

C:

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE
NETWORK OF WOMEN
MINISTERS AND
PARLIAMENTARIANS
(NeWMaP) – SIERRA LEONE**

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE
NETWORK OF WOMEN MINISTERS
AND PARLIAMENTARIANS
(NeWMaP) – SIERRA LEONE**

PREAMBLE

The Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians (NeWMaP), the Sierra Leone Chapter, was formally launched in December 1999. With the adoption of the Network for African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians (NeWMaP) in the meeting of the African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians sitting in Libreville was Gabon, on 26th November 2004, NeWMaP Sierra Leone Chapter became a member. NAWMP was established to promote an equal representation of women and men in decision-making processes at the National, Regional, and International levels; and to strengthen the advocacy skills of women leaders.

Under the direction of the then Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (MSWGCA), NeWMaP enjoyed both financial and administrative support from the government and international partner organizations like UNFPA. There was a Coordinator who ran the day-to-day affairs of the Network, whose office was situated in the MSWGCA. NeWMaP was very active, with programmes focusing on maternal and child health, reproductive health and rights, population and family planning and capacity building of NeWMaP members. NeWMaP was a fully paid-up and vibrant member of NAWMP as it participated in all of NeWMaP’s international meetings and programmes. Given the busy schedules of Network members and the limited specialization among them, Technical Working Groups-Specialized groups focusing on specific areas such as legislation, policy advocacy, capacity-building, mentorship, constituency outreach and joint Programme development-were formed to assist in the implementation of the Network’s objectives and plan of action.

Many successes were achieved by the Network under the then Minister, until in 2008, when the Network’s activities were curtailed due to lack of financial and political support from the new government and Minister, resulting in default in meeting its international financial commitments and participation. All attempts to resuscitate NeWMaP proved futile until 2023, when discussions for its reactivation started under the present government and the new Minister.

With support from TROUCAIRE and IrishAid, Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) and the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs (MoGCA) conducted capacity building workshops were organized for the women ministers, deputy ministers, female members of parliament and female councilors, which culminated in the official launch of NeWMaP by the President of Sierra Leone.

The NeWMaP-Sierra Leone is a collaborative initiative aimed at advancing the interests of women in Sierra Leone. Comprising female Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and elected female Members of Parliament, NeWMaP serves as a platform to promote women's empowerment, gender equality, and women's rights in alignment with the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022.

ARTICLE I – NAME

There is hereby established the Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians-Sierra Leone- (herein referred to as “NeWMaP” that serves as a platform to promote women's empowerment, gender equality, and women's rights in alignment with the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022.

MOTTO: “United for Women’s Leadership and National Progress”

ARTICLE II VISION

A country where women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities in all spheres of development, not based on their gender, but on their competencies and capabilities.

ARTICLE III MISSION

To serve as a national platform from legislation, representation and oversight of an environment that serves to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality through enhanced maternal and child health, reproductive health and rights, population and family planning and capacity building of women and NeWMaP members in Sierra Leone.

ARTICLE IV- AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of NeWMaP-Sierra Leone- is to provide a unified platform that promotes collaboration, empowerment, and transformative change for women and girls in Sierra Leone. NeWMaP's expanded purpose and objectives underscore its profound commitment to women's advancement and empowerment in Sierra Leone. By facilitating collaboration, providing support, advocating for policy changes, driving joint programs, and actively contributing to the realization of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, NeWMaP embodies a comprehensive approach to catalyze transformative change. Through these actions, NeWMaP seeks to reshape the narrative for women and girls, ushering in an era of increased gender equality, improved opportunities, and enhanced social well-being across the nation. The objectives are to:

- a) **Foster Collaboration:** NeWMaP aims to bring together female leaders from different political parties and government roles to collaborate on matters related to women,

children, and vulnerable groups. NeWMaP recognizes that the strength of collective action is pivotal in achieving meaningful change. By bringing together female leaders from diverse political parties and government roles, NeWMaP aims to foster collaboration that transcends political boundaries. Through open dialogue, shared insights, and a unified voice, NeWMaP members will work together to address pressing issues concerning women, children, and vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone. This collaborative approach not only amplifies the impact of individual efforts but also paves the way for comprehensive and effective solutions that can bring about lasting positive change.

- b) **Empowerment and Support:** NeWMaP aims to empower women through mentorship, guidance, emotional support, and capacity-building opportunities in leadership and governance. Empowerment lies at the heart of NeWMaP's mission. Recognizing the challenges and barriers that women often face in leadership roles, NeWMaP is committed to providing a supportive environment for its members. Through mentorship programs, guidance from experienced leaders, and emotional support networks, NeWMaP seeks to nurture the confidence, skills, and resilience of its members. By focusing on capacity-building in leadership and governance, NeWMaP aims to equip women with the tools they need to excel in their roles, lead with conviction, and inspire future generations of female leaders.
- c) **Advocate for Gender Equality:** NeWMaP will advocate for policies, legislation, and budgets that advance gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment in Sierra Leone. NeWMaP is dedicated to advocating for comprehensive policies, impactful legislation, and equitable budgets that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. By leveraging the collective influence and expertise of its members, NeWMaP aims to actively engage with relevant stakeholders to drive the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive laws and policies. Through targeted advocacy efforts, NeWMaP seeks to create an enabling environment where women's rights are protected, and opportunities for their active participation and advancement are ensured across all sectors of society.
- d) **Joint Programmes:** NeWMaP will develop and implement joint programmes that address key issues affecting women and girls, leveraging the collective strengths and expertise of its members. NeWMaP recognizes the potential of collaborative initiatives to effect transformative change. By developing and implementing joint programs, NeWMaP members can pool their resources, expertise, and networks to address critical issues affecting women and girls in Sierra Leone. These programs will be designed to tackle challenges such as education, healthcare, economic empowerment, violence prevention, and more. NeWMaP's collaborative approach to program development and implementation not only maximizes impact but also showcases the commitment of its members to tangible improvements in the lives of women and girls.
- e) **Implementation of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act:** NeWMaP will actively contribute to the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's

Empowerment Act of 2022 by: Monitoring the enforcement and impact of the Act, advocating for additional policies and measures to ensure the Act's comprehensive implementation and collaborating with relevant stakeholders to drive change and address challenges. NeWMaP is fully committed to advancing the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022. To achieve this, NeWMaP will actively engage in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Act's enforcement and impact. Beyond mere observation, NeWMaP will use its collective influence to advocate for additional policies and measures that ensure the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Act's provisions. Through collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, and civil society, NeWMaP will work to address challenges, propose amendments, and drive a culture shift that reflects the Act's principles and goals throughout Sierra Leone's institutions and society.

- f) **Data Collection and Research:** The Network can play a pivotal role in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data and research on issues related to women, gender equality, and empowerment. By collaborating with research institutions, NGOs, and experts, the Network can generate evidence-based insights that inform policy-making and drive targeted interventions.
- g) **Public Awareness and Education:** The Network can actively engage in public awareness campaigns to educate the general population about gender issues, women's rights, and the importance of women's participation in leadership roles. This could involve organizing workshops, seminars, and community outreach programs to promote a broader understanding of these issues.
- h) **Mentorship Exchange:** In addition to internal mentorship programs, the Network can establish mentorship exchanges with other countries' networks or international organizations. This would create opportunities for cross-cultural learning and collaboration, enabling members to gain new perspectives and strategies for advancing women's rights.
- i) **Diplomatic and International Advocacy:** The Network can leverage its collective influence to advocate for gender equality on an international stage. By engaging in diplomatic efforts and participating in international forums, members can work to influence global policies and commitments related to women's rights, empowerment, and gender mainstreaming.
- j) **Intersectionality and Inclusivity:** The Network can emphasize the importance of intersectionality, recognizing that women's experiences are shaped by various factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and more. By addressing the unique challenges faced by different groups of women, the network can promote inclusivity and ensure that policy interventions are tailored to diverse needs.
- k) **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Network can establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs in Sierra

Leone. This involves regularly assessing the impact of initiatives, identifying gaps, and recommending adjustments to ensure sustained progress.

- l) **Legal Empowerment and Advocacy:** Apart from advocating for gender-sensitive laws, the Network can engage in legal empowerment efforts. This could involve providing legal support and resources to women who have experienced discrimination or violence, thereby ensuring their rights are upheld and justice is served.
- m) **Collaboration with Civil Society:** The Network can actively collaborate with civil society organizations that are dedicated to gender equality and women's rights. This partnership can amplify the network's impact by mobilizing grassroots support, expanding outreach, and connecting with communities at the grassroots level.
- n) **Youth Engagement and Education:** The Network can engage with young women and girls to inspire and educate them about leadership opportunities and the importance of political engagement. This could involve mentorship programs, workshops in schools and colleges, and initiatives to encourage young women to pursue careers in politics and governance.

ARTICLE V GUIDING PRINCIPLES

NeWMaP is a non-partisan body guided by the mandate from a number of conventions, platforms, and UN resolutions. These include:

- **Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) (1979);**
- **The Dakar Platform of Action (1994);**
- **The International Conference on Population and Development (1994)**
- **Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council on Women, Peace and Security (2000)**
- **The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2000);**
- **The African Union declaration on Gender Equity (2004);**
- **Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want; and**
- **The Sustainability Development Goals of the United Nations (2030).**

ARTICLE VI MEMBERSHIP

Membership of NeWMaP is open to only Women Ministers and Deputy Ministers and elected Women Parliamentarians, especially those with the conviction and commitment to promote and advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment in Sierra Leone.

ARTICLE VII- ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

NEWMAP will have the following organizational structures:

- a. General Assembly:** Comprising all the members of NeWMaP, is the highest decision-making body, responsible to: (a) formulate policies and programmes for the Network; (b) make and review rules and laws that guide the Network's activities; (c) receive, debate and ratify annual reports from the National Executive; (d) Conduct, elect and remove officers of the Network.
- b. National Executive:** Headed by the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs as Chairperson and Co-Chaired by the President of the Female Parliamentary Caucus, will be responsible in giving policy direction to NeWMaP's activities. Other National Executives shall comprise of the following: Secretary General, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Social Secretary, Publicity Secretary and 2 Auditors and divided evenly between the Ministers and the Parliamentarians.
- c.** Appointment of the other National Executives shall be either by election/negotiation/consensus, as the case maybe.
- d.** Any member of NeWMaP is qualified to hold the other National Executive positions, provided they have met all their financial obligations, are regular in meetings and participate fully in the Network's activities.
- e.** The National Executive shall:
 - Formulate and submit proposals and recommendations to the General Assembly for the adoption of policies and programs of the NeWMaP Sierra Leone.
 - Oversee implementation of decisions of General Assembly and all structures of the Network;
 - Authorize and approve budgets and expenditure of all the structures of NeWMaP;

- Ensure that proper accounts and financial systems are maintained by the various structures at all times.
 - Receive quarterly reports from all the NeWMaP structures;
 - Undertake Monitoring and Evaluation of all Network activities, programs and projects;
 - Prepare and submit to the General Assembly all required reports and audited accounts of the NeWMaP Sierra Leone.
 - Deliberate and advise upon questions or matters that may be referred to it by the any structure and take appropriate actions or refer as appropriate.
- f. Steering Committee:** Comprising representatives from different political parties and government responsible for strategic planning, development of annual work plan, identifying priority areas for advocacy, legislation and policy initiatives, monitoring and evaluation of progress and Programme implementation, fostering collaboration and networking with relevant national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations and decision-making, and overseeing the implementation of NeWMaP's objectives.
- g. Technical Working Groups:** Specialized groups formed to focus on specific areas such as legislation, policy advocacy, capacity-building, mentorship, maternal and child health, population issues, family planning, reproductive rights and health and joint programme development, with membership drawn from male and female experts/professionals, former Ministers and Parliamentarians, researchers, policy makers and civil society organizations. The Technical Working Groups will: conduct research and analysis to inform NeWMaP's advocacy and initiatives; develop strategies, proposals, and recommendations on specific focus areas; organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions on leadership, governance, and empowerment; facilitate mentorship and knowledge sharing among NeWMaP members; and collaborate on joint programmes to address critical issues affecting women.
- h. Coordinating Secretariat:** small basic staff, housed in the MOGCA, coordinating all the affairs of the NeWMaP, answerable and reporting to the Executive Committee. Specifically, it will: run the day-to-day affairs of NeWMaP; takes and prepared minutes of NeWMaP meetings; sends out notices of Meetings to Members; prepares meetings of NeWMaP; and attend meetings on behalf of NeWMaP and report accordingly.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVES

The **Chairperson** will provide leadership, preside over General and Executive meetings, represent NeWMaP in relevant forums, and ensure the achievement of its objectives.

- Shall direct the activities of the Network;
- Shall request the Secretary to convey meetings as and when necessary;

- In representing the Network, the Chairperson shall take decisions for and on behalf of the Network and report to the house thereafter;
- Shall have the power to cast a deciding vote where there is tie during elections;
- Shall be the principal signatory to Bank accounts, sign membership cards and Minutes of the Network's meetings; and
- Shall receive and acknowledge the Auditor's Report.

The **Co-Chairperson** shall deputize the Chairperson and preside over meetings in the absence of the Chairperson and carry out any duties assigned to her by the Chairperson.

The **Secretary** shall keep the minutes of all meetings and correspondences for the Network;

- Summon meetings on the directive of the President and keep all records of the Network, including a roster of members;
- She shall generally be responsible for the secretariat of the Association and shall take charge
- of the documents, furniture, equipment, seal and all other properties of the Network; and
- She shall present a report at the Annual General Meeting and/or Reunion of the Network.

The **Treasurer** shall receive/collect and disburse/make payments on behalf of the Network;

- Shall keep written accounts thereof; keep the bank cheque book of the Network;
- Shall prepare, produce and submit an Annual Statement of Account to the AGM of the
- Network for consideration and acceptance; and
- Shall be a signatory to the bank account of the Association.

The **Financial Secretary** shall work hand in hand with the Treasurer;

- Shall keep a permanent, up-to-date minute record of all financial transactions in ink and in a Treasurer's ledger (book) or electronically;
- Shall be prepared to report the financial status of the Network at any regular meeting; and
- Shall keep record of all incoming monies, noting the date and from whom the money was received and then turn it over to the Treasurer.

The **Social Secretary** shall plan all activities of the Network and assist with entertainment, refreshments, and other details connected with the Network.

The **Publicity Secretary** shall be responsible for dissemination of information to members;

- She shall ensure that the venue for a meeting is adequately prepared;
- She shall liaise with the Social Secretary to ensure that members of the Network are properly informed of programmes; and
- Shall be the Spoken person for the Network.

The **Auditor** shall audit the finances of the Network annually and submit her report to the Chairperson of NeWMaP.

ARTICLE VIII - MEETINGS

General Membership

There shall be a monthly meeting of the General membership of the NeWMaP to transact the following businesses:

- a) To receive the end of year report of the activities of the organization;
- b) To receive and consider the account of the Organization for the previous year, and the Auditors Report on the accounts.
- c) To appoint external Auditors and fix their remuneration.
- d) To review policy matters of the Forum.
- e) To decide on any resolution that may be duly submitted to it.
- f) To elect officers and appoint members of the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group;
- g) Recruit the Coordinator and any other staff of the Secretariat;
- h) Notice of any resolution proposed to be moved at the General Assembly shall be given 21 days in advance to the General Assembly.

National Executive Meetings:

- a) Shall meet once a month and prepare the agenda, minutes/reports for the General Meeting.

ARTICLE IX – CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

- a) The Chairperson shall chair all meetings of the General Assembly except for elections, which shall be conducted by an electoral body set up for that purpose; In her absence, the Co-Chairperson shall conduct the meeting.
- b) Secretary General shall act as Secretary to the General Assembly, to be assisted by the Coordinating Secretariat;
- c) Secretary General shall prepare & serve notices for each meetings of the General Assembly to every member that has paid all their obligations members of the date, time a and venue at least 21 days before the meeting.
- d) The quorum of said meeting shall be 1/3 of the members and each member present shall have one vote. In the event of equality of votes, the President (who shall be the chair) shall have a casting vote.
- e) Meetings shall be held Bi-Annually, but Elections of Officers shall be elected every 2 and a half years.

CONVENING EXTRAORDINARY /EMERGENCY MEETINGS.

- f) An Extraordinary/Emergency meeting shall hold where issues of extreme importance or urgency arise.

ARTICLE X FINANCE

The main sources of income of the NEWMAP shall be:

- 10.1 Registration and monthly membership fees as determined by the General Assembly at Annual General Meetings,
- 10.2 Contributions, donations, legacies, and grants by individuals, groups, Governments and non-governmental Agencies and institutions.
- 10.3 Income generated by fundraising activities organized by the Network.
- 10.4 Individual Network members who represent the Network at meetings, after deducting the actual expenses incurred by the Network member concerned, the balances of funds should be returned to the Network and recorded as income.
- 10.5 The National Committees shall decide on sources from which the Network shall accept gifts or donations. This shall be based on consideration of principles and goals not contrary to that of the Network.
- 10.6 The National Accounts of the Network shall be managed by a National Treasurer and the Executive Secretary.
- 10.7 All monies payable to the Network shall be deposited in bank accounts, in the name of NeWMaP (Sierra Leone) and no sum shall be drawn from the account except by a cheque signed by two signatories, which shall always include the Treasurer.
- 10.8 The income and property of the NeWMaP shall be applied only in furtherance of the objects of the Association. The Executive Committee shall have the power to authorize the payment of remuneration and expenses to any officer, member or employee of the Network and to any other person or persons for services rendered to the NeWMaP.
- 10.9 The financial transactions of the Network shall be recorded in a proper set of books kept by the Financial Secretary

ARTICLE XI– AUDIT

- 11.1 The Auditors appointed by the Executive Committee shall examine such annual accounts and statements and report to the General Assembly.

ARTICLE XII– AMENDMENTS

12.1 Amendments to the Constitution shall be made at a General Assembly meeting by a two-thirds majority of its members.

ARTICLE XIII– DISSOLUTION

13.1 A resolution to dissolve the Network shall only be proposed at a Special General assembly, and shall only be carried by a majority of at least two-thirds of members present.

ARTICLE X IV- ENTRY INTO FORCE OF CONSTITUTION

14.1 This Constitution shall come into force when half of the NeWMaP members have signed this Constitution.

