of vice-chancellors in British Universities. In Australia despite significant inroads made by women in bureaucracy, in 1989, women occupied 5 out of 35 positions in the Australian Council of Trade Unions. None of the 80 members of the Business Council of Australia were women (Sawyer, 1990; Elsen Stein, 1991). In the United States of America, there are some 17 per cent women in the legislature, only 0.5 per cent on the boards of corporations that control much of the country's economy and 9 per cent on the executive committee's of the American Federation of Labour (AFL - CLO). Indeed in 1989, only 3 per cent of top American and 8 per cent of top British managers were females. For Europe, less than 1 per cent of females were employed in the public sector and even then, they were located in feminized industries namely, spinning and weaving, while women's membership of trade union boards was 3.4 per cent.

In Tanzania, the study noted that women managers constituted a very small minority of up to 20 per cent in high and middle level positions. However, these women are not in top decision-making positions but serve as personnel and marketing managers, directors of corporate departments, chief accountants and financial controllers (Zezeza, 1988).

A similar and perhaps more extreme situation prevails in Kenya, where in 1988, only 20 per cent of women were in normal employment, the majority of them concentrated in low paid and unskilled activities, mainly in agricultural and service sectors. One study for example noted that by 1982, 93 per cent of all persons in secretarial work were women (Zezeza: 1988). In senior public decision-making arena women are a rarity in Kenya. Since the attainment of Kenya's independence in 1963, the highest political rank a woman has held is that of an assistant minister. The highest and most authoritative position in the judiciary, which is the court of appeal, has never had a women. In the prestigious arena of diplomatic and foreign service, there are currently only two women ambassadors. While in the civil service there is only one woman head

of a ministry (permanent secretary) out of a total of about 26 permanent secretaries. (Nzomo, 1989; 1990; 1991). In trade unions the absence of women in top management is equally glaring. For example by 1985, of the 33 registered trade unions in Kenya, 17 had never had a woman even as a member of their executive board. (Zezeza, 1988: 131).

#### **4.3 CAUSAL FACTORS THAT ENHANCE OR CONSTRAIN WOMEN'S EFFECTIVENESS IN TOP MANAGEMENT**

Over the last few hundred years, much happened regarding women's entry into the job market for wage, labour and the conditions facing them there. The two world wars, changed the role of women from being the reproductive traditional home maker to being the productive economic contributor. Yet despite their continued economic role, women's rights continue to be violated and restricted in many areas including inheritance, job opportunities, choice of professions and raising of loans. Although two-thirds of the world's work is done by women, yet they earn only one tenth of the world's income and own just one-hundredth of its property.

The factors which determine women's participation or non-participation in top management and decision-making positions hinge on a number of variables amongst which are the socialization by their access to social resources such as education, knowledge and their strength of purpose to achieve success. Also affecting women's effectiveness is their dual role of domesticity with all its constituent lack of social services and income-generation.

The next few paragraphs will seek to examine how the following factors have enhanced or constrained the Sierra Leone Women's entry and rise to positions of top management and decision-making. These factors include:

- Socio-cultural factors;
- The Socialization process;
- Education;
- Attitudes.

Other factors which can be added to the above as major problems affecting women managers are as follows:

1. Women's multiple roles as mothers, wives, employees and employers.
2. Male dominance, un-supportive husbands, and inferiority complex of husbands.
3. Lack of opportunities for education and training.

4. Traditional values, lack of political support, discriminatory laws and practices and
5. The women's own attitude, lack of self-confidence, fear of risk-taking and fear of criticism.

Incidentally these problems were also identified in Eastern and Southern Africa by Dirasse (1991).

#### **4.3.1 SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS**

Although women constitute approximately fifty-five per cent of the population, yet traditionally, their role has been categorized in the sector of the home and the bringing up of children. Societies and cultures, through a process of socialization, define what roles men and women will perform in the society. They define what occupation and activities must be carried out. Society also designs the nature and quality of interaction between members in the family, community, village and neighbourhood. The process becomes crystallized and over concretized as the only desirable role of men and women. The African woman in general and the Sierra Leone woman in particular is therefore caught up with her social role as daughter, daughter-in-law, wife and mother. Her expected role is to be domesticated and subservient and serve the significant males. Her entire expectations are governed by the social tribal norms, attitudes, values and beliefs of what her role in society should be. Her role as a working woman opens up new frontiers in relationship to people, their capabilities, competence, aspirations, and achievements.

Brooke Schoept (1971) explored the underlying patterns and diversity of women's experiences in African societies. Although women have always been the main agricultural producers yet the men are the beneficiaries of crop sales, thus becoming the controllers of women's labour.

As opportunities for formal education developed, men were given the chance to train in the technical subjects and roles of administration, whereas women were forced into the areas of home-making, crafts and caring jobs of teaching and nursing, and into subjects that trained them for their roles as wives and mothers. Many girls would drop out of school to play their domestic roles and where a choice was forced the male child would be given the opportunity of education. This attitude is slowly changing but still persists in many parts of the country especially in the North.

Many girls have been socialized to select arts rather than science-based subjects thus denying themselves access into scientifically and technically

oriented careers. Studies have revealed that girls' fear of mathematics and scientific based subjects prevents them from pursuing such subjects to the level where they will be equipped to pursue advanced careers in them, thus hindering their entry into such career choices. (Beckley, 1990). After independence when industrialization started expanding, women, due to their lack of skill and lower levels of educational attainment, were relegated to lower level jobs. Women who had attained a high level of education were still hindered from certain jobs such as administration and policy formulation, because of men's negative attitudes towards women as super-ordinates.

Marshall (1984) supports this view, that other peoples negative reactions to women in authority are particularly expected to undermine their ability to perform well. She notes that women themselves are not usually committed to paid employment, work for less serious reasons than men, and prefer to do a job rather than develop a career. Sierra Leone is a patrilineal society. This means that customs favour men as the dominant force with women being subservient and relegated to positions of the dominated. Such disadvantages are reflected in the work place and in the system of education.

#### **4.3.2 THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS**

In the 1987 United Nations Training Manual on Policy Development for increasing the role of Women in Management, it was noted that "through intentional and unintentional socialization processes, women and men learn their stereotypical behaviour; women should be at home as opposed to men being active outside the home". They are socialized differently from cradle to grave. Society has certain key behavioural expectations of them, which must not be deviated from, if one is not to be described as feminine or masculine.

In Sierra Leone, men are socialized in the competitive spirit. As boys, they establish hierarchies in their games-the best thrower, the fastest runner, the strongest fighter, the most skilful hunter or fixer. They are encouraged to exert themselves, the more strenuous the exercise, the greater the stamina. Men often talk about their prowess, how good or better they are, than their competitors; their popularity against the next man. Popularity depends on how courageous they are and the amount of risk involved.

In the Sierra Leonean context, the "boys to boys" "girls to girls" syndrome is demonstrated by the types of games and toys each is given. Boys play ball and girls play with dolls or play at cooking. Neither should be seen

swapping roles. Lobban (1976) supports the idea that the most strenuous activity girls were allowed to engage in was to hop, skip and jump. Men are socialized not to express emotion. They can be heard being told to "be a man" if they cry at a funeral.

Women on the other hand are socialized as supporters, helpers, sympathizers and as diffusing or smoothing conflict. This is typical in the interior of Sierra Leone where women are hired as criers at funerals. Women are encouraged to freely express their feelings. Not to do so is to be described in masculine terms. If a girl is caught climbing a tree, playing drums or kicking a ball, she is described as a "Tom Boy". When women meet they sympathize with each other citing examples of similar problems and experiences.

This is revealed in the findings of this study where 55 per cent of the women have fathers who share their aspirations and mothers who are more than averagely qualified. Sarah et al (1980) discovered that girls who attended mixed schools made more traditional choices than girls in single sex schools. Looking at why girls achieved lower than boys, it was noted that girls/women did not perform well not because they were less able and intelligent but because they were not given equal opportunities to demonstrate their worth. The heavy work load of the girl child was a major constraint. In Sierra Leone, household chores, early marriage and early motherhood are all factors affecting the women's pursuit of higher education. Formally, lack of information on sex was a major constraint to girls but with the recent introduction into the education system in Sierra Leone, of Family Life Education, it is hoped that early pregnancies will be reduced.

#### **4.3.3 EDUCATION AS A FACTOR**

Education is a major factor that influences the recruitment and upward mobility of women, to positions of top management and decision-making. It has been noted earlier that the number of women found in these positions is far lower in comparison to the number of men. In 1991 the report on labour force survey noted that there were 47 per cent of women in administrative managerial posts and 39 per cent in professional/technical jobs.

The fact cannot be erased that top level jobs are neatly tied in with higher levels of education and training. Most top executive jobs need a very high level of qualification; thus only women who have the qualifications can apply in the first place. Taking the low level of female literacy rate in Sierra Leone one can imagine that few women can enter these positions. Although formal education

for girls in Sierra Leone started in the 1800s, yet the progress of girls' education has been less than successful. Education being closely linked to christianity, it is not surprising that more girls are being educated in the Western Area and in the Southern Provinces than in the other parts of the country.

In the North, where Islam is predominant, the progress of girls' education has been extremely slow especially as the northerner is not hesitant in expressing his aversion to taking instruction from a woman. Enlightenment in the north is not commensurate to woman's place being in the home, and if a girl becomes too educated, the northerner feels that she will not be controlled. Thus only in the last twenty years has girls' education made slow progress in the North.

One major problem affecting Sierra Leone's education is that of wastage. This occurs at two levels. First, from year to year in the primary schools and from year to year between primary and secondary schools. A 1990 survey studying a cohort of children who entered primary one in 1985/86 revealed that only 14 per cent made it to primary six and more than half of those who dropped out were girls. Thus if this type of wastage continues then the future representation of women in top level jobs is bleak.

It should be noted then, that even when men and women are accorded equal employment opportunity, because of their relatively lower level of professional attainment, women remain fewer all the way from the recruitment stage. It must also be pointed out that even when women get into managerial administrative and professional jobs, promotion becomes slow and they stagger in one position.

The curriculum offered in schools is also detrimental to women's entry to these jobs. Historically, women's education was always geared towards domestic and reproductive roles. Girls were taught the 3 Rs, sewing and domestic science. Even when the curriculum was revised and diversified girls gently cajoled selecting arts and commercial subjects instead of science subjects.

#### **4.3.4 ATTITUDE AS A FACTOR**

Another significant factor is the male attitude towards women in these positions. Men misjudge women's abilities. The fact cannot be erased that socio-cultural and historical factors have a lot to do with such attitudes towards female workers, especially those in top management. Both men and women have little confidence or faith in the ability of women to perform as well as their male counterparts. Our culture is a hindrance as women are not traditionally expected

to be in public life. Their role should be in the home being submissive and obedient to their husbands. The training accorded them therefore is for the home. Even those whose educational training and ambition have accorded them promotion to top managerial positions, are caught between the conflict of domestically, un-supportive husbands and husbands who are affected by inferiority complex.

Attitudes have not changed substantially as pointed out by Bowman et al, 1965. Other people believe in stereotypes, and do not want to work with or for women. If they have to, they make life difficult for women. Studies show that reluctance to employ women as managers is the claim that "other people" do not want to work for or deal with women at work. A 1991 survey done in Sierra Leone on attitudes of people towards women executives revealed that two-thirds of men and almost one-fifth of women would feel uncomfortable working for a female boss (Mason et al, 1992). Things are changing slowly and the increase in the number of women getting into management positions is gradually improving the attitude of men. There is greater acceptance associated with the exposure to women with higher education in those roles and with being married to working wives.

A serious impediment to women holding top executive positions is their own outlook and attitudes. Unlike their male counterparts women are restricted from lobbying or networking in clubs or over a pint of beer, for top positions. In Sierra Leone, women are not expected to go to a club or pub unescorted let alone a woman top manager. Most women do not assert themselves or are not aggressive enough. They fear being described in masculine terms. As a result lack of self-confidence, fear of risk-taking and fear of criticism act as barriers to impede them. Women who have staggered in the second or third positions for long claimed that they were scared of going any further since they were not sure if they could cope with the demands of the new positions. As such they would watch as less senior male subordinates get promoted.

It has been noted that women fail to support each other. Lack of support from women colleagues and superiors and poor communication between male superiors and female subordinates is a significant limiting factor. It has been pointed out that sometimes male superiors attach strings to promotion possibilities of female subordinates. Women who refuse to submit to sexual advances by male superiors are faced with possible reprimand or demotion, transfer, stagnation, expulsion or forced to submit to victimization. However, it must be noted that some women have succumbed to sexual advances by men

in order to get into particular places of work, and to be promoted.

Often the female manager is treated differently from her male colleagues. Larwood and Wood (1979) discovered that in order to succeed, women had to be perceived as being much more competent than their male counterparts even though they were more qualified. The women interviewed explained that women were to be aggressive, tough, highly competent and very assertive if they were to succeed as managers. Asked if there were any feminine qualities needed to be a manager they responded that managers were not feminine.

Another significant factor affecting women's mobility to top managerial positions is fear of competition. Whereas men lend support to each other through lobbying and networking, women sometimes gang up with men against their female subordinates. This is because they fear competition from other females and thus display the "Queen Bee Syndrome" of importance. This philosophy was demonstrated when a subordinate who had been in one position over and above the criteria period was asked why? She claimed that she did not get on with her superior regardless of how hard she tried. She was therefore resigned to her status until the "Ogre," as she claimed, retired.

One last factor affecting women's upward mobility is that of "gender conflict". Whereas men are free to take jobs away from home, women cannot always take such opportunities. A 1974 "UNESCO Study on Education, Training and Employment Opportunities for Women in Sierra Leone" stated that 46 per cent of the male and 49 per cent of the female respondents felt that if women worked outside the home they had less time for domestic chores and 24 per cent of the males and 26 per cent of the females felt that the upbringing of the children suffered. Thirty-seven per cent of males and 21 per cent of female respondents did not like married women to be given jobs outside the home. Fifty-six per cent males and 48 per cent females did not like women with young children to be given jobs outside the home. The study further revealed that educated males and females were more concerned about the possible neglect of children as a result of women working outside and away from home than were their less educated counterparts. The intensity of feeling was stronger among the males than among the females. This seals the attitude that men prefer their women to stay and look after the home.

Depending on such role expectations some women over concentrate on their household roles at the expense of their jobs. Many women have had to sacrifice their career when their husbands get transferred. Some have had to

sacrifice being promoted to a high ranking position to avoid conflicts in their marriages. To get to a certain rank in the Banks and Library Board in Sierra Leone for instance, you should have served a minimum period in the provinces. This has been a bone of contention where married women have found it difficult to be separated from their families and as such are denied opportunities of going beyond a certain level, for fear of losing their marital hold.

#### **4.4. STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS**

A discussion of the causal factors which enhance and constrain women's advancement to positions of top management and decision-making reveal a series of barriers which need to be overcome. These include some social and cultural factors and even some forms of harassment, some historical factors, educational attainment, government policies, networking, domestic responsibilities and organizational factors. One would agree that if women in general, and the Sierra Leonean woman in particular, must gain entry and upward mobility in management posts, strategies will have to be formulated to minimize these barriers. Such strategies should include:

- Changing and diversifying the school's curricula to remove all forms of gender typing, gender streaming and gender discrimination and improving women's access to scientific, technical and commercial education to enhance their employment opportunities.
- Advocating for services that will ease the female manager's domestic role.
- Incorporating assertiveness training into programmes for women managers.
- Provide opportunities for professional and managerial networking, and sharing of experiences.
- Strengthening the institutions that will promote women.
- Conduct a gender sensitive awareness seminar.
- Change the laws and policies that affect women negatively.
- Introduce career guidance and counselling into schools especially girls secondary schools.
- Government should be sensitized about its role in advancing women's status.
- Companies should follow the examples of NGOs by recruiting and promoting women to positions of top management and decision-making where it is merited.
- Sensitize the media to portray women more in their professional role

CHAPTER 2

rather than in their domestic role.

Create an awareness in parents and educators as socializing agents to arrest the formation of stereotypic gender scripts and images.

## CHAPTER 5

### METHODOLOGY

Any research pertaining to women's participation in any sector of society must employ the type of methodology that is sensitive to women's realities and circumstances. African men and women as we know, were integrated into the world economic system in different ways and levels, a process which helped worsen the status of women. Moreover, public administration and management structures that were put in place in Africa, were a replica of European ones and naturally, they bore the marks of European patriarchal tradition. This legacy has inevitably meant that women in Africa have for a long time been excluded from the public and administrative machinery.

A number of African social science scholars have, in the recent past, come to question the relevance of predominant methodologies in the social sciences. These methodologies which have been developed in and are dominated by the North, continued to reflect the North/South relationship that perpetuates political, economic and cultural marginalization of women (Fadlalla and Kiros, 1986). Because of this prevailing condition in research methodology, African women researchers have made a case for the adoption of a methodology that can facilitate reflection, analysis, and bring about meaningful and accurate understanding of the status of African women (AFARD/AAWORD, 1983). Thus, a relevant research approach for women related issues is one which combines both quantitative and qualitative data and instruments of analysis, that complement one another so as to adequately capture the realities, experiences, and aspirations of women's lives in their entirety. Furthermore, the data generated should be adequate in solving the gender problems. The methodology for the proposed research takes cognisance of the methodological concerns outlined above. While trying to be as rigorous as possible in our data gathering efforts, we have also tried to be as flexible as possible in our use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Flexibility is necessary, given that our respondents are largely women with multiple responsibilities that put incredible demands on their time.

The research will utilize both primary and secondary data to be able to tap various relevant aspects of the problem of research. The research concentrates on the post-independence period up to 1991. The methodological task of this study addresses three main questions. First, it explores the issues on

which data will be generated. Secondly, the problem of data collection is examined. Finally, various statistical techniques that will be used to analyze the data to address the main research problems are suggested.

### **5.1 DATA COLLECTION**

An extensive literature review was conducted. Questions were based on personal profiles, education and training, access to employment and to top positions, laws, rules, regulations related to employment, institutional environment, attitudes and corporate culture. A questionnaire was developed and pretested (Appendix I). A survey was conducted, supported by extensive interviews both structured and unstructured (Appendix II). Focus group interviews were also conducted.

### **5.2 SAMPLING METHOD**

Women in top management was defined as those women who occupy the highest position in any public or private sector, organization or institution. It refers to the top three individuals who exercise the ultimate authority and decision-making power in a given establishment. It also includes female heads of departments in large organizations of over 200 employees, chairpersons of boards and board members who also play a major role in decision-making. A total of one hundred and two such women were identified and questionnaires were sent to all. Sixty-two questionnaires were retrieved. The sample was 61 per cent of the total population of Women in top management identified.

### **5.3 THE SAMPLE**

46 per cent of the sample were in public service,  
15 per cent in NGOs,  
12 per cent in the private sector,  
10 per cent in parastatals  
2 per cent in trade unions and  
12 per cent in other organizations (Table 1)

**TABLE 1: TYPE OF ORGANIZATION OF TOP WOMEN MANAGERS**

Values	Total	Percentage
Public	19	46.3
Private	5	12.2
Parastatal	4	9.8
NGOs	6	14.6
Trade Unions	1	2.4
Others	5	12.2

Source: Survey data (answer to Q.1)

Thirty-seven per cent of women worked in large organizations with two hundred and above employees. A total of 41 per cent worked in organizations with one hundred and less employees. Fifty-one per cent worked in organizations with one hundred and above employees. 56 per cent of the sample, were in national organizations, 13 per cent, in international organizations and 9 per cent, in continental organizations. Majority, 56 per cent, were in "not for profit" organizations while only 24 per cent, were in "for profit organizations" (Table 2).

**TABLE 2: TYPE OF ORGANIZATION OF TOP WOMEN MANAGERS**

Values	Total	Percentage
National	23	56.1
Continental	3	7.3
International	10	24.4
National/Continental	1	2.4
National/International	3	7.3

Source: Survey data (answer to Q.2)

## CHAPTER 6

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### 6.1 GEOGRAPHY

Sierra Leone is on the elbow of the West Coast of Africa, about 630 miles (1000 km) north of the equator. It has 212 miles (340 km) of Atlantic Ocean line, and an area of 227 700 sq. miles. The country is about 215 miles from north to south and from east to west; and about 185 miles from north-east to south-west and north-west to south-west. It shares a boundary with Liberia on the south-east and with Guinea, its larger neighbour, on the north-west.

Sierra Leone has a tropical climate with constant high temperatures and high humidity. The yearly average temperature is 26°C but slightly lower temperatures are recorded during the rainy season. There are two well-defined seasons: a hot dry season from November to April, and heavy rainy season from May to October. Part of the dry season (December to February) experiences the cool harmattan winds loaded with sand dust from the Sahara Desert to the North.

Administratively, the country is made up of twelve districts in three provinces (Northern, Southern and Eastern); and the Western Area, which contains the national capital, Freetown.

The country is characterized by five physical regions:

- 1) The Western Peninsula upland region; half of which consists of forested mountainous terrain at over 1 000 ft. This precludes large-scale commercial agricultural development. Freetown is located in this region.
- 2) The western coastal swamp region which covers the low lying areas around the estuaries and lower beaches of the main rivers. There is good potential for rice production through land reclamation here. Ocean and artesian fishing are important in this region.
- 3) The central plains region where inland fisheries are becoming important.
- 4) The northern region of woodland savannah. It has well drained soil of low inherent fertility. However, it is better suited for livestock and is also used for fruit and vegetation production.
- 5) The southern-eastern upland region which is characterized by soil erosion and by valleys caused by seasonal flooding of inland swamps.

More than 75 per cent of the population make their living from the land. The country's main agricultural exports are palm oil, ginger, cocoa, coffee and palm fibre. The main subsistence crops are rice, yams, millet and cassava. The country's principal mineral deposits are gold, rutile, bauxite, diamonds and iron ore.

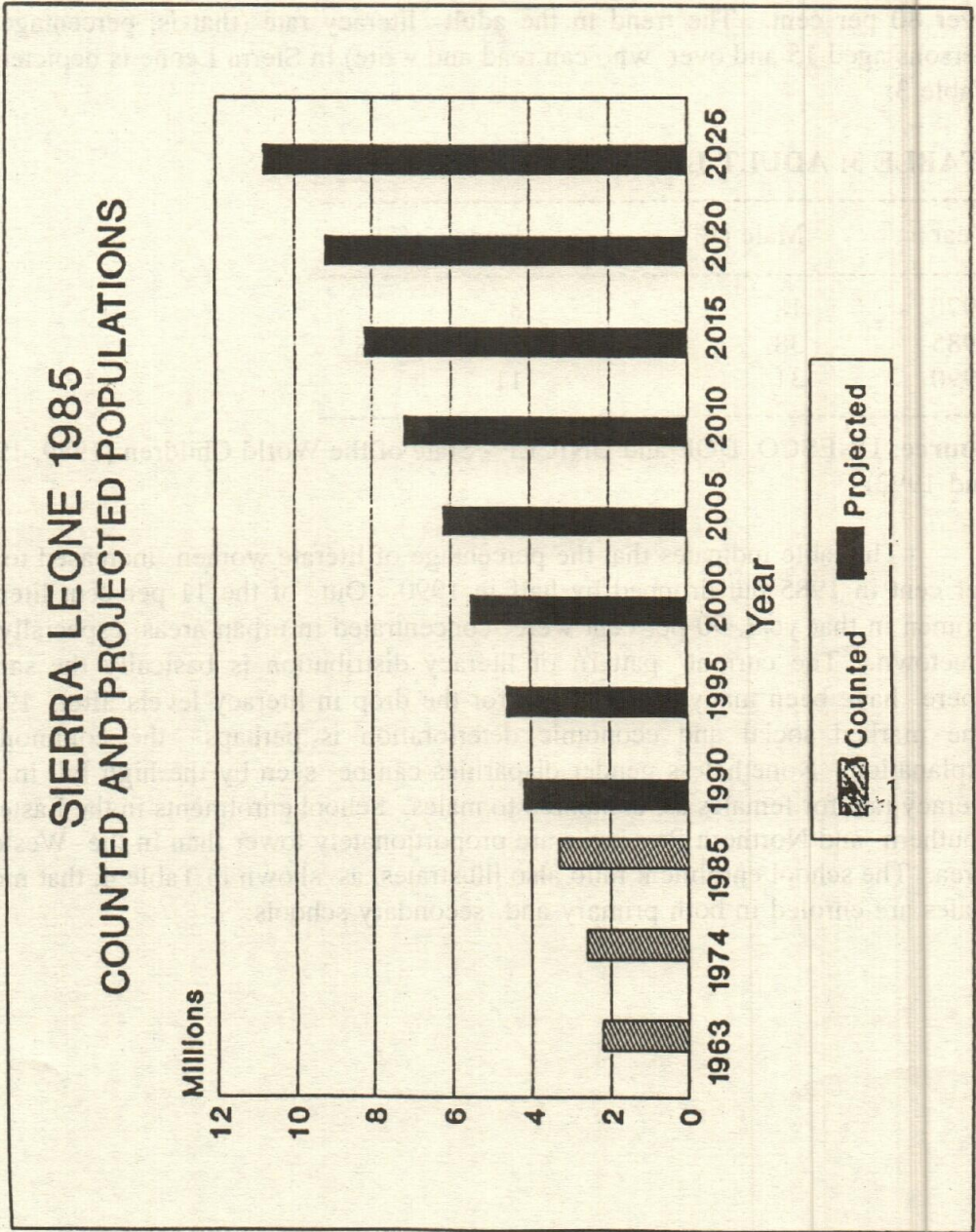
There are fourteen major ethnic groups: Temne, Mende, Limba, Vai, Gola, Krim, Susu, Yalunka, Kono, Kissy, Krio, Koranko, Sherbro, Madingo. Both Temne and Mende make up over 30 per cent of the total population.

## 6.2 POPULATION

The population census figures for 1963, 1974 and 1985 were approximately 2.3, 3 and 3.5 million respectively. This shows an annual growth from 1.96 per cent during the first census period to 2.31 per cent during the second period (1974-1985). From the 1985 population census as illustrated in Chart 1, it has been projected that by the year 2000 the population would have increased to 4.7 million.

Sierra Leone had an average density of 33 persons per sq. kilometres in 1974. The United Nations estimated population density of 51.9 persons per square kilometre in 1984, was expected to increase to 71.5 in 1995, and further to 83.2 by the year 2000. There is considerable variation in population density among the administrative areas of Sierra Leone. It is highest in the Western Area where the capital, Freetown is located. The national population figure as of now, is not extremely accurate due to out-of-date censuses and difficulty of communication and mobility but it is estimated at about 4 million. Over half of this number are under 20 years. Women constitute about 55 per cent of the total population and most of them live in the rural areas.

CHART I



### 6.3 EDUCATION

Sierra Leone is among the ten countries with a female illiteracy level of over 80 per cent. The trend in the adult literacy rate (that is, percentage of persons aged 15 and over who can read and write) in Sierra Leone is depicted in Table 3.

**TABLE 3: ADULT LITERACY RATE**

Year	Male (%)	Female (%)
1970	18	8
1985	38	21
1990	31	11

**Source:** UNESCO, DOE and UNICEF - State of the World Children (1989, 1990 and 1992).

The table indicates that the percentage of literate women increased to 21 per cent in 1985 but dropped by half in 1990. Out of the 11 per cent literate women in that year, 90 per cent were concentrated in urban areas, especially in Freetown. The current pattern of literacy distribution is basically the same. There have been many explanations for the drop in literacy levels after 1985. The marked social and economic deterioration is perhaps the commonest explanation. Nonetheless gender disparities can be seen by the high fall in the literacy rate for females as compared to males. School enrolments in the Eastern, Southern and Northern Provinces are proportionately lower than in the Western Area. The school enrolment ratio also illustrates, as shown in Table 4, that more males are enrolled in both primary and secondary schools:

**TABLE 4: SCHOOL ENROLMENT BY YEAR AND SEX**

	Year	Male (%)	Female (%)
Primary School	1984-86	68	48
Enrolment Ratio	1986-89	65	40
Secondary School	1984-86	23	11
Enrolment Ratio	1986-89	23	11

**Source: State of the World's Children (1985, 1990, 1992)**

The educational status of girls is further worsened by the high wastage in both primary and secondary schools. The 1985 census reveals a high dropout rate with less than 3 per cent of females completing secondary school. At the primary level, gross enrolment statistics show only 45.5 per cent of girls as opposed to 65.3 per cent of boys. Net enrolment reveals 30.2 per cent for girls as opposed to 43.5 per cent for boys and their retention rates are low. The results of the selective entrance examination into secondary schools over five consecutive years (1986-1990) show that less than 40 per cent of girls made it to that class. Early pregnancy is a major contributor and has serious repercussions for female development. The high dropout rate also has implications for eligibility for tertiary level education.

The female enrolment rate at the university substantiates this fact. Lynx Davis (1991) found that females made up 19.9 per cent of university students, with approximately 21 per cent turnout from Fourah Bay College and 15 per cent from Njala. In 1992 the student enrolment ratio of the university portrayed a similar trend with 1 966 (80.6%) males as opposed to only 473 (19.4%) females. Females are also less prone to participating in fields like Engineering and Science (Table 5).

**Table 5: SHOWING AREAS OF STUDY OF FULL-TIME SIERRA LEONEAN STUDENTS ENROLLED AT THE FOURAH BAY COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE IN 1978/79, 1979/80 AND 1991/92**

Course of study	Year								
	1978/79			1979/80			1991/92		
	MA	FE	F	MA	FE	F	MA	FE	F
Arts	238	120	33.5	303	129	29.8	414	182	30.5
Pure and applied Science	120	32	21	124	33	21	94	25	21
Engineering	125	1	1	123	2	1.6	162	8	47
Economic and Social Studies	136	28	17	159	33	6.7	456	92	16.7
Education	34	18	34.6	44	14	24	29	7	19.4
Law							39	10	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>199</b>		<b>753</b>	<b>219</b>		<b>1194</b>	<b>324</b>	

MA = Male FE = Female F = Frequency

Source: University of Sierra Leone Registry.

Female enrolment in the Engineering Faculty has been far from satisfactory. There has been only a slight increase in the female enrolment from 1 per cent in 1978-79 to 4.7 per cent in 1991/92. Although the enrolment of females into the Pure and Applied Science faculty is higher than in Engineering, the table indicates no improvement in the female enrolment ratio over the three years in question. For Economic and Social Studies, there was a marked decrease in the percentage of females enrolled from 21 per cent in 1979 to 16.7 in 1992. Even in the Arts faculty where the number of females has been relatively high, the enrolment ratio decreased from 33.5 per cent in 1978/79 to 30.5 per cent in 1991/92.

**TABLE 6: MALE/FEMALE ENROLMENT FOR SHORT COURSES IN 1991/92 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Courses of Study	Male	Female
Computer	18	44
Educational Administration	4	8
Health Services Administration	3	9
Negotiation Skills	11	1
Principles and Practices of Internal Auditing	13	3
Financial Management for Non-Financial Managers and Business Executives	10	8
Development of Small Scale Enterprises	21	2

**Source:** IPAM Registry

Table 6 indicates a high rate of participation of females in computing subjects (which are currently pre-requisites for certain secretarial jobs); as well as Educational Administration and Health Services. Another point worth noting is that the records show that the computer courses, with predominant female participation, are mostly paid for by the individuals themselves. On the other hand, courses for which participants are mostly nominated by their respective offices are dominated by males, rather than female participants. A glance at the enrolment figures for Negotiation skills, Principles and Practices of Internal Auditing, Financial Management for Non-Financial Managers and Business Executives and Development of Small Scale Enterprises shows that gender inequalities continue to exist through the educational system. This explains the unfulfillment of female strategic occupational interests.

#### **6.4 POPULATION IN EMPLOYMENT**

In Sierra Leone, like many developing countries, ten years is taken as the minimum working age and is used as bench mark in the population censuses. A study of the 1988/89 Labour Force Survey Report had the following findings:

- Sixty per cent of employed people were engaged in agriculture and its related activities of hunting and fishing. In this rural area activity, women were seen to out number men.
- The second dominant occupation was production, transport equipment operators and related workers congregated mainly in the mining areas. In these occupations and industry men outnumber women.
- The third major occupation - trade and sales workers, is the dominant occupation in large towns, but the second and third major occupation in the small towns and rural areas respectively. The number of women working in that occupation and similar industries were twice as many as that of men. Thus the marketing business, especially in the towns, is mainly controlled by women.

Persons with occupations such as professional and technical workers including teachers, administration and managerial workers were employed mainly in the large towns. Of the 46 thousand professional and technical workers, 31.2 thousand are males and 14.8 thousand are females. Workers in administrative and managerial positions account for 2.5 thousand and out of that number 2.3 thousand are males. Only 0.2 thousand are females.

Another salient point revealed by the distribution of employed persons by sex and employment status was that the majority of them were unpaid family

workers or own account workers employed mainly in agriculture and related enterprises, particularly in the rural areas. Of the number of paid employees, 131.5 thousand were men and only 33.2 thousand were women. In a nutshell, it could be asserted that even though the number of women in employment is higher than men, more males than females are in the formal sector and the number of women-paid employees is far below the number of men in paid employment.

### **6.5 SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

Sierra Leone is a poor country and in 1990 was listed in the UNDP index as one of the least developed nations. There is a national and institutional crisis in all areas of basic human needs; housing, health, education and welfare. The convergence of the crisis on the state, the infrastructure and the citizens generates at the same time a moral and social crisis. Corruption and crime have become alternative strategies for subsistence in the rural as well as the urban areas.

The population of Sierra Leone is made up of seventeen major ethnic groups. The Temne and the Mende are the largest groups comprising each of about 30 per cent of the total population. All the others are considerably smaller. The Krios are descendants of freed slaves from the United States, Nova Scotia, Jamaica and from recaptured slaves (the liberated Africans); these were slaves mainly from the West African Coast recaptured on the high seas and taken to Freetown as freed men. This settlement attracted a lot of missionary and colonial activity. The Krios consequently have a mixed culture, an amalgamation of West African cultural beliefs and practices but with strong western influences. The Krios having had considerable exposure to the west hold a high premium on education and religion. The mixed nature of their culture is seen clearly in their strong belief in Christianity alongside an equally firm belief in the ancestors. They have a lot of cultural rites and practices on their belief that the ancestors have an influence over their day to day existence.

### **6.6 RELIGION**

Christianity and Islam were introduced to Sierra Leone about 200 years ago. Majority of the population claim to be either Muslims (70%) or Christians (20%). Yet traditional animist religions, said to be 10 per cent, are probably more common than estimated. Islam is concentrated mainly in the north.

Christianity is found mainly among the Krios and the southern regions of the country. All three religions give leadership role to men and supportive role to women. This is quite marked in the Muslim religion where women and men to date are not allowed to sit together in their place of worship.

#### **6.7 TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

Traditional societies and organized groups are integral aspects of the socio-cultural existence of all ethnic cultural groups in Sierra Leone. They sanction behaviour in almost every sphere of life and function both as adjuncts to the political systems and as a strong mechanism for socio-cultural change. Two important societies are the Poro (male society) and Bondo or Sande (female society). The roles of the different traditional societies are summarized by Kenneth Little under four main headings:

1. General Education, in the sense of social and vocational training and indoctrination in social attitudes.
2. Regulation of sexual conduct.
3. Supervision of political and economic affairs.
4. Operation of various social services ranging from medical treatment to forms of entertainment and recreation.

#### **6.8 MARRIAGE**

There are four forms of accepted legal marriages in Sierra Leone. Christian and Civil Marriages are monogamous, Muslim and Customary marriages are polygamous. The majority of marriages are according to the customs and practices of particular ethnic cultural groups. The dowry or simply termed 'marriage payment' is one of the essential requirements for a valid customary marriage. Radcliffe-Brown defines the marriage payment as 'a kind of consideration by means of which the transfer (of the wife to the husband) is formally and legally made.' It is seen as compensation to the bride's family for the labour, the domestic and reproductive services she will render to her husband and his lineage. This payment including any subsequent gifts is required to be returned to the husband if the marriage is dissolved. The Christian and civil marriages are very western-oriented. However, all marriages do have, at least, a symbolic consideration which is given to the bride's family.

## 6.9 THE FAMILY

The term family usually refers to members of the extended family which includes kinsmen of two or more generations linked by blood or marriage, living in the same household. Although the traditional family structure is deeply and widely embedded in Sierra Leone Society, western education, modernization and urbanisation have eroded that structure in some places and there is a trend towards the nuclear family. However, the poverty in the society keeps people still deeply involved in the responsibilities of the extended family.

## 6.10 MALE-FEMALE INTER-RELATIONSHIP

Sierra Leone is a patriarchal society. Traditionally, power and authority in the family is vested in the father or oldest male relative who is the head of the family. Decisions within the home are normally made by him. Men are expected to be bread winners and women are expected to play a supportive role focusing on reproduction and domestic responsibilities. The dominance of the male can be clearly seen in all the three forms of laws of inheritance-civil, muslim, and traditional. All these put the woman in a vulnerable position. Most marked, is the customary law of inheritance where if a man dies intestate not only can his wife not inherit any of his property but she herself is property to be inherited. However, more current interpretations of the law in some areas have set precedents which do not necessitate an inflexible application of this law.

Historically, women and men have led varying roles in decision-making and varying access to and control over resources and benefits. In pre-colonial times both women and men had status in traditional secret societies and access to informal and formal types of education and health care. Land was generally controlled by chiefs and distributed to men, meaning women had access to, but no control over it. Similarly women may have been consulted in decision-making but men were the primary decision makers. Moreover, decisions made independently in both men's societies were binding on the whole community.

However, despite this male dominance, there were few female chiefs in pre-colonial times. In a few and isolated cases, women were able to take on policy and decision-making positions. The earliest and most notable being Madam Yoko who was termed by an important Sierra Leonean Historian Arthur Abraham as "an eminent show piece". Madam Yoko in the late 1800s reigned

in Mende land Southern Sierra Leone as paramount Chief. I quote Arthur Abraham on her reign "Women could never be suzera in pre-colonial Mende land i.e. they could not wield the ultimate political power over a state only; Madam Yoko had a "tenuous authority". Abraham goes on to say that "women, as heads of towns are not uncommon and there is no denying that they held such minor posts of political authority over the Mende". The quotes clearly show the strong patriarchal nature of a society which does not entertain a woman to hold any major political position. Arthur Abraham's thesis in fact argues that it was only the influence of colonialism that gave the extra control which enabled Madam Yoko to maintain this position. It may also be noted that legend has it that Madam Yoko had to almost literally turn herself to a man by some ritual process to maintain her position.

However, with colonialism and modern times, to a certain extent, women's status has declined in part because the new system brought reduced status for secret societies through which women traditionally gained their status. In more recent times, women have been able to get some amount of economic independence. They have been able to maintain independent farms, sell certain crops and enter into social obligations and debt. Many women have also gone into small business. As the figures indicate, more women are attaining high levels of education and getting high-ranking jobs. This progress is still within a back drop of a male-dominant socio-cultural milieu. The male dominant society affects the ambition, and the general mobility of women. For example, The African extended family system which expects women to have as many children as possible; the male-dominated society which leads women to hide their talents; and the unwritten rule that highly accomplished women diminish their marketability in terms of marriage.

## CHAPTER 7

### 7.1 THE ECONOMY

Sierra Leone has a relatively open economy. Agriculture and mining are the principal sectors, accounting for 30 per cent and 13 per cent of the GDP. Nearly 65 per cent of the population depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood. Mining in contrast, provides a livelihood for fewer than 5 per cent of the population. Agriculture, primarily coffee and cocoa, and mining primarily diamonds, rutile and bauxite, account for all exports. Although some import substituting industries exist, employing about 10 per cent of the labour force, the manufacturing sector is small. Most manufactured goods are imported.

Between 1962 and 1972, the first decade of independence, production and income rose impressively. GDP grew nearly 5 per cent a year, foreign exchange earnings were adequate and public revenue grew satisfactorily. After 1972, however, diamond output declined, oil prices increased sharply and the price of manufactured imports grew. The prices of cocoa and coffee also fell. The government budget went deep into deficit and its heavy borrowing especially to finance the hosting of the OAU Conference in 1980 further widened this deficit. During the first half of the 1980s, exports and imports were rapidly declining. The SDR value of exports in 1982/83 was only 50 per cent of the value in 1979/80. As a result draconian fiscal policies adopted by the government in 1982/83 and 1983/84, as conditions for economic stabilisation programmes that accompanied the IMF'S standby credit, were approved in February 1984. In 1985/86 performance was mixed, with some sectors showing growth and others declining. Aggregate GDP declined at an average rate of 1 per cent. Sectors that showed growth were agriculture (2.1%), mining (1.7%), financial (4.4%), government (8.6%) and others (7.5%). Sectors that showed decline were construction (14%), trade (2.1%) and transport (3.4%). Figures quoted by UNICEF State of the World's Children Report reflect a very bleak economic picture in 1990; the per capita GNP was \$240.

The state of the country's economy then has been far from satisfactory since the 1980s. The country has been suffering from galloping inflation and slow infrastructural development. Unfortunately, Sierra Leone's economy is subject to several constraints. Most agricultural production is for subsistence,

but rice has had to be imported despite the fertility of the land. Exports are confined to diamonds, coffee, rutile, bauxite and cocoa. The export of some agricultural products being adversely affected by the current rebel incursion. Blatant corruption and misappropriation of government funds have heightened the poor economic state over the years. Sierra Leone suffers from serious shortage of high and middle level professional, managerial and technical manpower. This is related to the sharp erosion of incomes and wages due to the economic deterioration, especially in the past decade. Consequently, emigration of skilled workers has been high. In addition, high levels of illiteracy and low skills development also constrained productive activities. A combination of the rapid devaluation and high inflationary trend has virtually wiped out real incomes. Indeed at current wage or income levels most residents find it difficult to meet their needs of even basic foods-rice, palm oil and fish. The burden of the deteriorating economy is, however, not felt equally by the different sectors of the population. Disparities in income appear to be increasing, especially in urban areas where the small middle class is becoming progressively impoverished. Vulnerable groups including women, have been hardest hit by the poor economic situation.

Government, in addressing the deplorable state of the economy, agreed with the IMF to adopt a Structural Adjustment Programme in 1992/93, based on the policy framework paper of August 1990. The objectives of the Structural Adjustment Programme include:

- i Creating macro-economic stability, particularly lowering inflation, to facilitate sustainable growth.
- ii Restoring the government's capacity to provide basic services
- ii Creating the conducive economic institutional and regulatory environment for private sector development.
- iv Bringing social problems and poverty issues to the forefront of national policy agenda and incorporating concrete actions to directly address poverty and the impact of SAP on vulnerable social groups.

## **7.2 LOCATING WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY**

Women in Sierra Leone are indeed a vulnerable social group and in fact are hardest hit by the deplorable economic situation. Even though they constitute 51.3% of the active population, under-employment and disguised unemployment are pronounced among the female labour force. Women work predominantly in the informal sector activities requiring little or no skills. This is, in large part,

due to their low educational attainment which limits their access to wage employment, particularly in managerial, professional and technical highly-paid jobs. Females constitute about 36.6 per cent of employees in the formal sector and 22 per cent of public sector employment. They account for 40.5 per cent of clerical workers category and only 8 per cent of administrative and managerial cadre in the labour force. Traditional beliefs have led to various forms of discrimination in the labour force and private sector coupled with low levels of education have hindered the contribution of women.

Most rural-based women (81%) are involved in agricultural activities. However, heavy workload and limited access to labour-saving technology affect their productivity. The additional risks of child-bearing is manifested in high maternal mortality rate, estimated at 45 per thousand. Thus, the majority of child-bearing rural women suffer from malnutrition, preventable diseases and poverty. They are in fact reflected in high infant mortality rates and malnutrition.

Females are also dominant in informal distributive trade and catering services, particularly in urban areas. However, lack of access to adequate sources of capital for most of them hampers the expansion of their business. Only a minute fraction of the female population is considered as having no economic activity outside of the home. There can be no doubt as to the contribution women make to the country's economy but they still remain a vulnerable social group. Government has been implementing social actions under the Structural Adjustment Programme and Poverty Alleviation measures largely through NGO's, Social groups, and United Nations agencies, namely UNICEF, WHO, WFP, among others, and their activities include special programmes for women (focusing on skills formation, credit and inputs to facilitate their access in asset-holding and productive activities). On the other hand, however, the public sector retrenchment required by the Structural Adjustment Programme will definitely spell adverse repercussions for females who constitute 22% of public sector employment.

## CHAPTER 8

### POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN SIERRA LEONE

#### 8.1 HISTORY OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Sierra Leone is now ruled by a military regime following a military coup in April 1992. However, the country has lived through a series of political systems. It became independent in April 1961. After independence, Sierra Leone was a multi-party state with the Prime Minister coming from the party with majority of seats in Parliament. There was always an opposition party. The two most important parties were the All Peoples' Congress Party (APC) and Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP). The All Peoples' Congress Party won the elections but was overthrown by a military coup. The National Reformation Council was in power for one year when another coup displaced them in 1968. The Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement took the reigns of power in April 1968. They formed a National Interim Council whose aim was to return the country to civilian rule in the shortest time possible. On the 26th April 1968, a fifteen-man cabinet, with the APC party getting the highest number was formed and Sierra Leone was returned to civilian rule.

During the period preceding the regimes described above, only one woman Paramount Chief from the South was represented in Parliament. The period 1969 to 1971 was dominated by the uncertain progress towards republicanism in Sierra Leone. There was strong opposition - fear that it would bring dictatorial executive presidency with it. There was a coup scare in 1971 in which the Prime Minister's life was threatened. This gave rise to a high public demand for constitutional change. After much debate Sierra Leone was declared a republic on the 19th April 1971, with the Chief Justice acting as ceremonial President. On the 20th the Premier was sworn in as the first executive President of Sierra Leone. During the period 1970-73 the President perceived the APC as a unifying party which would mark the end of tribalism and sectionalism. The party made use of youths and women to build its membership and strengthen its holds on the nation.

The APC party won the 1973 election by a margin virtually making Sierra Leone into a de-facto one-party country. The era 1973 to 1977 saw the unification of the country continue together with isolated instances of social unrest. During this period the APC Women's Organization together with the

Youth League became very active. The success at the 1977 elections heralded the inevitable in the political system as the call for one party intensified. On the 24th May 1978, a referendum was submitted to Parliament and on 5th to 12th June received a 97 per cent assent of the electorate. The role of women has been of vital importance despite their few representation in Parliament. The wives of some of the party's founders were very active in promoting the work of the party.

Although the role of women in developing countries is often erroneously considered unimportant; their opinions, needs and even welfare being largely ignored, yet in Sierra Leone, women have played a supportive role that has often transcended their position to play an active part in the party's development. They demonstrated their wrath against the party's opposition and protested violently when the need arose. But the admirable achievements of the Women's Emancipation Movement in Sierra Leone, which brought women to the fore front of public life was done in cooperation with the men. It was this cooperation which started the fourteen-year rule of the All Peoples' Congress in 1978.

The early period of APC rule can be described as an era of improved GNP and a stable economic system. Cost of living was low and salaries were commensurate with this; the foreign exchange rate was Le2.25 cents to \$1 United States dollar and Le6.00 (six leones) to 1 (one pound sterling). A bag of rice was less than Le10. There was increased school enrolment and teacher training. Enrolment rose from 112 000 in 1970 to 223 000 in 1979. Student intake into the teachers colleges also went up from 1 000 in 1970 to 1 600 in 1979 (Source: Primary and Secondary Division Department of Education). Gradual improvements were made in the areas of higher education and health. Foreign allegiance were also made.

The hosting of the OAU in 1980 marked a sudden decline. Sierra Leone became wrought with a lot of social and economic problems. A steady decline of our economy was characterized by gross mismanagement of natural resources and a steady drop in the development of our social services that gained us the position of least developed country in the world. It was this prolonged decline and breakdown in our economy caused by corruption, indiscipline, tribalism, nepotism and injustice of the APC government, that led to a Military Coup in April 1992. The National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) took the reigns of government. Under this new regime the Ministries become State Departments, the Ministers, Secretaries of State. There is a Supreme Advisory Council. The

National Advisory Council, among other things, will advise the NPRC on a return to civilian rule. The Head of State is the Chairman and he is assisted, by the Deputy Chairman. The NPRC set, as its major objectives:

- 1 Bringing the rebel war to a speedy conclusion;
- 2 Maintenance of law and order;
- 3 Eradication of corruption, mismanagement, indiscipline, tribalism, nepotism and poverty, so as to create a sound basis for the speedy introduction of a multi-party system with its commitment to good governance, accountability and respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights.
- 4 Commitment to implementing the IMF programme.

In an administrative listing released after the coup, five out of the seventeen permanent secretaries were women raising the original number by three. There are no women in the Supreme Council of State. The Council also appointed a number of women as chairpersons of Boards of Parastatals. In 1993 when a female was appointed as Under Secretary of State in the Department of Education; she has now been promoted, Secretary of State, in the Education Department.

## **8.2 SIERRA LEONE'S IDEOLOGY**

Foreign observers and even many Sierra Leoneans have often wondered on what ideology Sierra Leone's political system is based. Before the All People's Congress one party rule, one could almost say it was Democracy. The spirit of one man, one vote was overtly respected. Modern capitalist free enterprise was one time practised in Sierra Leone. After APC took over the reigns of power anything from "traditionalism", "paternalism", to "benevolent empiricism" was declared according to where the political wind was blowing. Some claimed that Sierra Leone had no political ideology. Sierra Leone, like many of its African counterparts was prone to adopt and adapt ideologies fashionable in the western world, regardless of how successful they were in the countries they operated. It has been the style for African Politicians to appropriate political philosophies and economic doctrines belonging to the western world. Thus, we can say that Sierra Leone like its many African counterparts, have moved from parliamentary democracy, to totalitarian nationalism to European/Chinese socialism to a marxist culture.

Sierra Leone has a reputation of floating through these various ideologies without really adopting them to any full blown proportion. Its leaders were noted

for adapting a pragmatic approach of government. It followed a philosophy that was tailor-made to the needs and aspirations of the Sierra Leonean people taking into consideration its historical background and its many political and socio-economic problems. The APC government therefore defined its main ideological aims as the welfare of all the people of Sierra Leone within the framework of social justice, dignity, security and personal freedom. It further recognized that this aim involved the development of a sound educational and health system, improved public facilities, full employment, increased productivity and the efficient use of its natural resources.

If, in its last days, the All People's Congress Party government failed to fulfil its own laid down aims and objectives, it could be attributed to the selfishness and greed of its leaders. The ideology of the new NPRC regime has not yet been identified. But judging from their few but highly noted accomplishments, one can conclude that they are trying to implement the very good aim of "pragmatic nationalism" so openly preached by the All People's Congress regime but never implemented. In Sierra Leone, the attention given to women's issues at national level could be attributed in part to the work of International Organizations and the United Nations in particular. The role of women in Sierra Leone since pre-colonial times, was deemed inferior to that of men. They were seen as unimportant and their opinions, needs and welfare were largely ignored. Certain historians like Dr. Gustav Deveneux, however, argue to the contrary, citing the case of Madam Yoko, a powerful female Paramount Chief in the South of the country during the second half of the nineteenth century. As he aptly puts it:

Pre-colonial traditions, while stressing women's special role in child-bearing..... never discriminated against women. The history of such characters as Mammy Yoko showed that women could be entrusted with the highest authority.

He further argues that of all the traditions to which Sierra Leone has been exposed, only Islam seemed to be a limiting influence on women. What he fails to realise, however, is that one cannot use an isolated case as Mammy Yoko as a yardstick for determining the plight of Sierra Leone women in general. It was common place, for women to have less income, less leisure, less protection and rights to property and civil and political liberties. In short, they were to be seen and not heard.

With the advent of the British and the imposition of Colonial rule, the

role of the Sierra Leone women did not significantly change. Even though there were no laws discriminating against women joining any profession, they continued to be under-privileged and vulnerable due to the traditional male-dominant attitude. The Second World War had its repercussions on Sierra Leone in general and the women folk in particular. A good number of women in the urban areas had entered the formal labour force in the 1940's and at the end of the war were instrumental to agitating for an improved economic status. In 1951, over 20 000 women demonstrated against the high cost of living and they received satisfactory results. The following year a Women's Traders Cooperative Society was established and they started printing a Women's newspaper, "Madora". In 1953, the Sierra Leone Women's Movement sprang up from the Women's Traders Cooperative Movement and was officially registered in the Law Courts of Sierra Leone. The nature of their task was, however, limited to social welfare work such as tending to the disabled. But in their first annual convention in 1956, they decided to expand their programme to include agitation for Women's Rights. Their activities were, however, confined to Freetown and therefore had very little or no impact on the Government and the populace as a whole. The result was that women were still seen as an insignificant group in the country. The situation was such that as late as 1957, there was only one woman in Parliament, appointed to represent one of twelve chiefdoms.

Sierra Leone's independence in 1961 hardly ushered in a new crop of honours for women. On the contrary they came to be increasingly used by the menfolk for their own selfish ends. Politics was one area in which women played an increasing role, especially in the All People's Congress (APC) party era (1967 to 1992). The Women's Wing of the party was a significant influence at election time, as the President Dr. Siaka Stevens himself acknowledged in 1973. The role of the Women's Wing of the party was two-fold. It influenced policy and mobilised support. One would then argue that theirs was a purely supportive role. In short it was an issue of women being manipulated to get women's votes.

An important stimulus to female representation in various spheres of life came in the wake of 1975 when the United Nations declared the year a women's year. Shortly after, President Stevens called on the Women's Wing of his party not to confine their activities to politics but to involve themselves in commerce and community development. The declaration by the United Nations, of the years 1976 to 1985 as Women's decade, further activated a national focus on

women in Sierra Leone. Seminars became important means of activating women's skills and talents. In 1976, a five-day Pan African Women's Seminar was held in Freetown on the Theme: "Integration of African Women in National Development". In addition, Workshops, Seminars, Women's Associations and Groups increased rapidly with corresponding Women in Development Projects, mainly sponsored by NGOs. A national umbrella Organization, National Organization of Women (NOW) was formed to coordinate women's activities. The period was thus one of advocacy, visibility and empowerment for women.

As a result, Government began to give lip service by placing women's affairs on the political agenda. Hence when the Women's Bureau was set up in 1988, it was located within the Ministry of Social Welfare, Rural Development and Youth. The Bureau was set up in response to both regional and international declarations. On the 11th December 1988, the Sierra Leone Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The Sierra Leone Cabinet on the 26th of September 1990, approved a 'Draft National Policy for Women in Sierra Leone'. Among the principles outlined in this policy are:

- 1) "Government will implement principles in the Commonwealth Plan of Action adopted by Commonwealth Heads of Governments Vancouver, October 1987".
- 2) "Government regards education and re-orientation as central to the process of developing ... and ensuring more control and equitable sharing of resources.
- 3) "Government is committed to implementing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women, which it ratified in 1988".

How far Government is committed to implementing the principles is yet to be seen. Numerous women associations and organizations sprang up in the last decade. A survey conducted on Women's Organizations in the country, in 1988, identified 339 of them. Forty per cent of these were affiliated to an international organization. Those linked with international or religious bodies did so mainly because of finance, supervision, technical assistance and aid packages. Some of the organizations have acted as pressure groups to bring about change for women particularly at the grassroots. Others do function rather loosely in an adhoc manner. Others address the practical needs of women, but not, as Juliet Dworzak puts it "Their Strategic Interest", such as the lack of

assertiveness, knowledge of rights etc. However, all of the organizations surveyed were service or community development based; none stated their objectives as the advancement of women in management. These developments therefore have had little direct influence on Women in Top Management.

### **8.3 HISTORY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM**

Until 1992, the structure of the Public Sector Administration was patterned under a ministerial system with the President as the Chief Executive and Head of Government presiding over the cabinet. After each general election, the President appointed two Vice Presidents to assist him and other ministers. Supporting the politicians, were secretaries, deputy secretaries and heads of departments. Each ministry has a professional and an administrative wing. The administrative wing is headed by the Permanent Secretary. The organizational structure of the public service is set out in three parts. First there is the legislative Function vested in and exercisable by Parliament. Then there is the Judicial Function vested in and exercisable by the Courts and thirdly, there is the Executive Power of the State vested in and exercisable by the President directly or through cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, parliamentary special assistants or public officers.

There are local governments which are supervised through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Local government administration is legally constituted through ordinances passed before independence and by acts enacted after independence. For the purpose of administration, the country was divided into three regions, the Western Area being administered by the Freetown City Council, Rural Area Councils, and the Tribal Administration in Freetown. The Northern, Southern, and Eastern Provinces each with its own headquarter town. The Local Government Administration in the provinces formally called the protectorate were administered by ordinances assisted by district, chiefdom and town councils established in 1947. Their functions were to promote development of the districts and seek the welfare of their people. They were financed from revenues collected, government grants, corporate investment profits, loans and aids. These councils were suspended in 1974 by the former APC government under the Local Authorities Miscellaneous Act of 1965. Other committees include the Budget Advisory Committee responsible for preparing the budget, the Public Accounts Committee in charge of reviewing financial reports and the Accountant General responsible for investigating any anomalies that may arise as and when necessary.

#### **8.4 LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING WOMEN**

When women think of the law and the legal system, they tend to think of courts, lawyers, judges and the police, all imposing institutions that are very alien to their world and completely out of their reach. However, women need to change this perception. They need to educate themselves about how the legal system works and to advocate for change where these seem discriminatory. To make sense of the legal system, it is necessary to understand its structure, its substance, the attitudes of people towards it and the customary law that governs it. The "structure" refers to the administration and practice of the formal legal system and includes all the personnel and apparatus needed for upholding the law. "Substance" refers to the actual content of the law, i.e. all those laws and policies that make up a country's constitution and found in the books. They set out the guidelines to which lawyers, judges, courts and law enforcement agencies operate. Laws which particularly affect women are those pertaining to marriage, divorce, custody of children, ownership of property and employment, to name a few. People's attitude influences the structure and substance of the law. The acceptance of discriminatory practices affect the way lawyers and judges practice the law and how it is enforced. People who are not part of the law always view the law as complex and beyond their understanding.

Customary law is a very powerful force in many countries, even where a formal legal system is firmly in place. It is women who are discriminated against by these laws, because they deal most often with such things as family relations, marriage, divorce, child custody, land and property rights. These systems are often administered side by side with statutory law and can affect the legal system substantially. Sierra Leone has always functioned under a legal system that was inherited from our British colonial masters. Most of the laws and legislations in operation are out-dated and are in some cases discriminatory to the female populace. It is governed by the 1978 constitution which was suspended after the 1992 coup d'etat. The next few paragraphs will outline a few of the laws and rules which affect women in Sierra Leone. One of the major ones is that of Family Law.

Family law in Sierra Leone operates under a three - tier system namely - General Law, Islamic Law and Customary Law, and each has repercussions that are discriminatory to the women. The direct areas of the law which have

serious implications or controversies are those pertaining to marriage, divorce, maintenance, contract and tort, property and succession. All of these, except contract and tort, will be discussed.

In Sierra Leone a lawful marriage is contracted in four ways namely:

- a. Under Mohammedan Act (Muslim Law)
- b. Under Civil Act
- c. Under Christian Marriage Act and
- d. Under Customary Law.

Under Christian and Civil Marriage Act there is complete equality of sexes with regard to the essential requirements for a valid marriage. Marriage under them is monogamous. Marriage under Mohammedan Act is in accordance with Islamic law whereby a man can have up to four wives concurrently provided equality can be maintained among them. Customary law allows for an unlimited number of wives at the same time, and therefore can be discriminatory. In the case of divorce under Civil and Christian marriage law both partners can divorce each other with sufficient grounds. Under Islamic law both husband and wife can divorce each other giving sufficient reasons; but since all arbitrators are male, the wife stands disadvantaged.

In Customary law, if a wife leaves her husband, she should wait for a period of six months to two years before divorcing him. During this time the common occurrence is for the husband to divorce her thus depriving the wife of her right and advantage of divorcing the husband. Divorce by unilateral repudiation of the wife is available to the husband but not the wife. Marriage payments are refundable to the husband and he is entitled to custody of the children. It can be seen therefore that, as regards marital law, the woman has very limited rights as regards the ways the various marriages are contracted and how these contracts can be broken when the relationship becomes uncomfortable. In the case of Islamic law other wives can be taken if equality is guaranteed. But this is seldom the case. In the case of customary law repayment of bride price is enforced regardless of services rendered to the marriage. And in the case of civil marriage a strong case must be proven before divorce can be granted the wife. A look will now be taken at how the maintenance law act affects women in Sierra Leone.

## **8.5 LAW GOVERNING MAINTENANCE**

In all four systems, it is the legal responsibility of the husband to maintain his wife. Legal sanctions for handling this breach are different. In

customary law the only remedy is divorce. The Muslim wife can also divorce her husband on the grounds of failure to maintain her. Non-maintenance is not a ground for divorce under general law. There are other remedies under general law available to the wife married under Christian and civil acts and to some extent, to the Muslim wife but these are in such water-tight compartments that few women seek to use them. Both in common law and statutory law, except in matrimonial causes, a wife's right to maintenance depends on her fidelity to her husband regardless of his own conduct.

### **8.6 LAW GOVERNING OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY**

Matrimonial property in Sierra Leone is fraught with confusion in that for some purpose the form of marriage contracted by the spouse is relevant, while for others it is the personal law of each spouse that determines the acquisition and disposition of his or her property. The two laws which govern ownership of property in Sierra Leone are Customary Law and General Law. In traditional society, under customary law, the woman does not own property independent of her husband. Everything in the household including the wife belongs to the husband. In present times, there is a liberal minority which claims that the wife is free to dispose of property she acquires by commercial venture to which her husband did not contribute. But in many parts of the provinces the traditional notion still persists. Customary law therefore paints a grim picture of the wife in regard to property.

General law provides that a woman can hold and dispose of property independently of her husband. Before the 1933 Act, equity recognized the wife's "separate estate" comprising property given to her by the husband or outsiders for her "sole and separate use", and the doctrine of restraint upon anticipation whereby property could be given to her in a will or by a settlement with a clause preventing her from alienating the property whilst allowing her to receive the income therefrom.

1858, 1875, 1881 and 1887 statutory reforms in Sierra Leone respectively, improved the wife's independent means. The 1858 Act, extended the concept of the wife's separate property to any property she acquired during the period of judicial separation. The 1875 Act conferred on her an independent beneficial interest in monies accruing from her separate property during cohabitation and outside it. The United Kingdom conveyancing Act 1881 afforded her absolute ownership of gifts given her by her husband. The Intestate

Estates Act 1887, in abolishing her right of dower, also did away with the husband's tenancy of courtesy. There is a difference of opinion over the 1932 statutes on property in the lower courts usually resolved in the supreme court. It must be noted that the law on ownership of property is more lenient as different statutory acts allow the woman free ownership of property regardless of her marital status. Where the property law poses discrimination is on succession to property (discussed in the next section).

### **8.7 LAW ON SUCCESSION TO PROPERTY**

In all three laws in Sierra Leone, the position of the married woman is inferior to that of the husband, in the event of either spouse dying intestate. Under General Law, the wife is entitled to one-half of the residue of the husband's estate if there is no issue but one-third in the presence of a child or children. In either case if it is the wife who dies, the widower gets the whole residue of her estate.

In Islamic law, the wife, as a Quoranic heir, succeeds to one-eighth or one-quarter of the husband's estate depending on the presence or absence of descendants. In similar circumstances, the male spouse relative takes one-quarter or one-half as the case may be. According to Islamic law, even for the sake of administering estate, males are preferred to females. However, the Islamic Marriage Act No. 10, 1988 has made a slight change in the case where the husband can/has made a will.

Under customary law, the general rule is that a widow is not only disentitled to the late husband's estate but that she herself is an inheritance. This is the concept of widow inheritance. On the death of the husband, the widow is expected to marry from within her deceased husband's family, but most widows now-a-days are reluctant to do so. Some tribes such as Limba, Loko and Susu allow for freedom to re-marry whomever she chooses or to remain single. But the Mendes and some tribes in the Southern part of the country demand that she should marry from amongst her deceased husband's family, otherwise the marriage consideration and other payments must be refunded. In 1963, cabinet over-ruled, that a widow must be free to re-marry any man of her choice without obligation to refund the marriage payments.

From the above discussions it can be seen that the law is not perfect. In the area of divorce, the law is so static as to become anachronistic. In another area of maintenance it does not exactly meet the needs of those for whom it is intended. In the third category of marriage and divorce under Islamic and

Customary Law, and Inheritance of Property under the tripartite system, it is unjust to women.

With regards to justice, whatever were the reasons the legal pundits of England, Arabia and Sierra Leone of years gone by might have had for relegating women to an inferior position, the modern world demands that justice in humanity calls for treating men and women as equals. This call is epitomized in the work of the United Nations for the promotion and advancement of women.

It is therefore hoped that the Law reform Commission in Sierra Leone will speed up its task of reforming the laws of this country and making recommendations that will raise the laws governing women's rights to the level of near perfection. The next category of laws to be examined will be those affecting employment.

#### 8.8 LAWS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT

Women in Sierra Leone have the same constitutional rights and freedom as men. The constitution guarantees that all citizens, without discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, shall have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment. It also provides that conditions of service and work are fair, just and humane and that there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, and that adequate and satisfactory remuneration is paid to all persons in employment. Women have always been treated equally where the employment laws are concerned as is reflected in their attainment to positions of high responsibility since independence. They have occupied posts such as Ministers of Government, Judges, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Department, Principals of schools and so on. However subtle discrimination in effect has served a serious stumbling block to women generally. The labour laws of Sierra Leone prohibit employment of women in mines below the ground, at night and in industrial undertakings. It states specially that,

"No girl or woman of any age, shall be employed in or allowed to be for the purpose of employment in any mine below ground" (Laws of Sierra Leone 1960, Vol. I page 2215) and also:

"No girl or woman of any age ... who appears to be under eighteen years of age shall be employed during the night in any branch thereof, other than an undertaking in which only members of the same family are employed". (Laws of Sierra Leone 1960 Vol. I, page 2216).

Although there are no laid down laws that are discriminatory or detrimental to the employment and upward mobility of women, yet unhidden detrimental laws exist in some institutions that have a negative effect on women, viz-a-viz some areas, such as medical care and housing.

## **8.9 INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

The twentieth century can be termed the women's century. It is the century that saw women all over the world advance into areas that were predominantly male domains. The two world wars brought them out of their protective home roost and changed their roles from private home maker to public servant. Yet their potential for development is not being put to full use. They are still being suppressed and have to cope with their multiple roles. If a nation is to become well-developed, all its citizens and their potentials must be harnessed for development. To achieve this, governments must make desperate and deliberate efforts to create a conducive and viable environment for the self actualization of its women.

Despite all the various United Nations Conventions and Decade, the Nairobi Women's Conference and the Forward Looking Strategies, government has still to be sensitized to the needs of their women folk and to double their efforts to help advance and promote their status. In the last two decades gender issues have been promoted internationally and nationally. On the international scene, in 1979 the General Assembly adopted the conventions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, a document binding all states to take:

appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing their exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom on the basis of equality with men.

Sierra Leone ratified this convention on December 11, 1988 with the hope of redressing the problems faced by women in playing their various societal roles.

On the national scene, the Sierra Leone government, since colonial times, has had limited adhoc affirmative action by stressing on the provision of educational access for girls in the south through the opening of the Harford Secondary School in 1908. They also sent three women for administrative training in 1956 and these ended up being appointed principals of prominent girls secondary schools. The aforementioned international focus on women has

influenced government policy favourably. Another positive move made to help alleviate some of the injustices against women, was the setting up of a Women's Bureau in the Department of Rural Development, Social Services and Youth in 1988. This bureau is the official and national body responsible for coordinating, supervising, monitoring and evaluating the integration of women in development at local, regional and national levels. All non-governmental organizations concerned with the welfare of women in Sierra Leone are registered with the Bureau.

Its main objective is to integrate women into the national development process and to improve their socio-economic status. Its function is to advise government on all matters relating to the status of women; to act as a central source of information; to ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It further initiates and executes projects for the benefit of women and ensures the eradication of female illiteracy. It creates a forum whereby women can be educated on their civil and legal rights and responsibilities.

An affirmative move made by the bureau to formulate a national policy for women which was ratified by cabinet in 1991. The National Policy adopted all policies laid down in the various ratified conventions. Among its many objectives were, to sensitize members of the public on gender issues and their implications for overall national development. It will further pressure government to increase women's access to educational facilities thereby reducing the high drop-out rates. This policy document, like most documents, is full of valuable objectives; They include:

- To sensitize members of the public on gender issues and development of the nation. Government will undertake and support public awareness programmes on gender issues in educational institutions, places of employment and in communities, using different media such as radio, newspapers, video films, mobile film units, traditional songs, dances, drama and television.
- To lobby for more women to be given executive and other positions in the Civil Service commensurate with their acquired competence, government needs the efficient cooperation of the public sector to ensure that women fill a number of posts especially at the higher levels. Government, in collaboration with organizations and development agencies, will also undertake to provide appropriate training facilities

including on-the-job training to ensure that women acquire the necessary expertise and experience for effective performance.

To provide basic amenities especially, electricity, water supply, fuel for cooking and transportation, so as to ensure that women perform their multiple roles in the home, and in income-generating activities more effectively. The government will accelerate its promotion and development of appropriate technology for use in these tasks, particularly in rural areas, publicise their use to women, make them readily available throughout the country at prices which women can afford and train women in the use and maintenance of these devices. Particular attention will be paid to appropriate technology in farming and food preparation.

To increase and improve child-care facilities including day-care, nurseries and creches with a view to minimising the detrimental effects on the health and quality of life of women and children and to improve their standard of living.

To increase the appointment of women in decision and policy making bodies in government and parastatals; women with a potential for leadership will be promoted to membership in the public and private sectors.

To encourage increased women's participation in politics and their ultimate integration in the decision and policy making bodies. The government will seek to increase their participation as policy and decision makers at national, district and local levels, including membership of parliament.

But the Bureau is hard pressed to implement these policies due to resource constraints and lack of political will. Although government had good intentions in setting up this bureau, beyond that, not much had been done in carrying out its many coordination, monitoring and evaluating roles. These will have serious implications for the implementation of ratified policies such as training and sensitization of men and women on gender issues. This will also hinder identification of problems and their solutions in this regard. Another positive move has been the establishment of female desk officers in the various Departments (Ministries) to collaborate with the Women's Bureau in promoting all issues relating to gender and to advise government on how to advance the status of women. Their role will be to act as conduit for a two-way information flow between the Women's Bureau and the Ministries. They will generate data for public awareness programmes needed at national level to concretise the

efforts of the policy. They will further assist the Women's Bureau by advising on gender implications of policies and programmes within their respective ministries. The head of the Women's Bureau is a member of the recently formed National Advisory Council of the NPRC government. A recent study, however, revealed that all these organizations charged with the responsibility of promoting and advancing the status of women, are under-financed and under-staffed. As a result, very little progress has been made.

Various women organizations have been formed to enhance and promote women within the Sierra Leone community. To name a few there is the Women's Association for National Development (WAND) whose objective is to cooperate and collaborate with the government agencies responsible for women's affairs. It also initiates and assists in self-help development projects. The National Organization for Women (NOW) whose main objective is to improve the socio-economic development of its members and to assist the poor and needy. The Association of African Women for Research and Development promotes research into the status of women in Sierra Leone. Zonta is an organization of professional women whose main aim is to promote and encourage high ethical standards in business and to provide out-reach programmes for young girls and women in the community. The Army Wives Cooperative is also an active group of women whose husbands are in the army. Their objectives are to provide medical care, advice and treatment to the poor; to develop through community effort, education, health and economic potential of the community and to generate income through effective use of members' skills and talents for their common good. Another association which helps to promote women in our society is the Rokel Women's Association whose aims are to increase income of its members through self-employment, to encourage the participation of women in decision-making process and to promote the use of appropriate technology for improving the environment.

The university has made some moves in the right direction. It has a Gender Research and Documentation Centre at Fourah Bay College - a constituent college of the University of Sierra Leone. The centre which is affiliated with the University of Birmingham, has, as one of its main goals, the setting up of guidelines for evaluating new courses on Women's Studies. Its development priorities will include assisting the people of Sierra Leone, especially women, to take control of their own lives; enhancing local perceptions of the dignity of womanhood; promoting development alternatives, increasing the

visibility of women's contribution to development and fostering cultural productivity. The challenge is for a more humane and equitable society through the development of women. The centre's broad objectives are:

- The development of a national cadre of personnel qualified in Women's/Gender Studies and capable of contributing specialist knowledge and skills to the implementation of a national policy for women in Sierra Leone.
- The development of strategies aimed at securing government and donor support for a self-sustaining centre.

Among its immediate objectives are to:

- Sensitize the University staff to gender issues in Education and raise awareness of the need for University policy and programme planning in the context of development.
- Empower University staff to conduct educational research on gender issues; research results will eventually serve as input teaching materials for related courses. Facilitate information exchange in-country and internationally by developing relationships with similar units in other African countries such as the Women's Research and Development Centre in Ibadan.
- Develop out-reach programmes for schools
- Carry out evaluation after each complete activity.

The centre plans to organize a lot of short-term preliminary activities such as a gender research workshop for university staff; gender-focused seminar on Maths/Science targeting women and girls and a gender-focused In-service course for primary teachers and Teachers College staff.

If the efforts of all these organizations should yield full benefits to the nation, then government should pay attention to the greater provision of access to all forms of education. It should provide encouragement for parents to send their female children to school and retain them there. Effort should be channelled through relevant adult education programmes and enlightenment campaigns. Drop-out rates, especially of girls, should be reduced. An awareness should be created among parents that, to educate a woman is for the entire nation to benefit and should therefore make a profitable investment on women's education. Although it is making significant progress, the centre is, however, faced with great financial and other resource constraints.

The Institute of Public Administration and Management, another constituent of the Sierra Leone University, in collaboration with Commonwealth

Secretariat, organized an Executive Development Programme for "Senior Women Managers in the West African Sub-Region" in December 1984. The continued low participation of women in the regular management courses at the Institute, together with the IPAM/Commonwealth Secretariat programme, acted as a spring board for the development of a three-week management course, significantly geared to the needs of the woman manager. "The Women Managers In Action Course" (WMIA) is run by the department of Administration and Management. The target group of this course are women in managerial and leadership positions in public and private sectors including NGOs. It has also set up a Women's Unit to address issues of women in management. It does research, dissemination of information and development of relevant programmes. The Sierra Leone National Curriculum Development Centre has developed teaching and curriculum materials in sex education/family life education, for use in the primary and secondary schools with the hope of eradicating ignorance, minimizing the evidence of unwanted pregnancies among young girls thus improving and advancing women's employment and advancement opportunities.

Also needed in this country is more support services-day-care and nursery facilities for working mothers. It would be valuable if government institutions will follow the example of UNICEF a United Nations agency which provides a nursery in the office premises to enable members of staff who are nursing mothers, bring their babies to work. The women themselves need to be sensitized to push for affirmative action for their advancement. When respondents who have made it to the top, were asked what efforts they had made towards initiating policies and programmes, about fifty per cent claimed that they were too busy trying to maintain their positions to be able to create an impact. A small number of (twenty-five per cent) claimed that they used every opportunity as a forum to promote women as being superiors in their own right. Most of the respondents interviewed (75 per cent) thought that all female organizations did not seem to be doing much to enhance women's mobility but rather deter it, as most of them were political affiliates only out to pursue their own selfish ends. They claimed that these organizations were perpetuating the image of helplessness and weakness, qualities which did not make for the promotion and advancement of women. It was suggested by those who supported the formation of these organizations, that they should have a coordinating body that will organize them for networking and positive lobbying. It was impressed by the respondents that women should seek to actively participate in trade union

activities rather than take a back seat and should positively influence employment policies relating to women in both public and private sectors. They should further strive to influence the institutional environment to ensure the implementation of favourable policies. There is therefore a dire need for the Women' Bureau and all other institutions interested in gender issues, to include civic and political education programmes for positive national development.

Finally, all the women's organizations should be involved in the education and socialization of their less advantaged sisters not only for their roles as mothers and wives but as political and economic participants. There has been a lot of lip service to affirmative action for women, since the decade for women, but, in reality, little has been done. Majority of women in Sierra Leone are in the rural areas and are involved in agriculture. Government's attention to agricultural credit for women who perform at least 40 per cent of farm activities and produce up to 60 per cent of the food, has been minimal. Women have had very limited access to credit. The first formal attempt for commercial banks to address women's credit was in 1992, when the National Enterprise Development Unit was set up. However, women have limited access to credit. As a whole this sector has been provided with very little capital. To correct this situation the Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (IADPs) were set up to provide credit and input supplies through their Commercial Service Department. Seven (IADPs) were established but none of them with the exception of Magbosi IADP had a specific programme for women. The programme was initiated with some success (five groups with 200 members were started). Yet no specific credit component was developed. With the phasing out of the IADP, the Bank of Sierra Leone established a rural banking scheme.

There are only six rural banks. There is, as yet, no policy on credit specifically for women's groups for reasons which include the small capital base of the rural banks. Generally women form part of groups led by men and in this way credit is given to these groups. There are, however, a few exceptional cases where loans are given to women for commercial purposes. Institutional credits are normally given to men who later channel them to women. However, less than 1 per cent of loans are disbursed directly to women by rural banks; the main reason given is that women cannot be sued because of their legal and social status. In the north for example, homes are owned by men and property is inherited by males apart from exceptional cases. Consequently, women cannot offer collateral. Women who require loans must obtain them through husbands or other male figures who act as guarantors. The total number of loans given

to females is negligible.

### **8.10 INFORMAL CREDIT SOURCES**

Sources of informal credit in Sierra Leone are many and varied. There are two major sources from which women have accessed credit from time to time on a small scale. The first is the Women's "Osusu" which is often a heterogeneous group and entails specific contributions at specific times with the pooled resources given to each member in turns. Contributions are either in cash, kind or both. Since it is given in turns there is a net borrower; namely the first recipient and a net lender, often the last recipient. In most "osusu" associations, the circle is hadly ever completed. Controversies and bickering often occur and result in litigation in local courts before the circle is completed.

The second source of the informal credit to women is the Women's Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies. These too have their own problems. Supervision is often weak and there is usually no powerful peer pressure. Their periodic financial subscriptions are very irregular, repayments are often in arrears to the extent that the net resource flows are low and therefore unable to raise additional loans. These two major sources have their inadequacies, chief of which is the lack of support services and accountability. However, the involvement of women in these have increased. Table 7 shows details of cooperatives for 1990 in a seaside village called Goderich (Dworzak). The Table shows a drop in female boat owners but a significant increase in female membership and working capital.

**Table 7: STATUS OF CO-OPERATIVES, JUNE 1990, BY SEX**

Name of co-operative	Total members	Female members	Board owners	Smoke oven	Working capital owners
Goderich Women's Co-op.	142		52		52
Goderich Fishermen's Multipurpose Co-op.	113	113	8	45	80
Mahera Onion Growers Multipurpose Co-op.	186	75			17
Konakridee Yamyatu Muthawa Co-op.	219	119			131
Yeliboya Fisherwomen's Co-op.	223	92	35	101	477
Yeliboya Suma Fisherwomen's Co-op.	114	114	2	114	194
Goderich Men's Co-op.	128		58		715
<b>Total</b>	<b>1125</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>1666</b>

**Source:** National Development Bank Research on Cooperatives

The 1990s ushered in more positive action with the setting up of the Women's Finance Trust which is a credit guarantee scheme for women where they can get loans for small enterprises. The women's Finance Trust Sierra Leone Limited was established to provide capital to women entrepreneurs on very soft terms and conditions. Minimum yearly loans granted can be as low as Le500 and the maximum is Le5000. Applications for loans byskilled and business women can be considered without collateral and be granted on the personal guarantee of a member. It was initially successful despite the small capital base. However, due to inadequate monitoring, amongst other reasons the programme seems to have fallen through.

A few NGOs provide uncoordinated credit for women. In 1985 FAO started an Integrated Agricultural Project for women which is very successful and now in its second operational phase. Another effort by government is the setting up in 1992 of a Women's Enterprise Development Unit by the National

Development Bank in Kabala. The principal aim of this unit is to facilitate credit to women, in the urban and rural areas who lack financial resources and other inputs by minimizing and eliminating the basic factors limiting access to credit by women engaged in small and medium-sized enterprises. It will essentially ensure and enhance effective and continuous participation of women in the development process. In short, it aims at making credit more accessible and affordable to women. The unit will undertake, among others, the following:

- a) provide loans, credit and other essential inputs to viable women's enterprises engaged in the productive sectors of the economy;
- b) increase productivity and income redistribution, improve the standard of living of women and reduce poverty;
- c) improve on the production technology of women's enterprises;
- d) create productive assets;
- e) provide support and training services at the right time at specific locations;
- f) facilitate storage, preservation and marketing of products of women entrepreneurs;
- g) encourage training and management development.

## CHAPTER 9

### FINDINGS

#### 9.1 CIVIL SERVICE

The Civil Service is the largest employer and has significant authority. The Civil Service advises government and implements government's policies. Recruitment procedures and standing orders are basically non-discriminating. There has been a steady progression of women up the ladder. Nonetheless, women are again poorly represented at executive level and there are hidden subtle barriers for women. In the 1991 administrative listings only 14 per cent of senior positions and only 13 per cent of Permanent Secretary level positions were held by woman. In the professional service, women have reached top positions in the ministries responsible for traditional female problems. The first female Professional Head was appointed to the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1970. The position has been filled by women to date. The first female Chief Medical Officer was appointed in 1973. The only female Professional Head of Education was appointed in 1970.

Women have also made gains in traditional male reserves. The Chief Architect is a woman and was appointed in 1985. The Accountant-General and the Auditor-General are females as is the Administrator-General who was appointed in 1988. There has been an increase in the number of women in top positions in the Civil Service but here again, progress has been dotted and slow. If one looks at the Diplomatic Service, the first female Ambassador was appointed in 1972. She was appointed Ambassador to Ethiopia and later became Sierra Leone's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Since then, two other women have become Ambassadors. At the time of writing this report, one was still in post.

#### 9.2 BANKING

In the world of banking, women are making considerable inroads in middle management. It was found that 13.2 per cent of women were in senior management and where they do serve in top management, they served mainly as legal advisors, company secretaries and heads of departments. There were two female branch managers. In 1993 there was no woman in the top three management positions, in the Bank of Sierra Leone but this issue was rectified, when, under the NPRC, a woman was appointed Deputy Bank Governor of the

Central Bank. However, the attitude of the society towards gender issues becomes quite clear when, despite the few women in top management in banks, both women and men insist that there is equal employment of men and women in the bank.

### **9.3 INSURANCE**

A similar situation exists in Insurance. Whereas in 1992 women made up 52.3 per cent of middle management staff, there were only 33 per cent of senior women managers and no woman in top management.

### **9.4 PARASTATALS OFFERING BASIC SERVICES**

In parastatals offering basic services, there were no women in top management. Women made up 7 per cent of senior management but were missing on the chief policy making body- the boards, until 1992 when the first four female chairpersons were appointed.

### **9.5 INDUSTRY**

Industry provides an even bleaker picture for women. Industrial concerns include parastatals and limited liability companies. There were no women in top management. Seventeen per cent of middle and senior management positions, were filled by women.

### **9.6 THE HOTEL INDUSTRY**

Only in the hotel industry did women play a significant role in top management. Women held 58 per cent of top management posts, 34 per cent of senior management posts and 35 per cent of middle management posts.

### **9.7 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

International NGOs have adopted a gender friendly approach to recruitment and consequently, this is one area where there are female absolute heads of organizations. However, in local NGOs with less international influence, the situation is different. Records show that in NGOs, only 11 per cent of people in top management positions were women.

## 9.8 POLITICS

In politics, the glass ceiling also exists. It is clear that women can make a difference and have their own unique agenda to bring to policy. When present in appropriate numbers in decision and policy making positions, women can make a difference in the way affairs are conducted. They are widening the agenda of public life to include issues of concern to women, framing policies that are relevant to women's lives and to the ultimate benefit of the whole community.

This report aims to present an overview of the participation of women in decision and policy-making positions and their control of power. Where statistics are available, an attempt has been made to highlight changes since the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies in 1985. The major policy making body in Sierra Leone is the legislative body, that is, Parliament. The National Policy for Women, Policy Objective 22 states that government will

encourage the increase of women's participation in politics and their ultimate integration in the decision and policymaking and political bodies.

It must be said that majority of the participation of women in Parliament has been as a result of Government intervention by the Head of State nominating women to Parliament.

Under the civil constitution, the Head of State is an executive president. Members of the single chamber parliament are normally elected at intervals of four to five years. The president selects government ministers from members of parliament. There are 126 parliamentary seats. The President has powers to appoint up to ten. Members of parliament are otherwise elected by a simple majority after a primary selection process. In 1990 parliamentary representation consisted of 114 members of parliament. Figures show that only 3.5 per cent were women. Of the 114 members, 105 were elected (92.1%), 9 appointed (7.9%), and only 4 women were represented.

The first female parliamentarian entered parliament in 1957. She was a Paramount Chief and represented Paramount Chiefs of the Southern Province. Women did not enter Parliament again till the 1970s. In 1993, another female Paramount Chief was appointed to be a member of Parliament. The first female elected member of Parliament came in, in 1981. She became the Parliamentary Special Assistant, Ministry of Tourism. Subsequently, three women were appointed members of parliament. One became Minister of State for Food Affairs in 1985 and another was appointed Minister of Health in 1991. A total of five women have won elections and gone to Parliament. In 1986 two women

were elected to Parliament, one rose to the position of Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, the other served as Minister of State, Trade and later in the Ministry of Transport and Communications. In 1992 prior to the change in government, there were only four female parliamentarians; the highest number at any time. The first full female Minister was appointed Minister of Health in the sixties. The second full Minister was not appointed till 1991. She held the post in an Interim Government for less than a year, her term ended with a change of government (by military coup).

In the present (1994) military regime, the policy and legislative body is the Council of Secretaries which is appointed by the Head of State. It is an all-male body. However, it should be noted that a woman was appointed Secretary of State, but declined the appointment. Another woman has, however, been appointed Under Secretary of State for Education. Clearly, women are very few in the highest policy making bodies. The fact that one woman was made Minister of Health in 1991 is significant. However, it should be noted that the Interim Government to which she was appointed was a temporary caretaker government. It represents perhaps tokenism rather than a willingness to incorporate women into major high level policy and decision-making for the nation.

### **9.9 THE JUDICIARY**

The judiciary was all male till 1970 when the first female judge was appointed. Three women have been subsequently made judges bringing the total number of female judges to four.

### **9.10 BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

If one looks at board members in parastatals, the first female director of a board was appointed in 1992. Prior to this, boards were almost exclusively male. A study of Boards of Parastatals, done by the Institute of Public Administration and Management in 1991, revealed that out of 11 public enterprise boards studied, there were only 2 female members of boards. With the recent take over of government, 4 chairmanships of important parastatals have been given to women.

- Sierra Leone National Telecommunications
- National Insurance Company
- Sierra Leone Roads Authority

- Sierra Leone Airlines

One of the reasons behind the appointment of women is a belief in the honesty of women which, it is felt, would bring a halt to the all-pervasive corruption.

### 9.11 THE UNIVERSITY

In the university, 1986 was an important year for women. A woman was nominated unopposed for the position of Vice-Principal in the University. The first woman Dean was appointed in 1986, and the first female head of department was also appointed in 1986. By the end of 1992 top management which includes the Vice-Chancellor, Heads of Colleges and Heads of Departments, there were only nine women - 11.4 per cent. Out of twelve Deans two were women (17 per cent). Out of six Directors of institutes there was only one woman (17 per cent).

Table 9: **PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT IN THE UNIVERSITY**

Management Level	Female (%)	Male (%)
Top management	11.4	
Directors	17.0	
Vice Chancellor		100

### 9.12 TRADE UNIONS

Female participation in trade unions which could perhaps influence the situation for women in employment, is not widespread. Amara (1988) concluded in a survey that less than 50 per cent of workers registered in Trade Unions were women. In 1994, in the eighteen Trade Unions registered under the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, only two had women presidents. These were the clerical and mercantile union and the Posts and Telecommunications union (their members are mostly women). In the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, an umbrella organization, only 8 per cent of its executive are females. It should be noted that they have a women's wing which attempts to address social and economic needs of women but has no policy making role.

The structural adjustment programmes and the general economic decline has affected women. Many organizations have had to reduce their operations and women are the hardest hit. One NGO made 6 senior staff redundant, 4 of these were women. Another industrial concern in its over 40 per cent redundancy move, made their only female senior staff redundant. If one asks an average Sierra Leonean about the status of women she/he would likely say women have equal access to power and decision-making posts. However, when one looks at the statistics, it reveals a definite glass ceiling. Women may take on senior management positions but are almost negligible in most corridors of top management where the real decisions are taken. Women have been able to attain a few high positions. However, except for a few isolated areas, more so in traditionally female areas, women have not generally been able to attain the highest decision-making posts.

### **9.13 THE FAMILY PROFILE OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT IN SIERRA LEONE**

The family profile of women in top management in Sierra Leone reflects a comparatively high standard of education of the parents of top managers. It was found out that majority of mothers of top managers had secondary education: 62 per cent of mothers of top managers had secondary education and above; 38 per cent of mothers had below secondary school education; 13.3 per cent of mothers were actually illiterates. The fathers in general tended to have a higher level of education; 77 per cent had secondary education and above; 23 per cent had below secondary school education; 13 per cent were illiterates. The findings indicate that majority of top managers, at least 77 per cent, come from a home where at least one parent had secondary education and at least 46.7 per cent had one parent who had tertiary education (Tables 10 and 11).

**Table 10: LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF MOTHERS OF FEMALE TOP MANAGERS (1992)**

Level of Education	Total	Frequency (%)
Primary	15	25.0
Secondary	29	48.3
Tertiary	8	13.3
Illiterate	8	13.3

**Source:** Survey data (answer to Q.4)

**Table 11: LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF FATHERS OF FEMALE TOP MANAGERS (1992)**

Level of Education	Total	Frequency (%)
Primary	5	8.3
Secondary	28	46.7
Tertiary	18	30.0
Illiterate	9	15.0

**Source:** Survey data (answer to Q.4)

A relatively high level of education of parents concurs with findings of a 1974 UNESCO study referred to earlier which noted the high educational levels of parents of the professional woman. (Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO "Education Training and Employment Opportunities for Women in Sierra Leone"). During interviews, quite a few top managers focused on the roles their parents, particularly their fathers, had in giving them direction, encouragement and support to attain the highest educational level. The 13 per cent illiteracy rate, however, is a positive indicator for Sierra Leone which has such a high illiteracy rate. It shows that successful managers can hail from illiterate homes. If one looks at the occupations of the parents, a similar picture emerges. Majority of parents are employed and hold responsible positions. 48

per cent of mothers had service occupations; 13 per cent were in administration; 12 per cent had clerical jobs and 7 per cent were professionals. Majority of the fathers also had responsible jobs. 25 per cent were in professional occupations; 13 per cent were in administration and 10 per cent in service occupations.

#### 9.14 FAMILY STRUCTURE

Majority of the top managers claim to come from nuclear families: 58 per cent come from nuclear families; 25 per cent from extended families and 17 per cent from polygamous homes. The present family situation of the managers is slightly different, majority live in extended families: 78 per cent have other dependents living with them apart from children.

#### 9.15 MARITAL STATUS

Majority of women - 58 per cent were married. However, 42 per cent did not have partners while 20 per cent were either divorced or separated (Table 12).

Table 12: **MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT**

Marital Status	Total	Frequency (%)
Married	35	58.3
Single	8	13.3
Divorced	8	13.3
Separated	4	6.7
Widowed	5	8.3

Source: Survey data (answer to Q.8)

The findings show clearly that married women can make it to the top. However, the rate of divorce - 13 per cent - is much higher than the national average. The divorce rate for Sierra Leone as found in the 1983 census was 1.10 per cent. Studies done in first world settings found that the only significant difference between the male and female managers was marital status in that women managers were less likely to marry or remarry once divorced than their male colleagues. This suggests therefore that top management can have a significant effect on marital relations. This seems to be the case for the woman

manager more so than the male. Majority of women, 70 per cent, had small families ranging from 15 to 20 years. Twenty-three per cent had between 4 to 6 children and only 2 per cent had over 6 children. During the interview, women spoke on the difficulties of holding responsible management posts and caring for children especially under-fives and general difficulties of coping with the dual responsibilities of home and office. The findings suggest that raising a family early, could be a long-term strategy which allows a woman to give her optimum as she climbs further up the career ladder.

### 9.16 MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP STYLES

Thirty-three per cent of women stated that their management style could be characterised as being management through meetings; 17 per cent expressed that they had a multifaceted management style which included management by meetings (a total of 50 per cent), and 23 per cent stated that their management style could be characterized as being management by objectives. Another 12 per cent stated management by objectives as only one aspect of their management style (a total of 35 per cent). The findings reveal that majority of women see their management style as management by meetings (Table 13).

Table 13: **MANAGEMENT STYLES OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT**

Management Styles	Total	Frequency (%)
A) Management by Objectives	14	23.3
B) By Meetings	20	33.3
C) By Memos	1	1.7
D) Others	2	3.3
E) AB	10	16.7
F) ABC	2	3.3
G) BC	2	3.3
H) AC	-	-
I) None	9	15.0

**Source:** Survey data (answer to Q.16)

Management by meetings is a management style which clearly emphasizes consultation. Consequently, when looking at the question of leadership most women eschewed the alternative which focused on a more directive and authoritarian leadership style. Five per cent of women indicated that their most common leadership style was "single decisive with own responsibility". Two per cent indicated "single decisive decision" but with responsibility resting on the leader. The rest focused on "consultative leadership". The most common leadership style indicated was stated by 20 per cent of women "collective decision after consulting at all levels" (Table 14).

**Table 14: LEADERSHIP STYLE OF WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT**

Leadership Style	Total	Frequency (%)
Single decisive decision with owner responsibility	3	5.0
Single decision after consultation	9	15.0
Single decisive decision but with responsibility relying on the leader	1	1.7
Collective decision by leaders who matter	5	8.3
Collective decisive decision by leaders who matter	12	20.0
Collective decision after consulting all levels of management (lower, middle, and top ranks)	6	10.0
Others	3	5.0

**Source:** Survey Data (answer to Q.15)

Many studies on women managers have used style theories as their conceptual base. A distinction between two dimensions of leadership behaviour has been made; structuring and support. The suitability of different combination

of structuring and supporting management styles for various purposes have formed the bases of several popular leadership theories and subsequently training programmes (Reddin, 1970). However, reviewers of leadership research conclude that structuring is more associated with higher productivity; and supporting greater job satisfaction amongst subordinates. Although the associations are by no means clear, Management by objectives, has been associated with the structuring type of management style which shows a concern for task and its accomplishment typically associated with more directive management behaviour.

The more common response of Sierra Leonean managers, "management by meetings" and the "marked consultative leadership style" is associated with the supporting (or consideration) style; where a concern for people, development of their capabilities and maintaining good relationships with the work group is stressed. It is typically associated with a more participative management style. Some writers have argued that women are suitable management materials because of an emphasis on structuring aspects of management. It should be noted that interpersonal skills are portrayed in management literature as a previously neglected aspect to the managerial role to which training and effort must now be devoted. The findings show clearly that women prefer a "consultative leadership style" It may be said that a greater attention to "management by objectives" may lead to a more rounded performance. Marshall, 1984, purports a theory based on extensive literature review, that concern for people may only become appropriate and acceptable to subordinates, once attention to the task has established credibility and the context for interaction defined. Although management by objectives was only indicated by 35 per cent of top managers, it must be stressed that consultation does not exclude task orientation. In interviews with women, a large majority stressed the importance of being task-oriented and the paramount importance of competence.

### **9.17 SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

Women were asked what their strategies for survival were. The majority (43 per cent) said job performance and leadership qualities; 31 per cent said job performance, leadership qualities and retraining; 20 per cent said job performance alone. Two per cent stated leadership quality, alone. Political backing and tolerance was not a strategy for advancement for these women managers.

Entrance into top management for majority of these women required a combination of competence, obedience and hard work. When reviewing various other factors that influence the achievement of top management positions, 38 per cent of women opined that merit alone led to achievement of top management positions. However, a similar number of women (33 per cent) said a combination of political backing, family background and lobbying were most important for advancement (Table 15).

**Table 15: OPINIONS ON HOW WOMEN REACH TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS**

Values	Total	Frequency (%)
A - Merit	23	38.3
B - Community involvement	-	-
C - Political backing	-	-
D - Family background	-	-
E - Women-networking	-	-
F - Lobbying	1	1.7
G - Policy to promote women	-	-
H - Other	-	-
AG	1	1.7
AC	-	-
AE	1	1.7
AB	2	3.3
ABE	-	-
ACG	3	5.0
ACF	5	8.3
Four-Condition	3	5.0
CDF	20	3.3
ABD	1	1.7
NAP	-	-
Invalid	-	-

**Source:** Survey data (answer to Q.30).

However, in interviews, women frequently expressed a distaste for lobbying. They felt it should not be necessary. They also noted that the manager is left in the debt of someone, usually a male and the ensuing requests could be compromising. In personal interviews with manager, they all stressed the need for competence to achieve success. A review of qualities women needed to attain and survive in management produced a diverse range of qualities. Qualities most commonly expressed were as follows:

Hard work

Aggressiveness

Competence

Determination

Tolerance

Honesty

Flexibility

Organization

Patience

Other qualities mentioned include:

Modesty

Simplicity

Willingness to learn

Good conduct

Not being petty

Impartial and not being emotional

A few respondents emphasized the need to behave like a man which in some cases meant forgetting about domestic responsibilities.

#### **9.18 GENDER-BASED SKILLS**

In personal interviews, the sample reflected on various attributes that women can bring and have brought to the management role. They have effective techniques for relating to people and alternative ways of communicating and getting things done which is based on being sympathetic and having concern for the problems of subordinates. This involves being trustworthy and friendly.

However, as one manager puts it, these ways of conducting management can be very effective in the long run. It develops a team spirit and inspires personal commitment from staff, though it can be problematic initially. It can be interpreted as weakness. Over and above this, managers emphasized the need to be tough and competent.

### 9.19 ASSERTIVE SKILLS

A question was asked to assess the assertive skills of women. Assertion has been defined in the Oxford dictionary as insistence on recognition of one's claims or rights. Management and personal development trainers have identified that women need to be more assertive. Hence, the number of assertiveness courses for women. In an evaluation of the IPAM middle level women managers training course, women managers also focused on the need for assertiveness training. Assertion can be seen as a means to get control and get one's way. It has received much attention by trainers as it appears to cross the boundary into unfeminine behaviour. Majority of women surveyed saw themselves as being assertive: 46 per cent said they had high assertive skills; 30 per cent felt they had very high assertive skills and 8 per cent said they had average assertive skills. Majority of women who said they were only averagely assertive, noted that this was so because they felt that developing a team spirit and getting cooperation from staff did not require high assertive skills.

The findings show that majority of women have high assertive skills and that all feel comfortable with their assertiveness. The findings suggest that the female top managers' management style and leadership qualities emphasize consultation, competence, hard work, concern for subordinates and studies in the western world reveal a similar trend in management qualities of women.

In studies comparing management qualities of men and women, there seems to be little significant difference. Reif et al., 1975 supports this assertion thus;

In conclusion there is considerable research evidence to support the fact that women managers psychologically are not significantly different from their male counterparts and they may

posses even superior attributes and skills in some areas relating to management effectiveness. Differences do exist, but mostly in ways that would serve to increase the probability of women functioning well as managers.

In this survey 98 per cent of women stated categorically that the female manager can be as effective as the male manager.

#### **9.20 LENGTH OF SERVICE**

The success and competence of the woman manager is reflected by their length of service in their various institutions. Majority have been able to hold jobs for more than 10 years despite the odds. 61.7 per cent have been in their institutions for 10 years and above; 5 per cent between 5 and 10 years; 32 per cent between 1 and 5 years. The findings suggest that women are loyal and dedicated to their organizations. They can be depended on to give long and continued service. This fact has been confirmed in other women in management research studies in Sierra Leone.

#### **9.21 RATE OF PROMOTION**

The rate of promotion of the women top manager is quite positive. 51.7 per cent say their rate of promotion has been fair; 16.7 per cent say rapid and 26.7 per cent say slow. It may be noted that the common reason for slow promotion was lack of vacancies. However, sex discrimination also played a part particularly from senior to top management.

#### **9.22 RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES AND SUBORDINATES**

Despite the myth that women do not get on with their colleagues, the findings suggest the contrary: 55 per cent have very good relationships with female colleagues; 42 per cent have a good relationship. Women in fact get on better with each other than with men. The findings show that although women can be said to have a good relationship with men their relationships with women is better. 56 per cent said they had a good relationship with male colleagues; 38 per cent said they had very good relationships; 5 per cent said they had only a

fair relationship with male colleagues. Women's assesment of their relationship with subordinates is in line with interview findings reflecting a concern for staff. 62 per cent of women said they had a very good relationship with subordinates; 33 per cent said they had a good relationship; 5 per cent said, "fair".

### **9.23 EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Women managers had either professional or academic qualifications. Over half had professional qualifications: 38 per cent had first degree; 13 per cent had masters degree and 5 per cent had the doctorate degree. Majority have been able to participate in various training courses and other types of further education: 38 per cent of women said they had attended 5 or more professional meetings and conferences in the last 5 years; 25 per cent said they had attended 3 to 4 times; 23 per cent said 1 to 2 times; 12 per cent had attended none within the last five years. Reasons given for lack of, or infrequent attendance are as follows: Lack of opportunity (8 per cent), sex discrimination (2 per cent) domestic affairs (7 per cent) and lack of interest (10 per cent)

In discussion with women managers, lack of finance was put forward as one of the main reasons for not attending meetings. They explained that the situation is becoming worse in this regard with the Structural Adjustment Programme, which has led to the devaluation of the Leone. The costs of attending a meeting particularly abroad becomes colossal and very few organizations can afford to pay. As a result funds are usually available for none but the top-most executive (usually males) to attend meeting.

### **9.24 TRAINING FOR WOMEN**

The following are the areas in which women should receive training to facilitate advancement into top management:

Management skills

Women's issues

Confidence building

Management

Finance

Computer Science

Leadership training

Community work

Women have clear cut training needs which need to be addressed. However, the issue of gender in management is not clear to most women. It is important to note that most women have never participated in a training course with a gender dimension. In fact, most women did not comprehend the need for a gender dimension in training: 45 per cent said they had never attended a training programme with a gender dimension; 20 per cent said they had, 1 to 2 times; 15 per cent said they had, 3 to 5 times; 8 per cent said they had, 6 to 10 times.

Higher education is one major means of access to management. 71 per cent of top managers stated that there were factors that limited women's access to education. Most of the reasons focused on the cultural roles of women which made them feel inferior, and cultural beliefs that a woman does not need higher education. Also important and particularly after the marriage is the domestic role of the mother which serves as a barrier to further education. Women have been given only limited access to post education courses. 62 per cent of women have not been able to attend one meeting a year for the last 5 years and in fact, 12 per cent have not been to any in the last 5 years. Despite their interest, lack of opportunity has been a major problem. Cultural beliefs and roles have also limited women's access to training. They are not frequently nominated for other management courses either. Nominations of participants to management courses at IPAM for continuing education courses, reflects a high percentage of women in traditionally female courses like Health and Education.

## 9.25 GENDER-RELATED HURDLES

Women have proved themselves competent but they are still under-represented in positions of top management. Women were able to identify certain gender-related hurdles. Most prominent in discussions was coping with the dual responsibility and demands of family and office. Child bearing, child care and demands of husbands created problems which necessitated increased coping mechanisms. Also important in the corporate situation was a male

negative attitude. This presents a serious problem as men control power, this therefore necessitated women to prove themselves over and over again. Women also noted male oppression and suppression as a hurdle that must be surmounted.

However, 65 per cent of women surveyed said they had not experienced any gender-related bias which influenced their career; 34 per cent said they had. Interviewee revealed that the subtlety and insidiousness of discrimination to women makes it difficult to assert, with confidence, that one has experienced definite gender bias. It is noted, however, that 58 per cent of women stated that gender had not influenced their career positively. Women noted that gender bias was as a result of:

- i) character assassination by men;
- ii) male chauvinism;
- iii) sex discrimination.

One manager noted that her experience of gender bias was of such a personal nature that she could not talk about it. Further discussion suggested that her problem was sexual harassment followed by deliberate suppression.

## **9.26 RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION PROCEDURES**

Discussions revealed that NGOs particularly those with international affiliations are seeking to redress gender imbalances and therefore make a special effort to talent spot, recruit and promote women. However, the situation is not so favourable in local NGOs. The civil service procedures for recruitment and promotion are gender-blind, they are laid down and supposed to be strictly adhered to. Consequently, if regulations are strictly adhered to it is difficult to discriminate against women. However, the reality is that women have been discriminated against in subtle and not so subtle ways. A note-worthy case was in the mid seventies where a female senior civil servant had reached a point in her career where the next position should have been attachment in London (a post aspired to by many). On two different occasions she received written instructions to proceed to London, which she was willing to do, and each time the instructions were reversed. The minister finally told her he did not think the post was appropriate for a woman. Female permanent secretaries particularly in

the early 70s reported political and other wranglings to prevent the post being given to a woman, which they were able to overcome only by proven competence and with the help of male mentors.

In the parastatals and limited liability companies, the situation is a bit different with women claiming that it is very difficult and almost impossible for them to attain first or second position in these organizations. Examples were cited of women who have had to remain in one senior or even top management position but were not allowed to go beyond that position regardless of competence or ability. In National Banks, it was revealed that a transfer to the provincial area was a necessary pre-requisite for achievement of top management. Due to domestic responsibilities and traditional roles of women this is very difficult for women. In industry, women were hardly recruited into technical jobs. In interviews, top management in industry (all male) clearly stated that they did not believe a woman can work in industry. Most conditions of service including most promotion procedures were gender-blind. However, as exemplified earlier, unwritten laws do discriminate against women. A lot of institutions for instance, have discriminatory health benefits. Where the man is the employee, he, his wife and children were entitled to health benefits. Where the woman is the employee her spouse is not always entitled. A government owned bank changed this policy in its bank in 1991. Nearly all health care packages do not include obstetrics. They also exclude gynaecology, which deals with the physiological functions and diseases of women but they do cover the diseases of men.

## **9.27 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

Despite all the problems women undergo to attain and advance in top management, women are still not convinced about affirmative action for women. When women were asked whether affirmative action has ever influenced their decision to promote a subordinate: 60 per cent of women said, "no"; 25 per cent said, "sometimes"; 12 per cent said, "yes".

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings reflect quite a complicated picture of the Woman Manager in Sierra Leone. The marginalization of women is clear but the contributing factors and the obstacles that hinder her progress are complex, often subtle but all-pervasive. Women are under-represented in top management in nearly all professions. In the Civil Service, (the largest employer), it was found in the 1992 Administrative listings that only 14 per cent of senior positions and only 13 per cent of permanent secretary level positions were held by women. In banking, there were only 13.2 per cent of women in senior management positions and none in top management. In insurance, there were only 33 per cent of women in middle management and none in top management. Only in the Hotel industry and Education, were there more than 50 per cent of women in Top Management.

Perhaps one of the most critical factors that has influenced the participation of women in management is education. Women are seriously limited in terms of access to education and in terms of areas of study. The first fact that needs to be taken into account is the very low literacy rate of women.

Sierra Leone is amongst the world's ten countries with a female illiteracy level of over 80 per cent. The illiteracy rate in Sierra Leone is in fact increasing. The literacy rate was 8% in 1975, 21% in 1985 and 11% in 1990. It was found that gender disparities were present in school enrolment. The percentage of females in primary and secondary schools was low and wastage significantly reduced the number of females completing school. The primary school level gross enrolment statistics show only 45.4 per cent of girls as opposed to 65.3 per cent of boys. The result of the selective entrance examination to secondary schools over 5 consecutive years, 1986 to 1990, show that less than 40 per cent of girls make it to that class. It is not surprising then that the number of women in tertiary education is also low. In 1991 only 19.9 per cent of university graduates were women. The study also investigated the choice of subject. It was found that very high majority of women were offering Arts subject and avoiding Science or Technical subjects. Clearly, women without being well educated cannot get to management posts. The next question that must be addressed is why there is such a large gender-based disparity within education.

Findings reflect that the socio-cultural milieu in Sierra Leone has had a great influence on the education of women whether they are given an opportunity to get basic education or are encouraged to aspire to higher heights. Women are

seen as the inferior sex whose major responsibilities are reproduction, domestic work within the home and service to the menfolk. With this background therefore women are seen to have no need for education. The inferiority of women was found to be attested to by all the major religions in Sierra Leone. It is also entrenched in the legal system. Most glaring is the traditional law of inheritance which states that, not only does a woman not inherit from her intestate husband's property, she herself is an inheritance. This socio-cultural milieu was found to seriously affect the females' educational prospects. As a consequence, majority of girls are not enrolled in school. For those who enter school and get to their mid or late teens, marriage and childbearing is the next logical step. Girls are often forced to drop out due to social and economic pressures. Eminent elders whilst encouraging males to strive on, convey in numerous ways to women, that their place is in the home and not in the office; let alone the corridors of powers. These are all internalized by women to further impede their progress. Those who do not attempt further education are faced by a host of socialization and social pressures into liberal arts or commercial and clerical skills, away from hard sciences or industry. In interviews with women managers, it was emphasized that early marriage, many children and the multiple roles of women have seriously limited theirs, and other women's participation in further education.

Within the organization, there are certain factors, mainly subtle, which serve to hamper women's career development. First of all, women have limited access to continuous education. The study revealed that 60 per cent of women were not able to attend at least one form of training or professional meeting annually. 12 per cent of women had not been to any sort of training within the last 5 years. The study looked at the enrolment figures for women at the Institute of Public Administration and Management the centre for professional management training in Sierra Leone. It was found that women are highly represented in the traditionally female areas of Health and Education. In other management courses where participants are largely nominated by their employers, women are poorly represented. For example, in the 1991/92 academic year, females represented only 23 per cent of enrolment in the course in Principles and Practice of Internal Auditing and only 10 per cent in Negotiation Skills (largely employer-sponsored) whereas in 1992, 24 per cent of women enrolled in the full time Associate of Accounting Technicians where participants are, to a large extent, self-sponsored. The study also found that even where women received training, the gender aspect was mostly absent.

Forty-five per cent of the sample noted that they had never attended a training programme with a gender dimension. Another 20 per cent noted that they had only attended once or twice. The figures indicate therefore that women have to make their way unaided, in a completely male-dominated organization.

The findings show that the gender aspect of women's career development is gravely neglected. Women have to survive in a male-dominated world with limited access to continuing education or exposure to knowledge, skills and attitudes. Gender-related hurdles within the organization were found to be a reality. 58 per cent of women said that gender had not influenced their career positively. Gender problems focused on a negative attitude of men towards their female colleagues. This negative attitude had, in some cases, deteriorated to sexual harassment. Women in informal interviews spoke very strongly on the discriminatory attitude of men (who presently command influence and power) particularly when it came to promotion of women to top-most positions. However, actual survey findings revealed that only 34 per cent of women felt that gender-related bias had influenced their career development negatively. It was felt that this figure is probably an understatement. H.M. Hackett, in writing on the Social and Psychological attributes of women, says that women under-rate their success and perceive any discrimination they meet as a result of their own shortcomings. Nearly all institutions have gender-blind promotion procedures.

However, it was found that these procedures are manipulated particularly in male-dominated areas, and negative attitude of men seriously hampers female progress. This forces the woman to stagger in one place, to lobby extensively for merited positions or to be forced to constantly prove herself.

The dual (home and office) role of women was also stated as a problem. Coping with domestic and official duties was stated as an important problem which required increased coping strategies. In jobs like the bank where out-of-station posting is a pre-requisite for promotion, family responsibility and cultural expectations was a serious hindrance to progress. Within the organization, most promotion procedures were found to be gender-blind but unwritten laws limit the progress of women particularly from middle management level to senior management level. Many factors also limit women's enjoyment of certain privileges. Most common was health benefits. Most health care packages exclude gynaecology which deals with the physiological functions and diseases of women but they do cover the disease of men. Some health care packages particularly in banking institutions, cover male staff, his wife and

children; but where the employee is a woman, coverage does not extend to her family. There is a similar situation in conditions of service concerning overseas training. Some conditions of service lay down that the company will pay for a wife and children of their male staff to join him if he goes abroad for training exceeding a stated period. But, the reverse is not true for the female. The use of non-sexist terminology i.e. spouse instead of wife or husband; staff person, instead of male or female, would remove these problems.

Recruitment procedures were found to be superficially gender-blind. However, the fact that most recruitment boards are often all or majority male (reflecting the management structure of the organization) makes recruitment policy prejudicial to women. Sexist questions enquiring into the domestic situation of women were often addressed to women but not to men. It was found that in industry in particular, the prejudice against the hiring of women was blatant. Top officials stated quite openly that they don't want to recruit women into industry. However, the reverse is true of NGOs with international links and the United Nations agencies. Policies concerning retrenchment of workers are gender-blind. However, in many cases (this study looked at two cases) women are often highly represented amongst retrenched workers. Despite this, some women have been able to achieve high managerial positions successfully. Their management style is complex and has a bias towards consultation. 50 per cent of the sample characterised their management style as either being management by meetings, or management by meetings formed one aspect of their management repertoire. 35 per cent stated that their management style was either management by objectives or management by objectives was one aspect of their management style. Self proclaimed leadership style focused on consultation. Qualities deemed necessary to succeed in management included hard work, aggressiveness and other leadership attributes. A few, however, saw the necessity to reject all feminine characteristics, especially a concern for domestic responsibilities, as a pre-requisite for success. Women's success as a group was assessed by their length of service. Majority (61.7 per cent) have been able to work in one institution for 10 years or more. Rates of promotion are also fair though 26.7 per cent of women said that their rate of promotion has been slow.

The study shows quite clearly that women in management have the ability to manage. They generally use a consultative management style but this is coupled with the usual qualities of hard work, determination, honesty etc. Despite prejudice, women have been able to forge ahead and have long

successful careers to which their organizations have rewarded them with promotion. However, one important issue is that only a few women do take this path. Domestic responsibilities, negative socialization and limited educational opportunities, force them to limit the scope of their ambition. Within the organization, various forms of subtle and not so subtle prejudice, serve to halt the female managers' progress.

In view of the new consciousness of the marginalization of women brought about by the United Nations focus on women and the declaration of the women's decade, a lot has been done to improve the status of women. This study reveals that in the area of education much effort has been made, in tertiary institutions, to help promote and enhance the mobility of women. The Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Sierra Leone, in response to the low numbers of women enrolled in management courses, started, in 1991, a management course for women focusing both on general management skills and the specific management needs of women. This programme is very effective as it tries to be customer-responsive but it serves only a limited number of women managers. Its short duration (2 weeks) is a constraint in relation to long years of negative socialization. IPAM'S Women's Unit initiated a programme to introduce the gender training methodology to its staff and other trainers and educators to ensure that all management courses bring in the gender aspect. The Gender Research and Documentation Centre of Fourah Bay College, a part of University of Sierra Leone also has a similar programme plan. However, it was found that the work of these two institutions are in fact in their infancy and much impact has not yet been made to the educational system. The socialization process through education from primary school up to university remains male-dominated.

There has been limited affirmative action in the area of credit for women. However, the National Development Bank has started a new, though limited initiative for women's credit in 1992. In national policy-making women have been given a few high posts. However, the numbers are too small to have an effect. NGOs are also mounting gender methodology workshops for their staff and significant others. However, here also efforts have been on a small scale and many development programmes still suffer from being gender-insensitive, not taking women into account or reacting negatively to women's needs. Most international funding agencies including The British Council, The Commonwealth Secretariat and United Nations Agencies are all requesting the

inclusion of women as a condition of their granting training funds. The study has found that this policy will give women the opportunity to get relevant training. It is hoped that this will help to increase the number of women in management thereby developing a critical mass of women in influential positions which would serve as role models to other women as well as setting up gender-sensitive programmes.

The study found that the Government of Sierra Leone has tried to take the initiative by appointing women to Parliament and giving a few members of parliament important ministerial and deputy ministerial posts. But this again has been merely a drop in the ocean. The government has also set up a Women's Bureau. The bureau developed a policy for women. One of its policy objectives is to increase the appointment of women in Decision and Policy-Making bodies. However, the very limited staffing, financing and the general lack of political will has made the Women's Bureau almost ineffective. Apart from a constitution, promise of non-discrimination, the study found that government has no legislation to prevent or discourage discrimination against women. As a whole, government regulations are gender-blind but there is no mechanism to ensure gender equity.

## 10.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The government of Sierra Leone should implement all legal and policy instruments pertaining to the elimination of all forms of discrimination.
- 2) Public and private sector establishments should review all conditions of service, institutional practices and policy to eliminate gender discrimination and gender insensitivity.
- 3) Public and private sector establishments should review and readjust their recruitment and promotion criteria to redress the gender imbalance in entry and advancement to top management.
- 4) The government should introduce and sustain gender-neutral and gender sensitive curricula into the educational system.
- 5) The government should provide gender-training in all training institutions particularly teacher training institutions.
- 6) The government and organizations working with women, should develop public awareness on gender as relevant to national development, to influence the socialization process generally. There needs also to be a focus on gender in management.
- 7) The government should enforce affirmative action to increase the number of women in policy making positions in the civil service, public and private organizations and in politics.
- 8) Focused training should be provided for women. This should include confidence-building and assertiveness training as well as the provision of management skills, skills to accelerate upward managerial mobility and career life planning skills.
- 9) Government should implement the national policy for women.
- 10) NGOs targeting women as beneficiaries should establish sound advocacy networks for the elimination of gender blindness.

## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT

#### PERSONAL PROFILE

1. Can you assess the general attitude of the state towards the advancement of women?

#### Access to Education and Training

2. What qualities do you think women in particular need to be able to attain top management positions.
3. What are some of the gender-related hurdles women meet in their rise to the top?
4. What are the strategies of survival at the top?
5. Do women have the same opportunities for further training as men?
6. Do women experience any difficulty with regard to taking advantage of training opportunities?
7. Are there any policies which facilitate or limit women's access (intentionally or unintentionally) to further education and training. What are they?
8. Do training programmes have a gender dimension?
9. What do you think are the reasons for low representation of women in higher level positions especially decision-making positions or positions influencing national development.
  - a) i.e. in Cabinet
  - b) Parliament
  - c) as Permanent Secretaries and Management positions in parastatals
  - d) and other organization
10. Are there any policies which facilitate or limit women's mobility?
  1. Between levels or an organization
  2. To certain sectors of the labour market
11. Are there any unstated policies?

12. Are there any policies which encourage the establishment of women's organizations?

**What are they?**

13. Does government provide support to encourage women's NGOs throughout the country?

14. Is the work done for women by NGOs seen as important to the National Development Effort.

15a To what extent has Government sponsored national meetings on the subject of policies for advancing women's status?

15b To what extent has the Government organised networking or clearing house effort for sharing information in women's issues?

16. In what ways does the government encourage local and International Development Agencies to take an interest in women's issues?

17. To what extent does the government participate in International Meetings and belong to Associations concerned with women in public life?

18. Are there any policies in your organization or any other organization which are relevant to persons responsible for children and families i.e. regarding child care?

19. Does your organization or other organizations (Foreign Service Teaching Service, Parastatals) have employment policies which might have a negative impact on women's employment or advancement or which are prejudicial to women, viz-a-viz

- a. Requirements for promotion
- b. Work hours
- c. Leave regulations
- d. Pensions
- e. Housing
- f. Transport
- g. Tax laws
- h. Medical care
- i. Home services
- j. Insurance coverage

20. What are the statutes that provide the legal basis for rules and regulations governing the administration of personal functions (i.e. staffing, performance appraisal, job enrichment, job rotations, career guidance, position classification, pay plans, etc.) which might disadvantage women?
21. Is there any gender discrimination in gender rules and regulations for the public and private sectors, (e.g. like standing orders, general orders, etc for the administration of policies governing recruitment examination, training rotations, achievements and career development)?
22. Is there any gender discrimination in the pay structure of wage and salary scales (as reflected in the information from Treasury, or Budget Office or similar body)? How gender blind is the classification plan on which the pay structure is based? (IASIA, 1991).
23. Is there any gender discrimination statutes, rules, regulations governing contracting for professional consulting services and the degree to which women consultants have access to this business?
24. How many and what type of gender policy interventions has government made since independence.
25. Is there a healthy climate for the establishment of women's association e.g. women civil servants lawyers, business or entrepreneurs.

**APPENDIX II**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN IN TOP MANAGEMENT**

**PERSONAL PROFILE**

1. Position occupied .....
2. Education: Indicate level or qualification, and year of attainment;
  - a. Bachelors ..... Year .....
  - b. Master ..... Year .....
  - c. Doctorate ..... Year .....
  - d. Diploma Certificate ..... Year .....
  - e. Other (Specific) .....
3. Family size (No. of brothers and sisters) .....
4. Level of parents education

	Mother	Father
a. Primary		
b. Secondary		
c. Tertiary		
5. Parents Occupation:
  - a. Mother .....
  - b. Father .....
6. Family Type:
  - a. Nuclear .....
  - b. Polygamous .....
  - c. Extended .....

7. **Religious Affiliation:**

- a. Christian .....
- b. Muslim .....
- c. Other .....

8. **Marital Status: (Tick one)**

- a. Married .....
- b. Single .....
- c. Divorced .....
- d. Separated .....
- e. Widowed .....

9. **Husband's Occupation: .....**

10. **Number of children .....**

11. **State ages of children according to birth**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Age</b>
Child 1 .....	
Child 2 .....	
Child 3 .....	
Child 4 .....	
Child 5 .....	
Child 6 .....	

12. **Do you have other dependants (besides children) living at home with you?**

- a) Yes    b) No

13. How many years have you been in full time employment in your present job?

- a) 1 to 5 years
- b) 5 to 10 years
- c) 10 years and above

14. Please give details of last three positions held:

	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organization/Institution</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1.	.....	.....	.....
2.	.....	.....	.....
3.	.....	.....	.....

15. What sort of leadership styles do you use most often (tick preferred items)

- a. Single decisive decision with own responsibility
- b. Single decision after consultation .....
- c. Single decisive decision but with responsibility relying on the leader .....
- d. Collective decision by leaders who matter .....
- e. Collective decision after consulting all level of management (lower, middle, and top ranks).....
- f. Other.....

16. Which of the following best describes your management styles?

- a. Management by objectives.....
- b. Management through meetings .....
- c. Management by use of memos .....
- d. Other .....

17. How would you rate your assertiveness in the performance of your job?

- a) Very high    b) High    C) Average    (d) Below Average

Give reasons:.....

.....  
.....

18. Promotion should be based on: (tick one)

- a) Merit .....  
b) Affirmative action to promote women .....  
c) Both .....  
d) Other .....

19. Has affirmative action to promote women ever influenced your decision to promote a subordinate?

- a) Yes..... b) No..... c) Sometimes.....

**ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

20. How many training programmes have you participated in that have the gender dimension?

- a) 1-2.... b) 3-5..... c) 6-8..... d) 9-10 None...

21. Are there any factors which facilitate or limit women's access to higher education.

- a) Yes..... b) No.....

Give details.....

.....  
.....

22. Do you know of any Government training programmes specifically designed to assist women in professional/career development?
- a) Yes ..... b) No.....  
If yes specify.....  
.....  
.....  
.....
23. What training programmes do you think women should participate in that will aid their advancement?
24. How often have you attended professional meetings and conferences in the last five years?
- a) 5 or more times .....  
b) 3-4 times.....  
c) 1-2 times.....
25. What are your reasons for not attending?
- a) Lack of opportunity  
b) Lack of interest  
c) Sex discrimination  
d) Domestic affairs

### **ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND TOP POSITIONS**

We wish to know the strategies used by successful women who arrive at the top and make an impact on policies and programmes

26. How would you assess your rate of promotion?
- a) Rapid.....  
b) Fair.....  
c) Slow.....

27. State reasons for rate of promotion.....  
.....  
.....  
.....
28. Have you experienced any gender related bias, major or minor which has influenced your career development?
- a) Yes..... b) No.....  
(If yes give details).....  
.....  
.....  
.....
29. Has your gender influenced your career development positively?
- a) Yes..... b) No.....  
(If yes give details).....  
.....  
.....
30. In your opinion how do women achieve top positions (Please tick the relevant items).
- a) Merit.....  
b) Community involvement.....  
c) Political backing.....  
d) Family background.....  
e) Women's networking.....  
f) Lobbying.....  
g) Positive policies to promote women.....  
h) Other (Specify).....  
.....  
.....

31. What are your strategies for survival at the top? (Please tick the relevant items).
- a) Job performance.....
  - b) Leadership qualities/abilities.....
  - c) Political backing.....
  - d) Retraining.....
  - e) Other (Specify).....
32. What are the most important factors which facilitated your rise to positions of top management?
- a) Competence.....
  - b) Obedience.....
  - c) Hardworking.....
  - d) Personalities.....
  - e) Other (Specify).....
  - .....
  - .....
33. What are your strategies for survival at the top? (Please tick the relevant items)
- a) Job performance.....
  - b) Leadership qualities/abilities.....
  - c) Political backing.....
  - d) Retraining.....
  - e) Other (Specify).....
34. How would you characterize the interaction between yourself and other female colleagues?
- a) Very good.....
  - b) Good.....
  - c) Fair.....
  - d) Not so good.....

35. How well do you relate to professional top management colleagues in other organizations.

- a) Very good.....
- b) Good.....
- c) Fair.....
- d) Not so good.....

36. How would you characterize the interaction between yourself and other male colleagues?

- a) Very good.....
- b) Good.....
- c) Fair.....
- d) Not so good.....

37. How well do you relate to both male and female subordinates

- a) Very well
- b) Good
- c) Fairly well
- d) Not very well

38. Do you think that as a female manager you can do your job as well as a male manager?

- a) Yes.....
- b) No.....

Give reasons.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

39. In which of the following areas are there laws/policies affecting women negatively? (tick appropriately)

1. Equality with men viz-a-viz:

- a) recruitment.....
- b) promotion.....
- c) training opportunities.....
- d) salary scale.....
- e) terms of employment.....

2. Rights viz-a-viz:

- a) child care.....
- b) maternity leave.....
- c) insurance coverage.....
- d) work hours.....
- e) leave.....
- f) medical care.....
- g) pension.....

Give details.....

.....  
.....

## **ATTITUDES AND CORPORATE CULTURE**

40. What socio-cultural factors have facilitated or limited your advancement?.....

.....  
.....

41a. In what ways have various managerial behaviour models (i.e. aggression, decisiveness, competition, etc) created barriers to or enhanced your advancement to top management?

.....  
.....  
.....

41b. How have they affected your success after attaining this top position?

.....  
.....

42. In what ways have the traditional attitude of women as the weaker sex (suited for supportive and subordinate roles to men) been barrier to your advancement?

.....  
.....

43. Do you think men react to sharing authority with women? State how this has affected your career advancement.

.....  
.....

44. What personality traits have facilitated or hindered your advancement to top management? (state and tick accordingly)

<b>Personality trait</b>	<b>Facilitated</b>	<b>Hindered</b>
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45. How do your roles as manager/home-maker relate? Explain briefly

.....  
.....

46. Have you experienced any professional upset/embarrassment in your rise to the top?

a) Yes..... b) No.....

If yes explain briefly

.....  
.....

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