
Gender Assessment

SAP036: Sierra Leone Coastal Resilience Project

Sierra Leone | SCA | GCF/B. 38/02/Add.03

March 7, 2024



**GREEN
CLIMATE
FUND**

Sierra Leone Coastal Resilience Project (SLCRP)

Annex 4: Gender Assessment

Accredited Entity: Save the Children Australia

Version: Final – 29 January 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	3
GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ASSESSMENT.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	4
METHODOLOGY	4
KEY FINDINGS.....	5
KEY DATA.....	6
LAWS, POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS	7
DECISION MAKING AND GOVERNANCE.....	9
<i>Social Norms and Beliefs</i>	9
<i>Decision-Making, Leadership and Participation</i>	10
LIVELIHOODS, AGRICULTURE/FISHING	13
<i>Roles, Responsibilities and Time Use</i>	13
<i>Access to and Control of Resources</i>	15
<i>Finance and Credit</i>	16
<i>Information and Knowledge</i>	16
<i>Water and sanitation</i>	17
<i>Mangrove use, conservation and restoration</i>	18
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.....	19
<i>Reporting and Response to Gender-Based Violence</i>	20
DISABILITY	21
SLCRP TARGET AREAS.....	23
CONCLUSION	24
<i>Project-Specific Recommendations</i>	25

Abbreviations

AE	Accredited Entities
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HDI	Human Development Index
SCA	Save the Children Australia
SLCRP	Sierra Leone Coastal Resilience Project
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Associations

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Assessment

Introduction

1. The project aims to improve the adaptive capacities of rural communities and recognises that within communities' gender, age and disability influence climate change adaptive capacities and that addressing structural disadvantages is a precondition to effective and sustainable adaptation action. This analysis considers the ways in which gender, age and disability intersect with livelihood management, mangrove conservation and gender-based violence in Sierra Leone with a focus on coastal communities. The assessment sets out key data and analysis across six domains and includes recommendations for the Project. The core approach is to embed gender equality and social inclusion across the Project activities and operations. The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Action Plan highlights actions included in the Project wide logical framework.
2. The six domains of analysis are:
 - Laws, Policy and Institutional Arrangements
 - Decision-Making and Governance
 - Livelihoods, Agriculture and Fishing
 - Mangrove Exploitation, Conservation and Restoration
 - Gender-Based Violence

Methodology

3. The assessment and action plan were prepared by the feasibility team located in Sierra Leone and the GESI specialist based in the UK. The team used a combination of primary and secondary methods:
 - Literature review of policy documents, project reports and published research
 - Field survey with women's focus group discussions and community household surveys in the five project target districts – Kambia, Port Loko, Moyamba, Bonthe and Pujehun – using standard question guides and in local languages.
 - Key informant interviews with national government staff.
4. For more details on the field survey, focus group and key informant interviews methodology and details please refer to Annex 13.

Key Findings

5. National policies on climate change, agriculture, fisheries, and gender equality recognize the importance of gender equality and social inclusion in building community climate and disaster resilience.
6. Climate changes impacts vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone – especially women, but also youth and people with disabilities – differently. Following natural disasters, for example, women, girls and people with disabilities bear the brunt of the impacts, due to social norms, breakdowns in law and order, mobility issues and disrupted livelihoods,¹
7. Translating these policies into service delivery, projects and social change is hampered by cultural beliefs, gendered divisions in labour and limited support – both from government officials and traditional community authorities.
8. A high degree of fatalism and the acceptance of traditional ways of doing things impacts peoples' conceptions of their role in environmental sustainability as well as the social norms which dictate lifestyles. Belief in the 'will of God' as the core determinant in society means that many people do not question their actions in the environment, nor behaviours in the family and community. High levels of illiteracy and deference to those in positions of authority leads to repetition of harmful behaviour patterns and consequences across the board.
9. At family level, women and men report a high level of male dominated decision-making. Men are seen as heads of households and social norms privilege male decision-making in traditional, formal and community settings. At the community level there are inconsistent levels of inclusion of women in consultations and in decision-making fora, with progress made in certain communities and less so in others. There is widespread social acceptance of decision-making being the responsibility of men and for women to be responsible for accepting the consequences. As such, women's leadership and authority in the community is earned through acquired respect and age.
10. Key factors of community leadership are earned credentials, such as civic duties, levels of education, etc. This is highly exclusive; earned credentials can be inaccessible to women,² youth, and people with disabilities, reinforcing the status quo and isolating these groups from decision-making power. There are some reports of young people being included in community consultations, but there is little evidence of systematic inclusion of voices of young women and men across the board.
11. Tribal customs and practices on property rights differ throughout the country. In Northern and Western areas women can own land, but in Southern and Eastern areas women only have access to land through their male relatives.³ While women cannot inherit land, they have rights to land before marriage and are entitled to land for cultivation upon marriage; these women may encounter problems regaining control of the land when widowed or divorced. Children born of the marriage will inherit the land; if there are no children and a woman remarries into her late

¹ Government of Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone's updated nationally determined contributions (2021)*.

² Earned credentials refer broadly to the list of civic duties, levels of education, and household behaviour that leadership credentials – especially within the household or the community authorities – are based on.

³ Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, *Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)* and the *Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)*, Government of Sierra Leone, June 2014

husband's family, she can continue to cultivate the land. A woman who returns to her patrilineal family regains her rights to land for cultivation from the male head of her family.⁴

12. In economic activities there are gendered differences. Women are far more likely to engage in activities such as charcoal production and fish processing whereas men engage in fishing, sand collection, deforestation or timber logging and stone mining. While men engage in locating, selecting and cutting down trees, women are responsible for processing the wood for charcoal production.
13. Agricultural and fishing decisions are the domain of men, with women generally processing and selling the produce in markets.
14. Women and girls are significantly constricted in their free will by typically performing the majority of unpaid household chores; this reduces the time available for engaging in economically productive activities and income generation.
15. Lack of quality water and sanitation facilities affects all the coastal communities, with menstruating women particularly impacted by hygienic constraints. Water supplies are inadequate in quality and toilet facilities are frequently not available which forces both men and women to engage in open defecation, this increases the risk of infection and illness.
16. High levels of gender based violence (GBV) are accompanied by high levels of social acceptance of violence; two in three women in Sierra Leone experience gender-based violence in their lifetime.⁵ Traditional models of masculinity and femininity promote inequitable relationships and GBV; forms of GBV in Sierra Leone include intimate partner violence, rape, child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Key Data

- The population of Sierra Leone is 7.98 million (Female 3.995 million/Male 3.981 million)⁶
- The country has a young population with 42% under 15 years of age. The median age is 18.5 years, which is disproportionately young and makes for a very young working population.
- Life expectancy for women is 56 years and 54 years for men (2020).⁷
- Sierra Leone's Human Development Index (HDI) score is 0.477 (2021), which ranks it low at position 178 out of 188 countries measured.
- The Gender Inequality Index 2022 positions the country at 155 out of 162 countries and territories. Significant gender-based inequality exists in all aspects of life including reproductive health, economic activity, access to education and opportunities, and participation in public life.
- The literacy rate is 43% for men and 35% for women⁸. Secondary school participation for girls was 41% in 2018⁹ and non-attendance at school is correlated with early marriage and

⁴ African Development Bank, *Sierra Leone Gender Profile 2011*, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/2012-sierra-leone-country-gender-profile-28063> (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁵ UNFPA Sierra Leone, *Gender-based violence*, <https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence-11> (12 July 2022)

⁶ World Bank Data 'Population, total - Sierra Leone', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=SL> (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.FE.IN?locations=SL>

⁸ World Bank Data, 'Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above) - Sierra Leone' <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.FE.ZS?locations=SL> (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁹ <https://tradingeconomics.com/sierra-leone/school-enrollment-secondary-female-percent-net-wb-data.html>

pregnancy.¹⁰ Evidence shows that adolescent girls are especially at risk when they are out of school as the risks of being married or having a child too early are magnified.¹¹

- Sierra Leone has a rural population with 62% of people living outside of the cities¹².
- 60% of the population live below the national poverty line¹³.
- 27.4% of households are female-headed.¹⁴
- The disability prevalence rate is estimated at 4.3%.¹⁵ Sierra Leone has one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates, at an estimated 1,165/100,000¹⁶
- Early marriage is widespread, with 13% of girls married before they are 15 and, 39% by the time they are 18¹⁷.
- 60% of women have experienced sexual or physical violence¹⁸.
- 86% of women and girls undergo FGM¹⁹.
- Secondary school attendance is low with only 40% for boys and 33% for girls²⁰.
- The current Sierra Leone Parliament is male dominated, with an estimated 86% of positions held by men²¹.
- Women represent an estimated 70% of Sierra Leone's agricultural workforce but have a marginal position as men still possess greater access to ownership and control the means of production.

Laws, Policy and Institutional Arrangements

17. Social relations, including gender relations, were until 2002, characterised by discriminatory laws, customs and traditional practices that subordinate and oppress women and girls. As part of its post-war reconstruction and development efforts, the government initiated wide-ranging reforms to achieve not only long-term sustainable economic and human development, but also gender equality. As a result, laws reforming marital relations, inheritance, domestic violence and citizenship rights, among other matters, have been enacted. ** This section has been redacted in

¹⁰ MBSSE (2021) National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools. <https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Radical-Inclusion-Policy.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/07/30/covid-19-hinders-sierra-leones-growth-and-girls-education-prospects-as-government-implements-quick-response-program>

¹² World Population Review, 'Sierra Leone Population', <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/sierra-leone-population> (accessed 12 July 2022)

¹³ The Borgen Project, '10 Little Known Facts About Poverty in Sierra Leone' <https://borgenproject.org/facts-about-poverty-in-sierra-leone/> (accessed 12 July 2022)

¹⁴ Government of Sierra Leone, Demographic and Health Survey 2019

¹⁵ Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) (2018)

¹⁶ The Borgen Project, '10 Little Known Facts About Poverty in Sierra Leone' <https://borgenproject.org/facts-about-poverty-in-sierra-leone/> (accessed 12 July 2022)

¹⁷ Girls Not Brides, 'Sierra Leone', <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/atlas/sierra-leone/> (accessed 12 July 2022)

¹⁸ UNFPA Sierra Leone, *Gender-based violence*, <https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence-11> (accessed 12 July 2022)

¹⁹ UNICEF, 'Sierra Leone – Education' <https://www.unicef.org/sierraleone/education> (accessed 12 July 2022)

²⁰ The Borgen Project, 'Education in Sierra Leone', <https://borgenproject.org/education-sierra-leone/> (accessed 12 July 2022)

²¹ Concord Times, 'Female MPs demand more women in Parliament', 16 June 2022, <https://slconcordtimes.com/female-mps-demand-more-women-in-parliament/> (accessed 12 July 2022)

accordance with the GCF Information Disclosure Policy, as the portion is confidential under the disclosure policy of the Accredited Entity. **

18. The Government of Sierra Leone 2021 National Adaptation Plan responds to the overall objectives of the UNFCCC's National Adaptation Plan Guidelines for reducing vulnerability to the impacts of climate change by building adaptive capacity and resilience of the country and facilitating the integration of climate change adaptation into relevant existing and new policies, programmes and activities.
19. The Government of Sierra Leone developed policies and enacted laws for the protection of children especially girls, and women. These include but are not limited to:
 - The Child Rights Act 2007
 - Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009
 - Devolution of Estates Act 2007
 - Domestic Violence Act 2007
 - Persons with Disability Act (PwDA) (2011) National Child Justice Strategy 2008 -2012 and 2014-2018 Sexual Offences Act 2012 and Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2019
 - Child Welfare Policy 2014
 - Alternative Care Policy 2014
 - Education Act 2004
 - Reproductive and Child Health Policy (2012) and Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) policy and strategy (2017-2021)
 - National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy 2013-2015
 - Social Protection Policy and National Social Protection Strategy for Sierra Leone 2022-2026 Sierra Leone has ratified the Convention for the Rights of the Child, Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Regional commitments include Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the African Union's African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).
 - The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2020)
 - The National Policy on the Advancement of Women (2000).
 - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (2021)
 - National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools (2021)
20. The enabling environment is continuing to improve. The country strengthened the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act with stronger measures against those who abuse women and girls. Sierra Leone has also passed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) policy (2020), and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment ACT (2021), which provides for quotas for women's political participation and appointment positions, enumerates specific rights that reinforce the equality of women and men, while providing in law mechanisms for ensuring substantive equality and women's empowerment. It also sets out mechanisms to mainstream gender, with gender units mandated within all ministries, departments and agencies, and gender-

responsive budgeting. The Medium Term National Development Plan (2019-2023) has a goal focusing on ‘Empowering Women, Children and Persons with Disability’.

21. In 2019, the government established the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs and a sexual offences court, as well as One-Stop Centres for sexual violence survivors. The Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs launched six pilot One-Stop Centres in July 2020 to provide multidisciplinary services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including psychosocial counselling, free medical services and legal assistance. The main goal of the centres is to ensure survivors would not have to go to the police to report cases of SGBV. In July 2020, the government set up a sexual offences court, a special court to expedite the trials of sexual-related offences and reduce the backlog of cases.
22. In March 2020, the government overturned a 2010 decision to prevent pregnant girls from attending schools and taking exams. In May 2020, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education issued a national policy for the radical inclusion of all vulnerable children in formal education and integrated the policy in the new curriculum.
23. The Medium Term National Development Plan (2019-2023) has a goal focusing on Empowering Persons with Disability”. The National Commission of Persons with Disability (NCPD) was established in 2012, following the provision of the People with Disabilities Act (2011). It is under the Ministry of Social Welfare. NCPD coordinates across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDA) and the Local Councils. and has regional coordinators in each of the four regions.

Decision making and governance

Social Norms and Beliefs

24. Decision-making is male dominated in Sierra Leone's highly patriarchal society. Institutionalized gender inequalities are exacerbated by discriminatory customs with inequitable decision-making. At a community level, women have not been formally barred from standing for political office or partaking in decision-making, but systemic and structural factors continue to restrict women’s access. Commonly accepted decision-making forums are often male only or segregated by sex. This has resulted in wide gendered divergences in political participation. At a national level, women have historically played key political roles in national development, but they continue to be marginalized in formal politics and decision-making processes²². For example, Sierra Leone’s parliament comprises of just 12.3% women, ranking it 157th in the world in terms of female parliamentary proportion. However, a 2021 law – the Gender equality and Women’s empowerment act – was written into legislation on 19th January, and will mandate that 30% of parliamentary members must be women. ²³
25. The exclusion of women from decision-making can impact the overall effectiveness of community-level climate change initiatives, especially regarding the gendered aspects of climate change.²⁴ This gives them less control over the use of natural resources and the design of initiatives which affect them. Social norms and expectations shape the ways in which women and men can access information about climate change, natural disasters and appropriate

²² Ngadie Rogers, M, *Women, Politics and Decision-Making in Sierra Leone*, GJDS Vol. 8, No.1, May 2011

²³ <https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2023-01/sierra-leone-opens-door-more-women-in-parliament>

²⁴ Wright et al, ‘Chapter: Gender in scaling up community based adaptation to climate change’, *Community based adaptation to climate change: scaling it up*, Routledge, New York, NY (2014), pp.226-238

adaptations and responses. In Sierra Leone only 17% of women have a mobile phone compared with 30% of men.²⁵ Accessing information in a community setting can also be a challenge; social norms give men control over women's behaviour which privileges male decision-making in both traditional, formal and community settings. Girls are raised to believe they should be submissive, soft spoken and should defer to men. This along with lower rates of secondary education (see 'livelihoods' section below) contribute to many girls lacking confidence to be outspoken, especially in public settings.

26. GBV is widespread in Sierra Leone and continues to be socially accepted as a means of men enforcing expectations and exerting power over women. There is high tolerance of violence by both women and men with most believing that there are justified circumstances under which a man can beat his wife. Convictions for rape and serious assault against women are rare and response generally focused on community-level mediation and family negotiations. This means women and girls are conditioned to believe their needs are not prioritised and this constricts the opportunity for the voices and opinions of women and girls to be sought and heard; this is critical for sustainable and equitable climate change resilience.
27. Sierra Leone developed a strategy for gender and social inclusion mainstreaming to better integrate gender across its climate actions, in line with its [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy](#).

Decision-Making, Leadership and Participation

28. Decision-making is generally male dominated in Sierra Leone. Women report not having access to community consultations unless this is facilitated by an NGO and when invited to participate, women lack self-confidence due to expectations of needing to be shy and quietly spoken. This endangers appropriate climate change adaptations and, maintains an inequitable status quo of male dominated resource-use allocations and decision-making. In the SLCRP project areas, responses to questions in focus group discussions were mixed around decision-making. One woman in the Kambia district said '*Men are the head of our homes. We respect the decisions our husbands are making on our behalf*', whereas a respondent in Bonthe indicated that attitudes may be shifting '*In some families whatever the man said is what will happen but for most of us these days, it involves both men and women deciding in the house*'.
29. Traditionally at the household level, men subscribe to notions of masculinity in being the "big" man as the head of the household, the primary breadwinner and provider of food. For men, respect is traditionally accrued with age, marriage, number of children, and the extent of familial or communal responsibility. Access to resources through income, or position, is therefore a key factor in fulfilling this prevailing masculine ideal. This status quo can prevent women and girls from being equitable participants, especially in improving the climate-resilience of their communities.
30. High rates of unemployment and limited possibilities to escape poverty are preventing young men from achieving the traditional version of masculinity. This is resulting in some young men – particularly in urban areas – deviating from social norms, by sharing household and childcare responsibilities, for example²⁶. These men fear a loss of respect and authority; men express that

²⁵ <https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/international-womens-day-unfpa-and-un-women-call-for-harnessing-the-digital-age-for-gender-equality-op-ed/>

²⁶ UNICEF, *Gender analysis of the situation of women and children in Sierra Leone 2011*, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/unicef_gender_analysis_report.pdf (accessed 12 July 2022)

they will change their behaviour privately at home, but not openly in public. Climate change is affecting the opportunities for men and women to earn a living and support their families. This development of equitable relationships, based on trust, openness and teamwork, is vital to change how communities' function and support themselves.

31. Women typically lack control over the number and spacing of their children. Traditionally women report that the use of contraceptives, the number of children born and when they should stop breastfeeding is determined by men. Women also report that men expect sex from their wives' i.e. sex on demand. This has resulted in a high fertility rate of 4.8.²⁷ Large familiecroops put additional strain on the use of natural resources. These observations were noted by participants in the women's focus group discussions as part of the SLCRP design, with some women noting they had to make decisions behind their husband's back. Female-headed households were identified by participants in focus groups as being particularly vulnerable. Households headed by women had a higher level of multidimensional poverty²⁸. They are likely to rely on cheaper food alternatives (e.g. Cassava) compared to male-headed households and are more food insecure, and less likely to own assets. Girls- headed households are increasing and are extremely vulnerable.²⁹
32. There are high levels of harmful traditional practices against women and girls, including child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). The rates for FGM have fallen in recent years but remain above 80%. In rural areas the rates of teenage pregnancy outside of marriage remain high. Similarly, the rate of child marriage is high at 39%. The causes of child marriage and early pregnancy are complex but include the low value of women and girls in society, lack of prioritisation of education for girls and inequitable gender relations. Girls who marry and have children young, are typically more likely to be in poverty and less likely to thrive. They are less likely to be educated, less likely to earn their own money and therefore as a result, more likely to be excluded from community initiatives and discussions.³⁰
33. In rural areas, including the target areas of the SLCRP, secret societies play a strong role in reinforcing and reproducing traditional notions of femininity and masculinity. Both women and men are active participants of these notions and subscribe to the traditional feminine traits the societies promote; traits which are designed to prepare women for their roles in married and reproductive life, such as stoicism, discipline, and subservience to men. These norms of feminine behaviour are reinforced by social and physical practices for enhancing femininity such as secret society initiation and FGM. These practices and beliefs are intended to generate strong social cohesion and validation of identity for women and girls. This is reinforced in secret women-only societies – such as the Bondo in the Northern provinces, and Sande in the South³¹, covering the SLCRP target areas – which perform institutional rites of passage into womanhood, transmitting skills for efficient and harmonious household management. Traditionally, the FGM rite has been performed to enhance aesthetic ideals of femininity, to curb sexuality and to counter perceived inherent tendencies towards promiscuity and infidelity. Male-only secret societies often task members with ruling of cases of violence against women and girls and, as the deliberations are in secret, they are generally not in favour of women³².

²⁷ <https://knoema.com/atlas/Sierra-Leone/topics/Demographics/Fertility/Fertility-rate>

²⁸ Government of Sierra Leone (2019) Multidimensional Poverty Index

²⁹ Save the Children (2021) Girls Vulnerability Assessment Report

³⁰ Save the Children, *Genda bizness final evaluation*, 2022

³¹ Dr Richard Fanthope, *Sierra Leone: The influence of the secret societies, with special reference to FGM*, 2007.

³² Ngambouk, V. et al., (2017) Cultural power, ritual symbolism and human rights violations in Sierra Leone, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3:1,;Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, *Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)*, June 2014

34. Social norms towards early marriage and childbearing are persistent, especially in rural areas. Opportunities for education, employment and mobility are acutely constricted once childbearing starts as married women will move away from their family home to move to their husband's home on marriage, sometimes to a different community away from social supports. A woman's entitlement to land and other natural resources is through her husband and sons, leaving women vulnerable if they are unmarried, divorced, widowed or without sons. Customarily if a woman fails to give birth to sons, it is expected that her husband might try to do so with another woman. As a result of a lack of secure land-tenure, family and economic support, climate-induced changes can leave women acutely vulnerable to poverty.
35. Socially there is high degree of fatalism and acceptance of traditional ways of doing things which impacts peoples' conceptions of their role in environmental sustainability as well as social norms which dictate lifestyles. Belief in the 'will of God' as the core determinant in society means that many do not question their behaviour, whether environmental, in the family or community. High levels of illiteracy and deference to those in authority leads to repetition of harmful behaviour patterns across the board.
36. There are recent changes in some social norms, notable with the practice of polygamy - whereby a man takes multiple wives - is increasingly unpopular among young women, who refuse to bear the emotional and financial hardship of sharing a husband with other wives. In parallel, it is also losing relevance to young men who fear the strain of financially providing for numerous dependents amidst increased costs to cover food, education and caring. However, 38% of women with disabilities are in polygamous marriages (compared with 30% of women without disabilities), and can be more vulnerable in these marriages, in terms of power differentials with other wives³³.
37. Socially the attitude among adolescents and youth is shifting in regard to informal relationships and sex outside of marriage. This trend may be influenced by the prevalence of sexual abuse of many girls and young women. However, this also increases the vulnerability of young girls to teen pregnancies, loss of education and economic opportunities and an increased risk of poverty.
38. There are stigmas and taboos around menstruation and girls frequently miss school because they cannot attend during their period. Many women and girls grow up with little to no information on their menstrual cycle, their own fertility or how to manage periods. Menstrual pads are expensive and often not available in rural areas³⁴ and water and sanitation facilities are frequently absent, poorly designed or unsafe.
39. In terms of community decision-making, age is a determining factor for participation; as such, male children and youth much more marginalized than women, as there is a tendency of taking the suggestions of an older woman over those of a younger person. This was evidenced by responses from women across different districts. A woman in Kuranko, Pujehun, stated '*You must have reached a certain age before you will be appointed to take up community responsibility. We prefer older women because they ... have matured to handle community affairs with honour and respect*'.

³³ Statistics Sierra Leone Stats SL and ICF. 2020. *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019*. Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Stats SL and ICF. and Humanity and Inclusion (2019) *LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND Factsheets on Disability humanity & inclusion Sierra Leone & Global Context 2019–2020* <https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Factsheet-on-Disability-SL-1.pdf>

³⁴ Save the Children, '2020 Results are in for the Accelerated Education and Kimi Projects' <https://sierraleone.savethechildren.net/news/2020-results-are-accelerated-education-and-kimi-projects> (accessed 12 July 2022)

40. However, this perception of youth does not extend to young women and they are much more marginalized than male youth – this is true in the SLCRP target areas, as evidenced by views and perceptions from participants in the USAID-funded WABiCC project (similar project areas)³⁵.
41. The lack of body autonomy for women and girls, combined with an exposure to GBV, can prevent them from achieving agency in their lives. This influences their omission from participating in the development of climate solutions and consultations, excludes them from leadership and, from developing the opportunity to develop self-confidence and potential.

Livelihoods, Agriculture/fishing

Roles, Responsibilities and Time Use

42. The inequitable gender division of labour both in the household and market economies - combined with poor infrastructure - increases women's time poverty as they navigate remunerative work spheres and gendered responsibilities. This affects women's well-being and livelihoods, as they spend excessive time collecting water, fetching firewood, cooking, and taking care of the sick, older people and children, a phenomenon clearly observed and discussed in Save the Children's field visit to the SLCRP target areas (see annex 13 for more detail). It leaves them with little or no time to engage in income generation, leisure or self-development activities such as adult literacy, entrepreneurial skills development, community or national affairs. Girls, who are seen as the extension of their mothers, are also affected as they are often withdrawn from school to ease the burden of household chores and responsibilities of their mothers.³⁶ Addressing this issue is key to ensuring that women and girls have equal opportunities to participate in climate change action.
43. Women dominate the informal economy, unlike the private formal sector where their presence is negligible, with 84% of rural and 63% of urban women operating in the informal sector.³⁷ This sector generally has no social-protection provisions and is characterised by low wages and poor working conditions. Women's predominance in the informal sector offers them very little financial reward for their labour and does not sufficiently diminish their vulnerabilities to poverty. In our household survey of selected communities from within the target areas, 74% of female-headed households stated they earned less than Le500,000 per month (around USD 40 at the time of survey),³⁸ compared to 52% of male-headed households. The survey also found that 32% of women in the selected sample of target areas had 'petty trading' as their main occupation, compared to just 6% of men.
44. Despite this fact, the government has no policy framework that caters to the needs and interests of those working in the informal sector.³⁹
45. Men conduct most of the fishing, and this is a main source of income alongside farming. Women are the fishmongers who buy the fish and conduct food processing, such as drying and smoking

³⁵ USAID, *West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BICC) Program: Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy October 2017*, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2QB.pdf (accessed 12 July 2022)

³⁶ African Development Bank, *Sierra Leone Gender Profile 2011*, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/2012-sierra-leone-country-gender-profile-28063> (accessed 12 July 2022))

³⁷ 6th CEDAW Country Report, 2010)

³⁸ <https://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=USD&to=SLL>

³⁹ African Development Bank, *Sierra Leone Gender Profile 2011*, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/2012-sierra-leone-country-gender-profile-28063> (accessed 12 July 2022)

as well as making salt, and sell these products as a livelihood. There are clear gendered attitudes towards these livelihoods in the SLCRP target areas, as evidenced by our focus group discussions with women. For example, one woman in the Moyamba district said that *'women are not allowed to go fishing because they cannot endure staying at sea for so long'*. It was also clear that in addition to the gendered difference in livelihoods roles, men tended to have a key say in the choices around livelihoods. A woman in a focus group in the Pujehun district told the consultation team that *'the men decide where to farm or plant crops and women support their decisions. Men also determine when and where to go fishing.'*

46. Leisure time for men in rural and urban settings is institutionalised. In farming communities, adolescent boys and fathers have leisure time after they return from the fields and wash, while they are waiting for the women to prepare the evening meal. During this time, and again after dinner, they are free to play football, go fishing, drink *poyo* (palm wine), play drafts, or watch a film. In contrast, women are expected to labour continuously throughout the day, fitting in time for socializing and relaxation around their daily productive activities. Women's time for relaxation are moments in the day where they can interact with other women during labour-based activities and excursions, such as sourcing water, going to market, cooking, and hairdressing⁴⁰. Social gatherings during market days offer an entry point to how women access information, as these norms of socializing can limit the ability of women to form social and support networks as well as gain information, including on climate change and adaptation.
47. As a result of various factors, girls are more likely than boys to drop-out or be withdrawn from their education. Traditionally, the education of girls is not valued as much as that of boys and, as a result, parents are reluctant to support school costs for girls (e.g. fees, materials, uniforms, transportation, and opportunity costs). In the project intervention area, this is especially stark. In the household survey across the five project districts, an overwhelming 62% of women said they had never been to school, compared to 31% of men (which is nevertheless an extremely high proportion). Across Sierra Leone, people with disabilities face the starkest lack of access to and completion of basic education, with 67.4% having never been to or completed primary education.
48. The discrepancy in access to and completion of education for girls and children with disabilities is further exacerbated during times of economic scarcity or income pressures. The needs of girls and family members with disabilities are the first to be compromised through reduced spending on rehabilitation, healthcare and school, and surges in early marriages. Girls may be subjected to sexual abuse in order to meet the costs of schooling, which frequently results in unwanted pregnancy and them subsequently leaving education as men and boys are not expected to have responsibility for the resulting child outside of marriage. For both women and girls, their roles and high unpaid workloads restrict access to training and development initiatives that could assist with adaptation strategies, such as livelihood diversification.
49. Focus group discussions conducted during the design for SLCRP reinforced evidence that, despite being the primary 'breadwinners' and household financial providers, men are not expected to account to their wives for the use of money and resources, nor to prioritise the family in their spending. In terms of household resource and income generation, women are responsible for decision-making and control.

⁴⁰ UNICEF, 'Sierra Leone – Education' <https://www.unicef.org/sierraleone/education> (accessed 12 July 2022)

Access to and Control of Resources

50. Land tenure in Sierra Leone is governed by a combination of customary and statutory laws. Customary law, rooted in local traditions and practices, plays a significant role in land allocation and administration, especially in coastal and rural areas where the proposed project will work. Statutory laws, such as the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, the 2009 Customary Land Rights Act, and the 2015 National Land Policy also have an impact on land tenure rights, as well as setting out the national government's intentions and plans for land tenure.
51. However, Sierra Leonean women and youth face several challenges related to land tenure, including continued unequal rights and discriminatory cultural norms. Customary practices have predominantly favoured male land ownership and inheritance, leading to women facing significant barriers in accessing and controlling land. In situations where land is governed by customary tenure, women are not equally entitled to inherit the property of their husbands or fathers, meaning women are precariously connected to their livelihoods, land and food security assets, despite women's majority role in the agricultural sector, which accounts for 50% of GDP in Sierra Leone⁴¹. This gender bias is rooted in cultural norms and perceptions that limit women's land rights and their ability to assert ownership. For example, patrilineal succession rules prevent children born to women from land-owning communities from inheriting land unless their fathers belong to the same community. This leads to lack of land rights for children whose fathers do not have land rights. Preference is also often given to adult males as heads of households, further discriminating against unmarried women and youth⁴².
52. The government of Sierra Leone has made efforts and set out intentions to address these inequalities and promote gender equality in land tenure. The 2015 National Land Policy set out proposed actions including amending the Constitution to protect women's rights, enacting a new basic land law to ensure equal inheritance and ownership rights for women and children, and removing discriminatory provisions in existing legislation, as well as related implementation strategies involving enforcing existing laws, facilitating women's access to land, promoting joint spousal titling and consent, securing inheritance rights for unmarried daughters, ensuring women's representation in land institutions, and eliminating discriminatory distinctions in the Provinces Land Act⁴³.
53. Despite these legislative efforts, implementation and enforcement of gender-equal land tenure practices remain challenging. Cultural norms, lack of awareness, and limited access to legal services hinder the effective realization of women's land rights. ** This section has been redacted in accordance with the GCF Information Disclosure Policy, as the portion is confidential under the disclosure policy of the Accredited Entity. **
54. Women face additional barriers to accessing land due to customary rules based on the patrilineal system. They are often economically disadvantaged and lack the resources to acquire land through the open market. Limited access to capital and credit, as well as demographic and economic pressures, contribute to the challenges faced by marginalized groups such as women and youth⁴⁴.

⁴¹ UNICEF, 'Sierra Leone – Education' <https://www.unicef.org/sierraleone/education> (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁴² Government of Sierra Leone, National Land Policy 2015, <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/managementresponses/keyaction/documents/download/671>

⁴³ Government of Sierra Leone, National Land Policy 2015, <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/managementresponses/keyaction/documents/download/671>

⁴⁴ Government of Sierra Leone, National Land Policy 2015, <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/managementresponses/keyaction/documents/download/671>

55. Various organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, are working towards promoting gender-equitable land tenure in Sierra Leone. These efforts include raising awareness, providing legal aid services, and supporting capacity building initiatives to empower women and enhance their access to land. Furthermore, the government has established the National Land Commission (NLC) to oversee land administration, resolve disputes, and promote land rights, including gender equality in land tenure⁴⁵.
56. Similar to issues of unequal land tenure practices, at a community-level, men control most decision-making related to who accesses, controls and profits from resources. In particular, decisions about sharing out harvests are held by men, despite women's equal or disproportionate labour inputs.

Finance and Credit

57. Communities have a limited number of financial institutions which provide access to loans and credit facilities. Although institutions lend to both women and men, women make up the majority of Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) participants, up to 75%. During the Save the Children field visit to the project target areas, many women attested to the success of these types of arrangements. However, many women find that the interest rates for micro loans are too high and will access Credit Unions (known as "osusu") which are often the only available option. Some women report that loans are only granted to them if they provide a male guarantor, and that unmarried women still need to find a man to perform this role for them. The complexity of women accessing credit means that some schemes have failed to become sustainable due to lack of funds.

Information and Knowledge

58. Access to information is highly inequitable, as many community forums and meetings are reserved as male-only spaces, and access to mass media and communications, particularly for rural women, is infrequent at best. Access to information can also be particularly challenging for people with disabilities, particular those in rural communities who are D/deaf or have visual impairments, given the limited means for accessing information within their communities already.
59. Although community meetings are a primary source of information for men in rural areas, women are frequently not invited and not welcome in these spaces, making it hard for them to keep up to date with what is happening or new developments. For example, one community member said she considered their community meetings 'man meetings'⁴⁶. This exclusion creates challenges for women and young people in accessing information on events and decisions happening at the community level, as well as critical information on the management of natural resources. The marginalization of women is further evident in such meetings being held at times when women are engaged in household chores, or simply not invited.
60. It was also observed that women have little control over their access to informal information and mass media communications since their time is often fully occupied with agricultural and household (including childcare) activities throughout the day. Overall, only 3% of women and

⁴⁵ Government of Sierra Leone, National Land Commission Act 2022, <https://namati.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/THE-NATIONAL-LAND-COMMISSION-ACT-2022.pdf>

⁴⁶ USAID, *West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BICC) Program: Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy* October 2017, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2QB.pdf (accessed 12 July 2022)

girls in Sierra Leone aged 15-49 regularly (on a weekly basis) have access to radio, newspaper and television⁴⁷.

61. While 55% of Sierra Leone households own a radio (67% in urban areas, dropping to 45% in rural areas)⁴⁸, it is men who have the leisure time available to listen to the radio, as well as chat with friends from big towns, to update themselves on current affairs. Women are, instead, burdened with responsibilities and expectations, and do not have the same opportunity to regularly access information. Mobile phones can be a useful source of information for women, with 53% of rural households owning a mobile telephone (usually basic handsets). However, access to and control of mobile telephones is also gendered and unequal, and internet access in rural Sierra Leone is very poor (only 4% of households) which places limits on women's access to information, social media and communications⁴⁹.

Water and sanitation

62. Access to safe and sustainable water sources and sanitation is extremely poor. Nationally, only 51% of households obtain drinking water from improved sources. In relation to sanitation, only 11% of households have access to an improved and private toilet facility. The most common toilet facility in Sierra Leone is open pit latrines⁵⁰ and sanitation facilities rarely have provision for managing menstrual hygiene, for example inadequate privacy and lack of provision for washing or disposal of sanitary products. In coastal and inland areas, open defecation behind mangroves and at the seashore is extremely common. Soil erosion and poor sandy soils means that it is difficult to erect toilets in these areas. This increases the spread of disease and especially impacts women who are the main caregivers of young children who may become sick as a result of poor sanitation and related waterborne diseases.
63. Water shortage has compounding effects on women and girls by increasing the time involved for collection; in rural areas 77% of water collection is done by women⁵¹. Water shortages, impacted by increasing temperatures, destroy crops and reduce harvests and many women and men report that poor water quality and overuse of rivers has reduced fish stocks.
64. National research suggests that water shortages, heat waves, and extreme weather events are creating new risks of GBV and deepening pervasive inequalities. The report makes clear the urgent need for gender-responsive action to tackle these interlinked crises⁵².
65. The 2020 report on Gender, Climate and Security indicate that in the coastal community of Freetown – which, as a major urban centre tends towards being more liberal in terms of gender norms than rural coastal areas – gender norms and power dynamics exist which differentially impact on women and men's exposure to climate physical hazards and capacity to cope with risks:
 - Control of economic assets

⁴⁷ Statistic Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017 – Survey Findings Report

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ African Development Bank, *Sierra Leone Gender Profile 2011*, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/2012-sierra-leone-country-gender-profile-28063> (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁵¹ Graham, J, Hirai, M and Kim, S. *An Analysis of Water Collection Labor among Women and Children in 24 Sub-Saharan African Countries*. PLoS One. 2016 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4889070/>

⁵² UNDP, 'Women at the front of climate action', <https://undp-climate.exposure.co/women-at-the-front-of-climate-action> (accessed 12 July 2022)

- Access, use and control of natural resources
 - Physical mobility & migration
 - Decision-making power
 - Household or community expectations
66. The report found that water scarcity for domestic usage exposes women and adolescent girls to increased risk of GBV, increases household burdens for women and, exposes girls to insecure routes when fetching water^{53 54}. Given the commonality of women’s experiences, we would expect these impacts to be replicated across other areas of Sierra Leone.

Mangrove use, conservation and restoration

67. Mangroves are crucial for both coastal protection and livelihood support for all, including women and youths⁵⁵ based on their ability to stabilize coastlines and serve as important fish breeding grounds⁵⁶.
68. Mangrove conservation and protection cannot succeed if it conflicts with people’s livelihoods. As the communities living near or around mangroves tend to be economically disadvantaged, prevention of mangrove cutting is not a reasonable goal. Recognizing the intricate relationship between environmental protection and livelihoods requires viable options which achieve the dual purpose of fostering the resilience of both mangrove ecosystems and the community. Men, women, and youth need alternative livelihoods and technologies that foster mangrove protection alongside economic support. Importantly, this must incorporate a gender equality and social inclusion lens that ensures the most vulnerable groups in these communities – particularly women and youth – directly benefit from this project⁵⁷. The SLCRP includes interventions to address this directly, by offering a range of solutions to limit the unsustainable use of mangrove wood, as well as raise awareness of methods to conserve mangrove forests.
69. Local customary rules and community-level institutional arrangements dictate how mangroves are used and there are entrenched gender difference in roles and responsibilities. For example, the task of logging is generally male dominated (although women do log in some specific communities), while the logged wood is generally used by women for fuel, or they process the wood into charcoal. Similarly, sand mining from mangrove areas is considered a physically arduous task and is therefore done by men, while women and young men sell the resulting sand. As the work of selling the mangrove resources falls to women and young women, this can result in them working away from home and being unavailable for consultations and participation in meetings⁵⁸.

⁵³ UNEP, UN Women, UNDP and UNDPPA/PBSO, *Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change*, 11 June 2020, https://gender-nr-peace.org/assets/2020_GCS_Report/GCS_PolicyReport_200611.pdf (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁵⁴ Kellogg, M, *Women Building Resilient Cities in the Context of Climate change: lessons from Freetown, Sierra Leone*, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, <https://genderclimatetracker.org/sites/default/files/Resources/Women-Building-Resilient-Cities.pdf> (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁵⁵ USAID, *West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BICC) Program: Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy October 2017*, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2QB.pdf (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ USAID, *West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BICC) Program: Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy October 2017*, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2QB.pdf (accessed 12 July 2022)

70. Mangrove charcoal is often used in open fires for cooking, without the use of fuel-efficient stoves – this inefficient method increases the amount of fuel needed for cooking a meal. As women are responsible for cooking and fish smoking activities, and often undertake these in an enclosed setting and with their children, open fires and smoke represent a source of health risks for women, girls and young children, making them vulnerable to respiratory disease.
71. During design consultations, women reported an inequality in accessing natural resources in the community, especially when they observe men getting the resource for ‘free’ (such as fish or sand), while women must pay men for the same resource. This concept of a ‘free’ resource does not consider the time and labour expended by men. However, the frustration of women feeling obliged to give money to men to maintain their livelihoods was clearly palpable and perpetuates the role of men as ‘gatekeepers’ of natural resources despite the livelihood dependency women experience.
72. Mangroves are also crucial for fish-breeding, due to the shallow waters mangroves grow in. As men tend to fish in the deeper waters for bigger fish, women often conduct fishing in the mangrove fish-ponds, which also include other marine catch such as crabs, oysters, and shrimp. For these smaller catch, women can oversee the entire value chain process, from catching the items, through to preservation and selling.

Gender-Based Violence

73. The combination of national high levels of gender-based violence (GBV), tolerance of GBV and acceptance of violence hampers women’s ability to participate fully and safely in community and family life, as well as active participation in the SLCRP.
74. GBV negatively impacts a woman’s ability to access education and training, work, livelihoods and access to healthcare and nutrition. Climate change exacerbates these existing inequalities and risks, leading to an uptake in intimate partner violence due to increasing poverty and economic instability. Furthermore, a reduction in access to water, fuel and food can lead to increased levels of transactional sex and sexual exploitation as women struggle to cope with the pressures and responsibilities.
75. Increased household stress following extreme weather events has been shown to correlate with an increase in child marriage for girls in tandem with adolescent girls’ absenteeism or withdrawal from school; they face increasing pressure to marry young⁵⁹. These events have a long-term, intergenerational impact on girls, their families, and their futures. The absenteeism of girls from school is influenced by worsening poverty and the need to reduce household dependents or a loss of educational opportunities. The latter is acutely experienced within coastal communities in Western rural and urban areas and coastal villages in the North, as children’s education - especially girls’ – has been severely hampered by climate change events which have destroyed school infrastructure and access roads, which negatively impacts school attendance⁶⁰. Girls are often more affected by climate emergencies because they are the first to be taken out of school in order to assist their families in coping with the aftermath of climate shocks. Furthermore, when schools are damaged and temporary education facilities are set up, girls are also less likely

⁵⁹ Girls Not Brides, ‘In the aftermath of Cyclone Idai, it is girls who are most at risk’, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/articles/in-the-aftermath-of-cyclone-idai-it-is-girls-who-are-most-at-risk/> (accessed 12 July 2022)

⁶⁰ Action Aid, ‘There is no climate justice without climate education!’, 10 November 2021 <https://sierra-leone.actionaid.org/news/2021/there-no-climate-justice-without-climate-education> (accessed 12 July 2022)

to attend than boys due to their caregivers concerns about the violence or sexual harassment girls might face during long journeys to and from those facilities. Following climate shocks, there's also an increased risk of early marriage for girls, since their dowries can help provide urgently needed finance to help their families who are affected by job losses resulting from climate change, ultimately making it unlikely those girls will ever finish their education.⁶¹

76. There is a notable lack of data concerning the nature and scope of sexual violence targeting women and girls with disabilities in Sierra Leone. Women and girls with disabilities experience the same forms of violence all women and girls experience. However, international evidence shows that women and girls with disabilities are three times as likely to be raped and twice as likely to experience intimate partner violence and other forms of GBV as women who do not have a disability. Sexual and gender-based violence also has the consequence of contributing to the incidence of disability among women. Girls and women with disabilities are less likely to report sexual violence or abuse or harassment, and when they do, they face challenges, including legal and accessibility barriers.⁶²

Reporting and Response to Gender-Based Violence

77. The Sierra Leonean Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act (2019) and the Domestic Violence Act (2007) state that victims of sexual and domestic violence shall receive free medical examination, treatment, and necessary certificates, however this is yet to be actualized for vulnerable women and girls. This is compounded by a lack of police officers in some of the remote areas to respond to and handle cases of violence against women, despite these being criminal matters. ** This section has been redacted in accordance with the GCF Information Disclosure Policy, as the portion is confidential under the disclosure policy of the Accredited Entity. **
78. The formal justice institutions, such as the Family Support Unit (FSU) within the Sierra Leone Police Force, have demonstrated weak capacity to provide redress for survivors of VAWG (violence against women and girls). This is largely due to inaccessibility to many women and girls leading to impunity for sexual violence related crimes. VAWG cases are either resolved or under review by the police; few are charged and taken to court, and very few of those cases that do get to court are successfully prosecuted. Community level mechanisms - such as traditional dispute resolution mechanisms - have the potential to bridge the gap in justice service provision but require greater awareness on rights of women and girls. Furthermore, there has been little engagement of men and boys as agents of change themselves. Girls and women with disabilities are less likely to report sexual violence or abuse or harassment, and when they do, they face challenges, including legal and accessibility barriers.⁶³ Overall, these gaps require significant and more progressive action in terms of prevention, support, and justice.
79. The SLCRP project will integrate strategies to manage and mitigate risks of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse within the project activities, and will also seek to contribute towards transforming gender norms at household and community level – see recommendations set out below.

⁶¹ Wonder foundation, '[How educating women and girls could help fight climate change](#)', accessed 10 March 2023

⁶² World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence; and World Health Organization/World Bank (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: World Health Organisation/World Bank

⁶³ What Works to Prevent Violence. 2018. *What Works Evidence Review: Emerging Evidence from the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Global Programme*. FCDO.

Disability

80. Estimates of the overall number of people with disabilities in Sierra Leone vary, with the 2015 census reporting that just 1.3% of the population has disability,⁶⁴ for example, whereas the *Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey* (SLIHS) from 2018 reported that 4.3% of the Sierra Leone population (or 310,973 people) were living with a disability. The SLIHS uses the Washington Group questions, so is likely to be the most accurate – or at least the most comparable to global estimates – source of disability reporting in the country. It is likely that the true number is even higher than this, due to social stigma in terms of reporting disability, or problems understanding the questions asked in common research methods. For example, in Sierra Leone, people with disabilities including those with mental illness, other mental disorders or multiple disabilities are often excluded from surveys due to stigma and prejudice. WHO estimates that about 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability⁶⁵.
81. Like many post-conflict countries, disability in Sierra Leone has been linked to the civil war (1991 – 2002), with a large number of the population undergoing forced amputation at the hands of rebel soldiers. In the aftermath of the war, social services were not able to keep up with the associated strain, due to the sheer burden and number of people impacted, and this tended to have greater impacts on those living with disabilities.
82. The 2018 SLIHS findings show that there are slightly more women with disabilities than men (50.1% compared to 49.9%)⁶⁶, although reporting of disability amongst women is also particularly likely to be under-represented with women globally representing a significantly higher proportion of people with disabilities⁶⁷. People with disabilities had higher levels of multi-dimensional poverty⁶⁸.
83. Disability, gender and discrimination are inextricably linked. For women with disabilities, there was societal stigma of disability linked with witchcraft and were seen as being burdens and pitied. This impacted on girls and women's ability to access services, and they had less access to education, healthcare and employment than those without disabilities. They are therefore likely to most acutely experience negative impacts of climate change, including the resulting negative socio-economic impacts, as well as having lower adaptation capacities to cope.
84. Of the five project districts, three (Port Loko – 9.2%; Moyamba – 6.2%; and Pujehun – 4.7%) had a higher reported prevalence of disability than the average across Sierra Leone. The remaining two districts had a relatively low (reported) proportion of people living with disability (Kambia – 2.4%; and Bonthe – 1.6%). The household survey conducted in SLCRP target areas as part of the stakeholder consultations asked the question 'does the household head have any form of disability', and 14.4% of respondents answered affirmatively. Due to the exact phrasing of the

⁶⁴Statistics Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census – Thematic Report on Disability* https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/sl_2015_phc_thematic_report_on_disability.pdf

⁶⁵ WHO (2011) *World Report on Disability*. <https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability>

⁶⁶ Statistic Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) Report 2018*, https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/SLIHS2018/SLIHS_2018_New/sierra_leone_integrated_household_survey2018_report.pdf

⁶⁷ Mitra, S. and Sambamoorthi, U. *Disability prevalence among adults: estimates for 54 countries and progress toward a global estimate*, 2013 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3109/09638288.2013.825333>

⁶⁸ Government of Sierra Leone (2019) *Multidimensional Poverty Index*.

questions differing, it is not possible to compare this directly to the SLIHS, however, on further probing about the type of disability experienced by those respondents, the research found that the most commonly reported disability was a lower-limb mobility impairment' (52%), followed by visual impairment (35%), the ranking of which aligns with the SLIHS.

85. In the target areas of the SLCRP, extreme weather events such as floods, landslides, and storms are expected to increase in frequency and intensity, and rising sea levels are likely to lead to coastal erosion and loss of land. These climate change impacts can have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities, who may be more vulnerable due to factors such as limited mobility, reduced access to resources, and social exclusion. This is especially relevant given the most common disability stated in the target areas was a lower-limb related mobility impairment. Floods can be particularly challenging for people with disabilities who may, for example, struggle to evacuate their homes quickly, and may not have access to appropriate transport or accommodation during an emergency. In addition, floods and landslides can damage infrastructure such as roads and bridges, making it difficult for people with disabilities to access essential services such as healthcare or education.
86. Rising sea levels can also have a significant impact on people with disabilities in coastal areas. For example, people with disabilities living close to the coastline may be at greater risk of being displaced as a result of coastal erosion or storm surge. This can lead to loss of land, homes, and livelihoods, as well as disruption to social networks and support systems. In addition, people with disabilities who rely on coastal livelihoods may find it increasingly difficult to earn a living. As climate change impacts on the marine environment, affecting the financial viability of their existing income source, people with disabilities can face significant physical or attitudinal barriers to securing alternative or additional income generating opportunities. Given the majority of people with disabilities are engaged in agriculture and forestry for work (70.3% of women and 66.8% of men with disabilities who are in work), they are particularly vulnerable⁶⁹.
87. While the government of Sierra Leone introduced the 'Persons with Disability Act' in 2011, seeking to prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities, enable equitable opportunities, and establish the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, amongst other provisions, concrete actions and progress in enacting these provisions has been limited. The weak policy environment is compounded by lack of recent available data, research and evidence on the prevalence, experiences and inequalities faced by people with disabilities in Sierra Leone. In particular, available research rarely disaggregates by district.

⁶⁹ Statistics Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census – Thematic Report on Disability*
https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/sl_2015_phc_thematic_report_on_disability.pdf

SLCRP Target Areas

88. The SLCRP will target 260,000 direct beneficiaries, of which 60% (156,000) will be women. The exact project locations have not been selected yet, but the direct beneficiaries will comprise 35% of the target chiefdom population, rising to 41% of the female population in the target chiefdoms (Table 2), due to activities targeting women and youth in particular.

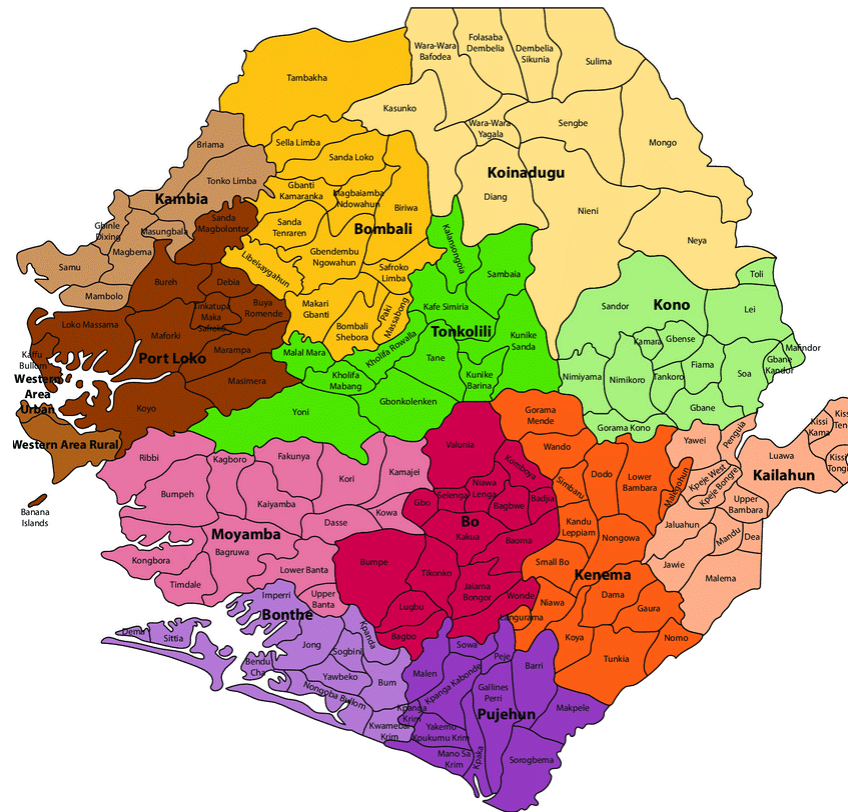


Figure 1: Map of Sierra Leone showing chiefdoms and districts

Region	District	Chiefdom	Male	Female	Total
Northern	KAMBIA	Mambolo	17,911	20,041	37,952
Northern	KAMBIA	Samu	31,004	33,786	64,790
Northern	PORT LOKO	Koya	40,119	45,058	85,177
Northern	PORT LOKO	Loko Masama	22,878	25,415	48,293
Northern	PORT LOKO	Maforki	16,754	19,200	35,954
Northern	PORT LOKO	Kaffu Bullom	59,160	61,330	120,490
Southern	BONTHE	Bendu-Cha	3,500	3,668	7,168
Southern	BONTHE	Dema	3,749	3,662	7,411
Southern	BONTHE	Jong	16,511	17,305	33,816
Southern	BONTHE	Imperri	17,019	16,375	33,394
Southern	BONTHE	Kwamebai Krim	6,975	7,314	14,289
Southern	BONTHE	Nongoba Bullom	10,009	10,051	20,060
Southern	BONTHE	Sittia	10,522	10,825	21,347

Southern	MOYAMBA	Bagruwa	13,705	13,918	27,623
Southern	MOYAMBA	Bumpeh	17,826	19,619	37,445
Southern	MOYAMBA	Kongbora	4,979	5,349	10,328
Southern	MOYAMBA	Ribbi	15,730	17,435	33,165
Southern	MOYAMBA	Timdale	5,155	5,137	10,292
Southern	PUJEHUN	Galliness	11,527	11,783	23,310
Southern	PUJEHUN	Kpaka	7,721	8,747	16,468
Southern	PUJEHUN	Mano Sakrim	6,084	6,809	12,893
Southern	PUJEHUN	Soro Gbema	20,291	22,001	42,292
Total Coastal chiefdoms excluding Western Area			359,129	384,828	743,957
Total beneficiaries			104,000	156,000	260,000
Percentage of population			29.0%	40.5%	34.9%

Table 2: population of target chiefdoms among Sierra Leone's coastal districts

Conclusion

89. Women, girls, youth and people with disabilities (particularly women with disabilities) bear the brunt of the increasing risks and vulnerabilities brought on by climate change, recurring extreme weather events, and climate-induced environment impacts in Sierra Leone⁷⁰. Women and girls are more likely to suffer food insecurity and poverty and have a higher risk of experiencing violence. When communities are recovering from the impacts of climate events, the burden of unpaid care work on women and girls is greatly increased, affecting their ability to have a paid job or continue their education.
90. Focus groups showed that women and youth feel that they have little recourse to livelihood alternatives and are also left out of decision-making and information-sharing spaces (such as community meetings) regarding the management of natural resources. Of acute vulnerability were people with disabilities, who were typically viewed through the charity model of providing assistance rather than being supported to play active roles in society. It was recognised that girls and women are doubly marginalised on account of their disability and their gender. They are more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, and often have limited social, political and economic opportunities and lack of access to basic services. Women with disabilities may also be at greater risk of sexual and physical violence and abuse. Girls with disabilities often experience discrimination, for example in education and family life.
91. It was agreed on by all focus groups that women tended to be vulnerable because of their responsibilities to care for children and manage households. They were also frequently left out of community discussions, particularly those on managing natural resources, even though they are frequent users of such resources like mangrove wood and sand. Women headed households are increasing, and identified as particularly vulnerable, for example, poor access of household children to education, low household economy, food insecurity. There is also an increase of households headed by adolescent girls.
92. Youth also struggle to be heard and taken seriously by the older members of the community. Often, in meetings with youth leaders or active young people, only young men would be

⁷⁰ Government of Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone Updated Nationally Determined Contribution, 2021*: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/210804%202125%20SL%20NDC%20%281%29.pdf>

involved. For example, youth leaders either head organizations that include only young men or mainly young men. Young women can therefore be a challenge to meet with as they frequently are working outside of the community selling items. Special care is therefore needed to ensure that working with youth does not equal working with solely young men.

93. Therefore, we must ensure that the voices of women, girls and people with disabilities are at the centre of our considerations around gender and social inclusion, and that gender and inclusion is integrated across our efforts to combat the climate crisis.

Project-Specific Recommendations

94. Given the existing gender discrimination and barriers faced by other marginalised groups – including youth and people with disabilities – throughout Sierra Leone and in the target areas of the SLCRP, the project will focus on improving the rights and access to opportunities for women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups across several different areas. **All nine recommendations listed here have been taken forwards in the project design and are incorporated throughout the activity descriptions, as well as the Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan below.**

95. **Recommendation 1** – *Ensure gender considerations are mainstreamed into national and sub-national government departments, and women in government have equitable opportunities to both participate in training to deliver climate change projects, and lead on government planning processes to improve climate-resilience.*

- This will be achieved by ensuring that the Ministry of Gender and Children’s affairs (MoGCA) has a representative on the Project Steering Committee, and MoGCA are involved in designing capacity-building programs for more climate-focused departments (e.g. EPA, NPAA, SL Met).
- Capacity-building programs for government officials will include modules on the differential impacts of climate change for men, women and other vulnerable groups, with a specific focus on collecting disaggregated data to monitor this differential impact.
- Women government officials will be supported to take a leadership role in training sessions so they are empowered within their roles and their voices are heard.
- Women will be overrepresented in the capacity-building program at both district and national level, to ensure that sufficient numbers of women gain the skills, knowledge and tools to deliver on the government’s National Adaptation Plan.

96. **Recommendation 2** – *Gender norms in the household must be transformed at a community level.*

The focus group discussions and individual interviews with men and women found that there remain specific views on what roles men and women should play at a household level, in terms of paid and unpaid work, childcare and feeding the family among other things. This also impacts the likelihood of women attending training or decision-making fora, due to potential prior responsibilities they need to honour. The SLCRP will address this by:

- Promoting attendance of women by including child-friendly spaces in all training and decision-making spaces.
- Ensuring that community-level capacity building on climate change includes a focus on gender norms and roles of men and women, start a dialogue on why these roles exist, and discuss how they can be shifted.

- Conducting specific training for men and boys as agents of change, to transform perceptions of what is expected of women. This training will be part of general capacity-building on climate change as part of component 1.

97. **Recommendation 3** – *Ensure project staff have adequate knowledge and skills to deliver on gender and social inclusion elements of overall SLCRP intervention.*

Anecdotal evidence from recent interventions in Sierra Leone showed that even when projects are designed with gender sensitive or gender transformative techniques in mind, it can be difficult to implement these intentions, due to a lack of gender awareness or knowledge of the project staff.⁷¹ The SLCRP will address this by:

- Recruiting a full-time Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist into the Project Management Unit.
- Conducting extensive GESI training (led by the GESI specialist) of all project staff employed as part of the project, before community-level engagement takes place.
- Conducting refresher (annual) GESI training for all project staff to ensure new knowledge and skills are consolidated and entrenched.

98. **Recommendation 4** – *Address inequitable distribution of resources and labour in coastal agricultural settings.*

The primary and secondary data analysed as part of the stakeholder consultations found that, although women make up a greater proportion of the agricultural workforce than men, they are less likely to control the resources from agriculture, and more likely to conduct additional work in harvesting and selling agricultural produce. As part of the agricultural activities, the SLCRP will:

- When seeds and other agricultural inputs or technologies are distributed, women will be given equal opportunities to purchase or be provided with these tools, and furthermore will be encouraged to take ownership of the method of production.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, at least one woman per community is represented in the 'lead farmers' group who will deliver training to wider community. This will promote women's empowerment and demonstrate they can lead farming practices within the community.

99. **Recommendation 5** – *Address inequitable distribution of resources and labour in the fishing value chain.*

Similarly to the agricultural sector, women play a key role in the fish value chain in coastal communities in Sierra Leone, with primary responsibility for fish preservation, and selling fish both within the communities, and at communal markets. However, for a majority of these women, it is their male spouse who controls the financial gains afforded by these products. The SLCRP includes interventions targeted at fish and other coastal products, and will ensure increase equitable control of resources by:

- In each community, at least one woman is part of the initial 'training of trainers' for fish preservation technology, demonstrating their leadership and empowering them to take control of their own produce and labour.
- When new technology is distributed, work with the community to agree how it is used, so that women who use these products are the ones who determine how they sell or keep the preserved fish.

100. Linked with output 2.2, women will receive training on entrepreneurship to consolidate their ability to make the most of the new technologies and products related to the fish value

⁷¹ Save the Children, 'IFC Agricultural Livelihoods endline evaluation', unpublished.

chain. **Recommendation 6** – *Ensure all new technologies provided as part of the project are accessible to people with disabilities.*

Climate change impacts in coastal areas can affect people with disabilities more severely than people without disabilities, and there are few considerations given to how people with disabilities can use existing resources. For example, the household survey found that latrines had provision for people with disabilities in less than 20% of communities people with disabilities. SLCRP will provide improvements to WASH infrastructure – including rainwater harvesting – new agricultural and fishing techniques, and mangrove conservation. To account for those with disabilities, the SLCRP will:

- Ensure that all needs assessments conducted across different sectors consider access requirements for people with disabilities.
- When installing or implementing new technologies (e.g. rainwater harvesting systems), the construction team will ensure that there is provision for disability access (e.g. handrails) suitable for the different forms of disability existing in the community.
- The maintenance committees for each new intervention will either include a person with disabilities, or at a minimum, consult with members of the community with disability to determine the maintenance strategy.

101. **Recommendation 7** – *Promote women and youth leadership, and voices of people with disabilities in any community-level decision-making structures.*

The consultations with stakeholders found that often in the SLCRP target communities, existing decision-making committees and community authorities were dominated by men, with – in many cases – there being either no women, or a maximum of one or two out of 10-15 total members. Through observation, it was also noted that people with disabilities rarely featured in these groups. The SLCRP will address this by:

- Designing all community level interventions to include discussions that focus on increasing community support for more equal representation of women and men.
- Providing targeted training to women in self-confidence, self-worth, dignity and the skills to act as leaders in community spaces.
- Ensuring women make up at least 50% of the membership of any new groups formed as part of the SLCRP, and project staff initially facilitating discussions to bring both men’s and women’s voices into the discussions when developing the community adaptation plans.
- Ensuring that people with disabilities are represented in the community adaptation committees in at least 50% of the communities, and providing training on how the effects of climate change can impact people with disabilities more than people without disabilities.
- Ensure that youth make up at least 15% of the membership of any new groups formed as part of the SLCRP

102. **Recommendation 8** – *Integrate strategies to manage and mitigate risks of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse within the project activities.*

- In consultation with women and girls, identify risks of GBV, sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse in project activities and address them through intervention design.
- Be guided by Save the Children’s Child Safeguarding Policy and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) of Adults Policy.
- Prevent sexual and other forms of exploitation and abuse through activities that empower women to speak up for their rights and engage men and boys as allies.

- Integrate GBV prevention into activities by focusing on how climate change/environmental degradation is linked closely to GBV and how project objectives (e.g., resilient households and communities) might be adversely impacted.
- Enhance and expand GBV survivors to access reporting, protection mechanisms, safe spaces and confidential referral services.
- Ensure that all community members – especially women and girls – have a comprehensive understanding of the project grievance redress mechanism (annex 12) and feel confident reporting any issues through the official channels available to them through the project

103. **Recommendation 9:** *Integrate GESI considerations across all project activities*

- Ensure the GESI Specialist is engaged in the project’s decision-making processes and management structure to provide advice on GESI considerations in implementation of supported activities

Ensure that all project analyses and the detailed development of the project’s innovations engage the GESI Specialist and ensure GESI considerations are deeply embedded in development and implementation of these activities. By including women as leaders in the community adaptation committee, as well as people with disabilities (including women with disabilities) we will ensure that the village / project leadership is representative and will maintain communication mechanisms with the most marginalised in the communities. All communications materials will be GESI-appropriate as it will be developed with women, youth and people with disabilities (including women). Access for women, youth and people with disabilities (including women with disabilities), who do not have mobile phones will be able to access information, awareness raising activities and last mile early warning systems, through radio jingles, accessible campaigns and community-appropriate dissemination mechanisms, for example poster, announcements in markets, etc. Awareness raising and communication materials and messaging will also be accessible for all individuals with disabilities and for those with low literacy levels.

The project is also committed to working with Female headed households and other vulnerable groups included people with disabilities The project will firstly ensure to capture FHHs (and other marginalized groups) within the project participants by conducting comprehensive disaggregated data collection during the project baseline to determine vulnerabilities, including the Washington Group Questions for people with disabilities. Using this information vulnerable groups (including FHHs) will be targeted for interventions that require targeting for marginalized community members. For example, the WASH activities under output 1.3. This aligns with the activity description for activity 1.3.2 in the Funding Proposal and eligibility criteria.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Action Plan

104. The GESI Action Plan presents:

- Work undertaken to address GESI issues in the SLCRP
- Targets and design features, included in the SLCRP to address GESI concerns and ensures tangible benefits to women and men, especially from vulnerable communities
- Mechanisms to ensure implementation of the gender design elements
- Gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation indicators.

105. Our approach to equality seeks to ensure that the gender barriers identified in this GESI Action Plan are overcome to enable sustainable changes in the lives of girls, boys, women and men in these communities. In particular, the action plan is designed to ensure that all climate adaptation interventions take account of the lived experience of both women and men and that in particular, the voices of marginalised women are heard. We will ensure that we target not only the small number of women who already operate in these community leadership spaces, but the wider communities of women, in particular marginalised women (women with disabilities, younger women, poorer women, etc.)

106. In addition to women and girls, the plan also addresses the compounding vulnerabilities experienced by people with disabilities and youth. Analysis in section one of this annex demonstrated that young people in Sierra Leone are particularly marginalised, and across the majority of communities do not have a voice in decision-making, including concerning responses to disasters. People with disabilities are also impacted more severely than others, and analysis showed that many spaces at community-level do not cater for the needs of people with disabilities. Our plan will address this by ensuring not only inclusion of these groups, but further, empowerment and leadership, leading to more equitable access to decision-making, community structures and any new technologies proposed by the SLCRP.

107. The action plan uses an intersectionality lens, looking at different people's vulnerabilities and taking their capacities into account in the design and implementation of the project. This will include looking at people's characteristics (i.e., sex, gender, age, dis/ability and poverty), recognising the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination intersect, interact and compound each other. This includes identifying and mitigating unintended negative effects of the interventions which could increase people's vulnerability to physical and psychosocial risks such as sexual and gender-based violence or perpetuated inequality.

108. Our interventions focus on tackling the gender norms and discrimination that dictate that men should be the main decision-makers, and which prevent women from participating in community forums or from being leaders in community-wide actions. These norms and discrimination include high levels of gender-based violence, structural inequalities such as women's exclusion from community leadership and low levels of women's self-agency, exclusion of gendered climate related risks, impacts, needs and solutions, and ability to make decisions about their lives.

109. We use evidence-based interventions to transform power dynamics to build women's self-confidence, self-awareness, climate knowledge and skills, and to develop their capacity for collective action together with other women and their communities as a whole. We work with husbands, extended family, community and religious leaders and wider community to build support for these changes and to ensure that men and women understand that they are stronger when working together to solve problems and build a better future for their children. Conversations on gender norms, fairness, equitable relationships and mutual support enable

everyone to thrive. Creating a cadre of women and men who model new ways of living together and strengthening their climate resilience, enable these changes to take root.

110. We build this work on our experience of working on gender norms and gender-based violence in a variety of contexts, using the global evidence that shows that working with both women and their male partners is critical, that harmful gender norms are negative for men as well as women, creating unrealistic expectations and pressures, particularly on younger men and women, and that women and men working together with their peers can enable them to see new ways of behaving and new ways of building their lives. In this way, we aim to ensure that women are supported to become community leaders and activists and that the resulting climate actions work to address the needs of everyone.