



Concept Note

OPEN PARLIAMENT DIALOGUE

Topic: *Advancing Gender Responsiveness in the Sierra Leone Parliament: How Did You Do It?*

Monday, May 27, 2024 | Please register here <https://bit.ly/4e5O5ev> | 12-2 PM GMT

Introduction

In the year 2000, Sierra Leone adopted its National Gender Policy, which aimed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment across various sectors, namely education, health, economic empowerment, and political participation. The policy laid the foundation for subsequent efforts to mainstream gender considerations into national development strategies and programs. Women's representation in Sierra Leone's Parliament has increased over the years with a current number of 44 (29.5%) women in Parliament, although women remain underrepresented in elected positions.

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, was introduced in Parliament to promote gender equality, eliminate discrimination against women, and advance women's rights in Sierra Leone. The Act also seeks to address various issues, including access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation. The passage of the Law was met with challenges and controversies, including debates over certain provisions and resistance from conservative factions. While some critics argued that the Act goes against traditional values and norms, others raised concerns about its practical implementation and enforcement. However, women parliamentarians played a crucial role in advocating and pushing for its passage, through support mobilization, debates, and lobbying with fellow lawmakers to prioritize gender equality issues. Their efforts helped raise awareness about the importance of addressing gender disparities and promoting women's rights in Sierra Leonean.

Today, the passage of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act marks a significant milestone in Sierra Leone with noticeable improvements in the number of women holding parliamentary seats, reflecting a more inclusive and diverse legislative body. Although some strides have been made in areas such as legal reforms and increased gender awareness and activism, entrenched cultural beliefs and practices that discriminate against women and girls remain a stumbling block in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Open Parliament Dialogue

The story of how Sierra Leone has come thus far in advancing women representation in Parliament is worth sharing with the rest of the world. A platform to provide an opportunity for parliamentary stakeholders, civil society and parliamentary development experts to discuss the

lessons and experiences from Sierra Leone is why this dialogue is being organized by Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) in collaboration with the Parliament of Sierra Leone. This webinar will also mark the celebration of the #OpenGovWeek which falls within 27th and 31st May. This webinar will allow stakeholders and partners to share insights, experiences, on strategies and interventions that have been effective in promoting women's representation in Parliament and advancing gender equality in Sierra Leone.

The objectives for organizing this webinar include the following:

- To showcase the progress made and the impact of the collective efforts in policy and law-making in the Sierra Leone Parliament; and
- Identify gaps, challenges, and areas for improvement in advance women's representation in parliament.

Expected Outcomes

At the end of the webinar, it is expected that:

1. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the provisions of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act and its implications for women's representation in Parliament.
2. Participants will be exposed to diverse perspectives and insights on the challenges and successes of promoting women's representation in Parliament through legislative reforms.

Target Audience

1. National Parliaments
2. Civil Society Organizations
3. Women Rights Advocates
4. Female Parliamentarians
5. Parliamentary Development Experts