

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

2023



January-December 2023

Section I: Contents

Contents

Section I: Contents.....	2
Section II: List of Abbreviation.....	3
Section III: Introduction and Country Context Analysis.....	4
3.1 Introduction.....	4
3.2 Political Country Context.....	4
3.3 Attempted Coup.....	5
3.4 Legal Framework Review.....	5
3.5 Macroeconomic Context.....	6
3.6 Environmental Context.....	6
3.7 Civil Society.....	6
3.8 Organizational Engagements.....	7
Section IV Acknowledgements.....	8
Section V: Outputs Achieved.....	9
Section V: Key Results and Achievements.....	26
Section VI: Challenges and Lessons Learned.....	31
6.2 Lessons Learned.....	32
Section VII: Way Forward.....	34
Appendices.....	35
Case Story.....	35

Section II: List of Abbreviation

ACA	Advocates for Community Alternatives
APC	All People's Congress
CAC	Community Development Committee
CDC	Community Advocacy Committee
CHW	Community Health Watch
CHMVGS	Community Health Monitoring Volunteer Groups
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GRC	Grievance Redress Committee
KDHRC	Kenema District Human Rights Committee
MDA	Ministries Departments Agencies
NaCCLE	National Coalition for Community Legal Empowerment
NaRGEJ	Natural Resource Governance and Economic Justice Network
LPPB	Local Police Partnership Board
MSP	Multi-Stakeholders Platform
ONS	Office of National Security
SLLAP	Sierra Leone Land Administration Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure



Community Dialogue Session in Bunabu in Kono - 28th April 2023

Section III: Introduction and Country Context Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The Year 2023 was as productive for NMJD as an organization as it was challenging. These challenges were caused mainly by unavoidable externalities that adversely impacted on already fragile national environment. Like with other countries of Sierra Leone's economic and social indices, the impact on the lives and livelihood of the ordinary man and woman was hugely excruciating. The Russian war with Ukraine caused devastating consequences across the globe leading to acute food shortages and hikes in prices of petroleum products resulting in high costs of living. This invasion, though happening hundreds of thousands of miles away, further deteriorated the living conditions of the vast majority of the people of Sierra Leone. Towards the end of the year and as the world was grappling with the impacts of the Ukraine invasion, another conflict erupted in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas. The spiraling effect of the Israel-Hamas conflict saw the Yemen-based Houthi strikes on the Red Sea targeting Israel-bound commercial ships or vessels flying USA or UK flags as a protest for what they described as "Israel's continued bombing of Palestine". This further compounded the problems of Sierra Leoneans living in the country as prices of petroleum products continued to escalate due to the fact that the Red Sea, which is a major sea route for many commercial vessels, has been made dangerous and risky to ply.

3.2 Political Country Context

Sierra Leone conducted Local Councils, General and Presidential Elections on 24th June 2023, using three different electoral systems, including the Proportional Representation District Block for Members of Parliament and Councilors; First-Past-the-Post for Mayors and Chairpersons; and Re-Run for President. These were the sixth multi-party elections held in the country since 1996 and the fifth since the 11 years civil war ended in January 2002. The

Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) declared incumbent President Julius Maada Bio winner with 56.1 percent of the total valid votes cast, garnering slightly above the 55 percent threshold to avoid a run-off. The opposition APC bagged 41.24 percent of the total valid votes cast. International and local elections observers in their preliminary and final statements reported that even though the campaigns were relatively peaceful, the whole process was fraught with irregularities and lacked transparency, particularly the tallying of results. In fact, in their analysis of the 60 percent of polling station results announced by the ECSL, National Elections Watch (NEW) reported that no one presidential candidate got the 55 percent mandatory threshold to be declared winner in the first ballot. According to NEW's projections, based on its Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) data (Citizen Situation Room), the SLPP Presidential Candidate should get 50.4 percent of the total valid votes cast and 46.5 percent for the APC Presidential Candidate.

The opposition APC contested the outcome of the elections, but ruled out going to the courts to seek legal redress. However, they boycotted governance at all levels thereby bringing the governance of the nation to a virtual standstill. The ensuing dialogue, facilitated by the Commission for Peace and National Cohesion and brokered by the Economic Community of West African States, African Union and Commonwealth, resulted in the setting up of the Cross-Party Committee on Electoral System and Management Body Review (Tripartite Committee). The principal responsibility of this Committee is to examine the processes, systems, appointments, independence, capacity, principle of consultations, Proportional Representation (PR) and other related issues and proffer recommendations/solutions to improve the conduct of future elections in Sierra Leone.

3.3 Attempted Coup

In another related development, residents of the country's capital city, Freetown, were on Sunday 26th November 2023, rudely woken up by the sounds of heavy gunfire coming from the direction of the Wilberforce community where the country's main military barracks is sited. On that fateful day also, the main and largest maximum-security facilities on Pademba Road and at the premises of the International Criminal Court on Kingharman Road where the female inmates of the country's correctional centre are housed were allegedly attacked by the assailants and hundreds of prisoners freed. This was later confirmed by government authorities to be an attempted coup to unseat the government of President Julius Maada Bio. Several people including opposition politicians, serving and retired police and army officers were arrested and charged to court with various offences bordering on treason. By the close of the year, three trials were underway in three different courts, including a court Martial, in relation to the attempted coup.

3.4 Legal Framework Review

Amidst these challenges, 2023 saw the conclusion of a number of legal processes that were initiated two or three years back aimed at reforming critical laws in the country relating to mining, land and gender with these legal frameworks receiving the Presidential Assent. They include: Mines and Minerals Development Act 2022; Customary Land Rights Act 2022; Land Commission Act 2022; and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022. NMJD played a pivotal role in the review of these laws by mobilizing citizens and local communities, and supporting them with the needed knowledge to participate meaningfully in the review process at district, regional and national levels. With these legislations receiving the Presidential Assent, NMJD and other civil society organizations used 2023 to start

popularizing these newly reviewed laws in local communities in their operational districts across the country.

3.5 Macroeconomic Context

Sierra Leone has been grappling with post-pandemic and Russian/Ukraine war recovery with lots of domestic and external shocks exacerbating the already existing macro-fiscal vulnerabilities. Inflation and exchange rates continued its free-fall depreciation, reaching unprecedented record levels, thereby limiting economic activities of many people and institutions, and triggering a severe cost of living crisis for the vast majority of the citizens. This gloomy economic situation was further compounded by events of Sunday 26 November 2023. Since it happened at the time diasporans were finalizing plans to travel home to the country for the Christmas vacation, many reportedly cancelled their trips for fear of the unforeseen. These cancellations caused not only disappointments with family members and friends, but also it had a huge adverse impact on the country's economy.

3.6 Environmental Context

The accelerating rate of deforestation is not only threatening biodiversity and ecosystem, but it is also contributing to global climate change and the likelihood of serious unforeseen climate change-related disasters, especially with the continued disappearance of most of the county's forest cover, particularly in urban towns and cities. The effects of climate change are experienced everywhere in the country and by every Sierra Leonean but more particularly farmers and rural women. Before the start of the rainy season, the Meteorological Centre projected that there would be lesser rainfall in Sierra Leone in 2023 than in previous years. Sierra Leoneans painfully and helplessly watched this projection come to fruition. What this is telling us as a nation is that if meaningful actions are not taken by the government, its partners and other stakeholders and sufficiently so to tackle issues of climate change, the country will continue to receive lesser annual rainfall going forward with its attendant consequences. This will further negatively impact agricultural activities across the country, especially when irrigation facilities are conspicuously lacking in the whole country.

3.7 Civil Society

Civil society in Sierra Leone continued to face challenges inhibiting their effectiveness in the pursuit of their respective mandates. These challenges border on, among others, limited funding opportunities, restrictive legal framework, regional/ethnic identity, and shifts in donors/partners interests. However, despite these challenges, civil society continued to play critical roles in important national and regional processes. During the 2023 electoral cycle, civil society contributed immensely towards the successful conduct of the 24th June 2023 elections through civic and electoral education, observation and monitoring of electoral processes, and mobilizing citizens to participate. NMJD, as a member of the Strategic Management Committee (SMC) of the National Election Watch (NEW), participated in critical decision-making processes of NEW¹ and contributed to NEW's successful engagement of the entire electoral process. Also, the district-level National Civil Society Forum-Sierra Leone continued to be active in their engagements with public interest issues, though at varying degrees – whilst some are very active, others are less active. This has made the leaderships of some of these platforms to undertake comprehensive reviews to identify what the issues are and how they can make these platforms more effective and efficient in

¹ NEW is a consortium of national and international civil society organizations, NNGOs, INGOs labour unions, religious bodies, youth and women's organizations working towards supporting free, fair, transparent and credible elections in Sierra Leone.

servicing their communities. The Bo district civil society became the pioneering platform in this when they organized the People's Forum in Bo and they are now implementing the recommendations that came out of the People's Forum. Other district-level platforms are now working on plans to emulate the Bo district platform.

3.8 Organizational Engagements



joyous moment for farmers after the bylaws were developed

Guided and motivated by its core values of mutual accountability and transparency and Solidarity with the poor and those struggling for change in society, NMJD continued to engage local communities and built their capacities with relevant knowledge, skills and tools through trainings, coaching and mentoring and the provision of resources to enable them ask critical questions and demand accountability from policy makers and service providers. In Kono district, NMJD facilitated the development of bylaws that are now regulating the conduct of

both cattle rearers and crop farmers. The insecurity resulting from these conflicts, which before the bylaws were developed, was considered unsolvable has significantly improved as the two groups of farmers now co-exist and live in peace; NMJD continued to monitor the implementation and compliance with the bylaws; the paralegals centres whose establishment NMJD facilitated and supported are now providing critical services to several communities in the district through human rights education, local courts monitoring and mediation and conflicts resolution. In Bonthe and Moyamba districts, NMJD mobilized and engaged communities including women and persons with disabilities on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and on the Right to Say No. NMJD also successfully coordinated the Multi-Stakeholders Taskforce for Public Disclosure of Revenues from the mines to primary host communities affected by mining activities. This is an initiative pioneered by NMJD and it comprises of 18 institutions: 9 Government Institutions, 4 Mining Companies, and 6 Non-Governmental/Civil Society Organizations.

In order to further improve accountability of mining revenue transfers, NMJD has begun implementing a social accountability project in Kono, Kenema and Moyamba districts. In Karene district, NMJD is working towards empowering women and girls using the *Masidama*² Methodology with the objective of increasing women's participation in decision-making processes in their communities and making them more active in driving community development programmes that are participatory and inclusive. The *Masidama* Methodology aims at changing the attitudes and behaviour of men towards women, as well as the way women also think about themselves. This is part of the empowerment process of girls and adolescents in the district.

² *Limba* word meaning doing it differently. *Limba* is one of the ethnic groups in Sierra Leone.


Section IV Acknowledgements

We thank our partners immensely including the civil society advocacy platforms, the local communities that we worked with, relevant government MDAs and our donor partners for being with us throughout this challenging journey. We would not have been able to achieve so much without your collaboration and support, which you provided to us in many ways. We thank you and we look forward to continuing working with you in the coming years.



GLOBAL GREEN
GRANTS FUND
UK/EUROPE

Section V: Outputs Achieved

No	Strategic Activities	Outputs Achieved
1	<p data-bbox="320 255 721 412"><i>Establishing, supporting and strengthening community structures in NMJD operational areas</i></p>  <p data-bbox="225 875 775 976"><i>Elected female Councilors and Ward Development Committee members on their roles and responsibilities in Kamakwie trained</i></p>	<ul data-bbox="890 255 1439 2022" style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained 60 participants, including members of the Karene District Women's Network, CSOs and other women-serving organisations on Citizens Monitoring and Advocacy (CMA) tools for increased understanding of social accountability, evidence-based monitoring and advocacy. The main objective of this training is to equip citizens with the necessary knowledge and tools to enable them hold their leaders and service providers accountable through monitoring and evidence-based advocacy at the district level. • Organized 3 days specifically designed training for female elected and appointed leaders at the ward, constituency and district levels in Karene district. The training was as a result of capacity gaps identified during a needs assessment NMJD facilitated in the project communities. The training was therefore deigned such that it contributed to addressing the identified capacity gaps with the objective of making citizens more knowledgeable, efficient and effective in their engagements. • Conducted community-level quarterly coaching and mentoring sessions for Village Development Committee members and other community-based structures on issues of Leadership, Accountability, Resource Mobilization and Financial Management to ensure the effective management of the various community structures and

		<p>to enable them undertake impactful community advocacy actions that are also inclusive of women, youth and PWDs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolled out social accountability tools using Citizens Monitoring and Advocacy (CMA) Manual for 20 people including women, Farmer-Based Organizations, Facility Management Committees, VDCs and other networks at community and ward levels in Karene district. The objective of this activity is to enhance the capacity of citizens to understand and undertake social accountability and monitoring of service delivery in their communities, and to be able to engage the authorities on their findings. • Organized quarterly dialogue sessions on the newly enacted gender-related laws for 20 community stakeholders inclusive of women leaders, chiefs, religious leaders, youth leaders, traditional leaders, secret society heads, school heads and other actors drawn from 15 communities in Karene district. The objective of these sessions was to increase citizens understanding of these gender laws with the view to enable them to take collective actions to monitor the implementation of these laws in their district. Also, the communities were supported to advocate for increased women's participation in leadership positions and decision-making structures and processes. • Conducted training for 30 Young Women in Governance Network (YWiGN) members at district level for three months (two days
--	--	---

		<p>training in each month) on Leadership and Public Speaking; Resource Mobilization and Group Financial Management; Social Accountability; Strategic Advocacy and Movement Building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized orientation meetings in three chiefdoms in Kono district targeting 10 local authorities for each meeting. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss progress in the implementation of the community bylaws developed to regulate the conduct of crop farmers and cattle rearers, identify challenges in the implementation process, and develop new strategies to increase compliance levels by all the concerned actors. The meetings were held in Gbense Native Administrative Barry in Koidu City, Njagbwema in Fiama chiefdom and in Kombayende in Lei Chiefdom. A total of 36 local authorities including 28 men and 8 women participated in the meetings. • Facilitated three chiefdom-level dialogue meetings for crop farmers, cattle rearers and traditional leaders on the implementation of the community bylaws. These sessions brought together 75 participants comprising 58 men • 17 women. Strategies were developed during the meetings aimed at promoting joint monitoring of the implementation of the bylaws by cattle rearers and crop farmers, as well as the role of chiefs and local authorities in ensuring the bylaws are complied with.
--	--	--

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated three chiefdom-level accountability, reflection, learning and sharing sessions on the rolling out of the community bylaws. Participants included 80 men and 40 women. The sessions identified issues affecting the smooth implementation of the community bylaws. For example, the issue of some local chiefs undermining the bylaws by allegedly taking bribes from the cattle rearers in order to side with them in the resolution of conflicts. Some successes were also highlighted during the sessions such as instances where some cattle rearers had to move out of the chiefdoms because of their failure to comply with the community bylaws. Solutions were also proffered for the challenges identified. • Continued to provide paralegal and human rights education to selected operational chiefdoms in Kono district through the continued maintenance of three paralegal centres and the employment of four paralegals and one legal retainer. The main objective for doing this is to strengthen community action for legal empowerment and to raise awareness on issues of human rights and environmental justice in Fama, Tankoro and Kamara Chiefdoms in Kono district. • Facilitated the formation of four farmers groups (2 groups in each chiefdom) with each group comprising 15 vulnerable women and youth and supported to undertake farming activities. The farmers groups are formed in Peya and Walehun communities in Nimiyama chiefdom and Tankoro
--	--	--

		<p>and Bunabu communities in Gorama Kono chiefdoms. The formation of the farmers groups was the outcome of a scooping exercise undertaken to identify the concerns and felt needs of the targeted communities. Bylaws were developed and MoU signed with each of the farmers groups to formalize our working relationship with them and also to clearly spell out the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties to the MoU.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With support from Public Interest Lawyering Initiative for West Africa (PILIWA), NMJD continued to keep alive the ongoing litigation, which the Marginalized Property Owners (MAPO) in Kono district, brought against Koidu Limited since 2019 despite the huge challenges that are always associated with such legal actions against giant mining companies aimed at seeking justice for affected host mining communities. Because of NMJD's steadfastness and the resilience of MAPO, the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone has finally empaneled three Appeals Court judges to look into MAPO's appeal against the judgement of the High Court in Makeni, which said MAPO had no locus standing to institute legal action against Koidu Limited. MAPO has waited for this ruling for about two years. Hopefully, the matter will soon come up for hearing at the Appeals Court of Sierra Leone. • Conducted project inception meetings for 80 community stakeholders in Bonthe and Moyamba districts including persons with disability, women, CBOs working with PWDs and
--	--	---

		<p>other mining-affected victims. The objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of affected mining communities, especially women and PWDs in Bonthe and Moyamba districts, to ask their leaders critical questions bordering on accountability and to demand their rights. This is part of our capacity building drive with local communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized awareness raising/training sessions for 50 community stakeholders including women and PWDs across Bonthe and Moyamba districts on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and Community Claims to Consent Right/ the Right to Say NO. • Organized education and awareness raising sessions for mining communities in Bonthe and Moyamba districts through the popularization of the new mining laws. The objective of these engagements was to enhance the capacity of local communities to contribute meaningfully to the mainstreaming of human security in the governance of the mining sector in the country. • Facilitated the establishment of the Community Advocacy Committees (CACs) in Golala, Mokañji and Benduma communities in Bonthe and Moyamba districts and they are all functioning effectively. • Facilitated and supported the formation of a Grievance Redress Committee comprising mining companies, CSOs, media, Community Development committees, mineral sector, local
--	--	---

		<p>authorities and affected mining communities. As the name implies, the Grievance Redress Committee seeks to resolve conflicts arising from mining-related operations involving local communities, mining companies and local leaders amicably without resorting to violence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated and supported citizens participation in policy reform processes as evidenced by the review of the Mines and Minerals Act 2009 and the Land Laws, resulting in the enactment of the Mines and Minerals Development Act 2022, the Customary Land Right Act 2022 and Land Commission Act 2022. Also, we have organized series of sessions and used every available opportunity to popularize these laws in our operational communities. • NMJD is constructing a six-classroom primary school in Manjendu, Gorama Mende Chiefdom, Kenema district. The construction of the building is now far-advanced; it is at the completion stage. When completed, the building will house a Headteacher's office and a staff room. The construction of the building is a response to the felt needs of the Manjendu and its satellite communities where the population of school-age going children is far way higher than the available two classroom school facilities. The building is intended to ease the congestion of children in classrooms and improve the learning and teaching environment, including better health and hygiene. The new
--	--	--

		<p>building will also motivate parents to send their children to school, and children themselves will find motivation in the new building to go to school.</p>
2	<p style="text-align: center;">Capacity building events for staff, partners and community structures</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Women during training on their land rights</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized 6 Political leadership trainings for 50 women leaders and aspiring women candidates using the Training and Accompaniment Manual. The training was intended to help women politicians acquire basic knowledge, skills and tools that they needed to compete effectively with their menfolk and do away with the gender stereotypes, which have kept women from participating in politics. The training was also meant to educate and encourage women to support their peers who have opted to contest the elections as MPs and as councillors. • Organized Training of Trainers (ToT) for 10 Community Co-facilitators/Focal Persons at district level using the core Masidama Manuals on Facilitation Skills and Exploring Attitudes and Beliefs aimed at building their facilitation knowledge and skills for the implementation of Masidama Methodology. The Masidama Methodology aims at changing societal perceptions about women and men's attitudes towards women. • Conducted 15 weekly female Masidama sessions in a "Woman Only" spaces with support provided to them to undertake effective advocacy to increase women's representation in leadership and decision-making processes.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted 13 weekly male Masidama sessions in the "Men Only" spaces with action plans developed demonstrating support for increased women's representation in decision making and leadership. • Trained 210 (60 women and 150 men) members of the Community Action Groups (CAGs) in Kono district in the community bylaws on cattle rearers and crop farmers, conflict mediation, negotiation, advocacy, data collection and reporting skills. The training aimed at raising awareness, enhancing skills of the CAG members on the basic community monitoring tools and assessing compliance of the two groups of farmers with the community bylaws. 180 crop farmers and 30 cattle rearers were trained. • Trained 50 women who are adversely affected by the mining activities of Koidu Limited in Koidu City in financial management and record keeping, profit distribution, micro loan repayment, developing operational plans and managing budgets. This was followed up with a refresher training in monitoring and reporting. • Organized two Regional People's Land Conferences in Makeni for the North and North-Western regions and in Bo for the South and Eastern regions. 200 people, including farmers, land owning families, chiefs, local authorities, women and youth participated in these regional conferences. These were the first land conferences held in Sierra Leone after the
--	--	---

		<p>enactment of the Customary Land Rights and National Land Commission Acts in 2022. The purpose of holding the conference was to create a platform for critical land stakeholders to reflect on the legal review process and to discuss the newly-enacted laws and position themselves well for their implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained 50 non-state actors, including journalists, chiefs, local authorities, community leaders, land owning families, women and youth on the Customary Land Rights Act 2022. The training provided an opportunity for media practitioners, citizens, civil society and other community activists to enhance their knowledge of the Customary Land Rights Act 2022 as a prelude to taking collective actions to advocate and protect their land rights. • Secured a piece of land in Small Bo Chiefdom, Kenema district, for community-led farming. Farming activities have not started yet on the land. But when they finally kick off, it will not only contribute towards increased food productivity and food security, it will also promote peaceful co-existence between and among local communities and hence ensures sustainable peace and community growth. • Facilitated the formation/strengthening of local structures such as Village Development committees (VDC), Community Action Groups (CAGs), Community Legal support committee, and ensured these
--	--	---

		<p>structures are gender inclusive; trained members of the structures in different areas including advocacy and monitoring in order to make them function effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held three inception meetings in the three project communities on public disclosure for 80 community stakeholders consisting of: 5 local authorities, 5 land owners, 5 farmers, 25 PWDs, 20 affected women, 5 men, 10 youth, 3 CSOS/CBOs and 2 media practitioners in Bonthe and Moyamba districts. The purpose of the meetings was to enhance community legitimacy and support towards the successful implementation of the project whose objective is to increase awareness of communities on the state's duty to protect their fundamental human rights and to provide remedies for any abuse or violation of their rights. • Facilitated and supported the holding of a workshop on Responsible Agriculture Initiative (RAI) for CSOs; held other orientation/awareness-raising meetings at national-, regional- and district-levels, as well as titling and documenting.
3	<p><i>Strengthening collaboration, coalition building and networking</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated and supported the formation and functioning of the Young Women in Governance Network (YWiGN) at district- level. It comprises 30 older adolescent girls. The Network is established for the purpose of creating a platform where young girls meet and interact, acquire knowledge and skills through training, coaching and mentoring on issues of human rights, women's rights, advocacy and governance.



NMJD Executive Director in a meeting with CSO members in Freetown


- Collaborated with other civil society organizations and worked assiduously towards strengthening the capacity of the Bo District National Civil Society Forum for increased effectiveness in public interest advocacy. This engagement is a follow-up of the outcome of the People's Assembly, which the CSOs leadership in Bo organized to identify the challenges facing civil society in the district and to develop and implement mitigating measures.
- Contributed towards bridging the gap between CSOs and Members of Parliament through regular dialogue and the signing of an MOU to strengthen collaboration and joint actions. The Executive Director of NMJD signed the MOU on behalf of CSOs.

4 **Research and Documentation**



Paramount Chief in Kono speaking during Social Auditing Processes

- Conducted social audit to assess the level of accountability of key stakeholders in the mining sector, including mining companies, chiefs, local authorities and other stakeholders in Kenema, Kono and Moyamba districts. This activity involved the development of the Social Auditing Manual, training of auditors in the use of the Manual, holding planning engagements with the Community Development Committees and the establishment of partnerships with key community, national and international stakeholders whose participation is critical to the success of the process.
- Conducted a scoping study of the institutional and legislative framework of the food security drive of Sierra Leone. This activity

		<p>was implemented in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).</p>
5	<p style="text-align: center;">Implementation of the Organization Development and Change (ODC)</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Team building retreat in Karene</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized 3 days annual staff team building retreat for 10 staff in Bombali and Karene districts. The retreat provided a conducive environment for staff in these two offices to reflect and critically analyse their work; and then developed action plans to undertake collective actions to address identified gaps, as well as draw lessons to improve programme impacts and individual proficiency at work going forward. • Held two Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings in Bo and Makeni with 11 staff (9 men and 2 women) attending in each of the meetings. The SMT is the hub of NMJD's work, as it coordinates all levels of the organization's structure and takes responsibility for implementing the Board's decisions. During the SMT meetings, critical reflections were done, operational plans reviewed, country contexts scanned, SWOT analysis of NMJD with regards its capacity to carry out its mandate carried out, and other critical related issues were also looked at. The overarching objective is to make NMJD continually relevant, and committed to always remain faithful to its vision, mission and core values. • Recruited and trained a MEAL Staff in M&E systems, strategies and tools and supported the staff to develop an organizational M&E framework.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated and supported the training of eight finance staff in the use of the Accounting Software (QuickBooks) Package. • Facilitated and supported the training of five staff on social audit for mining accountability. • Recruited a Communications Officer to fill the void caused by the departure of the erstwhile Comms Officer. • Printed and distributed assorted branding, visibility, information, education and communications materials, including t-shirts, calendars, stickers and sign posts. The materials were distributed to Board members, staff, partners and local communities. • Developed 5 policy manuals for Land for Life staff and partners, including Human Resource, Finance, Procurement, Data Management, and Safeguarding.
6	<p>Collaboration with Government and Development Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted 2 interface sessions with the Karene District Election Management Bodies (ECSL, PPRC) and other elections stakeholders (police, political parties and ONS) and the Karene District Council. These sessions enhanced citizens understanding of procedures, systems and processes, as well as the role of Election management bodies (EMBS) and other elections stakeholders on the June 2023 elections. • Carried out quarterly popularization of the GEWE Act 2022, Customary Land Rights Act 2022, Land Commission Act 2022 and other related gender laws at district level to enable stakeholders to have an in-depth understanding of the laws that are

		<p>protecting women and promoting their rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated with the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, other CSOs, the KWiG and YWiGN and commemorated this year's International Women's Day (March 8th), International Day of the Girl Child (October 11th), International Day of the Disable (December 3rd), 16 Days of Activism (November 25th- December 10th) in Karene district. • Participated in official events and activities organized by the District NGO/MDA stakeholders in Makeni/Karene districts. During these meetings, we shared the impacts of our work, including the strategies we used to achieve success and to overcome some of the challenges we faced on the field. • Established new partnerships with two MDAs: Audit Service Sierra Leone and the Right to Access Information Commission. • NMJD is a pioneering member of the Multi-Stakeholder Task Force on Public Disclosure whose main objective is to maximize community benefits and ensure improved transparency and accountability in the diamond mining sector through public disclosure of sub-national revenues/transfers. Though public disclosures did not take place during the reporting period, preparation and commitment of the key stakeholders for the disclosure of Sierra Diamonds Ltd have been ensured and secured. • Collaborated with five district councils across the country: Kono District Council, Moyamba District
--	--	---

		<p>Council, Kambia District Council, Pujehun District Council, and Kailahun District Council, and raised the awareness of citizens and community leaders of the contents of the new land laws. This is to strengthen the capacity of citizens and community people, especially women and youth so as to enable them participate more effectively in land governance issues, including negotiations and decision-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed Service Level Agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. This SLA further paves the way for NMJD's engagements for the promotion of food security and the alleviation of poverty. • NMJD is a member of the Food Security Technical Working Group at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. As a member of this technical group, NMJD is better positioned to not only be part of the decision-making process, but also it could influence critical decisions bordering on agriculture and food security in the country. • Facilitated the construction of Local Police Partnership Board offices (LPPB) in Soa, Kamara and Gbense chiefdoms in Kono district. The construction is done in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and the local authorities with the latter providing land and local materials that are available in their communities whilst the SLP provides technical guide on how the buildings should be constructed. Having LPPB offices will enhance the confidence of the citizens in these communities to go about their
--	--	---

		<p>daily businesses in peace without fear of harassment from criminals; the relationship between the police and local communities will be strengthened; and the maintenance of law and order will be seen as a collective and collaborative responsibility. The construction works in all three chiefdoms is now far advanced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Land for Life Programme of NMJD is a member of the Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure Technical Working Group (VGGT-TWG) and Participated in all its monthly meetings and other related engagements.
--	--	---

Section V: Key Results and Achievements

Following our contributions towards the empowerment of women and young girls in Karene District through trainings, knowledge-sharing and community mobilizing, as well as our continued engagements with critical stakeholders for the inclusion of women in decision-making structures in the district, 24 formal decision-making structures in 15 operational communities have included women in their executive bodies. A total of 44 women have been elected and are now serving as executive members in those community structures in the district. These structures include 15 Village Development Committees, 4 School Management Committees and 5 Facility Management Committees. The number of women executives in the 24 formal decision-making structures accounts for 35.4 percent of the total number of executive members in all the 24 formal structures. Though records of what was happening before the intervention of NMJD in the district in relation to women's inclusion in decision-making were not kept, but all indicators point to the fact that women's inclusion was almost non-existent, as leadership and decision-making were exclusively men's domains. Also, 37 informal structures in 15 local communities, including Village Savings and Loans Associations and Farmer-Based Groups now have a total of 230 women in executive positions accounting for 72.5 percent of the entire executives of those informal structures.



NMJD project team in Karene district, facilitating discussions with community stakeholders on the newly enacted laws (land right act and gender equality and women's empowerment act)



Launching of the Women in Governance Network in Karene District

Additionally, the KWiGN collaborated with other women's networks and women-serving agencies and advocated for the implementation of the 30 percent quota for women in elective positions as stipulated in the GEWE Act 2022. This solidarity and collaborative action contributed to having 7 women out of the 21 elected councils in the Karene District Council accounting for 35 percent of councillors in the district. Prior to strengthening this collaboration, NMJD organized trainings for women activists

in Citizens Monitoring and Advocacy in relation to the implementation of the GEWE Act 2022.

Members of both the Karene Women in Governance Network (KWiGN) and the Karene Young Women in Governance Network (YWiGN) are now engaging their leaders, including local authorities and local councils, with more confidence, persuasion and articulation of the issues affecting them, especially those related to gender injustice and power dynamics in the home. This is evidenced by the quality of women's contributions during community meetings and other community events. This is due largely to the Social Norms trainings, which we conducted for 105 vulnerable and marginalized women and 84 men (Male Champions) in social norms Change using the Masidama Methodology.

The participants were drawn from eight communities in the district. The perception that women go to meetings only to be seen is now giving way to the situation where women's voices can no longer be kept under the back burner.



The paralegal component of the Medico International supported project making representations to authorities on behalf of victims.

There is now an increased willingness on the part of chiefdom authorities in Kono district to include young people, women and persons with disability in the Chiefdom Councils and other community structures. The Paramount Chiefs of Soa, Gbense and Kamara chiefdoms have all agreed to include at least one young woman and one person with disability in all governance structures of the chiefdom. In fact, the Paramount Chief of Soa chiefdom, PC Emmanuel Torche Foyoh IV, who doubles as the Chairman for the Council of Paramount Chiefs in Kono district, made a public proclamation that he would increase women's representation to the

Chiefdom Council from one person to two persons; he further instructed his eight Section Chiefs to establish Sectional Councils with at least the same number of women's representation in each of them. PC Foyoh said in promoting good governance, "no one should be left behind or be left out", especially women and young people.

This improvement is due mainly to the series of multi-stakeholders' education, sensitization and awareness-raising engagements, which the CAGs have organized in communities across the project districts on issues bordering on human rights, gender and good governance.

NMJD did not only participate in this year's 16 Days of Activism, but also mobilized and supported the different women's platforms in the Karene district to step up and communicate with a strong voice their concerns, fears and aspirations in a more structured fashion. The series of awareness raising activities and other public interest events, which these platforms held at chiefdom and district-levels during the 16 Days of Activism, caught the attention and interest of the relevant authorities and other community stakeholders. In Sanda Limba, Sanda Loko and Romende chiefdoms, the women activists campaigned against the FGM and called on the authorities to take the necessary actions to stop its practice in the district or refine it to take away its harmful aspect. Overall, the response from the authorities was good, as they all made strong commitments towards working with women in addressing their concerns. In fact, the Chiefdom Speaker of Sella Limba chiefdom assured the women that he would discuss the issues they had raised with the Paramount Chief and other Chiefdom stakeholders, especially the issue of FGM and the request for increased inclusion of women in decision-making processes, so as to ensure decisions of the chiefdom align with the needs of women.

The Community Advocacy Committee (CAC) composed of residents of Golala – Mokañji and Benduma Communities in Moyamba District and the Grievance Redress Committee (GRC) comprised of the CAC leadership, Moyamba District Council, two large-scale mining Companies and other relevant community stakeholders within the communities affected by Sierra Rutile Limited and Sierra Minerals Holdings Limited across Bonthe and Moyamba

districts whose establishment NMJD facilitated and supported are now functioning effectively.

Despite the long distances between local communities and the deplorable conditions of the roads, the Community Advocacy Committee has made coordination between and among communities a lot easier. The Committee has established a WhatsApp Group where issues affecting local communities are discussed and solutions sought. In the same vein, the Community Advocacy Committee is effectively serving as a link between the affected communities and the Grievance Redress Committee, which serves as a Multi-Stakeholders Platform comprising critical stakeholders, including chiefs, local authorities, youth, land owning families, women, persons with disability and mining companies. The main focus of the CAC is on informing the GRC on circumstances that relate to their concerns and other mining-related issues for redress, whilst the GRC is primarily charged with responsibilities to hear, determine and resolve such issues with the ultimate aim of maintaining tranquility and peaceful co-existence between and amongst the mining companies, local authorities and the affected people. Since they were established, these structures have become avenues where different stakeholders with diverse interests meet and discuss with the view to collectively addressing challenging issues. It was the absence of such platforms in the past that contributed to the frequent conflicts between mining companies and local communities.

The capacity of affected mining communities in Bonthe and Moyamba districts, especially women and persons with disability, to demand their rights by holding the mining companies and the relevant government agencies to account, has been strengthened. This is due to the capacity building activities NMJD delivered in the two districts aimed at raising citizens awareness on the state's duty to protect the fundamental human rights of citizens and local communities and to provide remedies for any abuse or violation of these rights. Also, citizens and communities were educated on the obligation of corporate entities to respect their fundamental human rights, as well as their rights to Free, Prior and Informed Consent to Say No to unproductive investment. With this knowledge, coupled with reviving, strengthening and reconstituting the mining advocacy platforms, and making them more gender sensitive through the inclusion of women and persons with disability, the affected local communities have gradually discovered their voice and space. This is evidenced by the fact that communities now participate in public meetings/discussions with more confidence in articulating issues affecting them and in demanding their rights.

The micro-finance scheme continued to improve the economic statuses of women in our operational communities in Kono district, especially those who are members of the scheme. The scheme has not only succeeded in providing start-up capital to women who are intending to start a business, but also the trainings have helped women to acquire knowledge and skills in business, record keeping and other related areas. For those women who are already in business, the scheme helps them to manage their businesses more effectively and/or increase their capital and expand the scope of their businesses. The scheme is run on a revolving loan basis where a set of women are given loans on favourable conditions, including very little interest rate and upon repayment, loans are given to other set of women. By so doing, more women are now benefiting from the scheme. A shining

example of such beneficiaries is Madam Hawa Williams of Tankoro Chiefdom. Before joining the scheme, Hawa Williams owned a small business, which involved mainly hawking of foodstuffs such as akara, groundnut and sometimes orange, mango and bananas, depending on what time of the year. But Hawa's story has changed, thanks to the micro-finance scheme. She no longer hawks. She has changed her line of business; she now trades on imported plastic/rubber household utensils and now has a permanent business place where she sits and displays her wares.

"I am thankful to God, NMJD and the Scheme. I wonder how I would have raised money to send my child to college after she had written the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) and had a good pass. With the loan I got and the business-related knowledge that I got from the training, I have been able to embark on a more stable business. I am now the proud mother of a student at the Fourah Bay College. It's a life-long dream," Hawa said.

Other women beneficiaries and their spouses also had good things to say about the Scheme ranging from women contributing to the overall running of the homes, including feeding, medication, payment of school fees to supporting social and cultural events. Also, the loan scheme, according to the project communities, has led to increased cohesiveness between and among women due to the long periods of time they now spend together in planning and coordinating the loan scheme activities in Nimikoro, Gorama Kono, Nimiyama, Gbense and Lei Chiefdoms.



TWG member participating in SLLAP Briefing

The Land for Life staff participated in various meetings of the VGGT-TWG, including the 23rd February World Bank Commissioned Mission to Sierra Leone for the monitoring of the Sierra Leone Land Administration Project (SLLAP); the 1st March Meeting where the SLLAP Component 3 Discussion about recording and registration of land tenure rights in Sierra Leone was discussed; the 23rd March meeting where we discussed several ongoing processes in the land sector; key among these processes was the collaboration of CSOs, traditional leaders and the government on the implementation of some of the activities of the

SLLAP. A key output of this meeting was the decision of the three parties to sign an MoU that clearly defines each party's role in that regard; the 6th April meeting that was led by CSO members of the TWG, which discussed the zero draft of the MoU, finalize and get it ready for the next meeting; the 19th April, Meeting which received updates from the sub-groups assigned to formulate the framework of the MoU. Other related processes were further discussed. At the 26th May Meeting which was a joint stakeholders' dialogue meeting, CSOs, traditional leaders and the government firmed up the MoU and signed it. This was a very special and important meeting, organized by the SLLAP Secretariat of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning, in fulfilment of the multi-Stake actor engagement process on crucial matters in Sierra Leone. The meeting was attended by all CSOs on the TWG, a cross-section of the members of the National Council of Paramount Chiefs (NCPC), core staff of the SLLAP/VGGT TWG Secretariat and the leadership of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning. Other MDAs, the media and FAO, were in attendance.

The various engagements of Land for Life Initiative in Kenema district with regards the popularization of the newly-enacted laws on land have led to increase citizens awareness, especially women, about their land rights and the need for them to participate in land governance issues in their communities. Before NMJD's intervention, discussions bordering on land disposal, appropriation and/or ownership was exclusively for men. Even women from land owning families were completely excluded from such discussions. But with the new knowledge of the land laws acquired and the confidence community people have built, the story is hanging for the better. It is a common occurrence now to see or hear of members of land-owning families, especially women and youth, demanding to participate in discussions relating to their family lands. At a meeting held in Blama, Small Bo chiefdom, Madam Sallay Boima of Mavehun community acknowledged the fact that the L4L engagements have helped them to understand their land rights and assured that henceforth they would not allow their menfolk to keep them away from participating in land-related discussions. Sallay Boima's position resonated very well among other women present at the meeting as evidenced by the spontaneous applause from them.

"Despite the fact that women have long been marginalized from participating in decision-making processes relating to land, we are hopeful that the new land laws have given women a new lease of life. What we now need to do as women is to monitor the implementation process with the view to ensuring that the laws are fully implemented as they are set out in the Acts," Sallay Boima said. .

Also, the community engagements on titling and documentation of land have led to increased level of awareness in project communities of the importance of titling and registering individual, family and community lands with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning. Even before the statutory structures such as the Chiefdom Land Committee are established and fully constituted, people affected by land conflicts are now bold enough to bring such cases to the appropriate authorities for redress and amicable resolution. During the reporting period, two land conflicts were successfully resolved (one in Dama chiefdom and one in Small Bo chiefdom) by the District Facilitator (DF) in collaboration with members of the district and chiefdom multi- stakeholders' platforms (DMSP/CMSP), including Land for Life, ONS, and the Kenema District HR committee.

Section VI: Challenges and Lessons Learned

6.1 Challenges

Despite the several successes we recorded, the organization equally faced some challenges of varying degrees during the reporting period. Among these challenges are the following:

- Logistical challenges due to limited vehicles and motorbikes coupled with the high costs of maintenance. NMJD is a national organization with offices and staff and activities across the districts, but effective coordination among offices and monitoring of project activities are hampered by the grossly inadequate number of vehicles and motor-bikes that the organization has. Some offices have neither a vehicle nor a motorbike. Additionally, costs of fuel and spare parts have risen astronomically resulting in high maintenance costs;
- Communication challenges due to poor roads and poor national communication infrastructure across the country. The roads are not only poor, but also their connectivity with the local communities is very challenging thereby making movements from one point to another very difficult or impossible, especially in the rainy season when some of these roads are cut off by floods. Also, internet connectivity is not available in some of our operational communities thus inhibiting effective communication from the field; sometimes making the holding of zoom meetings impossible;
- High inflation and high costs of goods and services: The unpredictability of the value of the local currency and the rapid daily increase in prices of commodities in the market have resulted in a situation where approved budgets can no longer support the planned activities. The resulting effect is that budgets and planned activities are continuously reviewed such that the quality of the outputs are sometimes adversely affected;
- The politicization of almost every state structure or facets of society, as well as the growing sharp divisions of citizens along political party, regional and ethnic lines have a telling effect on our engagements, especially when our work spreads across the country. This is because some people/institutions cannot distinguish one civil society from another and they therefore mete out collective punishment on civil society as a whole, including even those civil society that are doing the right thing. The holding of the June 24 presidential, general and local council elections further deepened this challenge;
- Reluctance of the community stakeholders to engage with the social auditors and share information with them, as well as the regulatory barriers at national and sub-national levels, are key factors that are affecting our social audit process;
- The decision to demolish the dilapidated LPPB offices in Soa and Kamara chiefdoms and construct new ones rather than rehabilitate them has proven to be costly in terms of duration of the project and resources to complete it on schedule. Our request for project extension was rejected outright by the UNDP who funded the project. According to UNDP, the rejection was due to lack of funding, which is also the reason

why the funds they provided initially was for the refurbishment of the dilapidated structures, and not to construct new ones. However, we are still in discussion with them to see how they can reverse their decision and support the completion of the construction of the new structures.

6.2 Lessons Learned

During the reporting period, we learned several lessons which can stand us in good stead going forward; amongst these lessons are:

- Empowering marginalized groups like women and girls with knowledge, skills and tools in areas such as public speaking, resource mobilization, advocacy and leadership can only be more effective if the trainees are given the opportunity to put into practice what they learned. This came out very clearly with members of the YWiGN who performed post-training leadership roles like chairpersons and keynote speakers resulting in successful outcomes;
- The Social Norms Change work using the Masidama Methodology is an effective approach to creating lasting change in the mindsets and behaviours of community members, especially as it relates to community perceptions about women. The Masidama Methodology works with both men and women using different tools to create a better understanding and acceptance of the new social and gender reconstruct where every one has a well-defined role to play;
- Women's participation in meetings and other community events increases when their specific needs and circumstances are taken into consideration. For example, providing childcare services during the Masidama sessions has increased women's attendance and participation because they are no longer bothered about the safety of their children since they are no longer leaving them at home;
- The participation of local communities and intended project participants in conceptualizing, developing and implementing projects, including monitoring and evaluation, is key to increased community involvement and ownership. When communities are involved in the early stages of a project development, it becomes highly likely that the said project will take the concerns and aspirations of those communities onboard, hence the motivation to up their commitment and participation;
- There is a huge gap in information flow between and amongst mining companies, Community Development Committees and the affected mining communities. Vital information that is sometimes supposed to be in the public domain is hoarded and hardly made public thereby leaving room for suspicion, frustrations and misgivings. This is a major factor for grievance accumulation;

- Making pre-disclosure visitations and orientation meetings create the opportunity to discover potential challenges and interact with all relevant actors needed to participate in the public disclosure process in order to make it successful and impactful. It is also an opportunity to educate the community people about the importance of the process and what should be their roles in it.

Section VII: Way Forward

In order to address the challenges highlighted in section 6.1 above, it is planned that:

- Project staff make provisions in their project proposals and budgets for post-training engagements to enable trainees put into practice what they have learned and negotiate with donor partners to support such engagements;
- The leadership of NMJD negotiate with donors and other partners for the purchase/provision of vehicles and motorbikes for the use of staff in order to enhance monitoring and coordination;
- Project staff to articulate the implications of the present state of affairs with regards mobility and the dire need for improved mobility in subsequent project proposals and budgets;
- The leadership of NMJD negotiate with donor partners to ensure subsequent project budgets take into account the uncontrollable and unpredictable rate of inflation in the country and its corresponding increases in prices of commodities and make provisions to cushion the effects;
- NMJD increase the popularization of their work across the country using the traditional media and all its social media platforms to enable citizens discern their work from those of others;
- Staff use every opportunity to articulate the organization's work, vision, mission and core values so as to make people know more about what the organization is doing and what it stands for;
- The social audit unit undertake more engagements with community stakeholders aimed at getting them to know the importance of the exercise, their roles in making it work and to assure them that it is within their rights as citizens to participate in the social audit exercise.

Section VIII: Appendix

Case Story



The truism of the old adage that says what men can do, women can do too, and even better was proved right in Sanda Loko chiefdom in Karene district when 25-year-old Ms Isatu Conteh was elected to the prestigious and respectable position of youth leader of the whole of Sanda Loko chiefdom by her peers. Isatu Conteh is one of those that successfully went through NMJD's young girls and women's empowerment programme.

The programme focused mainly on strengthening the capacity of women and young girls through training, coaching and mentoring, as well as the provision of necessary resources and tools, to engage effectively in decision-making and challenge for leadership positions. This singular achievement of Isatu Conteh in Sanda Loko chiefdom opened the floodgate for more women to be elected in leadership positions in several community-established structures across the chiefdoms in Karene district.

Sanda Loko is one of the 13 chiefdoms in the Karene District in the North-Western region of Sierra Leone, and Makankoi is one of the several vibrant communities in the chiefdom. The inhabitants of the chiefdom are mainly from the Themne and Loko ethnic groups. Both ethnic groups are historically ascribed as petty traders and subsistence farmers. They are largely rooted in their culture and traditions, which enforce a patriarchal society where women are subdued and subjected to see themselves as grossly inferior to men and less knowledgeable with little to offer towards the development of their communities. Men lord it over women in all spheres of life, including control of economic resources, holding leadership positions, participating in decision-making and the enjoyment of basic human rights and freedoms, as elective positions like Paramount Chiefs and critical decision-making processes are the exclusive domain of men. Men had a firm grip on everything in their communities and there were no signs of a let up on their demi-god status. This was reinforced by the high poverty and low literacy levels among women and young girls, especially in rural communities.

This is the situation of the power dynamics in Sanda Loko chiefdom before the intervention of NMJD. Through the Ireland Civil Society Programmes (ICSP)-Women in Alliance for Leadership and Development (WALD) project, NMJD embarked on extensive capacity strengthening activities aimed at empowering women and young girls in different communities in Karene district using different approaches, including the MASIDAMA Methodology³. Ms Isatu Conteh is an indigene of Makankoi community. She is married with five children (two boys and three girls). Like all other women and young girls in her community, Isatu Conteh was not privileged to go to school. She experienced first-hand the ominous signifier of the stark reality of poverty and voicelessness. She enrolled in NMJD's empowerment programme and went through all the several capacity strengthening events/activities, which NMJD organized. Today, not only Isatu Conteh, but several other women in Sanda Loko chiefdom feel confident and ready to occupy their rightful place in

³ Masidama is a Social Norms Change approach adopted by NMJD to help build women's self-confidence, public speaking skills, assertiveness, and power to increase their voice, actively participate in the decision-making process, and take leadership positions.

all community structures and contribute meaningfully towards the development of their homes in particular, and their communities at large.

“Ms Isatu Conteh is a part of the 20-member Masidama Women-Only space group established in the Makankoi community. After going through the Masidama female curriculum (14 sessions) and other gender empowerment trainings, including the GEWE⁴ Act, Customary Land Right Act and the Three Gender Acts 2007, she grew in confidence and knowledge of the power dimension (Power Within, Power To, Power With and Power Over). Having increased her self-confidence and public speaking skills, she contested for the position of youth leader and she got elected. She also embarked on motivating other women in her community and encouraging them to come together and engage their menfolk, especially community elders and their spouses, in constructive dialogue,” Programme Coordinator II, Ms Alice Kamara, said.

“This approach works well for us because we have been able to get more women elected in different community structures in the district. But despite this, we are still not satisfied yet, as we want more women to come onboard,” Ms Isatu Conteh confidently said.

end

⁴ Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment