

**DIVISION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
WOMEN'S RIGHTS SECTION**

**CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)**

MISSION TO SIERRA LEONE, 25-28 OCTOBER 2004

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXPERTS

Note: The present report was compiled and synthesized from experts' individual reports by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a request from the Government of Sierra Leone for support in the implementation of its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an internationally recognized panel of experts on the Convention participated in a mission to Sierra Leone in October 2004. The mission was organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.

The purpose of the mission was to identify gaps and challenges faced by the Government in its efforts to implement the Convention and develop appropriate recommendations for priority action by both governmental and non-governmental bodies for enhanced implementation of the Convention.

The present report contains the experts' assessment of the situation in Sierra Leone with respect to implementation of the Convention, and a set of recommendations for follow-up action. The report also contains a description of the discussions held during the mission in Sierra Leone. The report was compiled by the Division from the individual reports (summaries of discussions, assessments and findings, and recommendations) of the five experts.

The report covers a number of substantive areas, including law reform, awareness-raising, access to justice, violence against women, and women's education, health and economic development. A major focus is on strengthening the catalytic role of the national machinery for the advancement of women in highlighting the objectives of the Convention and strengthening commitment to and enhancing action for its full implementation. The recommendations contained in this report are also intended to form the basis for a follow-up programme in Sierra Leone by the Division for the Advancement of Women to strengthen capacity for implementation of the Convention. It is also hoped that the recommendations will facilitate further support by other institutions, organizations and donors for the promotion of women's human rights in Sierra Leone

The mission to Sierra Leone and the planned follow-up work are part of the Division's programme to support countries emerging from conflict in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Financial support for the programme is provided by the Government of New Zealand.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

1.1 Introduction

This report outlines the outcome of high-level consultations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW or ‘the Convention’) held in Sierra Leone in October 2004.¹ These consultations were the first part of an overall effort to support and strengthen the capacity of the Government of Sierra Leone, at its request, to identify strategies and put in place laws and policies for implementation of the Convention. The purpose of the mission was to identify the gaps and challenges faced by the Government in its efforts to implement the Convention as well as identify training needs and develop appropriate recommendations for priority action for enhanced implementation. The high-level consultations were also guided by the desire to strengthen the catalytic role of the national machinery for the advancement of women in ensuring that the Government as a whole embraces the objectives, implementation and dissemination of the Convention.

The first part of the report outlines the background and purposes of the mission. This is followed by an assessment of the gaps, challenges and opportunities for implementation of the Convention in Sierra Leone. Recommendations for priority action for implementation of the Convention are then outlined. A descriptive account of the various meetings held during the mission is also provided.

1.2 The Obligations in the Convention

Sierra Leone ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 11 November 1988. Although the treaty allows for progressive rather than immediate implementation of many provisions, ratification demonstrates an unqualified positive commitment to the comprehensive prohibition and elimination of discrimination against women.

According to the Convention’s definition (article 1), discrimination against women encompasses any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the grounds of sex, which

¹ The Division for the Advancement of Women is grateful to the staff of the UNAMSIL Human Rights Section, in particular Ms Theresa Kambobe, for the excellent logistical and substantive support provided both before and during the mission. We are indebted to her. We are also grateful to Mr Prince Acorlor for the administrative and logistical support for the mission. The mission to Sierra Leone, and subsequent follow-up activity, was made possible by funding from the Government of New Zealand.

prevents the equal exercise or enjoyment by women, irrespective of marital status, on the same basis as men, of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all spheres of life.

States parties are required by the Convention to eliminate discrimination against women in the exercise and enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Convention requires States parties to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women, and to take all appropriate measures to eliminate such discrimination, whether committed by public authorities or by any person or organization. Significantly, the obligations of States parties to eliminate discrimination against women extend beyond public life to incorporate discrimination in private life, and, uniquely, within the family.

Upon ratification or accession to the Convention, States parties assume specific obligations for the full implementation of the Convention at the national level. States parties are expected to embody the principle of equality of women and men in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation, and ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle. States parties also commit to adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination, to establish legal protection for women on an equal basis with men, as well as to provide effective remedies against acts of discrimination against women.

The sixteen substantive articles of the Convention identify the specific areas of discrimination that are of particular concern to women and establish the means to eliminate discrimination in these areas. In Part I of the Convention (articles 1-6) States parties agree to take all appropriate measures to bring about the advancement of women. These may take the form of legal, administrative and other measures, which include temporary special measures of affirmative action, modification of social and cultural patterns of conduct and suppression of traffic in women and the exploitation of prostitution of women. In Part II (articles 7-9) States parties undertake to protect women's rights in political and public life. They agree to grant women the right to vote and be elected on a basis of equality with men, to participate in government as officials and policy makers, to participate in non-governmental organizations and to represent their countries internationally. They also agree to grant women equal nationality rights and equal rights with respect to their children's nationality. In Part III (articles 10-14) governments make various commitments to eliminate discrimination in education, employment, health, economic, social and cultural life. In an important and unique provision, States parties also bind themselves to take into account the particular problems faced by rural women, to eliminate discrimination against them and ensure that they

participate in and benefit from rural development on the same basis as men. Lastly, in Part IV (articles 15-16), States parties agree to afford women equality with men before the law, in the exercise of legal rights, and in marriage and family law.

Given the scope of the Convention, its implementation requires a concerted effort and response from Government as a whole. Such an effort and response should be based on a comprehensive review of national legislation, administrative rules and procedures, and of practices to determine the present degree of compliance with the terms of the treaty. During such a review, attention needs to be paid to each of the substantive provisions of the Convention to assess the extent to which the rights guaranteed are being enjoyed by all women. Based on the results of such a review, clearly stated and targeted policies need to be elaborated and priorities set that are consistent with the provisions of the Convention. Public discussion of government policies should be encouraged to strengthen the involvement of various sectors of society in the formulation, review and implementation of these policies.

1.3 Two-Phase Programme of Technical Assistance

Following a request from the Government of Sierra Leone through the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations, the Division for the Advancement of Women proposed a two-phase programme of technical assistance to support the Government in identifying obstacles and developing recommendations for enhanced implementation of the Convention.

The first phase, which was to take the form of high-level consultations and meetings of experts with various stakeholders, was intended to sensitize and raise awareness amongst key roleplayers, including staff in various ministries, on the provisions of the Convention and the obligations arising from it for the Government. The national machinery for the advancement of women, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), would be an integral part of this phase so as to enhance its capacity for follow-up and coordination in the development of targeted policies and programmes.

The second phase of the programme would involve the development and delivery of training based on the recommendations formulated after experts' high-level consultation with the MSWGCA and other key ministries. Such recommendations would include areas for priority action by the Government as well as the types of technical assistance and support needed to enhance the capacity of the MSWGCA and all other ministries, as well as other actors, to comply with the provisions of the Convention.

The present report sets out the recommendations of the experts in this regard. The Division will use the recommendations made in this report to formulate a follow-up training programme in Sierra Leone within its available resources. It is also hoped that the recommendations will facilitate further support by other institutions, organizations and donors for the promotion of women's human rights in Sierra Leone.

1.4 Implementation of Phase One: Mission to Sierra Leone

Phase one of the programme of technical support, the high-level consultations with key ministries and other stakeholders, was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women and took place from 25 to 28 October 2004. A team of internationally recognized experts in the provisions of the Convention, including current and former members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, visited Sierra Leone and met with a number of key ministries and other stakeholders in order to:

- assess the current status of awareness about the provisions of the Convention;
- review the provisions of the Convention, and their implications for the work of the respective ministries;
- discuss challenges in implementation of the provisions of the Convention;
- identify opportunities for using the Convention and its provisions as a strategic tool in legislative and policy processes and in programme development, to enhance adherence to its provisions;
- discuss coordination mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between the MSWGCA and other ministries, as well as with civil society to monitor progress in implementation of the Convention; and
- develop a set of recommendations for priority action for implementation of the Convention in Sierra Leone.

The following experts participated in the mission to Sierra Leone:²

- Dr Charlotte Abaka, former chairperson and member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women ('the Committee');
- Professor Feride Acar, former chairperson and member of the Committee;
- Ms Dorcas Coker-Appiah, member of the Committee;
- Judge Unity Dow, judge of the High Court of Botswana; and
- Professor Tiyanjana Maluwa, Professor of Law at Penn State University.

² The biographies of the experts is attached as appendix one.

Ms Christine Brautigam, chief of the Women's Rights Section in the Division for the Advancement of Women, and Ms Saras Jagwanth, technical adviser in the Division, accompanied the experts.

The experts held meetings with a number of key ministries and institutions, including the MSWGCA, Justice, Education, Health and Economic and Development Planning. Meetings were also held with members of Parliament, the Law Reform Commission, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).³

The experts welcomed the invitation by the Government and the opportunity to hold this series of discussions with high-level officials and staff in various ministries and other government entities, and in particular the MSWGCA, as well as with civil society, and representatives of the United Nations system. They expressed the hope that these consultations would further strengthen commitment and capacity of all stakeholders to fully and effectively implement the Convention.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN SIERRA LEONE IN RESPECT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: GAPS AND CHALLENGES

2.1 Sierra Leone in Context

Sierra Leone ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on 11 November 1988 without reservations, and signed the Optional Protocol in September 2000. It has yet to submit a report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Sierra Leone has also ratified a number of other international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It is a party to the Geneva Conventions, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and has ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Sierra Leone's commitment to international human rights standards remains to be translated into domestic legislation, policy or practice to give effect to these international obligations, particularly in relation to women's rights: legislation that discriminates against women continues to be in effect, and women are also subject to deep-rooted structural discrimination and customs, prejudices and other practices which constitute discrimination against them.

³ The full list of meetings held is attached as appendix two.

Sierra Leone was devastated by the ten-year conflict which destroyed many of institutions including schools, courts and health-care facilities. It remains one of the poorest countries: according to UNDP's Human Development Report of 2004, despite its mineral wealth, Sierra Leone ranks last of 177 countries in terms of life expectancy at birth, adult literacy, combined enrolment in education and GDP per capita. According to the report, over 50 per cent of the population live on less than US\$1 per day, while 74.5 per cent of the population live on less than US\$2 per day. Life expectancy in 2002 was 34.3 years and adult literacy stands at 36 per cent.

While the civil war devastated Sierra Leone, its effects are felt particularly acutely by women and girls. Thousands of women and girls were subject to widespread and systematic sexual violence during the war, including rape and sexual slavery. However, women were marginalized and disadvantaged in all spheres of life also before the conflict, reflected in their low literacy levels, poverty and persistence of discriminatory traditional practices. According to a Government study in 2001, the female literacy rate in Sierra Leone was 20 per cent in 2001. UNDP's 2004 Human Development report indicates a maternal mortality rate of 2000 per 100 000 live births and an infant mortality rate of 182 per 1000 live births.

Although inadequate implementation of the Convention is due to a large number of factors, including lack of political will, inadequate gender equality policies and programmes, and limited knowledge and understanding of the provisions of the Convention, there is also an acute shortage of financial and human resources required for effectively protecting and promoting the rights of women in Sierra Leone, and for putting in place time-bound measures and effective policy coordination and implementation mechanisms.

The following sections discuss a number of key areas for implementation of the Convention, including the gaps and challenges faced by the Government.

2.2 National Machinery: the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA)

The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 6 encourages the establishment of national machinery to promote the advancement and development of women in all States parties. The mandate of such machinery should include monitoring progress in compliance with international human rights standards. The national machinery set up in

Sierra Leone is the MSWGCA, which is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Convention.

A critical challenge affecting the implementation of the Convention is the lack of effective co-ordination and collaboration of the national machinery with other Ministries, the Law Reform Commission as well as with civil society. In this respect, the catalytic role of the Ministry in facilitating gender mainstreaming in all other government departments needs to be further developed. The limited ability of the MSWGCA to play this catalytic role is due to the perception prevalent in most other government departments, including in key line ministries such as education and justice, that implementation of the Convention is the paramount responsibility of the MSWGCA. At the same time, the Ministry must take the lead role in developing a national gender equality strategy and coordinating its implementation. Collaboration and co-operation with civil society also requires further attention, and needs to be enhanced and expanded beyond the education field and the provision of support for women in crisis, typically women victims of violence.

In addition, the capacity of the staff of the MSWGCA needs to be further developed, especially on the Convention, and their catalytic role in its implementation. Limited knowledge of, and expertise about the Convention among staff in all ministries results in limited implementation. Resources for capacity-building efforts thus need to be urgently mobilized.

The many challenges facing the MSWGCA must be acknowledged. In particular, there is an acute shortage of both human and financial resources in the Ministry. Lack of resources is attributable to a number of factors, including budgetary constraints and prioritization of areas other than gender equality as the country struggles to reconstruct its society, economy and state institutions after ten years of devastating conflict. Reportedly, 60 per cent of the country's economy is currently sustained by donor funding. States parties should provide financial and human resources required to enable the national machinery to promote the advancement of women and gender equality. Insufficient funding in Sierra Leone for both the national machinery and NGOs involved in women's rights and gender issues makes it difficult for them to build the necessary capacities for the fulfilment of their respective roles and functions in the promotion of the human rights of women.

2.3 Civil Society

Despite the difficult circumstances under which they operate, non-governmental organizations perform a vital role in the promotion of women's rights in Sierra Leone. These organizations can play an important role in advocating for, and monitoring the Government's implementation of gender equality policies and programmes. A correct understanding of the Convention's provisions and commitment to long-term, sustained implementation of these rights are needed throughout Government and society. This necessitates knowledge, commitment, resources and political will, and all different groups and institutions must be mobilized towards this goal. Strong cooperation between civil society and governmental actors, with international support and assistance, are necessary to achieve the practical realization of gender equality in Sierra Leone. At present, effective collaboration between civil society and government, including the MSWGCA, remains to be realized. NGOs working to improve women's enjoyment of their human rights must be strengthened, and their interface with the Ministry enhanced. Strong cooperation and linkages between the MSWGCA and civil society on gender equality issues would also further strengthen the catalytic role of the MSWGCA in coordinating the implementation of gender equality policy across all sectors of Government.

2.4 Awareness-Raising

There is a significant lack of awareness among public officials that discrimination against women is a violation of women's human rights and of the State's international legal obligations under the Convention. There is also a lack of understanding of the concept of equality embodied in the Convention and the State party's responsibility to identify and eradicate both de jure and de facto discrimination against women in all spheres. With some notable exceptions, there was limited evidence of any awareness among officials that discrimination against women is a systemic problem, and that realization of women's equality is a societal responsibility, to be pursued across all sectors and by all actors. High-level officials as well as civil servants in 'line' ministries displayed limited understanding of the persistence of discrimination against women, and there was a widespread misconception that there was no discrimination against women in the laws of Sierra Leone. Officials also commonly held the perception that issues affecting women were to be dealt with solely by the MSWGCA. A limited understanding of the provisions of the Convention was apparent in all Ministries, including the MSWGCA. In some cases, a negative attitude towards the Convention and the rights of women was evident. This limited awareness of the persistence of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage of women, and of opportunities to use the Convention as a tool for promotion of gender

equality requires immediate and urgent steps. These should include in particular broad-based discussion on gender equality as a societal responsibility, and specific capacity-building initiatives for staff in the MSWGCA and other line ministries. The mission's purpose did not include an assessment of the level of awareness of women's human rights and discrimination against women among the general public, but experts gained some insights especially through its discussions with representatives of civil society.

2.5 Law Reform

Sierra Leone's ratification of the Convention without any reservation gave rise to an immediate need for legislative review to bring its pre-1988 laws into conformity with the provisions of the Convention, and for the enactment of new legislation to enable Sierra Leone to meet the obligations set out in the Convention, especially in articles 2 and 3. However, steps to modify or revise pre-existing legislation, or to enact new legislation to align the domestic legislative framework with the provisions of the Convention remain to be taken, and discrimination against women exists in the law itself, both formal and customary law, for example in relation to property ownership and inheritance rights.

Through the adoption of the National Policy on the Advancement of Women, the Government of Sierra Leone has declared its commitment to harmonize its laws to conform to its obligations under the Convention. The National Policy identifies a number of issues which require intervention by the Law Reform Commission including equality before the law, marriage and divorce, inheritance, ownership of land, citizenship, rape and sexual abuse and violence against women, including domestic violence. The Law Reform Commission has indicated that draft legislation covering some of these areas has already been finalized or is under consideration. However, there is a risk that the process of law reform in relation to women's rights is likely to be slow and long-drawn out and its outcome highly dependent on political pressure by outside bodies on the government. While there is some concern about certain aspects of gender-based discrimination in the current law reform process, much greater efforts are needed to ensure that the review of legal provisions from the perspective of the Convention becomes a priority, with a view to amending laws and provisions that discriminate against women. Steps are necessary to strengthen institutional links so that the Ministry for Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs becomes directly involved in the law reform process to ensure that gender concerns are given high priority, and coordination and collaboration between the law reform initiative and the MSWGCA must be established and strengthened. It is crucial that efforts to institutionalize legal reform under the guiding principles of the

Convention be stepped up as a matter of urgency. Political will at all levels is an essential requirement of such an effort.

2.6 Access to Justice

The formal justice system, particularly in the provinces, was destroyed during the civil war, and the courts remain chronically understaffed and under-resourced with inadequately trained judicial officers and low levels of remuneration. Because of the severe shortage of trained magistrates, a number of justices of the peace were trained and deployed throughout the country to perform the functions of magistrates. Despite the attempts at rebuilding, access to the formal justice system is limited for most Sierra Leoneans and women in particular lack access to the formal court system. Laws and policies remain out of step with international human rights standards. Where laws are in place, poor implementation by an under-trained and gender-insensitive judiciary remains a challenge.

Considerable resources and capacity-building efforts are required to re-build the justice system to a level where it can function adequately, particularly for the protection of women's human rights. To that end, matters pertaining to women and justice, including women's access to justice, need to become a priority in the Ministry of Justice, which needs to make greater and more systematic use of the Convention and enhance its responsibility for women's issues. Coordination and collaboration with the MSWGCA around the Convention needs to be strengthened. Lack of knowledge and awareness of the Convention and women's human rights among the judiciary, including Islamic law and customary law court officials, and law enforcement officials need to be addressed through capacity-building and awareness-raising efforts.

2.7 Incorporating the Principle of Non-Discrimination

Article 1 of the Convention defines 'discrimination against women' for the purposes of the Convention. Under article 2 of the Convention, States parties must commit to eliminate discrimination against women through legislative and other appropriate means. The obligations stipulated under this article extend to public authorities and institutions of the State party as well as private persons, organizations or enterprises.

The State party is thus obligated to include the principle of equality of women and men in the Constitution or suitable legislation and incorporate provisions to prohibit discrimination in the national legislation. Article 2 requires States parties to eliminate the legal basis for discrimination and protect women's rights by revising existing and

enacting new legislation, and if necessary, by abolishing customs, traditions or other practices that discriminate against women.

The definition of discrimination contained in article 1 of the Convention is at present not explicitly reflected in Sierra Leonean legislation. On the contrary, Section 27 of the Constitution, which provides for protection from discrimination, makes discrimination against women permissible by excluding from constitutional protection the application of personal law and customary law, which are in some respects inherently discriminatory against women, especially in areas of marriage, inheritance and property ownership. The Convention requires this situation to be remedied through constitutional amendment and the adoption of specific anti-discrimination legislation embodying the Convention's definition of 'discrimination against women'.

2.8 Customs and Practices that Constitute discrimination against Women, and Stereotypes

Articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention require introduction without delay of measures, including legislation, to modify or eliminate customs and practices that discriminate against women and to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct so as to promote women's full enjoyment of their human rights.

Although section 2 of the Local Courts Act (1963) provides that general law should prevail over customary law when customary law is repugnant to statute or natural justice, equity and good conscience, customary law continues to be widely applied. Significantly, while the Constitution guarantees equality on the basis of sex, under section 27(4) the guarantee of non-discrimination does not apply 'with respect to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death or other interests of personal law' as well as to any law which makes provision for the application of customary law.

Women are discriminated against under customary law. Married women have the status of minors and do not enjoy rights to property ownership or inheritance. Polygamy is widely practiced, as is early marriage including forced early marriage, and the allocation of custodial rights over the children to the husband. In most of the ministries and amongst parliamentarians the experts met with, there was a failure to identify customs and practices as likely sources of discrimination against women that the State had a responsibility to address. There was an understanding that customs, practices and stereotypes which constitute discrimination against women fall within the private sphere where the State should not intervene. The view was expressed that rising levels of

education would lead over time to changes in these practices also without Government intervention. Certain harmful practices, most notably female genital mutilation/ cutting, an issue addressed by the Committee in its General Recommendations 14 and 19, were not openly discussed and there was an unwillingness to critically address the practice as a violation of the human rights of women. A cause for concern was the frequent rationalization of some discriminatory practices, such as the practices of ‘guardian for widows’ or ‘ban on land inheritance’ for women.

2.9 Temporary Special Measures

Article 4 of the Convention provides for the possibility of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women. Although it is generally assumed that article 4 merely permits temporary special measures, it has been suggested that a global reading of articles 2, 3 and 4 does, in fact, create an obligation to implement such measures. The CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation 25 encourages States parties to employ more temporary special measures, such as preferential treatment or quotas to accelerate achievement of women’s equality in fields such as education, the economy, politics and employment. General Recommendation 23 further advises States parties to establish quotas and targeted recruitment procedures and appointments to particular posts, such as the judiciary, in order to overcome the cultural barriers that remain, after de jure compliance has been achieved.

At present, Sierra Leone has the declared policy of preferential measures for girls in primary schools in the northern and north-eastern region of the country. The kinds of measures articulated in the General Recommendations mentioned above remain to be put in place by the Sierra Leonean authorities. One of the women members of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee pointed to the absence of any deliberate policy aimed at increasing the participation of women in political or public life through special quotas. Temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention thus need to be put in place as a matter of urgency.

2.10 Violence Against Women

During the war, women in Sierra Leone were subject to a number of gender-specific abuses, including rape, sexual violence and forced marriages. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women reported in 2002 that systematic and widespread sexual violence against women and girls characterized the conflict in Sierra Leone. Thousands

of cases have been reported, including individual and gang rape, sexual assault with objects and sexual slavery.⁴

Violence against women is also prevalent outside of the war context in present-day Sierra Leone. Although rape is a crime under Sierra Leonean law, there are very few rape convictions in the courts, and many rapes are dealt with under customary law. Under customary law, the perpetrator is generally required to pay a fine to the victim's family, with a higher sum if the complainant was a virgin. Domestic violence against women and children is common, and there is no domestic violence legislation. Under customary law a husband has the right to chastise his wife by physical force. Female genital mutilation/cutting is widespread.

Both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child affirm the right of women and the girl child to be free from violence and harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation/ cutting (see in particular the CEDAW Committee's general recommendations 14 and 19). States are required to take effective action against these practices. Such measures are currently lacking in Sierra Leone, and concrete action remains to be taken by the Government to address these practices. Progress is impeded by an apparent reluctance, at the official level, to discuss the problem of female genital mutilation/ cutting which continues to be treated as a taboo subject, and to tackle this challenge openly and directly.

Similarly, although domestic violence appears to be a pervasive aspect of gender-based and sexual violence in Sierra Leone, there is reluctance to tackle it. This was confirmed by some of the NGO presentations. As gender-based violence impairs the rights and freedoms of women (such as the right to life; the right not to be subject to torture, or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or the right to liberty and security of the person, etc), its continued prevalence in Sierra Leone society, even in the post-conflict period, negates the full enjoyment by women of the rights guaranteed under the Convention.

2.11 Education

Article 10 requires States parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of education. There are three categories of

⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Mission to Sierra Leone (21-29 August 2001) (UN Doc E/CN.4/2002/83/Add 2) 11 February 2002.

obligations in article 10. First, there is an obligation to take all appropriate measures to ensure equal access to education. Second, States parties have an obligation to eliminate gender-role stereotyping in and through the education system. Third, there is an obligation to close the existing gender gap in educational levels between men and women so as to promote the advancement of women, for example by ensuring the reduction of female student dropout rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely.

Literacy levels of women and girls in Sierra Leone are alarmingly low. A further cause for concern is the low enrolment and the high drop-out rates of girls due to factors such as poverty, preference for boys' education and early marriages. The existence of systemic discrimination against women in the field of education in Sierra Leone was widely acknowledged. It was also acknowledged that, as in most societies elsewhere, especially in Africa, this discrimination is partly rooted in age-old gender-role stereotyping and traditional and religious practices. To eradicate such discrimination, the authorities are required not only to put in place appropriate measures – including legislative and administrative measures – but also to undertake educational campaigns to persuade society to change these traditional and religious attitudes and practices. While Sierra Leone's recent political history and current financial resources limits the services it can make available to its citizens, significant additional efforts are needed for Sierra Leone to meet its obligations under article 10. Neither the Constitution nor the recently adopted Education Act contain provisions guaranteeing that women enjoy equal rights with men in the field of education. Policies or programmes to implement the rights of women and girls in regard to literacy and girls' equal access to education remain to be put in place. Such policies would need to include efforts to increase their enrolment and reduce their drop out-rates. Although it was reported that, under the new Education Act, the Government is instituting policies aimed at improving access to education, including vocational training, by girls and young women, enhanced efforts are needed to tackle the challenges comprehensively.

Insufficient links and lack of coordination between the Education Ministry and the national machinery for women, the MSWGCA, are another factor contributing to the limited implementation of the Convention in the education sector. There is little transfer of information, expertise or policy guidance from the MSWGCA to the Education Ministry, which also results in a lack of awareness of the officials at the Ministry of Education about the Convention. Policy planning or implementation of the Ministry of

Education in conformity with Sierra Leone's international obligations under CEDAW, particularly articles 10 and 5 of the Convention, remains to be achieved.

Mention should be also made of the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting, given its reported pervasiveness and cross-cutting consequences in a number of areas of women's lives, including education. Article 10(h) entitles women and girls to receive education relating to health and family life. This provision is premised on the right of women to be fully informed and counselled about reproductive health matters, and to receive education, for example, about sexually transmitted diseases, sexual violence, and forced and early marriages. Research shows that female genital mutilation/ cutting poses a threat to women's reproductive rights, and therefore to the enjoyment of their human rights. In its General Recommendation 14, the CEDAW Committee recommended that States parties introduce appropriate education and training based on research findings about the problems arising from female genital mutilation/ cutting other practices harmful to women. There is evidence that some NGOs in Sierra Leone are engaging with some aspects of this issue. Effective Government action, including efforts to encourage public discussion about these practices, including in schools, remains to be achieved.

2.12 Health

Article 12 requires States to eliminate discrimination against women in their access to health-care services throughout their life cycle. The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 24 gives further guidance on the legislation, policies and programmes, as well as monitoring systems that are necessary to ensure compliance with this provision.

Women in Sierra Leone lack access to adequate health services, particularly in the provinces. Women suffer from a number of health-related problems. Sierra Leone's maternal and infant mortality rate is the highest in the world, and the health system is unable to adequately deal with the effects of the conflict on women. It is reported that HIV/AIDS will likely be one of the greatest challenges facing the country in the post-war period. Female genital mutilation/ cutting is commonly practiced in Sierra Leone. The incidence of vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) is so high that a special ward has been set up to treat it and consideration being given to establishing a hospital for VVF patients. Efforts are needed to explore the links between female genital mutilation/ cutting and VVF, and plans to collect data to establish whether female genital mutilation/ cutting is a cause of VVF should be implemented. Opportunities for an open discussion, especially of the adverse health consequences of this practice, should be actively explored.

Despite the significant resource constraints faced by the ministry, it was encouraging to note the commitment of the Minister of Health to promote women's health and to integrate a gender perspective into policy and planning. Such efforts need to be supported by the donor community. The Minister and Ministry officials also acknowledged the link between women's health and human rights, and the importance of collaboration with the MSWGCA.

2.13 Economic Development of Women

Article 3 enjoins States parties to take active steps to promote women's development and advancement so that they are able to enjoy the basic rights guaranteed in the Convention and other international human rights instruments. Article 3 requires States parties to implement more proactive and positive measures that promote women's development and advancement in all fields. Article 13 obliges States parties to take all measures to eliminate discrimination against women in economic life, and article 14 extends this protection to rural women in particular.

Few women are represented in Sierra Leone's formal working sector, and even fewer in managerial or professional positions. Sierra Leone's rural population is primarily engaged in subsistence farming, with women forming 80 per cent of the agricultural labour force. Agricultural labour is usually unremunerated. Women cannot own property under statutory law in Sierra Leone, limiting their access to credit. Women remain largely economically vulnerable and insecure, thus constraining the possibilities or opportunities for their full development and advancement. Sierra Leone has prepared a National Policy on the Advancement of Women which lays out many recommendations. Specific programmes to implement these recommendations and to actively promote women's development and advancement remain to be put in place.

3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CEDAW IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the significant resource and institutional hurdles faced by Sierra Leone, there are also important opportunities available for implementation of the Convention. Among these are the following:

- As a country emerging out of a devastating ten-year conflict, Sierra Leone faces the particularly daunting task of rebuilding its society and the institutions of State, including the institutions and structures necessary for the proper administration of

a human rights-sensitive justice system. However, as experience in countries like South Africa and Rwanda shows, the process of post-conflict reconstruction also offers a major opportunity to reassess and rebuild the normative framework, institutions and structures of the legal system. Thus, the occasion of reconstructing the legal system may be the best political moment for the country to review its legislative framework and carry out the legal reforms needed to align its laws with the provisions and obligations of the Convention. This would include ensuring that new institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission incorporate a strong gender dimension in their work.

- The reconstruction phase also provides an excellent opportunity for ensuring that gender equality issues are an integral part of all policy and programme development from the outset, ie the initial planning and design stage. The wider societal efforts for development are strengthened if gender-based constraints women encounter in the enjoyment of their rights and their contribution to development are identified and entrenched inequalities based on gender addressed explicitly and at an early stage as part of overall national development efforts.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs can use the preparation of its CEDAW Report as an opportunity to fully assess the current status, including factors and difficulties as well as challenges and obstacles in implementation of the Convention. The process of preparing the report is an opportunity to review existing laws, policies and programmes and their impact on women; identify legislative and policy gaps and initiate relevant corrective action; identify the institutions and ministries responsible for implementation; identify possible sources of funds for action in support of gender equality; seek the involvement of various sectors of society and put in place consultations with all stakeholders to create an environment that is supportive of gender equality.
- The presence of civil society organization ready and willing to work to improve the situation of women is an added advantage that the Government as a whole, and especially the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs should fully utilize.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

The civil and political unrest that culminated in the ten-year conflict in the country contributed in no small measure towards rendering many agencies of government dysfunctional. The shortage of financial and human resources also contributed

significantly to the lack of implementation of the Convention. De jure and de facto systemic discrimination against women continues to exist in all sectors.

On the basis of the findings of the mission, the following recommendations are made as long, medium and short-term strategies for prioritizing women's enjoyment of their human rights in policy and programme design and enhancing implementation of the Convention and the protection and promotion of the human rights of women in Sierra Leone. The recommendations below cannot be implemented by the Sierra Leonean Government alone, and it is hoped that entities of the United Nations system, donor agencies, as well as international non-governmental organizations will provide funding, capacity-building and other forms of technical assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone and especially its Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, the Law Reform Commission, local non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders involved in the efforts to implement CEDAW and eliminate discrimination against women.

4.1 Review of National Laws and Policies

The Government should, without delay, embark on a well-coordinated effort, complete with time lines, to review national laws and policies to ensure their conformity with international principles of human rights and the specific obligations enshrined in the Convention. This law and policy reform effort should include the following:

- The reflection of the principles of non-discrimination on the basis of sex and equality of women and men by abolishing all discriminatory laws in all fields, including section 27 of the Constitution, and in the field of marriage and family relations;
- The adoption of specific laws prohibiting violence against women, female genital mutilation/ cutting and other practices that constitute discrimination against women throughout the life span, such as early marriages and wife inheritance, so as to ensure complete and effective conformity between the domestic legislative framework and the provisions of the Convention;
- Provision of necessary support and resources to the Law Reform Commission to accelerate and strengthen the revision of laws in light of their compatibility with the Convention;
- The formulation or revision of existing national policies on the advancement of women and gender equality and the allocation of the necessary resources by government to ensure implementation;

- Adoption of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, as an integral part of legislative and policy measures to accelerate achievement of substantive equality;
- Adoption, specifically, of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, to increase women's representation in all spheres and levels of public and political life, accompanied by skills training and other support programmes to allow women to effectively take advantage of such opportunities.

4.2 Access to Justice

The Government should take specific steps to enhance women's access to the structures of justice. These should include:

- Sensitization of judicial officers to the particular challenges women face in accessing justice, and on the types of violations of rights and discrimination women commonly suffer;
- Establishment of family law courts, with less formal procedures so women can access the courts at very little or no cost to them;
- Awareness raising campaigns to enhance women's knowledge of their rights and their legal literacy, and measures directed at the elimination of social stereotypes that prevent women from seeking justice.

4.3 Awareness-Raising, including among the General Public

There is an urgent need for awareness-raising on women's human rights and the Convention across all sectors and levels of Government and the public at large.

. Steps should include:

- Media campaigns to promote awareness about women's human rights and the persistence of discrimination against women, and to make the Convention widely known;
- Educational measures and awareness-raising campaigns to facilitate an enhanced understanding of equality between women and men;
- Targeted programmes and activities designed to raise awareness of and eliminate violence against women and harmful practices and stereotypes, including female genital mutilation/ cutting.

4.4 Training and Capacity-Building, and Institutional Development

The Government is encouraged to proceed with the design and implementation of a comprehensive training programme on the Convention for the following groups and sectors:

- Staff of the MSWGCA. The training programme should target a core group of staff from the MSWGCA to empower them to act as catalysts for gender equality vis-à-vis other ministries and community groups, and to provide advice on gender equality issues. The training programme for staff of the MSWGCA should be carried out with the purposes of:
 - (i) familiarizing them with the full content and meaning of the articles in the Convention, the Committee's general recommendations, decisions and guidance in this regard;
 - (ii) developing their skills to enhance collaboration with line ministries;
 - (iii) developing their skills to enhance cooperation and coordination between government agencies and civil society organizations; and
 - (iv) enabling them, including through illustration of good practice examples from other countries, to develop national strategies and action plans, policies and programmes for the advancement of women, as well as to initiate law review efforts.

- Staff in other line ministries, especially gender focal points. The training programme should focus on the relevant provisions of the Convention and their applicability in various sectors, including education, economic and development planning, justice and health. The integration of gender perspectives in the development of all policy and programming, gender-sensitive resource allocation (gender-sensitive budgeting) and the collection of sex-disaggregated data should also be included in this training.

- Parliamentarians, the judiciary, law enforcement officials and members of the legal profession, including prosecutors. An important part of this training should be on the use of international human rights law, in particular the Convention, in domestic legal processes and decision-making, including violence against women.

- Staff and officials of the soon-to-be established National Human Rights Commission. The training should focus on ensuring the effective mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all dimensions of its work, as well as ensuring

attention to the specificity of discrimination against women and its relevance across all prohibited grounds of discrimination.

The Government should urgently provide adequate human and financial resources to the MSWGCA to enable it to effectively carry out its functions in promoting the advancement of women and gender equality, and to play its role as a catalyst in coordinating the implementation of policies and programmes for the promotion of women's human rights and gender equality. Resources are also needed to enable the Ministry to work effectively with civil society organizations in the development and implementation of gender equality policies and projects. Donors are encouraged to supplement the Government's own efforts, and especially to support enhanced Government-civil society cooperation in regard to gender equality.

The Government, especially the Ministry of Justice, should work with the University of Sierra Leone and other institutions to enhance training programmes on law and gender issues, and support the development of law school curricula to integrate gender perspectives in legal training.

The Ministry of Justice and the MSWGCA should maintain regular cooperation with the Law Reform Commission on gender-related aspects of the Commission's agenda.

4.5 Support for Civil Society

It is recommended that the work of civil society be supported and strengthened, particularly in the framework of Government-civil society partnerships in support of gender equality. Bilateral and multilateral donors are especially encouraged to support joint Government-civil society activities and pilot projects for gender equality. Civil society organizations' training in women's human rights as well as in leadership, lobbying and advocacy training should also be supported.

4.6 Educational Opportunities for Women and Girls

The Government is urged to adopt policies to provide incentives for girls and young women to prevent early marriages and early pregnancy; integrate compulsory gender awareness programmes in the school curricula at all levels, designed in particular to eradicate stereotypes and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/ cutting; and provide for statutory recognition of non-formal education and technology and skills training, especially for girls and young women. The Government is also encouraged to

put in place strategies to increase the literacy rate of women and girls, encourage girls' enrolment and reduce the high drop-out rate of girls from schools. The Government should provide, and seek donor support for, scholarships for girls' formal secondary and tertiary education.

4.7 The Role of the International Community

The United Nations and the international community, bilateral donors and international non-governmental organizations have an important role to play in supporting Sierra Leone to implement fully and effectively the obligations it voluntarily assumed by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

5. DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNTS OF MEETINGS HELD

This section of the report describes the proceedings of the meetings and consultations held during the mission. It is largely a descriptive account of the discussions which took place. The assessment of the situation in Sierra Leone and the recommendations given in this report are drawn in large part from the discussions summarized in this section.

5.1 Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA)

The meeting began with a brief introduction by Ms Christine Brautigam outlining the purposes and main goals of the mission. She highlighted the fact that the aims of the mission were to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs in its catalytic role in implementing the Convention, and to facilitate the use of the Convention by Government as a whole. The introduction was followed by presentations by the Minister and Deputy Minister which outlined the activities of the Ministry since its inception. It was noted that as part of its work, the Ministry had organized consultations, including a workshop with other ministries, NGOs and external partners (including UN agencies) to discuss its CEDAW implementation strategies; that a simplified version of the Convention had been prepared and disseminated; and that the Ministry had coordinated the preparation of the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming and the National Policy on the Advancement of Women.

The challenges in implementation of the Convention were also raised. The Minister stated as that as a result of the long conflict and the competing claims on available resources, the budget of the MSWGCA was small, and there was much dependence on

outside agencies to support the work of the Ministry's Gender Division. For example, the Netherlands Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had supported the Division to develop the gender policy for effective gender mainstreaming, and the Commonwealth Secretariat had provided a consultant to prepare a simplified version of CEDAW for wide dissemination. However, even though the Ministry relied heavily on outside donors, the Government faced the challenge that the post civil-war funding from international sources for gender equality was directed mainly at NGOs rather than at capacity-building efforts for government institutions. Lack of funding presented a significant obstacle to ensuring long-term sustainability of projects on women's issues and the building of national institutions to effectively coordinate national policy to implement the Convention.

Members of the panel of experts made short presentations on various aspects of the Convention. The main presentations in this session were made by Feride Acar and Charlotte Abaka. Professor Acar's presentation stressed the need to achieve both de facto and de jure equality of women and men. She noted the Convention's requirement to eliminate discrimination against women in both the public and private spheres. The adoption of non-discriminatory laws was a central implication of this requirement and an absolute minimum – the starting point. Any legislation that had the effect of impeding the enjoyment by women of equal rights had to be modified to comply with the Convention. Special measures intended to ensure the accelerated achievement of such equality, for example affirmative action programmes in favour of women, were not discriminatory and permissible under article 4 of the Convention.

In her presentation, Charlotte Abaka pointed out that the Convention contained many provisions from which Sierra Leonean women could benefit: for example Article 4 provided for special temporary measures to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality between men and women. More pertinently, other provisions contained obligations to eliminate discrimination against women in the fields of education and employment; other provisions addressed the needs of rural women; and guarantees of equal rights regarding property and inheritance.

Dr Abaka complimented Sierra Leone for ratification of the Convention without reservations, the establishment of a national machinery for the advancement of women in the form of a Ministry and efforts to co-ordinate gender equality policy with other ministries through the appointment of gender desk officers, and the adoption of a gender mainstreaming policy. She also highlighted the importance of eradicating traditional and

customary practices that discriminated against women, as well as the need to involve civil society in the development of policies for the practical realization of equality between women and men.

During the discussion that followed, some of the challenges and strategies for implementation of the Convention were raised. This included the need for capacity-building on the Convention for staff in the Ministry and the strengthening of coordination and collaboration with other Ministries as well as with civil society. However, experts also called for a strengthening of the catalytic role of the Ministry in facilitating gender mainstreaming in all other government departments. The importance of collaboration and coordination with non-governmental organizations was also stressed.

5.2 Ministry of Justice/ Office of the Attorney-General

This meeting provided an opportunity for the panel of experts to discuss with the Ministry of Justice its role in implementation of international agreements through aligning national legislation with the country's international obligations. The main presentations during this meeting were made by Tiyanjana Maluwa, Unity Dow and Dorcas Coker-Appiah.

Professor Maluwa noted that as Sierra Leone had ratified the Convention without reservations, it incurred a number of obligations under international law. He highlighted the obligation incumbent upon States parties under the international law principle of *pacta sunt servanda* to carry out their treaty obligations in good faith. This required an obligation upon parties to international treaties to align their domestic legislation with international obligations, especially in the context of human rights instruments whose implementation was only possible if the domestic legislative framework granted to the individuals within the State party protection of the rights recognized by it under the international treaty. In this respect, it was noted that the Convention, in article 2, expressly obliged States parties to ensure that the fundamental principle of non-discrimination underlying the Convention was incorporated both at the constitutional level and in legislation. Where necessary, therefore, States had to undertake appropriate constitutional and legislative reform. He also pointed out that such constitutional and legislative reform was mandatory because of another fundamental principle of international law, namely that a State cannot plead deficiencies in its own laws as a justification for violating its treaty obligations.

Professor Maluwa also raised the issue of the important coordinating and advisory role of the Ministry of Justice for Sierra Leone to meet its obligations under international law. He raised the question of judicial training and coordination with other institutions such as the University of Sierra Leone on special training programmes on law and gender equality issues; the role of the Ministry in designing the law school curriculum to integrate gender perspectives, and cooperation with the Law Reform Commission on gender-related aspects of the Commission's agenda.

Judge Dow noted the need for political will to fully implement the Convention and the need to engage in interaction and dialogue at national and international levels in order to overcome the obstacles faced in the national implementation of international obligations. She also raised the question of structural and substantive problems in the judiciary which had the effect of impeding access to justice, such as costs, legal personnel, language of the courts, as well as the need for the criminal justice system to respond appropriately to the effects of the conflict. It was not only important to adopt gender-sensitive laws and policies, but also to put in place institutional mechanisms to ensure their full implementation. The severe shortage of trained judicial officers and the devastating impact of the armed conflict on the functioning of local courts was acknowledged.

Ms Coker-Appiah's presentation focused on customary practices and stereotypes that discriminated against women, including polygamy, forced and early marriages and female genital mutilation/cutting, and their incompatibility with the Convention. In this context, she also discussed the effects of the co-existence of the pluralistic legal system of civil law, customary law and religious law, and the effect of section 27 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, which excluded family law and customary law from protection against discrimination. She highlighted the dynamic nature of culture which was capable of change and evolution, including through government policy and constitutional and legal amendments. She highlighted the devastating effects of the conflict on women in Sierra Leone, and the continued high incidence of violence against women in the post-conflict era. The importance of passing laws prohibiting discriminatory customary practices in all fields, and the need for specific laws that dealt with violence against women, was also raised.

During the general discussion that followed, the Attorney General/Minister of Justice noted that the very creation of the MSWGCA was evidence of the Government's commitment to enhancing women's rights and to implementing the Convention. In his view, the primary responsibility for identifying and addressing gaps in legislation or

policy and in implementation rested with the MSWGCA. According to him, it was the responsibility of the MSWGCA to bring proposals for law reform to the Cabinet for approval. Once the law had been approved, the role of the Ministry of Justice was simply to draft the legislation and present it to Parliament. The Minister also expressed the view that the principle of non-discrimination entrenched in Constitution was subject to culture/tradition, which also had to be respected. Discriminatory customary practices and attitudes would gradually disappear through education. In his view, there were no discriminatory laws in Sierra Leone. He also emphasized, however, that an exercise of general law reform was already underway with a CEDAW component incorporating the Convention's obligations.

The Solicitor-General elaborated that, at the time of ratification of the Convention, Sierra Leone had not been ready to become a party because of the challenges arising from some of the country's cultural and religious practices and traditions. According to him, at the time of ratification Sierra Leone had not been in a position to comply fully with the provisions of the Convention, but ratification was an expression of the will to implement its provisions.

Experts' interventions directed the discussion towards the need for Sierra Leone to look at good practice examples from around the world, including countries in the region and Muslim countries, without diverting from the principle that traditions and customs that were contrary to international human rights standards and repugnant to natural justice and morality were not permissible. Enhanced coordination between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could strengthen the Government's capacity for adhering to its international legal obligations. Improved coordination between the Ministry of Justice/Attorney General's Office and the MSWGCA was also suggested.

5.3 Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone

In this meeting, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General briefed the visiting experts on the mandate of UNAMSIL, and the work of his Office. He also discussed with the experts his observations regarding gender relations and the implementation of the Convention in Sierra Leone society; and also the relationship between the local population and the United Nations forces and staff in Sierra Leone and its impact on gender relations.

5.4 Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights

Following the introduction of the experts and a brief statement on the purpose of the mission, the Chairperson of the Committee made a short presentation on the establishment of the 28-member body in 2003 as a cross-party oversight body. Among the Committee's future priorities was the domestication of international human rights conventions, including CEDAW, and the Committee was already collaborating with UNICEF on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and with UNDP on CEDAW.

Each expert made a brief presentation which covered the following topics: Sierra Leone's obligations under the Convention and in particular the role of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention, legislative reform, violence against women, access to justice, and customary law.

Several members of the Committee responded to experts' comments and observations, referring in particular to women's representation in Parliament, and weaknesses in law enforcement institutions, especially the police, in dealing with gender-related offences. Among the major constraints identified by parliamentarians were inadequacies in education, customary and religious practices such as polygamy, social exclusion of women and their limited participation in political and public life. One woman parliamentarian emphasized the need for quotas for women in political bodies and described how efforts to institute them were unsuccessful due to a lack of political will. There was, however, significant difference of opinion amongst members of the Parliamentary Committee on the question of whether discrimination against women was prevalent.

Members of the Parliamentary Committee suggested measures that could be taken to address these problems, including revitalization of local government, which would provide an entry point into political participation by women; special representation for women at all levels; enhancement of women's economic and social independence, for example by reforming the discriminatory property regime (commercialization of land) and redefining citizenship to make it gender-neutral; institution of preferential treatment for girls in education (particularly in the north-eastern region of the country), using article 4(1) of the Convention. It was emphasized that, given strong political will and support, these kinds of measures would lead to increased participation for women in political life and towards the realization of gender equality in Sierra Leone.

The overall view was that it was up to the Executive branch of Government to take an active stand and demonstrate sufficient political will to eliminate discrimination against

women. The power of the legislature was seen as limited. This was despite the fact that most members of the Parliamentary Committee recognized the existence of discrimination against women in the legal framework of the country, including in the Constitution, the inheritance law, the citizenship law and women's rights to property and land. Recent nominations of women as judges and as commissioners by the President, as well as the practice of providing scholarships for girl students who wanted to continue their education beyond elementary school (in the Northern and Eastern provinces) were important positive steps reflecting the political will to improve women's lives. While the challenges of addressing women's issues in the predominantly Muslim Northern and Eastern provinces were mentioned, gender-based discrimination was seen as resulting primarily from specific regional or local characteristics. None of the participating members of the Parliamentary Committee commented on violence against women and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/ cutting as problem areas in Sierra Leone.

5.5 Ministry of Education

This meeting was attended by Professors Acar and Maluwa. Professor Acar gave an overview of the Convention and the specific obligations arising from certain articles, including articles 4, 5 and 10. She raised a number of specific questions including on measures in place to address the low rate of female illiteracy in Sierra Leone and the low priority given to girls' education. She also discussed the need to address such cultural barriers as early marriage of girls and stereotypical gender roles as part of the obligations of the State under the Convention to ensure women's equal access to education. She placed particular emphasis on the need to use education as a tool to modify discriminatory cultural norms in Sierra Leone.

Professor Maluwa made a presentation on the nature of international law obligations and the Convention and how these related to the field of education. In particular, he noted how education could be used as a tool to address and eradicate traditional and customary practices and social attitudes that presented obstacles to the achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women.

The Deputy Minister expressed the view that there were no discriminatory laws or practices in Sierra Leone. As evidence of non-discrimination in the education sector, he noted that the Education Act of 2004 made provisions for both boys and girls to receive compulsory basic education (6 years grammar school and 3 years secondary school) and that free primary education for every child was legally available. Among the causes of

the existing low level of school attendance of girls were regional, cultural and economic differences between the Western and Eastern Northern parts of the country as well as the post-conflict situation. He argued that religious and cultural considerations were paramount in Sierra Leone, and major factors that determined the pace and direction of change in the human rights field. He cautioned against imposing change and Western values on societies, especially in regard to the role of women. There was no discussion of the structural and systemic nature of gender-based discrimination and its relation to girls' and women's educational level.

Other officials in the department provided substantive and technical information and highlighted the Ministry's efforts to scale up girls' education through both formal and non-formal education policies. In this context, in addition to the existing policy of providing free secondary education to successful female students who wanted to continue their education in the Eastern and the Northern provinces, a new re-entry policy into the school system for young mothers; school feeding programmes that benefit girls as well as boys; and distance schooling and low-cost boarding schools were mentioned as policies in effect to enhance girls' education. Officials identified the need for a 'gender-friendly' curriculum and teaching methods, and guidance and training in gender sensitivity for counseling staff in the schools to better guide girls to the 'right' careers. Other necessary measures were the need to channel female drop-outs to informal education and to implement laws to prosecute parents who did not send girls to school. Other areas where action was needed included the promotion of gender issues at tertiary education levels; gender awareness training especially for men; strengthening of career guidance and counselling units in schools; integration of rehabilitation and reconstruction as part of the overall educational programme; enhancing vocational, technology and skills training in the non-formal education sector, including building capacity for vocational teachers; implementation of a sensitization and popularization campaign of CEDAW in schools; addressing the sociological aspects of discrimination; Review entry/registration fees in schools to enhance girls' and young women's access to education

While the eradication of illiteracy was highlighted during the discussion as the stated priority of the national education system, the gender dimensions of illiteracy were not addressed nor the need for policies to raise women's low literacy levels. The experts highlighted the role of the Ministry of Education in the implementation of the Convention, and the need for enhanced communication and contact between the Ministry of Education and the MSWGCA. The meeting also represented the first opportunity for the Deputy Minister of Education to meet the gender focal point in his Ministry.

5.6 Ministry of Health

This meeting was attended by Dr Abaka, Ms Coker-Appiah and Judge Dow. Dr Abaka delivered the main presentation and outlined the main obligations arising from the Convention in the field of health, including general recommendation 24. Noting that health was a human rights issue, she highlighted the links between article 12 of the Convention on health and other articles, including article 5, 6 and 10. She also noted the impact of the conflict on women's health and the need for special programmes to overcome this phenomenon.

The Minister of Health outlined the programmes and policies in place to implement article 12 of the Convention. The Ministry had put in place reproductive health services and services to pregnant and lactating mothers were free. Trauma counseling was included as part of health delivery in view of the atrocities that women had suffered during the conflict. Rape crisis centres had also been set up, as well as a special ward to deal with the high incidence of VVF amongst women and girls. A discussion was held on the links between female genital mutilation/ cutting and VVF, and the Minister acknowledged the need for the collection of data to establish the links between the two. It was recognized that the practice of female genital mutilation/ cutting was considered a taboo subject and shrouded in secrecy, making it difficult to eradicate it effectively. The alarmingly high rates of maternal and infant mortality rates in Sierra Leone, and the rising HIV/AIDS infection rate were also raised. The Ministry currently had a multi-sectoral intervention programme to deal with HIV/AIDS. Pregnant women were provided anti-retroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission and free voluntary counseling and testing sites had been set up in each province.

While the shortage of human and financial resources was flagged as a major problem, the Ministry of Health displayed significant commitment to implementing the Convention and attempting to advance women's right to health. Although discriminatory cultural and social attitudes were seen as obstacles, the importance of drawing from good practices in other countries, including strategies for the eradication of female genital mutilation/ cutting, was acknowledged. The importance of coordination and collaboration with other ministries was also raised, with the Minister acknowledging the need for human rights training for officials in the health sector.

5.7 Ministry of Economic and Development Planning

The meeting with the Ministry of Economic and Development Planning was attended by Ms Coker-Appiah and Dr Abaka, with Ms Coker-Appiah providing the lead presentation. She gave a brief overview of the obligations in the Convention relating to women's development and economic rights, and raised questions relating to the Ministry's strategy in relation to women's social security, access to arable land and credit.

Officials from the Ministry noted that while there was no official policy on women's economic rights, efforts were being made to include women in all processes at the national level. Efforts were also being made to include women in all processes at the community level, and micro-credit schemes had been introduced to support the large number of women-headed households. The view was expressed that women's disadvantaged economic position was due mainly to discriminatory customary and traditional practices, which were difficult to change and required time. Officials expressed the view that primary responsibility for changing cultural attitudes rested with the Ministry of Education. Factors and traditional practices that prevented women's ownership of land were mentioned, and steps were needed to encourage and support a gradual move from subsistence farming to commercial farming. The view was also expressed that there was no discrimination against women in laws or policies of the Government. Officials noted the need to empower district councils to implement laws at the local level and to increase the participation of women in local government elections.

5.8 Non-Governmental Organizations

The meeting, which was attended by a number of civil society organizations working in a wide variety of areas, was very useful in exposing experts to the cross-section of national and international NGO's active in Sierra Leone in the areas of women's human rights, gender-based discrimination and/or issues of women's access to health services, education and poverty reduction measures.

The following is summary of the presentations made by the NGOs:

Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI): COOPI's field of operation includes women's rights. It works with women, supporting young mothers who have been victims of violence. It has organized a conference on women's rights and children's rights, and has funded projects in support of women's economic empowerment. COOPI also provides advice on psycho-social problems, literacy campaigns and addresses issues of domestic

violence. Its major challenge is to explain rights to women, and to strengthen human rights education and sensitization.

International Medical Corps (IMC): IMC's work addresses, *inter alia*, the issue of harmful traditional practices. It has been addressing the problem of fistula pregnancies, and has established that there is evidence that the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting increases the likelihood of vesico-vaginal fistula. It has organized a strategy for the Mano River Union countries, which include Sierra Leone, to address this issue. According to IMC, the challenge is to address the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting as a reproductive health issue.

Oxfam: Oxfam has been undertaking capacity-building programmes for women's NGOs, and supports the '50/50 Program' aimed at ensuring gender parity and enhanced women's participation in political, economic, social and public life generally. The major challenges are in regard to protection issues; prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse; law reform and advocacy.

International Rescue Committee (IRC): IRC has been focusing on sexual violence, under the umbrella of safe motherhood, and has been addressing basic reproductive health since 1999. It uses reproductive health as an entry point to introduce the issue of gender-based violence. To this end, it provides free medical and psychological counselling for victims/survivors of sexual abuse/exploitation at its Rainbow Centres. It also concentrates on adult education for women. In addition, IRC has been working on justice issues (police training, access to justice for women); gender-awareness campaigns and advocacy; support groups to address gender-based violence and intervening with the law enforcement agencies to ensure that appropriate action is taken in cases of sexual violence. The main challenge is law reform, e.g. rape laws. IRC is working with the Law Reform Commission and Care International Law on law reform issues.

Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement (GGEM): GGEM has used the provision in article 14 of CEDAW to work towards strengthening women's groups in Sierra Leone. It has engaged in micro-credit loan scheme management, participation of women in development; gender awareness/sensitization, and advocated for the socio-economic empowerment of women. Its main challenges are to overcome bureaucratic constraints that hamper its advocacy work for women's empowerment, through involving community leaders; strengthening the role of women in peace building and development; and improving the situation of survivors of sexual violence. It also aims to work on

inheritance laws which disadvantage women, and to continue raising awareness of CEDAW to overcome current lack of information at the community level.

Forum for African Women's Educationalists (FAWE): FAWE supports women and girls to acquire education for national development in Sierra Leone at three levels. First, formal education for disadvantaged girl-children and non-formal adult literacy programmes; Second, skills training centres for pregnant girls/girl mothers; and Third, counselling and reproductive health education, including awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS prevalence. It also works on programmes aimed at raising awareness about the adverse effects of sexual and gender-based violence. FAWE has identified the following challenges: overcoming constraints in the law; lack of adequate skills training for girls; obstacles against education for girls in Sierra Leone arising from cultural and social practices and attitudes; sexual exploitation and commercial sex.

Campaign for Good Governance (CGG): CGG is involved in human rights education. It has prepared and disseminated simplified CEDAW documents and organized focus group discussions. It also provides economic assistance to women to assist in their socio-economic advancement.

Partners in Adult Education (PAE): PAE is composed of a number of adult education providers and works on capacity-building (with Oxfam as training partners). The main challenge PAE faces in Sierra Leone is to recruit facilitators for its activities.

Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (SLANGO): SLANGO has identified a number of challenges: low levels of education; poverty, especially among women, and the resulting use of commercial sex as a survival strategy; constraints to legal reform; limited interaction with staff in line ministries; the transition from post-conflict to development phase and challenges for women's economic empowerment (micro-credit); and lack of capacity in the area of leadership.

During the discussion it was noted that issues such as harmful traditional practices, female genital mutilation/ cutting and violence against women are brought to public attention particularly through the work of the NGO community. Early marriage was identified as one of the major causes that create and/or perpetuate discrimination against women in Sierra Leone. This harmful customary practice had obvious direct effects on women's education and health (particularly reproductive health), it also had a critical

indirect impact by rendering girls and women vulnerable to sexual abuse and violence in the family and the community and contributing to their dependence on family and men.

NGOs also identified major challenges to awareness-raising initiatives regarding women's human rights in general and CEDAW in particular. Especially in the North of the country, local chiefs and men (husbands) often felt threatened by such efforts and were unsupportive and intolerant of grassroots NGO work, and creative ways had to be devised by them when doing this kind of work. Also, while NGOs saw involvement of men in programmes carried out in local communities as essential, it was reportedly very difficult to enlist men's participation.

While NGOs faced particular challenges in community-based work in each of their respective areas of activity, their overall experiences confirmed that the major obstacles and challenges to women's human rights stemmed from three main sources: the existence of an inadequate and discriminatory legal framework (including the Constitution); severe shortage of funding and resources (human and financial) to support a smooth transition from an emergency/conflict situation to a development agenda; and the unchallenged legitimization of customs and traditions (female genital mutilation/ cutting, early marriage, violence against women including 'forced sex') that violate women's human rights.

5.9 United Nations Country Team

Following an introductory statement explaining the purpose of the mission and introducing the experts, and an initial response from the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, representatives of the various UN entities present were invited to identify opportunities where the international community could collaborate and support the implementation of the Convention and preparation of the CEDAW report, and to make suggestions for future training and follow-up activities.

UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, UNIFEM and FAO representatives reported on programmes and efforts in their agencies to mainstream gender issues and to enhance implementation of women-targeted projects. They suggested that, in light of many competing demands, such programmes and projects were not priority concerns for most government departments. Women's lack of empowerment and position of inferiority in society restricted their ability to take advantage of assistance and capacity-building programmes.

In regard to CEDAW implementation, UNIFEM emphasized the need to tackle the pervasive violence against women and the denial of access to justice for women. UNIFEM had worked with UNDP on the administration of justice-project aimed at extending justice nationwide. UNIFEM referred to the problems constraining CEDAW reporting and the need for appropriate capacity-building in the relevant ministries.

WFP had participated in a gender-training workshop and carried out a sensitization campaign on gender-based violence. WFP highlighted the importance of efforts in the areas of women's participation in education and women's empowerment, and pointed to its activities in this respect.

UNDP supported a project to strengthen the judiciary. As an aspect of its governance programme, it supported the empowerment of women, poverty reduction and micro-finance programmes for women.

WHO supported a 'Women-in-Crisis' project aimed at commercial sex workers, and HIV/AIDS prevention. WHO was carrying out sensitization programmes in the area of reproductive health and in this context, had attempted to address the issue of female genital mutilation/ cutting. Furthermore, it collaborated with the IRC on providing assistance to victims/survivors of rape.

UNHCR's policies aimed at ensuring special protection for women. It has supported the Government in drafting a refugee law that incorporates gender-related concerns. UNHCR noted the phenomenon of girls kidnapped from refugee camps to undergo female genital mutilation/ cutting. As a response, UNHCR has worked with traditional birth attendants (TBAs) to address female genital mutilation/ cutting. According to UNHCR, the best way to address the persistence of these harmful practices was by tackling discriminatory customary laws and practices and their underlying socio-economic realities through education, skills training and women's empowerment.

In general, UN entities were concerned about the persistence of customs and traditions that constituted discrimination against women, and resistance among officials to undertake effective efforts towards changing such practices.

5.10 Law Reform Commission

Following an introductory statement outlining the purposes of the mission, presentations were made by Professor Maluwa and Judge Dow on the obligations under the

Convention. Professor Maluwa noted the implications for States parties to international treaties to align their domestic legislation with international obligations, especially in the context of human rights instruments whose implementation was only possible if the domestic legislative framework granted to the individuals within the State Party protection of the rights recognized by it under the international treaty. In this respect, emphasis was placed on article 2 of the Convention which expressly obliged States parties to ensure that the principle of non-discrimination was incorporated both at the constitutional level and in the legislation. Where necessary, therefore, States had to undertake appropriate constitutional and legislative reforms to bring their Constitutions and legislation into conformity with the obligations resulting from the Convention. The role of the Law Reform Commission was, therefore, key in this process.

The Chairperson of the Law Reform Commission (LRC) emphasized that its function was to review all laws. This review process could be initiated by the LRC itself or by other government ministries or departments. As regards legislative reform in areas relevant to CEDAW, the LRC had undertaken a number of initiatives. A conference had been organized with the MSWGCA, the IRC, UNICEF and UNIFEM on the elimination of discrimination against women in July 2003 (*A Women's Law Reform Agenda*). A draft Bill on sexual offences (rape, sexual harassment, etc) had been prepared, in addition to other draft bills on inheritance, succession and marriage generally. Other proposed bills not yet in preparation related to domestic violence (funding for this work had already been received) and commercial use of land to guarantee equal access to land for both men and women.

The Law Reform Commission had identified a number of challenges: structural and personnel problems in the judiciary, especially in the customary courts; continuing discrimination at the institutional and societal levels; the inimical nature of some customary and religious traditions and practices, especially the unwillingness of the Muslim community to countenance any change in the law on inheritance. The Law Reform Commission was, nonetheless, confident about the possibility of real change due to the apparent readiness on the part of most Sierra Leoneans - as revealed through various consultations with communities, NGOs and other civil society groups - to embrace change. Examples included the consensus reached through such consultations on the need to legislate for a minimum age of marriage of 18; and the fact that Section 27 of the Constitution which permits discrimination on account of customary law was not an entrenched constitutional provision.

5.11 Wrap-up meeting with the MSWGCA

The wrap-up meeting with the Minister, Deputy Minister and staff of the MSWGCA provided an opportunity for the experts to share some of their preliminary impressions from the various consultations.

In their interventions, experts encouraged the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs to take a pro-active and visible role in initiating, coordinating and monitoring the Government's gender equality policies and programmes. They also encouraged the Ministry to enhance its inter-action with different ministries and agencies in carrying out activities and programmes for women. The Minister's own leadership role was seen as crucial in this respect.

Experts highlighted some of the challenges which, in their view, Sierra Leone, faced in implementing the Convention and promoting women's enjoyment of their human rights. These included the effects of customs and norms that discriminated against women, and harmful traditional practices, and their negative impact on women's health, education, empowerment, social standing in the community and economic wellbeing. Experts urged the Ministry to address these challenges squarely, and to take proactive measures to discourage and eliminate discriminatory practices and improve implementation of the Convention. Such measures should include, as a first step, the dissemination of information and advocacy for the human rights of women to enable women to make use of the available opportunities in education and the labour market or to benefit from programmes already implemented in different ministries with support from international agencies. Experts recognized the urgent need for strengthening and building capacity in the national machinery for women.

In her reply, the Minister concurred with the need for the national machinery to play a catalytic role in initiating, coordinating and monitoring national policy for gender equality and non-discrimination of women. However, she also expressed her concern about acute constraints facing the Ministry, for example, limited financial resources, lack of professional capacity and personnel, logistical/infrastructural problems, inadequacy of expertise and training in gender issues in the Ministry itself. She expressed concern that the many demands on the Government towards the country's development and lack of resources did not allow gender issues to be prioritized, and that more international logistical support for her Ministry would improve its work significantly.

Following the Minister's comments, Ministry staff, and in particular the gender officers (several of whom had been very recently appointed) articulated their need for training and capacity-building. They expressed their desire to be better informed about international standards of women's human rights and Sierra Leone's international obligations in order to be empowered and convincing vis-à-vis colleagues in 'line' ministries and local communities where several would be posted to work. They expressed a need to better understand the Convention in order to use it as a tool.

APPENDIX ONE

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE EXPERTS

Dr Charlotte Abaka is the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights in Liberia, a post she has held since October 2002. Dr. Abaka was a Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) from 1991-2002, and was Chair of CEDAW from 2000-2002. She was a Consultant and Advisor to the World Health Organization for its 1999 International Conference on Tobacco and Health in Kobe, Japan. For five years (1989-2002) she served as Chair of the National Women's Machinery organization in Ghana and eleven years (1978-1989) as a Member of National Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Ghana. Dr. Abaka served as Chairperson of UN Expert Meeting on the Critical Area of Women's Health in Tunis in September-October 1998. She is a dental surgeon based in Ghana.

Professor Feride Acar was a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and its chairperson until 2004. She is a Professor of political science at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey, and has a Ph.D in sociology from the Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. She has participated extensively in advocacy and training as resource person, keynote speaker and trainer for government officials and NGOs around the world on CEDAW ratification, implementation, reporting and follow-up activities. She is active in a number of international and regional bodies and has participated in a number of internationally funded research projects on women's human rights. Professor Acar is the author of several books and articles on issues affecting women.

Ms Dorcas Coker-Appiah is currently the executive director of the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre in Ghana and a serving member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. She was also a consultant in law, gender and development. She is a member of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF). From 1986 to 1991 she served as Vice President and President of FIDA, Ghana. She is actively involved in women's issues both nationally and internationally and has spoken at numerous conferences and workshops around the world on women and the law. She is the author of a number of publications including on family law and violence against women.

Justice Unity Dow was the first female to be appointed as a High Court Judge in Botswana, and has a long record as a human rights attorney. She founded the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project and is a member of International Women's Rights Watch, an advocacy organization. Judge Dow was the plaintiff in a groundbreaking legal case that used the Convention to overturn Botswana's nationality law and which led to passage of legislation allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children. Judge Dow has written three novels evoking the struggle women face in striving for equality and justice in modern Botswana. In 2001 an honorary Doctor of Laws degree was conferred on her by Kenyon College in Ohio and in 2003 she won the William Brennan Human Rights Award from the State University of New Jersey.

Professor Tiyanjana Maluwa is the H. Laddie and Linda P. Montague Professor of Law at The Penn State Dickinson School of Law. Professor Maluwa joined the faculty after having served for the past two years as Legal Advisor to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, a position to which he was appointed by the Secretary General during the tenure of Mary Robinson, the immediate past High Commissioner and former President of Ireland. Previously, he was the first Legal Counsel to the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), a Professor of Law at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and an Extraordinary Professor of Law at the University of Pretoria Centre for Human Rights. An internationally acclaimed scholar of human rights and public international law, Professor Maluwa has written, edited and contributed chapters to a number of books and is the author of numerous articles. In 1997, he was asked by the United Nations to serve as the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Nigeria following the execution of the famed poet-activist Ken Saro Wiwa.

APPENDIX TWO

LIST OF MEETINGS HELD IN SIERRA LEONE FOR CEDAW IMPLEMENTATION MISSION, 25-28 OCTOBER

MONDAY 25 OCTOBER 2004

9 am: Meeting with UNAMSIL Human Rights Section Head

Attended by all experts.

Present from UNAMSIL:

- Mr Ahowanou Agbessi (Officer in Charge)
- Theresa Kambobe, Gender Specialist, UNAMSIL

10 am: Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

Attended by all experts. Lead presenters: Professor Feride Acar and Dr Charlotte Abaka.

Present from the Ministry:

- Ms Sheila Gbujama, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
- Ms Memunatu Koroma, Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
- Mr K O Bah, Permanent Secretary
- Ms Fatu Kargbo, Acting Director, Gender Division
- Ms Jebbeh Forster, Gender advisor, UNIFEM
- Ms Gladys Carrol, Consultant, UNIFEM
- 7 officials, including programme officers and desk officers

2 pm: Meeting with the Attorney-General/ Minister of Justice

Attended by all experts. Lead presenters: Professor Tiyanjana Maluwa, Judge Unity Dow, Ms Coker-Appiah.

Present from the Ministry:

- Mr Frederick M Carew, Attorney-General and Minister of Justice
- Mr Tunde E Cole, Solicitor-General

TUESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2004

9 am: Meeting with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone

Attended by all experts.

Present from UNAMSIL:

- Mr Daudi N Mwakawago, SRSG
- Ms Theresa Kambobe, UNAMSIL

11 am: Meeting with Members of Parliament (Committee on Human Rights)

Attended by all experts with inputs by all.

Present from the Committee:

- Hon Dr Alusine A Fotahah, Chairman, Committee on Human Rights
- 10 Members of Parliament and members of the Committee on Human Rights

2 pm: Parallel meetings: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education

Ministry of Health

Attended by Dr Abaka, Ms Coker-Appiah and Judge Unity Dow. Lead presenter: Dr Abaka.

Present from the Ministry:

- Hon Abator Thomas, Minister of Health and Sanitation
- Dr Noah Conteh, Director-General, Medical Services
- Dr M S Kebe, Director-General, Management Services
- Dr Clifford Kamara, Director of Planning and Information
- 5 senior officials

Ministry of Education

Attended by Professors Acar and Maluwa. Lead presenter: Professor Acar.

Present from the Ministry:

- Mr Martin Sama Banya, Deputy Minister of Education
- Mr Williams Taylor, Director-General, Education
- Mr G M Sellu, Director, High Education
- Mr Jackson Rogers, Director, Inspectorate Division
- Ms Olive Musa, Deputy Director, Non-Formal Education
- Mr S Swaray, Deputy Director, Pre-Primary Education
- 5 senior officials

WEDNESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2004

9 am: Radio UNAMSIL Interview conducted by Dr Abaka and Ms Christine Brautigam

9 am: Meeting with NGOs

Attended by: Professor Acar, Ms Coker-Appiah, Judge Dow and Professor Maluwa

Present from the NGO community:

- Anita Kamara, International Medical Corps
- Selina Ade- Williams, Oxfam GB
- Iyesha Joseph, Sierra Leone Association of NGOs (SLANGO)
- Miatta Abu, International Rescue Committee
- Louisa Kamanda, Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement
- Eileen Hanciler, Forum for African Women's Education
- Antonella Lamborke, Cooperazione Internazionale
- Margaret Sankoh, Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone
- Sofie Sesay and Anifatu Conteh, Grassroots Empowerment for Self-Reliance
- Edward Sesay, Environmental Foundation for Africa
- Sally Kamara, Partners in Adult Education Coordination Office
- Madinutu K, Campaign for Good Governance.

11. 30 am: Meeting with UN Agencies

Attended by all experts.

Present from the UN agencies:

- J Victor Angelo, DSRSG and Resident Coordinator, UN country team
- Nancy Asanga, UNDP
- Harriet Matthews, UNDP
- Lynn Ngugi, UNHCR
- Louis Imbleau, WFP
- Rafal Mohammed, WFP
- Aloysins Lahai, FAO
- Lynn Ngugi, UNHCR
- Paul Sengeh, UNICEF
- Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM
- Zakari Wambari, WHO

2 pm: Meeting with Law Reform Commission

Attended by all experts.

Present from the Law Reform Commission:

- Mr Peter Tucker, Chairperson, Law Reform Commission

- Mr A B Timbo, Member, Law Reform Commission

3 pm: Meeting with Ministry of Economic Development and Planning

Attended by Dr Abaka and Ms Coker-Appiah. Lead presenter: Ms Coker-Appiah

Present:

- Mrs Kona Koroma, Permanent Secretary, Development
- 12 officials (no designations given).

4 pm: Wrap-up meeting with the Ministry of Social Welfare

Attended by all experts.

Present from the Ministry:

- Ms Sheila Gbujama, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
- Ms Memunatu Koroma, Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
- Mr K O Bah, Permanent Secretary
- Ms Fatu Kargbo, Acting Director, Gender Affairs
- Gladys Carrol, UNIFEM consultant
- 7 officials.

THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2004

10 am: Press Conference

Conducted by Professors Acar and Maluwa, and Ms Brautigam