

Project: "Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in Sierra Leone" Ref: DCI-Genre/2009/205-938)

# Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in the Western Area, Kono, Kailahun and Koinadugu Districts of Sierra Leone

## Lessons Learnt



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It summarizes women property violations cases identified during the implementation of the project "Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in Sierra Leone Project". The cases, reported from January 2010 to March 2013 in this report are not holistic, as they are limited to the areas of implementation and the time frame of the Project. Others institutions such as UNDP and UNWOMEN contributed financially to the implementation of the Project.

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Cover page photo: COOPI, woman in her garden plot in Mountain area, Freetown

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## Executive Summary

Women's property rights, including rights to access, use and ownership of land are critical to gender equality and women's empowerment. Women in Sierra Leone suffer from a range of property rights violations which are rooted in entrenched patriarchal systems supporting discriminatory customary practices and laws particularly in the rural areas, favoring male heads of families. As a consequence, women have limited rights to property and restriction over access and use of land which is the main source of their livelihoods. Empirical evidence has revealed that unequal access to resources including property and land, limits women's capacity to ensure, security of their livelihoods. Without secure title to land, women are more vulnerable and susceptible to poverty characterized by ill health, homelessness, and greater exposure to gender-based violence.

This report presents findings of a study on property right violations against women identified during the implementation of the 3 year, EU supported project "Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in Sierra Leone Project", implemented jointly by COOPI, OXFAM-GB, FAWA and SLYEO. The purpose of the study was to review cases of property rights violations, identify lessons learnt, propose recommendations for access to justice initiatives and further work on policy and legislation around women and property and land rights, and good practice for civil society and other relevant practitioners in this area. The study also included a mapping of the main stakeholders engaged in access to justice work on women's property rights and the identification of challenges and barriers faced by women in the project intervention districts of Kono, Kailahun, Koinadugu and the Western Area.

The research entailed the application of both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Interviews were held with key informants including community elders and district officials and NGO representatives of Kono, Koinadugu and Kailahun Districts and the Western Area. Focus Group Discussions involving men and women and traditional leaders were conducted in each of the project districts. Semi-structured questionnaires were also administered in each of the 4 study districts to randomly selected; community women (40), traditional leaders (20) and grassroots men (20). Questions covered: knowledge of women's property ownership, access to justice and literacy rights (pre and after project implementation); knowledge of legal and cultural barriers; achievements/impact; challenges/constraints; impressions of the project; impact of project on target project beneficiaries; recommendations etc.

Between 2010- 2013, the combined District Networks handled 175 cases, 90 of which dealt directly with women and property right violations. The study which covered mainly rural Sierra Leone included cases recorded in 9 chiefdoms in the 3 districts of Kono, Koinadugu and Kailahun and in rural and urban communities in the Western Area. The issues reviewed from the data generated include: distribution of cases; nature of incidents; location of incidents status of victim and status of perpetrator.

Survey findings revealed that property house /land claim and plantation deprivation were the most frequently recorded violations. Deprivation of plantations was the most frequently recorded violation in the provincial areas, whilst property house/ land claims and eviction threats were the highest recorded



incidents in the Western Area. The highest percentage of violations was committed against women by other non related community members, followed by violations committed by male relatives, particularly male in-laws. The survey revealed that Women with the highest level of vulnerability and the greatest victims of property rights violations were adult women who were not legally married. This category was followed by widows. The main identified causes of violations were, land tenure /customary law and lack of access to justice and including limited knowledge by women, perpetrators and traditional leaders of laws pertaining to property rights. Discriminatory matrimonial property law was also identified as being another particularly limiting factor.

The report highlights the differing nature of cases handled through the District Networks comprised of NGOs working in the areas of women's empowerment and related issues. The District Network mediation of property right violations as well as their advocacy efforts was identified as crucial in the promotion of women's property rights. A number of cases, many of which were successfully resolved, whilst others were pending further legal actions were addressed by the District Networks. Ten case studies portraying property right violation victims and the role of the District Network in the mediating and resolving property right violation cases are showcased.

Results of the mapping of agency interventions are presented, primarily those that are members of the District Network but also inclusive of those agencies that operate outside of the network membership. Organisations identified are involved in a number of interventions including: women's rights ; women's empowerment; gender and child rights protection; human rights; youth empowerment Issues; advocacy on women's rights issues; promotion of agriculture, education, health, good governance; disability rights and advocacy; poverty alleviation, etc. Recommendations for improvement in District Network performance are presented.

The several lessons learnt after three years of project implementation outlined in the report, if observed and exploited gainfully, will reinforce women's property rights. These lessons learnt drawn out from the study range from actions that directly affect women to those which require community action, as well as lessons that identify what can be achieved by the District Network. There are also lessons which are necessary for consideration within the context of the legal framework of Sierra Leone.

Based on findings and lessons learnt, recommendations for practice address issues such as: further support to community women from important stakeholders so as to facilitate the protection and promotion of women's rights to land; networking , advocacy, information sharing and amongst women; women opting for leadership positions; and the need for active involvement of civil society.

Recommendations for policy include: promotion of women's property right issues by Government/Councils; creation of District Networks in every district; sustained media engagement towards the formation of a Community Women's Land Rights Movement; information sharing education on violations and legal provisions affecting women; observance of national and community women's property and land rights days.

# Section 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 The Situation of Women in Sierra Leone

Women and girls in Sierra Leone face gender discrimination which results in them being disproportionately represented amongst the poor and facing greater barriers than their male counterparts in access to social and economic services. Access to justice for women is limited and there are numerous barriers to women's participation in democratic governance. This situation is reflected in the socio-economic indicators pertaining to women. Evidence indicates much higher level of illiteracy amongst women than men. The high level of female illiteracy (71%) has far-reaching socio-economic implications for women. Low levels of literacy affect female employment and their participation in decision making as well as their general well being. Women are predominately found in low income occupations in the informal sector. Limited or non-existent child care facilities also restrict women's mobility in both work and business.

There is a direct correlation between women's income earning capacity and their health status. MMR in Sierra Leone at 857,000/100,000 live birth compares unfavourably to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. High levels of poverty are also associated with early marriage. In a 2012 UNICEF State of the Worlds Children Report, it was reported that 47% of women marry before the age of 18 years and 19 % percent of girls under 15 are already in a marital union. Women in post conflict also experience higher levels of SGVB within these marital unions.<sup>1</sup>

Women's participation in governance and decision-making is minimal. They are in the minority in elected offices and senior posts in national and local government. Women hold only 14.5 per cent of parliamentary seats<sup>2</sup> and 13 per cent of ministerial positions.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Women Land and Property Rights in Sierra Leone

The right to own, control and access land is critical to gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Numerous studies have revealed that unequal access to resources including land limits women's capacity to ensure agricultural productivity, security of livelihoods and food security and is increasingly linked to poverty, migration, urbanization and greater risk of violence.<sup>4</sup> With women predominantly engaged in agricultural activities, land is significant to their economic empowerment as a major source of employment and a key determinant of access to other productive resources.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2012) *State of the World's Children*, New York: UNICEF [www.unicef.org/sowc2012/](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2012/)

<sup>2</sup> National Electoral Commission (NEC) 2012 Election Results

<sup>3</sup> January 2013 Sierra Leone Ministerial Cabinet

<sup>4</sup> UNDESA (2009) World Survey on the Role of Women in Development



In Sierra Leone customary practices and laws in the rural areas which favour male heads of families has resulted in women having limited ownership rights over land. Women, therefore rarely own land titles or property either individually or jointly with their husbands and many of them only gain access to land indirectly through their men by either blood linkage or marriage. This has negative consequences, especially for households headed by women. Without secure title to land, women are more vulnerable and susceptible to poverty characterized by ill health, homelessness, and greater exposure to gender-based violence.

### **1.3 The Legal and Policy Environment for Women's Property Rights**

The policy and legal framework within which women's property rights are regulated in Sierra Leone, have a significant effect on the way in which their rights are exercised. The land tenure law operates within a pluralistic legal system in which the land in the provinces, where the majority of the population resides, is governed by customary law, which is highly discriminatory towards women. The customary law system rarely allows for women to own land in their own right but rather through blood or marital ties with male relatives.

The national constitution of Sierra Leone reinforces the influence of customary law over property rights matters, in that, despite the constitution stating that all persons are equal under the law, discriminatory cultural practices are legitimized by Article 27 4(d) and (e) in which the statement "...unless customary law says otherwise", gives customary law precedence.

The Devolution of Estates Act passed into law in 2007 with the two other gender acts (The Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act and Domestic Violence Acts provides protection for women and children to inherit their husbands and fathers property respectively. The law further imposes criminal penalties for evicting a surviving spouse or child from the marital home before formal distribution of the estate. The Act however is limited as it only protects women's rights to private and individual property and does not cover family chieftaincy property, or community property.

The National Land Policy which is currently under revision has incorporated definitive steps to address some of the discrimination women are subjected to by the current land tenure system. The policy however still contains provisions which support the status and implementation of customary law and practices which inherently discriminate against women and girls.

### **1.4 Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in Sierra Leone Project**

The Strengthening and Linking Women-Led Efforts to Promote Women's Property and Literacy Rights in Sierra Leone Project is a European Union (EU) funded initiative implemented as a partnership between four Non Governmental Organizations: Cooperazione Internazionale



(COOPI), Oxfam GB, Forum for Women Educations, Sierra Leone Chapter (FAWE-SL) and the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO). The project supports women and duty bearers to address some of the issues that affect women's property and literacy rights.

#### 1.4.1 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the project were to: (i) strengthen the capacity and improve networking between community-based groups and the national women networks; (ii) raise awareness on women's property and literacy rights; and (iii) advocate for greater participation of women in decision-making on property ownership and for a more enabling environment for women to exercise their property and literacy rights.

#### 1.4.2. Project Outcomes

Key project outcomes are recorded as:

- i. 4 District Networks established that reviewed 175 cases;
- ii. Property rights by-laws drafted in supported communities;
- iii. Women's increased inclusion in decision making at all levels of governance as a result of their greater understanding of the 3 Gender Acts and improved advocacy skills;
- iv. greater understanding of the 3 Gender Acts by duty bearers and knowledge used by traditional leaders in settling disputes relating to male offenders and women's access to land and property rights;
- v. 300 women 200 traditional leaders trained, as well as 200 men trained for active partnership with women in promoting their rights to acquire land and properties;
- vi. Increased awareness amongst women of referral pathways for reporting property Rights violations.

### 1.5. The Purpose and Scope the Study

#### 1.5.1 The Purpose

The purpose of the study was to review cases undertaken by the District Networks with a view to identifying lessons learnt. The study was also to include a mapping of the main stakeholders engaged in access to justice work on women's property rights and document challenges and barriers faced by women. The research was to propose recommendations for policy and practice to ensure secure land tenure for women and fair access to justice based on conclusions drawn from the study findings.

#### 1.5.2 The Scope

The study involved a review of operations of the District Networks in all 4 project operational areas, discussions with key informants and focus group discussions with selected groups of community representatives (men, women and traditional leaders). To fulfill this assignment the

consultant and researcher utilized various research methods to elicit the relevant information on: general views and perceptions of project beneficiaries; perception change in areas of the project intervention; recommendations made by community women around further support needed to facilitate the protection and promotion of women's rights to land; improving networking ; and District Network interventions and the extent of the problems identified and the capacity of the current legal and traditional system to deal with the issues.

**Desk Research:** All relevant project documents (generated by partners in Western Area, Kono, Kailahun and Koinadugu Districts ); and other resource materials pertaining to access to justice initiatives, policy and legislation around women and property and land rights, and good practices for civil society and other relevant practitioners in this area, were captured and documented.

Key Informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions were conducted in each of the project districts. These discussions involved men and women residing in the communities and traditional leaders. Semi Structured Questionnaires were also administered in the 4 study districts targeting randomly selected individuals community women(10 per district ); 20 traditional leaders (5 per district);20 grassroots men (5 per district) .Questions covered: Knowledge about women's property ownership, access to justice and literacy rights (before and after project implementation);Knowledge of legal and cultural barriers; achievements/impact; challenges/constraints; impressions of the project; impact of project on target project beneficiaries; recommendations etc.

## 1.6 Geographic Coverage

Questionnaires were administered in 2-3 chiefdoms per district and in the Western Rural and Western Urban districts as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Geographic Areas Covered**

Chiefdoms	Kailahun	Kono	Koinadugu	Western Area
1	Luawa	Gbense	Folosaba Dembela	Western Rural
2	Kissi Kama	Tankoro	Warawara Yagala	Western Urban
3		Kamara	Diang	
4			Sengbe	



## Section 2 Women and Property Rights Violations

### 2.1 Property Rights Violations

The project addressed property rights violation cases through the District Networks (DN) which comprised representatives of NGOs and local civil society organizations that were involved in mediation of cases, facilitation of legal aid and sensitization and mobilization of communities to address property right violations against women. District Networks were established in the three project districts and the Western area.

Between 2010- 2013, the combined District Networks handled 175 cases, 90 of which dealt directly with women and property right violations. The data generated from recorded cases below deals with the: distribution of cases; nature of incidents; location of incidents status of victim and status of perpetrator.

### 2.2 Distribution of Violation Cases Recorded

The district distribution of property rights violation cases handled by the District Networks during the period 2010-2013 is recorded in Table 2. Out of the 90 cases, Kono District with 34.4% of the cases recorded the highest number of incidents, followed in rank by Western Area with 24.4%. Koinadugu District obtained 23.3%, while the Kailahun District obtained the least number of cases with 17.8%. In addition, 2012 recorded the highest incidents in all target district with a total of 42 cases, followed 2011 with 33 violation cases. 8 cases were recorded in 2013 while 7 were recorded in 2010. This trend is in line with the pace of activities at the commencement and expansion phase of the project. In 2012 the project was established and operational in the target districts and a number of sensitization and training activities had been completed and the District Networks were fully functional.

**TABLE 2: District Distribution of Cases 2010-2013**

DISTRICT	YEAR				TOTAL	%
	2010	2011	2012	2013		
Kono	1	24	4	2	31	34.4
Kailahun	3	3	9	1	16	17.8
Koinadugu	3	6	7	5	21	23.3
Western Area	N/A	N/A	22	N/A	22	24.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	7	33	42	8	90	100



## 2.3 Nature of Reported Incidents

The nature of property rights violations recorded in Table 3 below, shows that out of 90 incidents recorded, 'property house /land claim and plantation deprivation' were the most frequent with 26% each. The others were ranked as follows: 'Property house eviction/ threat' recorded 22.2%, 'deprived of property' other than land, house and plantation 18%, ' house property demolished 3.3% , 'cheated on plantation proceeds' and 'debt willfully not honoured' were rated 2.2% each. The least recorded incidents were those in the category 'assaulted for withholding finances' with 1.1%.

Understandably deprivation of plantation is recorded more frequently in the provinces. The highest percentage of violations of this nature occurred in the Kono District. Property house land claims and eviction threats were the highest recorded incidents in the Western Area although Kono also had relatively high percentage of incidents involving properties violations involving houses.

**TABLE 3: Nature of incident in target districts**

	KONO	KAILAHU N	KOINADUGU	WESTER N AREA	TOTAL	%
Property house/land claimed	11	N/A	3	9	23	26
Property house eviction /threat	4	1	6	9	20	22.2
House property demolished	1	N/A	N/A	2	3	3.3
Assaulted for withholding finances	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1.1
Deprived of property	1	10	5	N/A	16	18
Deprived of plantation	12	4	7	N/A	23	26
Cheated on plantation proceeds	1	1	N/A	N/A	2	2.2
Debt willfully not honoured	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

## 2.4 Location of Violations

Violations were recorded in 8 chiefdoms in Kono District with Tankoro Chiefdom recording the highest incidents with a total of 13 out of 30. Kamara and Gbense chiefdoms recorded 4 violations each. Gbane and Soa chiefdoms recorded 3 violations each. Sandor chiefdom recorded 2 violations and Mafindor, and Fiama chiefdoms recorded 1 violation each. Out of 16

recorded violations in Kailahun District, Luawa Chiefdom recorded the highest incidents with a total of 7 cases followed by Dia Chiefdom recording 4 violations. Kissi Tongi Chiefdom recorded 3 violations while Kissi Bendu and Kissi Teng Chiefdoms recorded 1 violation each. Out of 21 violation cases documented in Koinadugu District, Shengbe Chiefdom recorded the highest violations (5 cases), followed by Diang and Wara-Wara chiefdoms which recorded 4 violations each. Folosamba Dembelia recorded 3 violations and Mongo Bendugu and Neine chiefdoms documented 2 violations each. The least incident was recorded in Warawara Bafodia chiefdom with only one violation. In the Western Area, 20 violations were recorded in Western Rural District and 2 were recorded in western Urban District.

**Table 4: Chiefdoms where recorded violations occurred**

LOCATION							
Kono		Kailahun		Koinadugu		Western AREA	
C/dom	Total	C/dom	Total	C/dom	Total	District	Total
Kamara	4	Kissi Tongi	3	Folosaba Dembelia	3	Urban District	2
Tankoro	13	Dia	4	Mongo Bendugu	2	Rural district	20
Gbane	3	Luawa	7	Diang	4		
Gbense	4	Kissi Bendu	1	Neine	2		
Soa	3	Kissi Teng	1	Warawara Yagala	4		
Mafindor	1			Shengbe	5		
Sandor	2			Warawara Bafodia	1		
Fiama	1						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>21</b>		<b>22</b>

## 2.5 Status of victims

Table 5 below indicates that adult women who were not legally married were the highest victims of land and property rights violations in all four target districts. This category of victims recorded 40% out of 90 cases documented. Next in rank were widows with 31.1%. House wives and teenagers recorded 10% each and 'sisters' were 4.4%. 'Divorcees' were rated as 3.3% while 'student' received 1.1%.



**TABLE 5: Status of victims in target districts**

VICTIM	KONO	KAILAHUN	KOINADUGU	WESTERN AREA	TOTAL	%
<b>Widow</b>	11	1	15	1	28	31.1
<b>House wife</b>	3	2	4	N/A	9	10
<b>Divorcee</b>	2	1	N/A	N/A	3	3.3
<b>Student</b>	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1.1
<b>Adult</b>	14	12	N/A	10	36	40
<b>Sister</b>	N/A	N/A	2	2	4	4.4
<b>Teenager</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	9	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	31	16	21	22	90	100

## 2.6 Status of perpetrator

Table 6 below ascribes the following percentages to the status of perpetrators in all target districts. The highest incidence of perpetrators falls into the category of community members who would not in any way be related to the victims. Next is category of in-laws. Within this category the highest number of recorded offences was ascribed to the victims' brother in-laws. To a lesser extent sister in-laws and step children also committed violations. Violations were also committed by the victims own relatives (8%) most frequently brothers. Other recorded perpetrators were, community elders (7%), Chiefs (2.2%) and husbands (3.3%). Secret society members, wealthy businessman and civil servant were recorded as committing 1.1% of violations. Thus 34% of perpetrators are relatives of victims while 66% are other members of target communities.

**Table 6: Status of perpetrator in target districts**

VICTIM	KONO	KAILAHUN	KOINADUGU	WESTERN AREA	TOTAL	%
<b>Community member</b>	17	13	N/A	19	49	54.4
<b>Relatives of deceased husband</b>	2	N/A	14	1	15	11.5
<b>Victim's relatives</b>	1	3	3	N/A	7	8
<b>Community elder</b>	5	N/A	N/A	1	6	7
<b>Husband</b>	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	3	3.3
<b>Chief</b>	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2.2
<b>Mate</b>	1	N/A	1	N/A	2	2.2
<b>Secret society members</b>	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1.1
<b>Wealthy businessman</b>	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1.1
<b>Civil Servant</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	31	16	21	22	90	100



# Section 3 Case Studies on Women's Property Rights Violations

## 3. Women's Property Rights Violations

Prior to the commencement of project, women's access to land and property ownership had been a serious challenge in project communities within the Western area and the Koinadugu, Kono and Kailahun Districts. Through the activities of the District Networks the project was involved in the mediation of a number of cases some of which were successfully resolved whilst others were pending further legal actions. Individual cases outlined in this section are representative of the nature of the main violations handled by women.

### 3.1 Land Tenure/Customary Law

Many of the violations stem from the dominance of culture over the land tenure system. Cultural beliefs and practices dictate that land ownership is vested in male heads of land owning families and women's property rights being extensively suppressed by their male siblings or in-laws.

One of the key informants; a traditional ruler, alluded to the land tenure system that reinforces inequalities between men and women in land and property ownership. According to him, "the system of land tenure in the provinces is founded on customary law. It is therefore implied that land ownership and property rights are women discriminatory. This notion is the common view of the greatest majority of key informants. Land ownership is rooted in a patrilineal system that is characterized male dominance. In the Western Area, land tenure is based on a discriminatory English land law, it is common for women to be denied the right to rent a

#### Case 1 Brother Usurped Step-sister's Inheritance

30 year old Mabinty Musa, from Luawa Chiefdom Kailahun District, was 7 years old when her parents were divorced. When her father died her step brother tried to thwart her of inheritance of the kola, cocoa and coffee plantations which had belonged to their father, by alleging that she was not their father's daughter.

Mabinty presented her case to the District Network. The Section Chief who was a member of the Network spearheaded the matter and invited Mabinty's step brother to meeting. During discussions the brother was educated on the provisions of the devolution of Estates Act. He admitted his guilt and promised to uphold Mabinty's right to their father's legacy. Since this time, Mabinty has been working together with her step brother on her father's plantation and receiving the attendant benefits.



### **Case 2 Intervention of Native Court**

When 60 years old Baindu Jusu, a widow, lost her father during the war her brother usurped the Kola, coffee, and cocoa plantations that was to have been inherited by she and her five siblings (4 girls 1 boy).

Baindu was intimated about the activities of the District Network by the Section Chief and appealed to the District Network to address the land issue affecting her and her siblings. The initial invitation for Baindu's brother to attend a meeting with the District Network was ignored. He however cooperated when he was ordered by the native court to attend the meeting.

When at the meeting, Devolution of Estates Act was read and interpreted to Baindu's brother, the brother made an undertaking to give Baindu a percentage of the yield during that years harvest. It was also resolved that the plantation be equally divided among Baindu's father's the 5 surviving children.

plot in urban areas, be forced from their marital home at the death of their husbands. Whilst the Sierra Leone National Constitution states that all persons are equal under the eyes of the law, Section 27 4d & e protects the legitimacy of these harmful cultural practices with the statement "unless customary law says otherwise".

In all but one of the case studies violations were committed males, who were either in-laws, siblings or related to the women through other means. In the one remaining case the violation was committed by a step-mother.

In Cases 1 and 2, sisters were deprived by their brother or step brother over the distribution of plantations and other properties left by their parents. The District Network was able to prevail on the offending party to judiciously distribute properties.

In Cases 3 and 4 the victims were taken advantage of by their in laws but were able to retrieve the property with the intervention of the District Network.

### **Case 3 Violation by a Brother in-Law**

After the death of her husband, Manty Koroma's brother in law seized the swamp that she had farmed with her husband for the past 20 years. She heard about the activities of the Koinadugu District Network through a radio sensitization programme on land ownership and property rights. She travelled from the village of Dalakuro where she resided to Kabala to report her situation to the District Network and solicit their assistance. The District Network members visited Dalakuro village where they held a meeting with Manty's family members, her brother – in-law and other key stakeholders in the community. After being informed about the penalties of contravening the provisions in the Devolution of Estates Act, Manty's brother in law acknowledged that the land he had intended seizing belonged to Manty and her children after which Manty was allowed to continue farming on the land.



In violation Case No 4 the victim escaped from a forced marriage union with her husband brother being imposed her by on in-laws invoking the age-old tradition of the deceased wife marrying the husband's brother in order to keep the husband's properties within the family.

#### **Case 4 Threat of Forced Marriage**

Kadiatu Sahr's husband died in 2010 and she was left to care for her 2 children in the village of Gbalama, Kissi Tongi Chiefdom in the Kailahun District. She maintained her family continuing to farm on the plantation that had previously belonged to her husband. Her husband's younger brother inhibited Kadiatu from her farming on the plantation until she consented to marry him. Unwilling to comply with her brother-in-laws wishes, Kadiatu contacted the Kailahun District Network which intervened into Kadiatu's situation through the town chief and the women's leaders. The section chief who was a member of the District Network ensured that Kadiatu regained the plantation and was no longer harassed by her brother-in-law.

### **3.2 Access to Justice**

Access to justice played an important role in the resolution of the identified property violation

cases, many of which were resolved with the application of the Devolution of Estates Act.

#### **Case No 5 A Teenager's Ordeal-Freetown Western Area**

After the demise of her father, a teenager who resided in the New England community of Freetown was excluded by her step mother from inheriting any of her father's property. She was advised to present her case to the Western Area District Network. After so doing, the Network solicited Legal Aid on her behalf. The District Network accompanied the young lady to the relevant institutions to secure the necessary documentation to support her claim to her father's estate i.e. the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank, Standard Bank and the Registrar General's Office. Members of the District Network together with the lawyer entered into negotiations with the teenager's family, following which her late father's property and assets were distributed judiciously with the teenager receiving her rightful share.

A majority of the cases were resolved through mediation and the perpetrators complied with the Act, once they had been informed of the penalties.

In some of the cases in which mediation did not resolve the issue legal aid was sought.

In the case No 5 of the Western Area the legal assistance enabled the young victim to acquire all the necessary documentation from the appropriate institutions.



Case No 6, provides an instance where there was some resistance to the law heeded to his counsel on the expediency of complying with the law. Similarly in Case No 2, when the perpetrator put up some resistance, he was ordered by the local court to comply with what was prescribed by the law.

#### **Case 6 Violators Legal Recalcitrance**

Finda Koba, 52 of Kongowakor Village, Tankoro Chiefdom was the younger of the two surviving wives of her deceased husband. After her husband's death, Finda's elder mate and her step-son appropriated all assets belonging to the deceased including, houses, businesses and plantations.

Finda contacted the District Network in Kono, and her stepson was invited her step son to a meeting at which the Network informed him of the provisions in the Devolution of Estates Act and the consequences of his actions.

When Finda's stepson paid no heed, the District Network obtained the assistance of a human rights lawyer. In an attempt to frustrate Finda's efforts the step son retaliated by hiring two lawyers. These lawyers however advised him to distribute the property in accordance with the legal requirements. The properties were subsequently shared, between Finda the co-wife and all her husband's surviving children.

Ignorance of the law has also been largely a factor in women not fully exercising their rights or seeking legal redress. The project addressed this constraint by engaging extensive sensitization and training, together with the implementation of a literacy programme which was expected to provide women with basic literacy skills to increase their understanding of the issues around land and property rights.

In some instances ignorance of the law by some community level authorities, tends to lead to the miscarriage of justice. This was the case for the customary court representatives in

#### **Case 7 Referral from Local Court to District Court**

When Madam Feremusu Kamara's husband died her husband's nephew was making plans to take over the house she and her husband had jointly constructed. Fortunately for Feremusu, during the period that her nephew was attempting to evict her, she was fortunate to attend a women's ownership property rights workshop. During the workshop, whilst issues related to property inheritance she tearfully explained her plight. The matter was taken up by the District Network, the village court chairman and community stakeholders.

During the initial mediation a compromise could not be reached as the representatives of the customary court structures at village level were ignorant of the laws related to the devolution of estate. The matter was referred to the customary court in the district headquarter town of Kabala where it was eventually settled. The house was handed back to Feremusu and her nephew was warned against further depriving her of any property formerly belonging to her husband.

Case No 7 .where due to ignorance of the case had to be referred to the district headquarter town.

### 3.3 Matrimonial Property

Matrimonial property cases were much more difficult to resolve as the laws governing the distribution of matrimonial property were a little more complex and were not favourable to women. All cases relating to matrimonial property such as those outlined below are still pending

#### Matrimonial Property Cases

In Calaba Town in the Western Area, a woman became homeless as a result of her husband abandoning her for another woman and renting out the house they jointly built. The Western Area District Network pursued the matter and made various unsuccessful attempts to meet with the perpetrator who had been evading the network. The matter has become protracted as the District Network is yet to secure legal assistance as the perpetrator appears to have little regard for the rule of law.

★★★★★★★★

A wife residing in Bongalow Community, Tankoro Chiefdom, Kono District, as a result of constant intimidation and harassment was separated from her husband. When the woman moved out, the husband claimed total ownership of the house, they jointly purchased. The Kono District Network was contacted and together with the police FSU led the mediation process between both parties. The victim and her children are homeless as legal support is required to resolve issues around property ownership between husband and wife.

★★★★★★★★

Another woman residing in the Bongalow community, Tankoro Chiefdom, Kono District was driven out from the house that she constructed together with her husband on land provided by one of her parents. The Kono District Network together with representatives of the police FSU led the mediation process. The matter was initially partially resolved but the victim was forced to abandon her home, amidst continued problems with her husband. The property claim is yet to be legally resolved



## Section 4 Mapping of Agency Interventions

### 4.1 Overview

Since the commencement of project activities in 2010, COOPI, Oxfam, FAWE and SLYEO needed partners in their strategic plan for effective project outcomes. In pursuance of this, the District Networks of Koinadugu, Kono, Kailahun and Western Area were the first point of call. Each District Network comprised vibrant organizations that were inclined to advocacy and human rights issues especially those affecting women such as 'access to land and property rights'. The need to sustain project beyond 2013 which was the project's time line required the enlargement of the partnership base through mapping of other strategic partners in target districts for collaborative work.

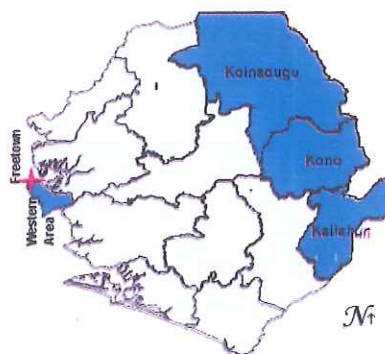


Figure 1 Project areas of Operation

### 4.2 Coverage

The tables below indicate the composition of the District Networks members as well as other organization that are presently operating in target districts on women's rights issues.

#### 4.2.1 Kono District

Table 7 below indicates that there were eleven organizations within the Kono District Network that contributed to project outputs. These organizations are listed as follows: Community Action for Psycho-social Services (CAPS), Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD), Mafindor Youth Development Association (MYDA), Community Action Against Poverty and Human Rights (CAAP-HR), Advocacy Vulnerable (AVA), Nimi Right, Sinava Community Development Organization, 50-50 Group, Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO), Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police, and Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. These organizations are all locally based inclusive of government agencies such the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police and the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs. All of the organizations have district coverage in outlook. They are involved in Psycho-Social Services, human rights issues, youth empowerment issues, advocacy, agriculture, education, health, and good governance.



**TABLE 7: Kono District Network Members**

	ORGANIZATION	INTERVENTION AREA	COVERAGE
1	Community Action for Psycho-social Services (CAPS)	Psycho-social Services	Entire District
2	Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)	Human rights issues	Entire District
3	Mafindor Youth Development Association (MYDA)	Youth empowerment issues	Entire District
4	Community Action Against Poverty and Human Rights (CAAP-HR)	Human rights	Entire District
5	Advocacy Vulnerable (AVA)	Human rights	Entire District
6	Nimi Right	Advocacy on human rights	Entire District
7	Sinava Community Development Organization	Promotes Agriculture, education, health, good governance, etc	Entire District
8	50-50 Group	Women's rights issues	Entire District
9	Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO)	Youth empowerment	Entire District
10	Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police	Women and Children's rights	Entire District
11	Ministry of Social Welfare...	Gender and child rights protection	Entire District

#### 4.2.2 Other Organizations Involved in Women's Rights Issues in Kono District

Organizations involved in women's rights issues with the possibility of expanding women's access to land and property ownership in Kono District are as follows: LAWYERS, 50/50 Group, Action Aid Sierra Leone, Kono Women's Network, and Ibis. The two prominent international organizations are Action Aid and Ibis while the others are local NGOs. As indicated in table below, all of the organizations have district coverage and are functional on issues relating to advocacy, human rights, empowerment of the poor and marginalized and education.

**TABLE 8: Other Organizations Involved in Women's Rights Issues in Kono District**

	ORGANIZATION	INTERVENTION AREA	COVERAGE
1	LAWYERS	Advocacy for the marginalized	Entire District
2	50/50 Group	Advocacy and	Entire District
3	Action Aid SL	Human rights & empowerment of the poor and marginalized	Entire District

4	Kono Women's Network	Advocacy and women's rights	Entire District
5	Ibis	Educational rights for children	Entire District

#### 4.2.3 Koinadugu District

Table 9 below indicates that 12 organizations have been actively involved in the operations of the Koinadugu District Network as members. These include: Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, Social Welfare, Family Support Unit, Koinadugu Women's Group, Dendebe Federation, Traditional Rulers, Koinadugu Disabled Association, Mammy Queens, Wara-wara Youth, Christian Extension Service, and Access to Justice. All other organizations operate at district level save Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Dendebe Federation that operates in selected chiefdoms. All District Network members are localized and two of them are Government agencies (Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police and ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs). The intervention areas are women's rights, human rights, advocacy, gender and child protection, education, local governance, and youth advocacy. Traditional rulers and the office of Mammy Queen are unique in the composition of the District Network as they are related to governance and grassroots women's interest group respectively.

**TABLE 9: KOINADUGU DISTRICT NETWORK MEMBERS**

	ORGANIZATION	INTERVENTION AREA	COVERAGE
1	Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)	Women's rights issues	On land and property rights -Wara-wara Yagala -Sengbe -Wara-wara Bafudia -Diang -Neine -Mongowo Folosaba Dembelia
2	Centre for Democracy and Human Rights	Advocacy on human rights issues	Entire district
3	Social Welfare	Gender and child rights protection	Entire District
4	Family Support Unit	Women and Children's rights	Entire District
5	Koinadugu Women's Group	Advocacy for women	Entire District
6	Dendebe Federation	Education for children and Adults	-Wara-wara



			-Sengbe -Mongowo -Kasonko
7	Traditional Rulers	Local Governance	Entire District
8	Koinadugu Disabled Association	Disability rights and advocacy	Entire District
9	Mammy Queen	Advocacy for women	Entire District
10	Wara-wara Youth	Youth advocacy and rights	Entire District
11	Christian Extension Service	Education for children	Entire District
12	Access to Justice	Human rights advocacy	Entire District

#### 4.2.4 Other Organizations Involved in Women's Rights Issues in Koinadugu District

From Table 10 below, 12 organizations have been documented to have been operating on rights based issues outside the District Network in Koinadugu. These organizations by virtue of their intervention areas could complement the activities of the District Network in women's access to land and property ownership. The organizations include; Cause Canada, SNAP, Future in Our Hands, SL Red Cross Society, Walendireh, Gold Star, Gold Star, Mangaia, Alanthanto, LIPO, Aliforthi, and Women Against Poverty. Cause Canada and SNAP are International Non-Governmental organizations while the others are Local Non-Governmental organizations and Community Based Organizations respectively. 4 of the organizations operate at chiefdom level while the remaining 8 operate at selected chiefdoms. The organizational intervention areas are: empowerment of marginalized groups, response to humanity, and women's empowerment.

**Table 10: Other Organizations Involved In Women's Rights Issues in Koinadugu District**

	ORGANIZATION	INTERVENTION AREA	COVERAGE
1	Cause Canada	Empowerment of marginalized groups	Entire District
2	SNAP	Empowerment of marginalized groups	Entire District
3	Future in our hands	Women's empowerment	Sengbe Chiefdom
4	SL Red Cross Society	Response to humanity	Entire District
5	Walendireh	Women's empowerment	Sengbe Chiefdom
6	Gold Star	Women's empowerment	Diang Chiefdom
7	Young Star	Women's empowerment	Diang Chiefdom
8	Mangaia	Women's empowerment	Diang Chiefdom
9	Alanthanto	Women's empowerment	Diang Chiefdom
10	Lipo	Women's empowerment	Sengbe Chiefdom
11	Aliforthi	Women's empowerment	Sengbe Chiefdom



12	Women Against Poverty	Women's empowerment	Entire District
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#### 4.2.5 Kailahun District

Table 11 below indicates that there were 12 organizations in the Kailahun District Network since 2010 to end of project in 2013. These organizations were: Amuloma Women's Organization, Cortuma Women's Association, Mano-River Women's Peace Network (MaWopNet), Women in Action, New Life, Rural Commercial Women's Association, SWAASL Society for Women and Aids in Africa SL Chapter, Send Foundation, 50/50 Women's Group, Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's and Children's Affairs, and Chiefs. These organizations have the following intervention areas; Womens' rights issues, agriculture, advocacy, business promotion, Gender and child rights protection, and local governance. The organizations are all localized save Send Foundation which is international in outlook. Government agencies (Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's and Children's Affairs) are also identified. The office of local chiefs stands out very unique in the list as it deals with local governance. All organizations in the District Network have district coverage.

**TABLE 11: Kailahun District Network Members**

	ORGANIZATION		INTERVENTION AREA	COVERAGE
1	Amuloma Organization	Women's	Womens' rights issues and agriculture	Entire district
2	Cortuma Association	Women's	Womens' rights issues and agriculture	Entire District
3	Mano-River Women's Peace Network (MaWopNet)		Women's rights issues	Entire District
4	Women in Action		Advocacy and women's rights	Entire District
5	New Life		Rights based issues	Entire District
6	Rural Commercial Women's Association		Women's rights and business promotion	Entire District
7	SWAASL Society for Women and Aids in Africa SL Chapter		Advocacy and women's rights	Entire District
8	Send Foundation		Women and Children's rights	Entire District
9	50/50 Women's Group		Advocacy and women's rights	Entire District
10	Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police		Women and Children's rights	Entire District
11	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's and		Gender and child rights protection	Entire District

	Children's Affairs		
12	Chiefs	Local Governance	Entire District

#### 4.2.6 Other Organizations Involved in Women's Rights Issues in Kailahun District

Table 12 below captures 4 organizations that have been operating outside the District Network but strategically placed to complement the work of the network. These organizations include: IRC, Plan Sierra Leone, Ndomake, and Child Fund. Out of the 4 organizations documented, Ndomake is the only Community Based Organization and the balance 3 are International non-Governmental Organizations. While IRC and Plan Sierra Leone have district coverage, Ndomake and Child Fund operate in selected chiefdoms.

**TABLE 12: Other Organizations Involved in Women's Rights Issues in Kailahun District**

	Organization	Intervention Area	Coverage
1	IRC	Children & Womens' rights issues	Entire District
2	Plan Sierra Leone	Children & Womens' rights issues	Entire District
3	Ndomake	Women's rights issues	Jiawe /Njaluahun Chiefdoms
4	Child Fund	Child rights issues	Jiawe /Njaluahun Chiefdoms

#### 4.2.7 Western Area

Table 13 below indicates the following organizations as part of the Western Area Network that were instrumental in the implementation of project 2010-13: Peoples Education Association, Defence for Children International, Women's Forum, Mano-River Women's Peace Network (MaWopNet), Bambara Town Women, Western Area Human Rights Committee, Market Women, Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's and Children's Affairs, and Chiefs. All of these organizations operated in both Western Area Urban District and Western Area Rural District. The intervention areas are Women's empowerment; Child rights issues, Advocacy & Women's rights issues, human rights, Gender and child rights protection, and local governance. Two of District Network organizations are government agencies and they are the Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police, and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's and Children's Affairs. The involvement of local Chiefs is ideal.

**TABLE 13: Western Area District Network Members**

ORGANIZATION	INTERVENTION	COVERAGE
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AREA			
1	Peoples Education Association	Women's empowerment	Entire district
2	Defence for Children International	Child rights issues	Entire District
3	Women's Forum	Advocacy & Women's rights issues	Entire District
4	Mano-River Women's Peace Network (MaWopNet)	Women's rights issues	Entire District
5	Bambara Town Women	Advocacy & women's rights	Bambara town
6	Western Area Human Rights Committee	Advocacy and human rights	Entire District
7	Market Women		Entire District
8	Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police	Women and Children's rights	Entire District
9	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's and Children's Affairs.	Gender and child rights protection	N/A
10	Chiefs	Local governance	N/A

#### 4.2.8 Other Organizations Involved in Women's Rights Issues in the Western Area

From Table 14 below, 9 organizations were documented as strategic towards complementing the work of the Western Area District Network on women's access to land and property rights. As listed, the organizations include: Action Aid SL, 50/50 Group, UN Women, LAWYERS, Timap for Justice, AWAA-SL, CORD-SL, World Vision, and Campaign for good governance. All of these organizations have coverage in Western Area Urban and Rural Districts. Their intervention areas are: Human rights & empowerment of the poor and marginalized, Advocacy & women's empowerment, Human rights, poverty alleviation, and good governance. Action Aid and World Vision are the two International Non-Governmental Organizations.

**TABLE 14: Other Organizations Involved in Women's Rights Issues in the Western Area**

ORGANIZATION		INTERVENTION AREA	COVERAGE
1	Action Aid SL	Human rights & empowerment of the poor and marginalized	Entire District
2	50/50 Group	Advocacy & women's empowerment	Entire District
3	UN Women	Advocacy & women's rights	Entire District
4	LAWYERS	Advocacy and human rights	Entire District

5	Timap for Justice	Advocacy and human rights	Entire District
6	AWAA-SL	Advocacy and women's empowerment	Entire District
7	CORD-SL	Human rights , poverty alleviation, etc	Entire District
8	World Vision	Human rights , poverty alleviation, etc	Entire District
9	Campaign for good governance	Good governance, human rights, etc	Entire District

### 4.3 District Network Challenges

During the period of implementation of the project the various District Networks faced a number of challenges in the performance of their mandate. Most of the challenges mentioned were experienced by all of the District Networks except for the Western Area which mentioned challenges associated with late project implementation. In the other districts challenges were wither associated with operational challenges or community response to intervention and access issues. The three Districts Networks mentioned funding and staffing. Kailahun and Kono allude to accessibility constraints as a result of bad road conditions. Only the Kailahun District Network mentioned the existence of cultural barriers as a constraint.

**Table 15: Challenges identified by the District Network**

Challenges	Kailahun	Kono	Koinadugu	Western Area
1	Existence of some cultural barriers	Bad roads	Bad roads	Late implementation of project
2	Accessing and documenting violations without funds	Accessing and documenting violations without funds	Accessing and documenting violations without funds	
3	Inadequate project staff in district	Inadequate project staff in district	Inadequate project staff in district	
4	Some women did not believe in the network due to the entrenched and deeply rooted	Some women did not believe in the network due to the entrenched and deeply rooted		



	traditional barriers which they thought are difficult to address	traditional barriers which they thought are difficult to address		
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#### 4.4 Recommendations for improving the functioning of the District Network

During the course of discussions with the various District Networks, the following recommendations presented in table 16 were compiled.

**Table 16: Recommendations for improvement in District Network performance**

	Recommendations
<b>How to improve networking and strengthen links between the stakeholders and the District Networks</b>	<p>To improved networking and strengthen links between the stakeholders and District Networks, the following are of importance;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be regular meetings on information sharing about violations, challenges and way forward, etc</li> <li>• Telephone contacts should be established for unrestricted flow of information at all times.</li> <li>• The District Networks should be provided with road worthy vehicles and motorbikes to promote a rapid response on critical violations requiring the involvement of stakeholders also.</li> <li>• Administrative cost and remuneration to key personnel should be outsourced from the private sector, local government and central government as means of motivation to attract quality results at all times.</li> </ul>

## Section 5 Community Awareness and Perception of Women's Access to Land and Property Rights

### 5.1 Community Awareness of Women's Access to Land and Property Rights

During project implementation there was extensive sensitization on women's property rights in particular the Devolution of Estates Act. The response to the questions in the questionnaires administered to the women, men and traditional leaders' knowledge on the three gender acts.

Respondents were further asked as to whether they were aware of the extent traditional leaders dispensed justice. Table 17 below indicates that 57.5% of respondents were of the conviction that in the dispensation of justice, traditional leaders were utilizing the Three Gender Acts. 18.5% of respondents held the view that traditional leaders partially utilized the three Gender Acts while carrying out justice. 12.5% of respondents were negative about the use of the Three Gender Acts by traditional Leaders; 11.3% had no idea and could not rate traditional leaders.

**Table 17: Awareness of Use of Knowledge on Gender Acts Dispensation of Justice**

	Kailahun		Kono		Koinadugu		Western Area		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<b>Yes</b>	7	-	11	-	20	-	8	-	46	<b>57.5</b>
<b>No</b>	5	-	4	-	-	-	1	-	10	<b>12.5</b>
<b>Partially</b>	5	-	5	-	-	-	5	-	15	<b>18.8</b>
<b>No idea</b>	3	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	9	<b>11.3</b>

### 5.2 Knowledge of Cases and Perception of their Resolution

According to table 18 below, serious violations against women on issues relating to land ownership and property rights were addressed through the following channels with the District Networks taking the lead: District Network 43.8%, family meeting 25%, English court 11.3%, and local court and police 10% each.



**Table 18: Knowledge on how cases were resolved**

	Kailahun		Kono		Koinadugu		Western Area		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
In local court	4	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	8	10
In an English court	-	-	1	-	2	-	6	-	9	11.3
At the police	3	-	-	-	2	-	3	-	8	10
In a family meeting	3	-	8	-	6	-	3	-	20	25
Through Network	10	-	10	-	9	-	6	-	35	43.8
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

On views of respondents in study districts, as to the level of satisfaction on the resolution of the cases, Kono and Koinadugu districts were rated higher for resolving women's land ownership and property rights violations in a satisfactory manner. Kailahun district and Western Area trailed behind with 70% each.

**Table 19: Respondents satisfaction with the manner in which matter was resolved**

Beneficiaries	Kailahun			Kono			Koinadugu			Western Area		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
<b>Women</b>	6	4	-	8	2	-	8	2	-	8	2	-
<b>Men</b>	4	1	-	4	1	-	4	1	-	3	2	-
<b>Duty Bearers</b>	4	1	-	4	1	-	4	1	-	3	2	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	14	6	-	16	4	-	16	4	-	14	6	-
<b>%</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>-</b>

From the list of respondents in table 19 who were satisfied with the manner in which land ownership and property rights matters were handled, the following were reasons for their justification: The woman was given right (60); and women reclaimed what was taken away (54),

**Table 20: Reasons given for positive response**

	Kailahun		Kono		Koinadugu		Western Area		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<b>The woman was given right</b>	14	-	16	-	16	-	14	-	60	-
<b>Women reclaimed what was taken away</b>	12	-	15	-	16	-	11	-	54	-
<b>Woman was compensated</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Culprit penalized</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Others</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Respondents who were not satisfied with the manner in which violations to women's land ownership and property rights were settled, did so on the grounds that justice was perverted (10) and women humiliated (3) as indicated in table 20.

**Table 21: Reasons given for negative response**

	Kailahun		Kono		Koinadugu		Western Area		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<b>Justice perverted</b>	4	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	10	-
<b>Woman humiliated</b>	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-
<b>Others</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 22 below indicates responses on the type of help / service given to women who are disadvantageded within the context of land ownership and property rights, were as follows; advocacy with 100% and Legal aid with 22.5%.



**Table 22: Services given to women**

	Kailahun		Kono		Koinadugu		Western Area		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<b>Legal aid</b>	2	-	4	-	2	-	10	-	18	<b>22.5</b>
<b>Advocacy</b>	20	-	20	-	20	-	20	-	80	<b>100</b>
<b>Lobby</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Others</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

### 5.3 Pre and Post Project Perceptions on Women's Property Rights

Table 23 records the responses of respondents on their views of the on the pre and post project situation on Women's property rights in the districts as well as perceived changes in dealing with Women's property rights issues.

**Table 23 Women's Pre and post Project Perceptions**

CATEGORY	RESPONSE SUMMARY
<b>1</b> The general views and perceptions of project beneficiaries including community women, traditional leaders and men in the community on the situation that existed on women's access and rights to property and land (houses, plantations and other capital assets) before the inception of the project	<p>Before the project was implemented, women's access and rights to property and land have been nothing good to write home about. Traditionally, women were considered as properties belonging to men. They were believed to be only instrumental in rearing children and taking care of domestic chores. Leadership was seen as a man's entitlement thus only men exercised ownership to land and other forms of properties.</p> <p>When a man speaks, a woman should listen and executes orders. It was therefore considered a misplaced priority to allow a woman to inherit property on her behalf or members of the family/clan. Land related issues were considered as novelty therefore they were men's issue.</p> <p>Due to traditional beliefs that regarded men as superior sex to women, women especially in rural settings accepted this dogma and held it in high esteem. According to most concerned women, even the Islamic doctrine underscored this belief and if God says something through the holy Prophets who dare to challenge it. Women's rights therefore did not exceed acquiring property in their name, land being one of them.</p>

Gender roles were clearly spelt out in most of project communities. Leadership and authority were vested in men. Even women desired giving birth to a male child for this sole purpose. Though this concept has some traditional backing, the national constitution also compounded the gender bias. In the Urban centres such as Freetown, it was difficult to lease land or rent accommodation in a woman's name. Even if the woman was economically advantaged, a man should stand as proxy for such transactions. It was even worse in the provinces where tradition has a firmer grip on society.

In almost all project communities in the provinces, the system of inheritance has been patrilineal. One inherits property from the father side and not the reverse (mother side). Ownership of land and property was therefore a man's issue. For this reason, it was rare to have female chiefs in project communities.

- 2 Perception change in areas of the project intervention including potential changes in nearby communities. Specifically, changes within customary law and practices should be recorded and 'mind-set' change amongst men and traditional leaders

The propagation of the Three Gender Acts especially the Devolution of Estate Act has to a very large extent changed the mind set of some community women to assert their rights on family property including land.

Due to the success stories of women reclaiming land and other properties which rightfully belonged to them, more women are coming up with similar cases where male offenders (family members) cease undue advantage on women. The concept that women do not possess the right to own properties is gradually undermined in project communities and even in control communities. The District Networks have records of cases for redress from communities which were not targeted for project implementation.

There is presently a growing fear among male community members that women's rights issues are becoming very popular with legal support thereby creating space for women in leadership and property ownership.

The engagement of Traditional Leaders in project meetings and workshops as important stakeholders has resulted in women's rights been recognized in project communities. Though still a challenge, the cultural barrier that 'a woman cannot take senior responsibility of family estate except a man', is gradually compromised. Some women are now championing land / property ownership for themselves and on behalf of family members. In addition, some women are even serving in



chiefdom administrations and representing their subjects in District Councils and Parliament. A typical example is the Chairperson of the Kailahun District Network in the person of Councilor Fatmata Sannoh who was elected by her subjects in the 2012 District Council elections in Ward II, Kailahun District. A traditional leader once made the comment that 'The longevity of a man depends on the reciprocal relationship between the husband and this wife'; which clearly indicates the willingness of traditional leaders in creating space to recognize and enhance the rights of women in their communities.

There has been an attempt by traditional leaders in the Four project districts of Kailahun, Kono, Koinadugu and Western Area to draft six bye laws each to be observed by their subjects when approved by respective District Councils and Parliament. For instance one of the draft bye-laws by traditional leaders in Kono District states that 'Where a man dies, leaving behind land, and other inheritable properties with the wife and children shall inherit the land properties according to law without interference from any family member of the deceased'.

## Section 6 Conclusions, Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

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### 6.1 Conclusions

Women in Sierra Leone suffer from a range of property rights violations which are rooted in various discriminatory cultural practices. Such cultural beliefs and practices dictate that land ownership is vested in male heads of land owning families. Women in the rural areas rarely own but rather access land through either blood or marital relationship with male members of their families.

Women's property rights are extensively suppressed by their male siblings or in-laws on the demise of either their father or their spouse. In other situations, in-laws evoke the age old tradition of the wife of the deceased marrying the husband's brother, in order to retain any property owned by the deceased individual within the family. Women are also at a disadvantaged position in the area of matrimonial property.

Problems for women claiming their land and property rights have been accentuated by high levels of illiteracy and limited knowledge of women and in some cases traditional leaders of the laws governing women's property rights. Where this knowledge exists, for many reasons women are constrained from seeking redress through the legal system because of ignorance, excessive bureaucracy and the expense.

The WPLR project registered a number of successes through its advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building activities resulting in enlightenment of both women and men, inclusive of traditional leaders. Women were empowered not only through increased knowledge but also through the handling by the District Networks of property rights violations. Interventions by the districts were appreciated by women and duty bearers, yet challenges were identified in the full adoption of women's property and land rights.

### 6.2 Lessons Learnt

After the three years of project implementation in Western Area, Koinadugu District, Kono District and Kailahun District, several lessons have been learnt which when observed and exploited gainfully, women's rights to land and property ownership will have been reinforced. These included the following:

- ◆ women with some form of enlightenment about their rights can easily assert their rights and even take up elective/leadership offices;
- ◆ involving strategically placed duty bearers (community leaders) and men in advocacy and



promotion of women's land ownership and property rights is an effective means of accelerating acceptance and adoption of these rights;

- ◆ fully capacitated and supported, District Networks would drastically reduce the incidence of women land ownership and property rights violations;
- ◆ domestic violence is closely associated with matrimonial property rights violations;
- ◆ with sufficient legal awareness and availability of legal aid, it will be easier for women to access justice for land ownership and property rights violations;
- ◆ the existence of the magistrate courts in all project districts, places checks on the excesses of the local courts in the event that the chiefs tend to compromise male offenders. Cases appealed at this level are judged within the legal framework of national laws such as the Three Gender Acts and penalties prescribed accordingly.

### 6.3 Recommendations

The Recommendations cover three areas: those which reflect the concerns of the women that can inform policy and practice.

#### 6.3.1 For Practice

- Community women recommended further support from important stakeholders to facilitate the protection and promotion of women's rights to land: local chiefs, Community men, community women, civil society, and Council/ Government and that:
  - There should be more training session for chiefs
  - The Three Gender Acts need to be religiously implemented by traditional leaders.
  - Men should allow their spouse to attend women's meetings as well as community meetings.
  - Men should also endeavor to attend men to men meetings
  - Men should be supportive of women's led efforts
  - There should be increased community awareness raising among women folks.
- There should be networking and advocacy among women. This will enhance documentation of violations and broaden knowledge base on referral pathways for remedial actions against offenders.
- Women should opt for leadership positions at community, chiefdom, district, regional and nation levels. Their involvement in decision making will to a very large extent promote women's property ownership and land rights issues.
- Civil society should perform its duty as mouth-piece for women; to advocate on behalf of women and ensure that offenders are accountable for their actions.

- Civil Society must also take active part in information sharing and awareness raising on women's right issues especially those hinging on access to land and property ownership.

### 6.3.2 For Policy

- Government/Councils need to promote women's property rights issues. This can be done through mainstreaming gender activities; undertake legal reforms such as ratifying the six bye laws developed by traditional leaders in project districts; ensuring that resources are mobilized in support of women's rights; and creating referral pathways and opportunities for legal representation for women on property and land rights.
- Creation of District Networks in every district with a mandate to train women's leaders in every chiefdom who will in turn train women's leaders at section level and subsequently community level. The training of trainers shall encapsulate leadership, advocacy, mentoring, networking, community mobilization, lobby, and income generation. This will enlighten and bring women together for a common good.
- There should be a sustained media engagement of community radios on the need for the formation of Community Women's Land Rights Movement. The radio discussions should be done in local languages for better understanding of the rationale for the intension.
- Support should be given for the convening of District and national conventions shall be held for the purpose of information sharing and education on violations and legal provisions affecting women and how they can be addressed.
- Community and national women's land right days should be observed where the efforts of certain women are recognized including proactive service providers. These shall be honoured and appreciated thereby generating commitment from women as well as service providers in standing in the gap on women's land rights violations and promotion.



# Annexes

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## Annex 1 Key Informants

1. Ms Sabine Jiekak-Country Director, COOPI
2. Mr. Mustapha Abu- Women's Property Rights Coordinator, Oxfam
3. Lawrence Lansana Sam- National Project Officer, FAWE
4. Ms. Mariama Kabba-Project Coordinator, COOPI, Ballop Area, Koidu, Kono District
5. Chief Ishmael L Foday-Senior Section Chief, Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun District
6. Mr. Sulaiman Hardy Bangura- Literacy coordinator SLYEO
7. Mr. Paul Kpange- Project Office, FAWE, Kabala, Koinadugu District
8. Mr. Frederick Sam Kumbaka- Chairman Kono District Network
9. Mr. Sheku A Sannoh- Assistant Project Officer, FAWE , Kailahun Town
10. Madam Mamie Sartie-Kailahun District Network Secretary, Kailahun District
11. Mrs. Agnes Abu, Western Area District Network Chairman

## Annex 2 Focus group Participants Characteristics

### 2A NGOs, CSOs and Civil Society

CIVIL SOCIETY (Kono District)			
	PARTICIPANT	ORGANIZATION	LOCATION
1	Anthony Amara	Sinava Community development Organization	Koidu

2	Isatu Maturi	Kono Women's Organization for Women and Children's Rights (KOWONET)	Koidu
3	Margaret Queen	Kono Women's Organization for Women and Children's Rights (KOWONET)	Koidu
4	Frank Moiwo	Kono District Network	Koidu
5	Sam F Kumbaka	Community Action for Psycho-Social Services (CAPS)	Koidu
6	Sahr J Bundor	Community Action Against Poverty and Human Rights (CAAPHR)	Koidu
7	Mani James	Advocate for Vulnerable Aid (AVA)	Koidu
8	Madam Nyama Mansaray	Advocate for Vulnerable Aid (AVA)	Koidu
9	Abubakr Kabia	Community Action Against Poverty and Human Rights (CAAPHR)	Koidu
10	Patric F Mansaray	Mafindor Youths Development Association	Koidu
<b>CIVIL SOCIETY (Western Area)</b>			
1	Sylvanus S Conteh	Grassroots organization	Campbell Town
2	Ibrahim S Marrah	Community Teacher	Campbell Town
3	Paul Musa	Youth Leader Campbell Town	Campbell Town
4	Modou Williams	Youth Activist	Waterloo
5	Edward Williams	Sports Chairman (Mountain Rural District)	Lompa
6	Joseph Bangura	Grassroots Organization	Six Mile
7	Mohamed Mansaray	Bike Riders Association	Waterloo
8	Mary Thomas	Women in Crisis	Six Mile
9	Winifred Cole	Women in Crisis	Waterloo
10	Sento Sinah	Amuloma Group	Waterloo
<b>CIVIL SOCIETY (Koinadugu District)</b>			
1	Haja B Mansaray	Koinadugu District Network	Kabala
2	Elizabeth Korio	FAWE	Kabala
3	Abubakar Conteh	SLUDI	Kabala
4	Ramatulaye Jalloh	Koinadugu District Network	Kabala
5	Sorie Mansaray	Social welfare	Kabala
6	Hawa Conteh	CDHR	Kabala
7	Alex M Conteh	FSU	Kabala
8	Eric Tommy	Teacher	Kabala
9	Patrick Momoh	Morto Drivers Union	Kabala
10	Hassan Kamara	Bike Riders Union	Kabala
<b>CIVIL SOCIETY (Kailahun District)</b>			
1	Marion Morlai	Save the Children	Kailahun
2	Madam Mamie Sartie	Kailahun District Network	Kailahun
3	Mr. Sheku A Sannoh	FAWE	Kailahun



4	Henry B Samu	CePSRHE	Kailahun
5	Mohamed Borbor	Community Teacher	Kailahun
6	Hawa Foray	Peace Garden	Kailahun
7	Mummy Fullay	Youth Activist	Kailahun
8	Emerson Fowai	Community Teacher	Kailahun
9	Susan Bockarie	Health Worker	Kailahun
10	Alfred Sam	Student	Kailahun

## 2 B FEMALE PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

WESTERN AREA			
	PARTICIPANT	DESIGNATION	LOCATION
1	Salamatu Kpange	House Wife	Western Rural
2	Makiatu Sesay	House wife	Western Rural
3	Isatu Bah	Widow	Western Rural
4	Florence Sankoh	House Wife	Western Rural
5	Sallay Kono	Single Parent	Western Rural
6	Aminata Kamara	House Wife	Western Rural
7	Salamatu Brima	Widow	Western Rural
8	Memunatu Sesay	House wife	Western Rural
9	Elfreda E conteh	House Wife	Western Rural
10	Aminata Koroma	House Wife	Western Rural
KONADUGU DISTRICT			
1	Fatmata Turay	Widow	Kabala
2	Memo Koroma	House wife	Kabala
3	Kumba Siillah	House wife	Kabala
4	Mateneh Dabor	Single parent	Kabala
5	Jeneba Tonkara	House wife	Kabala
6	Finda Koroma	House wife	Kabala
7	Francess L Koroma	Widow	Kabala
8	Mariama Koroma	House wife	Kabala
9	Hawa Koroma	House wife	Kabala
10	Sundu Dabor	Single parent	Kabala
KONO DISTRICT			
1	Augusta Challey	House wife	Small Lebanon
2	Yei Bunduka	Widow	Bongalow New Site
3	Bintu Senesie	House wife	Maima I
4	Antonia Songoba	House wife	Kocheor
5	Kinny John	Single parent	Kania New site
6	Elizabeth Fillie	House wife	Kania New Site

7	Rebecca Fillie	House wife	Yorkodu
8	Finda Dawunde	Widow	Koidu
9	Sia Moriba	Single parent	Koidu
10	Frances Abu	House wife	Koidu
<b>KAILAHUN DISTRICT</b>			
1	Finda M Momoh	House wife	Dodo Junction
2	Baindu Jusu	Widow	Fobu
3	Mabinty Musa	House wife	Mende Buima
4	Martha Alpha	Single Parent	Mende Buima
5	Sento Buckarie	House wife	Kailahun
6	Grace Fonnah	House wife	Kailahun
7	Yata Salia	Widow	Kailahun
8	Jattu Juana	Single Parent	Kailahun
9	Abi Vanjah	House wife	Kailahun
10	Mattu Sombi	House wife	Kailahun

## 2 C Traditional Leaders

<b>TRADITIONER LEADERS (Kono District)</b>			
	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
<b>KONO DISTRICT</b>			
1	Mrs Margaret Momodu	Mammy Queen & Council of Elders	Koidi
2	Kumba b Bockarie	Council of Elders	Teidu
3	Chief Sahr Borbor Gando	Chiefdom Speaker	Tankoro Chiefdom
4	Chief Samuel F K Ndomahina	Council of Chiefs	Tankoro chiefdom
5	Femusu Nyama Saquee	Mammy Queen & Council of Elders	Tankoro Chiefdom
6	Albert Fillie	Council of Elders	Kamara Chiefdom
7	James Menjor	Council of Elders	Kamara Chiefdom
8	Sahr Yusufu	Council of Elders	Sandor Chiefdom
9	Mohamed Dawunde	Council of Elders	Kamara Chiefdom
10	Francis Ballay	Council of Elders	Kamara Chiefdom
<b>Western Area</b>			
1	Pa Allmamy Sieh Turay	Limba Sub Tribal Head	Campbell Town
2	Pa Musa Koroma	Council of Elders	Waterloo
3	Pa Allmamy Conteh	Time Tribal Chief	Campbell Town
4	Saidu Sesay	Council of Elders	Waterloo



5	Pa Sorie Sesay	Council of Elders	Campbell Town
6	Pa Usman Sesay	Council of Elders	Waterloo
7	Pa Allmammy S Bangura	Council of Elders	Waterloo
8	Pa Santigie Kargbo	Loko chief Rep	Waterloo
9	Pa Sidikie Kargbo	Council of Elders	Waterloo
10	Usman T Kamara	Council of Elders	Campbell Town
<b>Koinadugu District</b>			
1	Kemoh Keita	Council of Elders	Musaia
2	John Kamara	Council of Elders	Musaia
3	Sirabaila Kamara	Council of Elders	Musaia
4	Abibatu Sonnah	Council of Elders	Kabala
5	Chernor Jalloh	Council of Elders	Kabala
6	Barbar Kabbah	Council of Elders	Kabala
7	Maodor Bah	Council of Elders	Musaia
8	Hadiru Marrah	Council of Elders	Kabala
9	Foday Koroma	Council of Elders	Kabala
10	Bailor Wurrie	Council of Elders	Kabala
<b>Kailahun District</b>			
1	Chief Ishmael L Foday	Senior Section Chief	Luawa Chiefdom
2	Fudie Bobeh	Council of Elders	Kailahun
3	Juana Lamin	Council of Elders	Kailahun
4	John Bockarie	Council of Elders	Kailahun
5	Brima Bonnah	Council of Elders	Kailahun
6	Moinina Kallon	Council of Elders	Kailahun
7	Thomas J Lansana	Council of Elders	Kailahun
8	Mohamed Kamara	Council of Elders	Kailahun
9	Augustine Kabbu	Council of Elders	Kailahun
10	Abdulai Domingo	Council of Elders	Kailahun