

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

JAN 2019 – SEPT 2020

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN PETTY TRADERS THROUGH INTEGRATED LEGAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE IN THE WESTERN AREA.



*Overcoming Barriers to Women's
FULL Participation in Sustainable
Development in the Western Urban
and Rural Areas.*



LEGAL EMPOWERMENT SHARED FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

Funded by: Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Women in Sierra Leone constitute about 51% of the population, and surpasses in quantum the 75% of Sierra Leoneans trapped in multi-dimensional poverty with serious deprivations in education, health and other social services. In terms of access to *Justice, Power, decision making, Economic opportunities and other resources*, they are widely categorized as marginalized. Difficulty in accessing and using the law prevents these vulnerable populations from taking part in decision making processes at the family, community and national levels. The Commission on Legal Empowerment survey on Sierra Leone in 2010 found 32% of respondents had an ongoing legal problem for which they wanted help; and that the situation is dire for the most marginalized and vulnerable women and girls who suffer the most on top of their being discriminated against on the basis of their gender and unfamiliar living conditions. Legal empowerment approaches share one core concept using the law to enable disadvantaged groups to access justice and realize basic rights. But for legal empowerment to work, the Commission on Legal Empowerment ascertained that the need for women's economic dependency amongst others such as cultural attitudes, discrimination etc. must also be tackled.

Drawing strength from LEWAF's existing cadre of CWSLA groups under its economic and Social Empowerment Scheme, in Jan 2019, LEWAF with funding from OSIWA started a new model with a project titled - *Building the Legal capacity of Women Petty Traders through integrated Legal and Economic Empowerment in the Western Area*. The project was a 15 months' intervention seeking to increase women's participation in Legal Education through Economic activities both as an *incentive* and *opportunity* to enable women initiate and pursue *collective social actions* on issues that protect and advance their rights and interests. In the broader context, from the position of economic strength, women will be positioned as *front-line Community-Based Justice Advocates* (CBJAs) by the project for *law enforcement, service delivery and systemic change*; while increasing their influence in *household and community decision making* processes. The **development hypothesis** is that women who *<understand their rights' and 'earn extra income' are more likely to initiate advocacy action for systemic change and hence foster sustainable development>*. The **overall objective** is *to Overcome barriers to Women's FULL participation in Sustainable Development in the Western Urban and Rural Areas*.

The proposed activities for this project fell under three distinct but clearly integrated phases as follows: **(1)** To provide **Paralegal-led Legal Education** for 1,360 women - making up 34 groups of women actively engaged in LEWAF women's Economic and Social empowerment scheme. **(2)** To transform 5 of these 34

CWSLA groups already participating in the legal education into viable and functional *Small and Medium Enterprises* (SMEs) to benefit 200 women members; and **(3)** To position 20 out of the 200 women benefitting from the SMEs as *front-line* CBJAs to plan and undertake *law enforcement, Service Delivery and Policy advocacy for systemic change*.

The phase 1 and 2 activities are **interdependent** and both **MUST** be realised to **TRIGGER** the attainment of phase 3 activity if the **development hypothesis** of this project is to come to fruition at the end of implementation. Thus far, LEWAF is delighted to state that achievements have been made in line with the expected sub objectives of the project phases and the **overall objective**. This is summarized below:

1. **1,300 Women petty traders successfully completed specialized Legal Education in 5 (five) areas of the law.** This achievement sets to fulfil the expected sub objective of *'Increasing women participation in legal education through economic activities both as an incentive and opportunities, and to enable them initiate and pursue collective social actions on issues that protect and advance their rights'*.
2. **5 SMEs Successfully established (5 CWSLA groups transformed) - each owned and managed by 40 women each holding shares in each SME.** Each SME are currently undertaken business portfolios within their **know-how** and are officially **REGISTERED** with the Corporative Society of Sierra Leone. This achievement sets to fulfil the expected sub objective of *'Improving access to saving and income for women'*.
3. **20 Women positioned as frontline Community-Based Justice Advocates (CBJAs)** and have adopted policy resolutions on issues that has continue to hinder access to justice and tramples on the rights and interests of women and girls in Sierra Leone. The CBJAs has presented these policy resolutions to the *Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone* (HRC); the *Legal Aid Board of Sierra Leone* (LAB) and the *Waterloo Rural District Council* (WARD C) for law enforcement, service delivery and systemic change. These advocacy engagements of the CBJAs with the HRC, LAB and WARD C went viral across Sierra Leone and beyond through national media houses including national televisions, radios and their websites; social media including WhatsApp and Facebook; newspapers press etc. Thus, without pessimism, this perhaps **added tempo** to the cries of many women and girls in Sierra Leone which finally saw three tangible outcomes (1) *Parliament of Sierra Leone passed the Sexual Offences amended bill into law on Thursday 19th September 2019*; and (2) *WARD C reinforced its commitment to enforce bylaws in the Waterloo community to continue protecting women and girls from the blatant exploitation and abuse of their rights in homes and community*. (3) *LAB's commitment to*

bring **men** to face justice for abandonment and failing to take care of their children **REINFORCED as fit-for-purpose** with fact-based evidences. This achievement sets to fulfil the expected sub objective of *'Positioning Women as front line community based justice advocates for law enforcement, service delivery and systemic change; while increasing their influence in household and community decision making processes'*

Over all, the project has proven that from the position of *'increase knowledge of the law'* through **Legal Education** AND *'economic strength'* through **weekly savings and loaning activities**, these women have identified their agency as been capable to initiate and pursue collective social actions on issues that protect and advance their rights both at community and national levels. The advocacy engagements with LAB, HRC and WARD C; hosting of live radio discussion sessions by CBJAs and paralegals including the conduct of the *Open Field Legal Education Exhibition* event witnessed by about **two thousand** people both direct and indirect beneficiaries' within and outside the project prefecture, speaks out the practical evidences. So in practical term, women's dignities through effective participation in family, community and national decision making has been **ENHANCED** and **PROMOTED** in the project prefecture, **thus 'reducing barriers to Women full participation in Sustainable Development'** as its relates to the **overall objective** of this project.

Despite these visible achievements, the critical gap that has been identified by LEWAF from practical experience and worth noting is that - as always expected when starting a business venture that involves the production of goods and services, the first 12 months is normally occupied with (a) setting up of structures and systems (b) perfecting product quality and design (c) establishing Customer base; and (d)maximizing demand and supply. ***It is not much of starting to make profit, sustaining business continuity and expansion.*** This tend to be a more notable reality when considering the fact that the **Start-up Capital** needed has been wrongly projected due to anxiety and inadvertent omission during the planning process to set-up the business.

This notion is very much consistent with the fact that all five SMEs are not yet able to make the predicted profit margin to report on for this project. The *empirical* reason is that considering the intensive investment nature of these SMEs businesses, ***it requires a minimum of full additional year and funds to perfect product quality and design, establish strong Customer base, and maximize demand and supply etc. before beginning to make a progressive and uninterrupted profit margin.*** This means that, the **duration** of this project is proven to be **SHORT** and the **start-up capital** to be **SMALL** for the women to undertake the SMEs and immediately realised the **TANGIBLE 'improved access to saving and income'**.

If the 200 SME women including the CBJAs are to sustain their positions in their communities and continue initiating advocacy actions for service delivery and systemic change, both their ‘improved access to saving and income’ AND ‘Legal Knowledge’ **CAPACITIES** must be **STRENGTHENED**.

However, LEWAF is proud to state that, the framework has been developed and foundation laid moving forward. With the availability of additional funding at least for the next 12 months, LEWAF will work to improve on the gains already made by strengthening both the **Economic** and **Legal** capacity of the 200 women including the CBJAs already benefiting from SME business. The aim is to sustain their positions in their communities to continue initiating advocacy actions for law enforcement, service delivery and systemic change from the position of economic strength.

A significant broader takeaway is that *if the environment is created and opportunities are readily available, women can ‘willingly’ contribute their hard-earned resources to development efforts that has the potential to restore their value, dignity and respect in their homes and communities squarely contributing to nations development.* This is evidence from the women paying the rental costs to acquire their shops and office spaces including purchasing the equipment/materials required to set-up the SME from the start-up capital that was willingly contributed by the women themselves.

Our profound thanks to our donor partner OSIWA and all our implementing partners including the staff, the women’s groups, community stakeholders and government ministries, departments and agencies etc. for your invaluable **support** and **productive collaboration** to contributing to these successes.

Signed: Mohamed Bobor Jalloh - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AYV.....	African Young Voices
CBJAs.....	Community-Based Justice Advocates
CEOs.....	Community Engagement Officers
CSOs.....	Civil Society Organisations
CWSLA.....	Community Women’s Savings and Loaning Associations
FSU.....	Family Support Unit
HRC.....	Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone
IDLO.....	International Development Law Organization
LEWAF.....	Lady Ellen Women’s Aid Foundation
LAB.....	Legal Aid Board of Sierra Leone
OSIWA.....	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
SMEs.....	Small and Medium Enterprises
SLBC.....	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
SLP.....	Sierra Leone Police
SGBV.....	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
TOT.....	Training of Trainers
WARD C.....	Waterloo Rural District Council
NaCCLE	

SECTION 1

ATTAINMENT OF OVERALL PROJECT OBJECTIVES: *The Progress Analysis*

1.1 Phase 1 Activity: Establishment of Paralegal-led Legal Education for Women petty traders.

As expected by the project and towards realising the **first part** of the **development hypothesis** of this project, which is the **understanding of rights**, **1,300 Women petty traders successfully completed specialized Legal Education in 5 (five) areas of the law**. After a two-week TOT session for **Peer Educators**, the weekly legal education sessions were facilitated by these trained peer educators using the 100 pages 'Legal Education Pictorial Message Album' - a tool designed for the most illiterate person who cannot read and write English. This tool is a 'stark converse' of the formal Gender laws entrenched in 'written words' with legal jargons which cannot be easily understood or interpreted by an illiterate person.

The 'structure of the album' is made up of 7 thematic areas: *Theme 1*: The Judicial Structure of Sierra Leone; *Theme 2*: The 4 Gender Acts of Sierra Leone; *Theme 3*: The Child Right Act 2007; *Theme 4*: The New Bail Regulation; *Theme 5*: Police Arrest and Detention; *Theme 6*: The National Land Policy of Sierra Leone; and *Theme 7*: The National Referral Pathway for Victims of Sexual and Gender Based Violence. Below is a sample of the layout of content on each legal education page.

SOLICITATION OF SEX BY PERSON IN AUTHORITY



TYPE OF CRIME/OFFENCE	WHERE TO REPORT	ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES – Persons in Authority
SOLICITATION OF SEX BY PERSON IN AUTHORITY	- Police / Family Support Unit - Formal Court - Ministry of Social Welfare - Legal Aid Board Lady Ellen Women's Aid Foundation (LEWAF) Any Human Right Organization	- Teacher and Pupil - Lecturer and Student - Coach and student - Employer and Employee - Religious leaders and worshipers - Police Officer and cell Inmate - Doctor and patient
PUNISHMENT Minimum 15 years in JAIL. (Section 13(2))		

Conceiving the legal messages: The methodology used to conceive the legal messages were through *one to one interview, focus group discussions* and *key informant interview* which included (a) Victims of Gender Based Violence that has benefited from the LEWAF Paralegal services. (b) Community/Tribal Authorities who are the first point of contact for dispute resolutions (c) Laws enforcement services including FSU and the SLP (d) Legal aid service providers like LAB, like-mind CSOs like Youth Arise for Rural Development, Empowerment and Peace building; Woman 4 Woman and (e) Market women in the western area urban and rural districts who are mostly interfacing with each other in the business places, communities and homes; and are familiar with the typical social issues and problems faced by women.



A focus group discussion session with 'Market Women'

Validating the Legal Messages: The legal messages contained in the album was validated by the legal team of LEWAF (including Lawyers and Paralegals) and classed the Album as **'Volume 1'** - suitable for people who have no formal education in general or at-most are semi-literate.

Weekly Legal Education Sessions: The peer educators facilitated the weekly Legal Education Sessions with the 34 groups of 1,300 women over the period of 6 months. To ensure maximum participation of the women participants, the learning sessions were planned to coincide with the MANDATORY weekly '*savings and loaning activities*' meetings **days** and **time** of the women groups. The *Paralegals* and CEOs provided technical supervision to the Peer educators during the weekly learning session.



Legal Education session

In summary, the above analysis of the project activities implemented, sets to fulfil the expected project sub objective of ***'Increasing women participation in legal education through economic activities both as an incentive and opportunities, and to enable them initiate and pursue collective social actions on issues that protect and advance their rights'***.

This achievement has set the ideal platform that will eventually see the women beneficiaries of the legal education '*initiate and pursue collective social actions on issues that protect and advance their rights*' if the second part of the *development hypothesis* of this project, which is the '*earning of extra income*' is to be realised.



A Paralegal Facilitating a TOT session for PEER EDUCATORS



A group photo of PEER EDUCATORS after completing a 2 weeks TOT sessions

1.2 Phase 2 Activity: Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development.

As expected by the project and towards realising the **second part** of the **development hypothesis** of this project, which is the **earning of extra income** by scaling up to SMEs, **the project has successfully established 5 SMEs each owned and managed by 40 women each holding shares in each SME**. Each SME is currently undertaken business portfolio within their **know-how** and are officially **REGISTERED** with the 'Corporate Society of Sierra Leone'. This achievement sets to fulfil the expected project sub objective of **'Improving access to saving and income for women'**.

In moving towards achieving this sub objective, the following activities were undertaken as defined by the project.

1. **Setting-Up the internal control system:** The project has always laid credence on *prudent management* of formal business venture as key to minimize loss and maximize profit. To achieve this, a sound **internal control system** is required to set-out a clear framework in the management and administration of a business in a transparent and accountable way. It also builds confidence and credibility in the entire business venture. Moving forward, the following has been accomplished in setting-up the internal control systems of the SMEs as another defined activity of this project.
 - a. **SMEs Bank Accounts:** All the 5 SMEs has an operational bank accounts with Rokel Commercial Bank Sierra Leone Ltd with an opening deposit of Le250, 000.00 and each issued a CHEQUE BOOK.
 - b. **Basic Business operation and financial accountability documents** available and operational. These are as follows: Official business Letterheads and Stamps; Record Ledgers for purchase, production, sales, distribution, and stores control; Box Files; Receipts Books; Delivery Notes books; and booklets of Proforma Invoices and Invoices; Cash request forms and Cash Payment vouchers forms etc.
 - c. **Certified Corporate Constitutions/Bye Laws** to regulate the governance of each SME and its membership is fully operational.
 - d. **Business Mobile Phones** provided for each of the 5 SMEs with **2 registered SIM cards** each for both Orange and Africel networks - to enhance official contacts and communication culture.
 - e. **Shops AND Office spaces:** All SMEs have secured their shops and office spaces with formal tenancy agreements. **Note that the rental costs to acquire the shops and office spaces was paid from the start-up capital that was willingly contributed by the women themselves; and not donor funding. This indicates that if the environment is created and opportunities are readily available, women can 'willingly' contribute their hard-earned resources to developments efforts that has the potential to restore their value, dignity and respect in their homes and communities squarely contributing to nations development.**

- f. **Accounting software systems:** An accounting and tracking software systems has been developed for each SME. This has been design to record and track all the business transactions from purchasing raw materials, noting finish products, tracking sales (both cash and credit) etc. Training to be provided in the use of the system.

The table below provides information on the SMEs including their business portfolios, number of members/beneficiaries, locations of businesses and their legal status etc.

Name of SME →	GBOTIMA Women's Cooperative	AMOULOMA Women's Cooperative	WAN-DESTINY Women's Cooperative	MAMISH Women's Cooperative	WOMEN'S HELP Cooperative
No of Participants →	40	40	40	40	40
Type of Business →	Soap Production and Sales	Community Household waste collection and disposal Services	Bread Baking and Sales	Soap Production and Sales	Community Household waste collection and disposal Services
Geographical Location →	Upper Mayenkinah, Calaba town, Western URBAN	Grafton – Western RURAL	Lower Mayenkinah, Calaba town, Western URBAN	Pamaronkoh Calaba town, Western URBAN	Old Allen town Road, Calaba town, Western URBAN
Legal Status Registration Certificates →					
Bank Accounts Nos RCB –SL LTD →	05-2019-171	05-2019-281	05-2019-161	05-2019-181	05-2019-031

2. **Identifying and training of SME Management team:** Amongst the 200 women beneficiaries, 40 were IDENTIFIED as the potential management team for the 5 business enterprises, that is, 8 personnel for each SME. The management positions are General Manager, Finance Officer, production Officers, sales officers, marketing officer and distribution officer.

In their capacity building drive, all 40 personnel participated in an intensive **two phase training sessions** in business leadership and management skills, using a **tested and successful Business Development & Leadership training manual**. The manual is made up of 8 modules as follows: *Module 1* - Organizational Management; *Module 2* - Entrepreneurship Development; *Module 3* - Business Plan Development; *Module 4* - Record Keeping; *Module 5* - Financial Management; *Module 6* - Operational Management; *Module 7* - Marketing and *Module 8* - Cost, Pricing and Savings.

The training sessions tapped into the knowledge of participants and were able to identify business portfolios within their know-how and eventually developed a business plan for action.

Photos on the next page showing the SME management team in business Leadership and Management skills training session



THE OUTCOMES: All SMEs have started doing their businesses, that is production and sales; and provision of services as identified. See the chain of photos of the SMEs below:

GBOTIMA Women's Cooperative
Soap Production and Sales.



WOMEN'S HELP Cooperative
Community Household waste collection and disposal services



AMULOMA Women's Cooperative
Community Household waste collection and disposal services.



MAMISH Women's Cooperative – Soap Production and Sales.



WAN-DESTINY Women's Cooperative – Bread Baking and Sales.



1.3 Phase 3 Activity: Policy and Service Delivery Advocacy

The achievements of phases 1 and 2 activities **TRIGGERED** the road map to realising phase 3 activity which saw **20 Women positioned as frontline Community-Based Justice Advocates (CBJAs)** and have adopted policy resolutions on issues that has continue to hinder access to justice and tramples on the rights and interests of women and girls in Sierra Leone. The CBJAs has presented these policy resolutions to the Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone (HRC); the Legal Aid Board of Sierra Leone (LAB) and the Waterloo Rural District Council (WARD C) for law enforcement, service delivery and systemic change. This achievement sets to fulfil the expected project sub objective of *'Positioning Women as front line community based justice advocates for service delivery and system change; while increasing their influence in household and community decision making processes'*.



In moving towards achieving this expected sub objective, the following activities were undertaken as defined by the project.

1. **Establishing the Community-based Justice Advocates (CBJAs):** During the legal education session, the peer educators, the CEOs and Paralegals of LEWAF observed the commitment level and keen desire of women participants in learning the law. These commitment levels and keen desires was ascertained through *attendance rate* and the *regular drop-in at LEWAF's office* for legal resources in their quest to better understand the legal messages in the legal education album. In a whole, the level of commitment and interest was rated as 95 percent. Though daunting, but at the end, 20 women were supported and transformed into **CBJAs**. These 20 women are made up of 2 groups each comprising of 10 women to be based in the Western area RURAL and URBAN districts.
2. **CBJAs adopt Policy Recommendations for Advocacy:** It was an incredible scene during the legal education session observing women participants sporting out weaknesses and lacunas in the laws that are meant to protect their rights and interest. As a key activity of this project, LEWAF legal and project management team facilitated **three Strategic Partnership meetings** for the 20 women CBJAs who deliberated and eventually conceived six tangible resolutions around the Gender laws of Sierra Leone as follows:
 - I. End all forms of compromise for SGBV cases.
 - II. Legislate against individuals who compromise Rape and Sexual Penetration cases.
 - III. Increase the number of prosecutions and the conviction rates for SGBV cases.
 - IV. Call on parliament to ratify the proposed amendment bill to the sexual offences act 2012.
 - V. End impunity around Sexual Penetration, Rape and Early Child Marriage cases.
 - VI. Provide Safe Homes nationwide, for survivors and Witnesses of SGBV cases during investigations and trial phases.

3. **Embarking on their advocacy engagements:** the CBJAs developed their resolution points in a form of '*position paper*' and presented to the WARD C, HRC and LAB. It was expected by the project that 5 institutions including 2 local Councils, 2 Legal Institutions and 1 government line ministry were to be engaged by the CBJAs, but despite special letters of notification to all the 5 identified institutions requesting for their self-allotted dates and time to accommodate the CBJAs, by the end of the project, only the above named 3 institutions made room to accommodate the CBJAs. The remaining two included the *Minister of Justice* and the *Minister of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs*.

Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRC)

These advocacy engagements started with the HRC on the 21st August 2019. The MAIN resolutions presented to HRC is to '*End impunity around Sexual Penetration, Rape and Early Child Marriage cases.*' by demanding the following: (a) Increase the number of prosecutions and the conviction rates for SGBV cases, (b) End all forms of compromise for SGBV cases and (c) Calling on parliament to ratify the proposed amendment bill to the sexual offences act 2012.



Western Area Rural District Council (WARD C)

The initiative to engage women of the rural district in direct legal education was classed by the chairman of the WARD C, Mr Kasho J. Hollande-Cole as *a novelty in our society in Sierra Leone*. He further



asserted that screening round the rural district, the women are vulnerable. The resolution presented to Chairman is **to end impunity around rape, sexual penetration and early girl child marriage**. He pledged to continue working with the police to ensure that Women's rights are protected in the district.

Legal Aid Board – Sierra Leone (LAB)

In the advocacy engagement of the CBJAs with LAB, they presented two advocacy points:

1. To end dubious out-of-court settlements and compromise of rape and sexual penetration cases by family members, local chiefs, community stakeholders and sometimes even the police.

The advocacy point called on LAB to put measures in place to stamp out attempts by family members, politicians, community stakeholders and the Police, to undermine and compromise investigations for Sexual offences against women and girls.



2. To support the enforcement of maintenance agreements subscribed by law on fathers who abandon their wife and children. The advocacy point called on LAB to bring to justice men who wilfully abandon their women and children.

THE OUTCOME OF THE ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENTS

These advocacy engagements of the CBJAs with the HRC, LAB and WARD C went viral across the country and beyond through national media houses including national televisions and their websites; social media including WhatsApp and Facebook; newspapers and national radios etc. Thus, without pessimism, this perhaps added tempo to the cries of many Women and Girls in Sierra Leone which finally saw three tangible outcomes both at community and national levels.

1. Parliament of Sierra Leone passed the ***Sexual Offences amended bill*** into law on Thursday 19th September 2019 – Happened after the advocacy engagement with the HRC.
2. WARD C reinforced its commitment to enforced bylaws in the waterloo community to continue protecting Women and Girls from the blatant exploitation and abuse of their rights in homes and community.
3. LAB's commitment to bring Men to face justice for abandoning and failing to take care of their children REINFORCED as ***fit-for-purpose*** with fact-based evidences.

The above empirical evidences have concretely substantiated the project development Hypothesis that <Women who understand their rights and earn extra income are more likely to initiate advocacy action for systemic changes>.

As assumed by the project, the *open-field legal education exhibition* **CLIMAXES** the platform through which the 1,300 women successfully completing the 6 months' legal education session can manifest if learning took place and that the model is workable.

During the advocacy engagements with HRC, LAB and WARD C, the CBJAs proudly narrated how 1,300 of them have successfully completed learning the law using a picture-base messages. The HRC, LAB and WARD C were amazed to have learnt that the CBJAs are the ideal products of this legal empowerment initiative. Furthermore, these institutions came to realised that these Women are longing to **put-on-show** what they have learnt through **public exhibition** and therefore pledged to witness the event.



To attract public interest and eventually witnessing the **EXHIBITION** event, the project organised and hosted series of live radio discussion sessions involving CBJAs, Paralegals and external expert persons'. These live radio discussion sessions also served as another medium through which the CBJAs exhibited their learning amongst other issues discussed. Also, jingle was produced and disseminated on social media, LEWAF project team and the women themselves embarked on community sensitisations and host of meetings with community stakeholders.

It is estimated that 2000 people witnessed the **legal education exhibition event**, these included Government Agencies such as the ministry of Social Welfare, gender and children Affairs, LAB, the HRC, the Sierra Leone Police etc.; **development agencies** such as the Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organization; Civil Society organizations such National Coalition for community legal empowerment (NaCCLE), Western Area Rural District Civil Society Forum (WARDCisof) etc.; Non-governmental organizations such as Sierra Leone Albinism Foundation (SLAFo), Youth Arise for Rural development, Empowerment and Peace Building (YARDEPB) etc.; community stakeholders including Imams, pastors, councillors, tribal authorities, community Chiefs; and the media including SLBC, AYV, STAR both television and radio provided full broadcasting coverage.



The public banner reads ‘OPEN-FIELD LEGAL EDUCATION EXHIBITION - Know the Law! Use the law! Help Shape the law! PROMOTING A CULTURE OF JUSTICE IN OUR COMMUNITY’.

At the open field, the learning tools were displayed and participants spread-out into show booths which they referred to as **‘barray’**. The names assigned to the barrays depicted prominent historical champions of women’s rights, recognition and empowerments in Sierra Leone. For instances



ELLA KOBLO GULAMA BARRAY OPEN-FIELD LEGAL EDUCATION EXHIBITION • Domestic Violence Act 2007 • Devolution of Estate Act 2007 • Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007 • Referral Pathway for SGBV Victims	MAMMY YOKO BARRAY OPEN-FIELD LEGAL EDUCATION EXHIBITION • Sexual Offenses Act 2012 (As 2019 Amended) • Referral Pathway for SGBV Victims • New Bail Regulations	KAILONDO BARRAY OPEN-FIELD LEGAL EDUCATION EXHIBITION • National Land Policy • Police Arrest and Detention
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All the women participants of the legal education session learnt all the legal messages in the Album. However, some went further to specialize in specific areas and therefore demonstrated their expert knowledge of the topics under the barray to the public.





The **Executive Director** of '**Sierra Leone Legal Aid Board**' – Ms. Fatmata Claire Carlton-Hanciles > taking an exhibition tour.

Key personalities made statements, overall classing



Hon Rugiatu Rosy Kanu – Member of Parliament, Constituency 113



Simitie Lavalie – Commissioner, SL Human Rights Commission



Ispt Fofanah – Line Manager, FSU of the Sierra Leone Police in Calaba Town



Mohamed Hajie Kella - Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affaires.

from the position of '*Increase knowledge of the law*' through **legal education** AND '*economic strength*'

through **economic activities**, these women have identified their agency as been capable to initiate and pursue collective social actions on issues that protect and advance their rights both at community and national levels. The advocacy engagements with LAB, HRC and WARD C; including the conduct of the *Open Field Legal Education Exhibition event* witnessed by about two thousand people both direct and indirect beneficiaries' from within and outside the project prefecture, speaks out the practical evidences. So in practical term, Women's dignities through effective participation in family, community and national decision making has been ENHANCED and PROMOTED in the project prefecture, **thus 'Reducing barriers to Women full participation in Sustainable Development' as its relates to the overall objective** of this project.

THE CRITICAL GAP WORTH NOTING

As always expected when starting a business venture that involves the production of goods and services, the first 12 months is normally occupied with **(a)** setting up of structures and systems **(b)** perfecting product quality and design **(c)** establishing Customer base; and (d)maximizing demand and supply. ***It is not much of starting to make profit, sustaining business continuity and expansion.*** This tend to be a more notable reality when considering the fact that the **Start-up Capital** needed has been wrongly projected due to anxiety and inadvertent omission during the planning process to set-up the business.

This notion is very much consistent with the fact that all five SMEs are not yet able to make the predicted profit margin to report on for this project. The *empirical* reason is that considering the intensive investment nature of these SMEs businesses, *it requires a minimum of full additional year and funds to perfect product quality and design, establish strong Customer base, and maximize demand and supply etc. before beginning to make a progressive and uninterrupted profit margin.* This means that, the **duration** of this project is proven to be **SHORT** and the **start-up capital** to be **SMALL** for the women to undertake the SMEs and immediately realised the **TANGIBLE 'improved access to saving and income'**. If the 200 SME women including the CBJAs are to sustain their positions in their communities and continue initiating advocacy actions for law enforcement, service delivery and systemic change, both their 'improved access to saving and income' AND 'Legal Knowledge' **CAPACITIES** must be **STRENGTHENED**.

However, LEWAF is proud to states that, the framework has been developed and foundation laid moving forward. With the availability of additional funding at least for the next 12 months, LEWAF will work to improve on the gains already made by strengthening both the **Economic** and **Legal** capacity of the 200 women including the CBJAs already benefiting from SME business. The aim is to sustained their positions in their communities to continue initiating advocacy actions for law enforcement, service delivery and systemic change **from the position of economic strength**.

SECTION 2

WHAT WORKED WELL and INITIAL ASSUMPTION ABOUT THE PROJECT

2.1. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

Generally, all activities undertaken by the project went well, but ideally, the following activities stood-out clearly:

- a. **Project implementation orientation session for LEWAF Team and Project participants/beneficiaries.** It laid a clear foundation for understanding, ensuring buy-in, ownership and acceptability.
- b. **Involving women during the process of conceiving the legal education messages** proved that local women had a working knowledge of the law. Their experiences as vulnerable groups and victims of persistent forms of gender-based violence means the women truly know their legal needs and are willing to address them.
- c. **A picture-based message** is proven to be an acceptable learning method for an illiterate individual. It generates passions, interest, draws quick attention/understanding and creates a fun atmosphere.
- d. **The initiative to set-up a ‘special taskforce’ to raise awareness on the SME** and the need for women to ‘commit’ Le500, 000 out of their annual take-home money was a key influence towards the success of establishing the SMEs. It is worth to note that funding was not provided by OSIWA to buy equipment/materials, renting of shops, offices, etc. to start their SMEs. Funding for these costs was covered by the start-up capital willingly contributed by the women themselves.

2.2. LEWAF INITIAL ASSUMPTION ABOUT THE PROJECT

The **development hypothesis** of this project is that *Women who understand their rights and earn extra income are more likely to initiate advocacy action for systemic change and hence foster sustainable development.*

Generally, LEWAF initially assumption about the project’s expected results has remained unchanged. The following are evident that substantiate our assumption:

- a. The advocacy engagements of the CBJAs with the HRC, LAB and WARD C finally saw three tangible outcomes (1) Parliament of Sierra Leone passed the ***Sexual Offences amended bill*** into law (2) WARD C reinforced its commitment to enforced bylaws in the waterloo community to continue protecting Women and Girls from the blatant exploitation and abuse of their rights in homes and community. (3) LAB’s commitment to bring Men to face justice for abandoning and failing to take care of their children REINFORCED as ***fit-for-purpose*** with fact-based evidences.

The above empirical evidences have concretely substantiated the project ***development Hypothesis*** that *<Women who understand their rights and earn extra income are more likely to initiate advocacy action for systemic change>.*

- b. However, one assumption of the picture-based Legal Education training was that if literate members of the CWSLA Groups are provided with Training of Trainers, they will provide training to their colleagues with minimal supervision from CEOs and Paralegals. In practice, some of the Peer Educators were found to lack the confidence and skills to present the modules. This required extra trainings/coaching for weaker Peer Educators from Paralegal and CEOs.

SECTION 3

BROADER TAKEAWAY and LESSONS ON THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Success Breeds Success: LEWAF have learned that in the business of transforming lives, small and incremental changes matter more. The take-away here is that success breeds more success.

At the initiate stage, LEWAF was expecting Women to readily buy-into the idea of investing into SMEs because of the advantages of scale and better profits. Apparently, this turned out to be difficult when the team set-off to mobilize the required number of women and requesting them to willingly contribute the sum of Le500,000 to the start-up capital. In fact, this led to LEWAF directorate to extend special opportunity by authorizing the CWSLA groups to give-out loan of Le500,000 to women who were interested in the SME activity but could not otherwise let-go Le500,000 on the day of the share-out. This was all in an effort to enhancing full participation into the SME activity.

This reminds us of the difficulty in initially mobilizing members of our CWSLA which was also started with much difficulty. However, with consistent successes in our CWSLA activities nowadays, LEWAF no longer approaches communities to form CWSLA Groups, instead it is communities who form their groups and apply to LEWAF. The same is been vision for the remaining CWSLA Groups once these SMEs are successful. Going forward, LEWAF will concentrate on making sure that the five SMEs are properly constituted and are profitable before we constitute new ones.

Creating the enabling environment and opportunity draws willingness and commitment: if the environment is created and opportunities are readily available, women can ‘willingly’ contribute their hard-earned resources to developments efforts that has the potential to restore their value, dignity and respect in their homes and communities squarely contributing to nations development. *This is evidence from the women paying for the rental costs to acquire their shops and office spaces including the equipment/materials required to set-up the SME from the start-up capital that was willingly contributed by the women themselves.*

The lessons going forward will be applied in other related work.

SECTION 4

KEY CHALLENGES and LESSONS LEARNED: *The Outlook*

Thus far, all activities undertaken by this project has had its desired impact as expected. This is so because the project implementation team have consistently monitored, reviewed and adapted changes throughout the duration of the project. However, on the road to these achievements, key challenges and lessons stood out clear that are worth learning from>

4.1. KEY CHALLENGES

- a. **Difficult Economic Environment:** The most challenging aspect of this project is the enduring and difficult economic environment under which the women operate. Majority of the women speak of increasing prices and falling profits as a result of incessant inflation. Many complain of ‘**sell nor dae**’ meaning they are making no sales. The resultant economic hardships inevitably reduce the savings ability and consequently the ability of women to invest. In future, this will be closely observed with due caution and timely action.
- b. **Seeking the Attention of decision Makers:** Embarking on their advocacy engagements to all the five identified institutions, despite special letters of notification requesting for their self-allotted dates and time to accommodate the CBJAs, the two targeted government ministries – *Ministry of Justice*, and *Social Welfare gender and Children Affairs ministry*, did not made time for the CBJAs up to the end of the project.
- c. **Outbreak of the Corona Virus (COVID 19) Pandemic:** This **halted** some activities involving public engagements such as the advocacy engagements visits, radio programs and community meetings. Even though the CBJAs and LEWAF team made couple of attempts, the fear of COVID19 infection was very much prevalence in participants including their family members and the public up-to the end of the project.

- 4.2. **KEY LESSON LEARNED:** The lessons LEWAF has learnt over the years of working with women in the economic and social empowerment scheme is that, women have entrenched in the perception that ‘**words alone**’ are not enough to trigger their interest, especially when it is an activity that engages them to commit their own money. They strongly believe in the adage ‘**seeing is believing**’ and very much particular about **credible**, **transparent** and **accountable** in the systems and processes of activities they are engage in doing.

This **credibility**, **transparency** and **accountability** is perhaps the most unique value of LEWAF’s humanitarian work that have been demonstrated over the years. Currently, LEWAF is having 101 groups of Women (minimum 45 in each group) actively engaged in the **saving and loaning** activity under its economic and Social Empowerment scheme across Sierra Leone.

As opposed to the first 5 groups that were mobilized and eventually joined the project in 2014 amidst extreme difficulty, the 96 groups that are currently engaged in the activity are **demand driven**, that is women mobilizing themselves in their various communities and requesting LEWAF’s intervention.

The lesson learned is very CONCRETE and will be certainly helpful going forward on subsequent projects or in other related work. This will be especially so, when we shall have completed the setting-up of all the five SMEs and are seen to be fully functioning and maximizing profits. As mentioned under the broader takeaway, like the CWSLA activity now, LEWAF is visioning that mobilizing women petty traders to participates in SME activities in the

subsequent years will be something of the past once these five SME groups are properly constituted and are profitable. It is expected that the women themselves will be chasing LEWAF to pay Le 500,000 or even more just to benefit from the SME activity.

SECTION 5

BENEFICIARIES' PERCEPTION, THE MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AND FOLLOW UP PLANS.

5.1. BENEFICIARIES PERCEPTION ABOUT THE PROJECT

This final report has tried to capture the perceptions of both the direct and indirect beneficiaries including key stakeholders both at community and national levels.

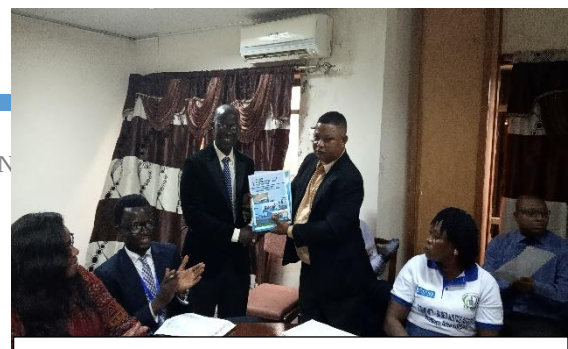
During the process of **CONCEIVING** the legal messages were victims of Gender Based Violence, and the market women themselves from the western area urban and rural districts were engaged, the Chairlady of five-five market in Waterloo said, *"The picture-based type of legal education will help my colleagues who cannot read and are most often in conflict with law on issues like micro-credit and family dispute and do not know the appropriate contacts for help."* The FSU line Manager at the Calaba Town police station said *"the picture-based method of educating women on legal issues is an 'ideal' strategy for the women who cannot understand what we say to them or even signing-for during and after interrogation and statement taking; I will like to see the impact and how this strategy can be popularized and sustained"* he concluded.



The legal education sessions with the women's group is classed by the beneficiaries as **'eye opener'**. **Marian Bangura** said quote *"I never knew the legal difference between RAPE and SEXUAL PENETRATION"* It was empowering to see **Admaya Bangura** explaining the Sierra Leone legal structure - Admaya said, *"I like the different levels and their limit of jurisdiction"*. From the quick knowledge gained, **Susan Kallon** recalled how she accompanied her deceased father to a magistrate court for a land matter against a businessman who falsely succeeded to claim a portion of her father's land with support from community authorities.

Working to improve income and saving opportunities for these women as business entrepreneurs through the establishment of SME, is overwhelmingly supportive by the participants. At this level where all the five SMEs have been established, other women in the CWSLA groups who declined interest at the inception are now beginning to see the reality. **Mrs. Fatmata Lee** said, *I have no regret to be part of the SME scheme*. This perception is consistent with almost all the 178 participants of the SME scheme.

The advocacy engagements with LAB, HRC and WARD C; including the conduct of the *Open Field Legal*



Education Exhibition event witnessed by about two thousand people both direct and indirect beneficiaries both within and outside the project prefecture, speaks out the practical evidences of *Women knowing the Law! Using the law! and are Helping to shape the law.*

The Chairman of the WARD C - Mr Kasho J. Hollande-Cole classed the project initiative as ***‘a novelty in our society in Sierra Leone’***. The LAB classed the project approach as ***‘impressive’*** and the HRC classed the initiative as ***‘wonderful and Strategic’***; and that the approach to empowering women through some economic, social and cultural rights is the ***‘right way to go about it’***.

Last but not the least, at the open field legal exhibition event, the key personalities that delivered position statements classed the initiative as ***‘innovative and successful’*** in its entirety.

5.2. MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

The proposed project activities fell under three distinct but clearly integrated phases as follows: **(1)** To provide ***Paralegal-led Legal Education*** for 1,360 women - making up 34 groups of women actively engaged in LEWAF women’s Economic and Social empowerment scheme. **(2)** To transform 5 of these 34 women groups already participating in the legal education into viable and functional *Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)* to benefit 200 Women members; and **(3)** To position 20 out of the 200 women benefitting from the SMEs as *front-line CBJAs* to plan and undertake *Policy and Service Delivery Advocacy for systemic change*.

Practically, both the internal and external actions undertaken to support project implementation and thus creating the road map towards achieving the above three main objectives has been reasonably exhausted within the context of project design. As much as possible this has been captured under section 1 of this final report.

However, the **NONE** hosting of the ***second Open Field Legal Education Exhibition event*** in the **rural district** of Waterloo as expected by the project could be classed as missed opportunity. The key reason responsible for this is the inadvertent economic inflations of goods and services at the time the planning process to host the first exhibition event was on-going. In the end, it was practically realised that the ACTUAL costs to host one show was far way more than the budgeted amount. That notwithstanding, the ***first Open Field Legal Education Exhibition event*** was conducted in the **urban district** which unavoidably exhausted the budgeted cost for the **rural district** open field legal education exhibition. However, the women beneficiaries of the legal education, the key stakeholders and CSO organisations in the rural district

including representatives from the district council of Waterloo eventually witnessed the **urban district open Field Legal Education Exhibitions** event in **Calaba Town**.

5.3. FOLLOW UP PLANS AFTER THE PROJECT

- a. **Improve on the gains already made in the SMEs and CBJAs:** LEWAF will work to improve on the gains already made by strengthening not only the **Economic** and **Legal** capacity but also the institutional capacities of the 200 women including the CBJAs for **resilience** and **sustainability**. For instance, securing ATTESTATIONS for the CBJAs with the relevant district Councils and conducting **specialist** trainings, coaching and mentoring.
- b. **Launching of CBJAs and SMEs:** this is critical to recognise legitimacy, promote community ownership, visibility for SMEs and ultimately increasing customer-base and hence maximising profit margins.
- c. **Continue providing technical oversight to the SME operations** to ensure team work, business stability and prudence financial management to maximize profit, and leverage opportunities to expand their business portfolios.

SECTION 6

LEWAF's assessment in collaborating with OSIWA and additional information beyond the programmatic.

1.1. LEWAF COLLABORATION WITH OSIWA: The Assessment *and recommendations*

Over the years of LEWAF continual partnership, OSIWA's capacity building drive has remained outstanding of which LEWAF as an organisation has continue to benefit from immensely when offered the opportunity. In addition to others from previous project, in November 2018, LEWAF to joined 25 Open Society Foundation staff and partners from five countries for a week workshop on '**design for Legal Empowerment Innovation**' at Lake Naivasha in Kenya. The workshop was a discovery venture where LEWAF was able to identify four possible new initiatives to be adopted and/or strengthened in its Legal Empowerment movement.

1. Applications that can alert legal workers of issues within their area.
2. Data collection and analysis on community legal issues.
3. Training communities as Paralegals.
4. Structured Fund raising events.

In consideration, LEWAF realises that, the *demand* for community Legal Empowerment and primary justice service delivery initiatives is getting greater and the need to scale-up innovative projects intervention is eminent; but donor funding is limited and donor priorities changes overtime. Therefore, there is a dared need to develop a sustain source of funding strategy to sustain Legal Empowerment beyond donor or government funding. This project incorporates an aspect of this fund raising initiative as clearly indicated in the LEWAF's '*prototype and journey map*' developed as a key outcome of the workshop.

Overall, LEWAF's collaboration with OSIWA in the implementation of present and past projects has been **remarkable** and candidly recommends the continuation of its *capacity building drive to partners*. Also, LEWAF has continue to maintained its opinion that OSIWA should endeavour to improve on the timely disbursement of fund to implementing partners to reduce undue pressure on partners and not jeopardising timely and quality project deliverables.

1.2.ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BEYOND THE PROGRAMMATIC.

- a. LEWAF considers the ***legal education pictorial message album*** as work in progress and not the perfect legal education tool. LEWAF recognized that there must be some mistakes, misinterpretation, misconceptions etc but wish to testify that they are not in any way deliberate. LEWAF further acknowledges that, the Album is a working tool and therefore has room for improvement and perfection.
- b. Beyond the mandate of this program, the Community Based Justice Advocates could be strengthened into a formidable primary justice service delivery network by facilitating their official recognition, securing a community space for their operations and providing paralegal training if funding is available.
- c. Moving forward, LEWAF will potentially roll-out the legal education component to other CWSLA groups in our operational communities across Sierra Leone.

