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REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ARMED FORCES

GENDER (EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES) POLICY

By Command of the
Defense Policy Committee

 April, 2023

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
TOWER HILL
FREETOWN

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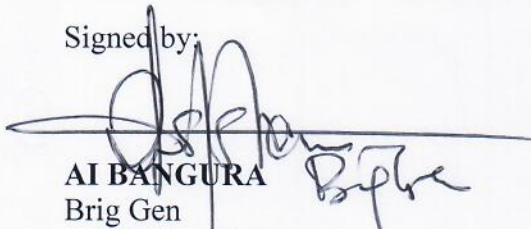
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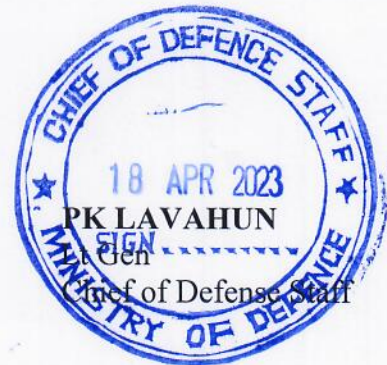
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Signed by:


AI BANGURA
Brig Gen
ACDS Ops & Plans



Authorized to sign on behalf of the Defence Council

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**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ARMED
FORCES
(MoD/RSLAF)**

GENDER (EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES) POLICY

TABLE OF CONTENT

[Signature]
Signature:

1
RESTRICTED

18 Apr 23
Date:

Preface

Part 1: Introduction and Rationale

1. Preamble
2. Why Gender is important in the MoD/RSLAF
3. Vision
4. Mission
5. Aims and Objectives
6. Pillars Underpinning the Gender Policy

Part II: Areas of Engagement

1. Recruitment
2. Retention
3. Career Staffing
4. Leadership
5. Peace Support Operation
6. Conducive Workplace Environment
7. Civil-Military Relations
8. Training
9. Complaint Procedure
10. Sexual and Gender-based Violence
11. Marriage
12. Ethics and Integrity

Part III: Framework of Implementation

1. Institutional Structure
2. Leadership
3. Budgeting
4. Monitoring and Evaluation
5. Scope of Application
6. Communication
7. Review of Policy


Signature:

18 Apr 23
Date:

PREFACE

This Policy repeals and replaces the Gender (Equal Opportunities) Policy of 2009. The review of the 2009 Policy is being informed by emerging gender issues (the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act of 2022 and the increased number of women in the RSLAF) that were not captured. This Policy, derived from the aspirations for equality, is designed specifically as part of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) military ethics on gender parity, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, particularly against women in the uniformed forces. It is also an effort aimed at strengthening a culture of professionalism and respect for all within the MOD/RSLAF.

The document is underpinned by the principles of International law and standards pertaining to the functions and activities of the armed forces on gender issues. The ultimate objective is to eliminate prejudices and customary practices that are based on the idea of the inferiority and/or superiority of either sex.

I take this opportunity encourage all MOD/RSLA Personnel to utilise this policy, together with Gender Training Module, as a basis for promoting the aspirations for equality in MOD/RSLAF as expressed in the various national, regional, continental and international frameworks on gender related matters.

PK LAVAHUN

Lieutenant General

Chief of Defence Staff


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PART 1

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

PREAMBLE

This Policy is conceived as a strategy that informs and drives the aspiration for the attainment of gender equality in the Ministry of Defence and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. Developed through a consultative process in the MOD/RSLAF, the Policy aims at accelerating gender mainstreaming across uniformed and civilian structures of Ministry of Defence (MOD), and the Republic of Sierra Leone of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF).

WHY GENDER IS IMPORTANT IN THE MOD/RSLAF

Focus on gender in the MOD/RSLAF is critical for a number of reasons that can be summarised into four:

- It will lead to attaining operational effectiveness through harnessing the potential of the defence force to operate optimally and effectively.
- It will ensure the participation of all towards the pursuit of national priorities for peaceful coexistence and development.
- To underscore the fundamental principle of equality, non-discrimination and fair play as elaborated in the Sierra Leone Constitution.
- Ensure representativeness and a republican character of the RSLAF.

Based on the above, effective gender mainstreaming and the participation of all gender groups (that is men, women, boys and girls) is a cross cutting issue in all the strategies of the Ministry of Defence and Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

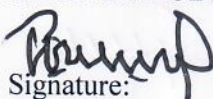
VISION

An Armed Force that is driven by the principle of equal opportunity and that is capable and trusted to fulfil its mandate to the people of Sierra Leone.

MISSION

To ensure that the MOD and RSLAF's organizational culture embraces and promotes gender equality in the provision, management and employment of forces as directed by the Constitution, national legislation, and regional and international instruments ratified by Sierra Leone, to optimise the success of the MOD/RSLAF.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES


Signature:

4
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18 Apr 23
Date:

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- To achieve and maintain a gender balanced Armed Forces that can meet contemporary security expectations and fulfil constitutional obligations.
- To incorporate gender mainstreaming across the MOD/RSLAF operation in ways that guarantee the required force readiness status.
- To identify gender specific needs and institute appropriate action, including affirmative action if needed, to address these across the MoD/RSLAF.

PILLARS UNDERPINNING THE GENDER POLICY

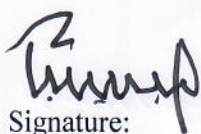
The MoD/RSLAF Gender Policy is underpinned by four main pillars derived from aspirations at the international, sub-regional and national levels that are codified in various reinforcing instruments.

A. At the national level, the Policy is informed by the following factors:

- The national experience and aspiration for equal opportunity as a basis for democracy and good governance, emanating from the desire of Sierra Leone to recover and pursue sustainable development.
- Legislative frameworks, as embodied in the Constitution of the Republic of Sierra Leone (Section 29 Chapter 1 1991) that highlights the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunity as core national values; and the Gender Acts (2007) on Domestic Violence, Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce, and the Devolution of Estates. Finally, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022 has influenced this Policy.
- The Sierra Leone National Policies on the advancement of Women (2000); and Gender Mainstreaming (2000); the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and the Sierra Leone National Security Policy Paper (2000).
- At the MoD/RSLAF level, the Policy is driven by the imperative to optimise operational effectiveness in view of the changing nature of security threats and responses needed to address these.
- The GEWE Act of 2022.

B. At the Sub-regional level, the Policy is informed by:

- Recognizing the interrelatedness of the Mano River Union sub-region in terms of experiencing common peace and security threats.


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5
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18 Apr 23
Date:

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- The Policy also draws from the ECOWAS policy Instruments including the Gender Policy, the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management Resolution and Security (1999), ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008), and the doctrine of the ECOWAS Standby Force, all of which Sierra Leone is committed to.

C. At the Continental level,

Sierra Leone is a party to a number of commitments seeking to promote gender equality and effective participation of women in the search of peace and security. These include the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004); the Africa Union Gender Policy (2009); Protocol to the African Union Charter on human and Peoples Rights on the Right of Women in Africa (2003); ASF Policy Framework (2004); Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (2002); Solemn Declaration on the African Common Defence and Security Policy (2004); AU Post Conflict Reconstruction Policy (2006), etc.

D. At the International level

Sierra Leone is committed to realising a range of obligations including effective participation in peace support operations and the promotion of international humanitarian and human rights laws as underpinned by instruments such as Beijing Platform of Action; UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888; Agreement on the Special Court for Sierra Leone (2009) CEDAW; and Windhoek Declaration on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (2000), etc.


Signature:

6
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15 Apr 23
Date:

RESTRICTED

PART 11

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

The MoD/RSLAF Gender Policy is aimed at achieving gender parity at all levels. In pursuance of this, the Policy focuses attention on the following areas of engagement in terms of the development of detailed operational plans of actions and their implementation.

A. RECRUITMENT

- Representation Quota – There shall be gender representation in the recruitment process. There shall at least 30% female representation in every recruitment process.
- Gender Specific needs are very important during recruitment process, thus female in particular must be specifically catered for in terms of uniforms, sizes, boot sizes, pads, uniforms, etc.
- Accommodations: RSLAF shall ensure that different billets and toilet facilities be provided for both male and female.

B. RETENTION

- TACOS - There shall be improved and attractive condition of service for all in RSLAF.
- Medical Insurance Policy- There shall be good medical policy that caters not only for both genders but also specific women needs for all illnesses, especially terminal or severe diseases.
- Dress Code – The input of females shall be sought in the procurement of good, services and works.
- Female Specific Needs – The specific needs of women shall be included when procurements are conducted; i.e. mess kit, appropriate boot sizes, uniforms, headdress, etc.

C. CAREER STAFFING

(1) At least 30% quota for female representations must be met for the following:

- Academic Courses- All academic courses, whether undergraduate, graduate or post graduate levels.


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- Military Courses- Staff and other career courses.
- UN/AU Missions – Opportunity be given to females to fill staff appointments at UN/AU missions.
- Vocational Empowerment Training.

D. LEADERSHIP

At least 30% female representation at the tactical, operational (HQ JFC) and strategic (MoD) levels. The requisite trainings shall be provided in order to achieve such gender inclusiveness. Female representation should be reflected in the areas mentioned below:

- There must be female officers in command positions (e.g., Platoon Commander, Battalion Commander Etc.)
- Women shall also be placed into administrative leadership positions (such as, quartermaster, finance, personnel, logistics etc.)

E. PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

- There shall be 30% female representation in all peace support operations.
- Prepare and train female personnel *to take up staff appointment.*

F. MUSTERING AND OPERATIONS

To develop mechanisms that ensure:

- Equal opportunities for deployment in local and international theatres of operations;
- Gender sensitive preparedness including appropriate logistics and equipment, and;
- Networking to draw on good practices from other security sectors in and beyond Sierra Leone.

G. CONDUCTIVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

- There shall be gender mainstreaming in all units. Gender Focal persons shall be trained to ensure gender representatives in all units across Sierra Leone.


Signature:

8
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18 Apr 23
Date:

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- All cases of sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation, domestic violence and assault shall be reported, investigated and perpetrators must be dealt with.
- Sensitization drives shall be done countrywide to encourage female personnel to report matters of the aforementioned nature.
- Commanders must investigate such matters and reported to GEO for actions.
- RSLAF shall create structures for the safety and security of whistle blowers. This will aid in exposing culprits.

H. *CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS*

- Every year the G/EO Directorate and the gender oversight body from Parliament should have a session for gender evaluation to ascertain progress and growth.
- All Military assistance to government agencies and institutions should be gender sensitive.

I. *TRAINING*

- Sensitization of policies and emerging issues nationwide should be done quarterly.
- There shall be a budget allocation to cover all gender related training within the RSLAF.
- Commanders (at all levels) shall partake in gender training, as this will impact the way they view and deal with gender issues.
- There shall be gender curriculum/manual as part of all essential training in RSLAF.
- All training conducted within RSLAF should be gender sensitive.
- There shall be an annual workshop/training (refreshers' training) for all focal persons.
- Focal persons shall include both soldiers and officers.

J. *COMPLAINT PROCEDURE*

- All complaints shall be reported to the Commander and the Gender Focal Person in the unit.


Signature:

18 Apr 23
Date:

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- All complaint must be speedily investigated and reported up the chain.
- Gender Focal Person shall promptly forward all complaints to Directorate G/EO and send weekly progress report on the investigation.
- RSLAF shall create some form of psychological support to victims of gender-based violence (Psychosocial Counseling Services).
- RSLAF to provide free medical care for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

K. *SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE*

All personnel of the Armed Force should adhere to the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 and its amendment of 2019 and the three Gender Acts; Domestic Violence, Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce, and the Devolution of Estates This will aid both commanders and men on how to deal with this matter.

L. *MARRIAGE*

- When a RSLAF personnel marries, such marriages shall be registered. Any male personnel who co-habits with a female personnel (or a civilian) for more than 5yrs, such co-habitation shall be deemed by Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, to be married under customary law, notwithstanding that they may not have performed any rites of customary marriage.
- Commanders shall encourage all soldiers to register their marriage certificates; and also to guide them also to put their wives and/or children as beneficiaries. It must also be emphasised to RSLAF Personnel that it is an offence if they do not take care of their wives and children.

M. *ETHICS AND INTEGRITY*

- Commanders shall be held responsible for failing to act. Failure to act should be punishable. The Misconduct Policy should apply if a commander is found liable of failure to act.
- Commanders shall uphold the law, justice, equality and fairness in dealing with RSLAF Personnel when confronted/connected with policies related to gender.


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PART 111
FRAMEWORK OF IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation framework for this policy is conceived at two levels, (a) Institutional structure and (a) leadership.

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

This policy will be driven by a dedicated force-wide structure that will coordinate and monitor the full implementation of the various aspects elaborated herein. The proposed structure will comprise of the following elements:

- An Equal Opportunities structure, at the MOD level headed by a one star, to provide strategic leadership for the agenda. To ensure effectiveness, this structure will report directly to the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).
- Cascading the headquarters level structure across and to all the command structure levels of the MOD/RSLAF i.e. from the strategic, operational to tactical levels.
- Appointment of focal person and creation of specialised gender units in all battalion and brigade levels.

LEADERSHIP

The full implementation of this Policy is transformative and therefore dependent on the commitment and drive of the top leadership of the MOD/RSLAF. For this reason, the Policy stresses the need for the top MOD/RSLAF leadership to remain seized with the equality agenda through such mechanisms as regular appraisals.

The top leadership of the MOD/RSLAF shall take bold and deliberate step by taking affirmative action by promoting to higher ranks female personnel within the framework in making the RSLAF a professional force (not inimical to the RSLAF). This will increase female representation at all levels. Affirmative action should also be done for POSTINGS, APPOINTMENTS and training. A detailed affirmative action policy should be devised for fairness and consistency.

BUDGETING

To ensure ownership and sustainability of the gender equality agenda within the MOD/RSLAF as well as alignment with the national aspirations of the Sierra Leonean society, the policy calls for dedicated resources to be set aside as part of the annual defence allocation. This may be supplemented, where necessary, by resources from other donors, but the utilisation of such resources should seek to reinforce the MOD/RSLAF aspirations and reflect the spirit of this policy.

Signature: 

Date: 18 Apr 23

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To ensure consistent monitoring of progress, identification of any possible gaps and undertaking of corrective measures, the Policy establishes a performance tracking system with a logical framework of activities that are time bound, with a set of indicators on the basis of which regular monitoring and evaluation will be based.

The gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation system should be established at various levels:

- At all leadership levels within the MOD/RSLAF, there is need to infuse gender parameters in the annual appraisal systems.
- Evaluation should also be undertaken through collective mechanism such as an annual forum where representatives from all forces converge to reflect together, on progress made, good practices, challenges, as well as map out strategies and plans to address various challenge encountered in the pursuit of gender mainstreaming and equality within the MOD/RSLAF.

SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The MOD/RSLAF Gender Policy applies to all levels of the organisation, starting from the office of the Ministry of Defence and its Secretariat, RSLAF, including Chiefs of Services and Brigades. The reason for this is that the primary responsibility for the pursuit of gender mainstreaming and equality lies with the leadership.

Gender equity considerations must also be integrated in all operational, administrative and training processes, regardless of the fact that some processes may appear to have nothing to do with equality between women and men. These include the following:

- Planning processes.
- Policy development and legal drafting.
- Service delivery.
- Decision-making processes.
- Procurement of goods and services.
- Compliance enforcement.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

COMMUNICATION

To ensure the ownership and implementation across the MOD/RSLAF, the Policy need to be cascaded through the chain of command. This should entail activities that deepen sensitisation of the members of the forces and civilians of it content as well as public campaigns with the people of Sierra Leone.


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REVIEW OF THE POLICY

The policy will be reviewed from time to time; as the need arises, but within the period of three years, to ensure alignment with the dynamics within the RSLAF and the Sierra Leonean society at large.


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13
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18 Apr 23
Date: