

EXPANDING LEGAL EDUCATION TO VULNERABLE AND POOR WOMEN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN WESTERN AREA
THROUGH INTEGRATED LEGAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT MODEL.



Funded by
Open Society Initiative for West Africa



Through
National Coalition for Community Legal Empowerment (NaCCLE)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Please provide an overview of the project, key achievements and actions planned to address any ongoing challenges in the project implementation.

Project Overview

This Project title '**Expanding Legal Education to vulnerable and poor Women and adolescent Girls in Western area through integrated Legal and Economic Empowerment model**' is designed to increase the participation of *vulnerable and poor Women and Adolescent Girls* in legal education through economic activities both as an *incentive* and *opportunity* whilst *strengthening* the existing community based Justices–advocates (CJBAs) and their Small Medium Enterprise (SMEs) owned by the women participants.

The project is conceived as a 12 months' intervention and the OVERALL OBJECTIVE is - ***A responsive and accountable community based primary justice service systems that are accessible to vulnerable and poor Women and Adolescent Girls with increased knowledge of the laws and profitable economic opportunities.***

The project is premise on four **principal objectives** as follows:

1. To increase access to Legal education.
2. To enhance access to income through viable SME activities.
3. To improve access to community based primary justice services.
4. A viable community-based Advocacy Networks.

The key **Outcomes** of this initiative are as follows:

1. More Women and Adolescent Girls learn basic aspects of the laws and are using it to solve their day to day justice problems.
2. Women and Adolescent Girls benefit from improved income through sustained and profitable business activities.
3. More vulnerable and poor Women and Adolescent Girls enjoy improved access to community-based justice services delivery.
4. Women well positioned to advocate for a responsive and accountable justice services delivery.

Objective 1: Roll-out Legal Education to new vulnerable and poor women and adolescent girls participating in the economic empowerment Scheme.

Outcomes 1:

- **20** new CWSLA groups Identified.
- **40** Peer educators identified and trained for **5 days** to delivered legal education sessions to their groups for a period of **6 months**.
- **1000** women from 20 CWSLA groups learn aspects of the law and are using them to solve their day-to-day justice problems.

Objective 2: Strengthened Capacity of Existing SMEs for sustained and profitable business activities

Outcomes 2:

- **25** SME executive have enhanced skills to effectively manage the affairs of their business enterprises.
- **5** SME have access small grant to boost the capital based capacities.

Objective 3: Advocacy and Outreach: ENHANCED 'Community-Based Justice Advocates' Networks

Outcomes 3:

- **1 Advocacy Plan developed** and rolled.
- **2 (two)** Community-Based Justice Advocates' Networks Accredited and Launched.
- Peer-Educators trained on Strategic advocacy.
- **1 (One)** Open Field Exhibitions held to show-case learning.

ACTIVITIES COMPLETED – accomplished

1. 20 new CWSLA groups Identified.

This did not pose significant challenge as LEWAF is currently maintaining over 100 structured groups of women in both the Western Area Urban and Rural districts of Sierra Leone. So drawing **strength** from the cadre of LEWAF's women's groups currently engaged in the regular Savings and Loaning Activities 20 new women's groups who have not benefited from the legal education implemented in the subsequent project in 2019 were identified. Below are the full details of the selected Women's groups:

No	NAMES OF GROUPS	COMMUNITY/LOCATION	PEER EDUCATORS
1	Sengbe Pieh	Pamaronkoh – Calaba Town	Mohamed A, Jalloh and Sallu S. Koroma
2	Woman for Prosper	Lower Orugu – Allen Town	Umu Samura and Simithy Turay
3	Woman for Grow	Lower Orugu – Allen Town	Makalay Conteh and Fatmata Jalloh
4	More Hope	Consider Lane – Calaba Town	Frederica Boima and Mabinty S. Turay
5	Focus Women	Kissy	Zainab M. Kandor and Isata Sesay
6	Wanness	Kissy	Jeneba Kamara and Zainab Bangura
7	Women for Betteh	Orugu – Allen town	Saffie Mansaray and Aminata Thoronka
8	Dominion Women	Lovers Corner - Waterloo	Anita Bangura and Sento Bangura
9	Wake up Women	GrassField - Kissy	Kadiatu Kortu and Jaria Mansaray
10	Strong Women	Allen Town Junction	Adama Shrieff and Mabinty Mansaray
11	Sababu	FHM	Sarah Moses and Umu Hawa Jalloh
12	Blessed Women	Banga Farm - Waterloo	Mariama Kamara and Fatmata Kamara
13	Stand Together	Grafton	Adama Fornah and Ester Kargbo
14	Simlapi	Banga Farm - Waterloo	Emma Bangs and Maltilda Gibateh
15	Courageous	San-San Ground - Mayenkinah	Haja M. Kargbo and Safiatu Fornah
16	Sabanoh	Camp Junction - Waterloo	Mary Forbay and Mariama A. Kamara
17	We Go Betteh	Kola Tree – Calaba Town	Emma Kamara and Fatu Kamara
18	Together as Wan	Allen Town	Fatu Y. Conteh and Martha Campbell
19	Deleh	Murray Town	Fatmata Bangura and Tina Pontis
20	We all Na Wan	Grass Field - Kissy	Zainab Y. Kamara and Kadiatu Sesay

To enhance knowledge on the project and trigger interest and willingness, between the 24th - 28th May 2021, an orientation session was conducted for the Project participants/beneficiaries. The context of this session ideally focused on the Project outline, implementation strategy and expected results. The LEWAF project team visited each group during their regular meeting days to conduct the orientation.





Legal Officer and Paralegal facilitating the **Training of Trainers** session for PEER EDUCATORS



Above: Peer Educators during training session and **Photo Below:** PEER EDUCATORS Group Photos



2. 1000 Women from 20 CWSLA groups learn aspects of the law and are using them to solve their day-to-day justice problems.



Upon completing the TOT, the Peer Educators were set to undertake the Weekly Legal Education Sessions with the 20 groups of 1,000 women. To ensure maximum participation of the legal education participants, the learning sessions were planned to coincide with the MANDATORY weekly meetings DAYS AND TIME of the Women Groups. The weekly learning sessions were monitored by the paralegals and routinely supervised by Community Engagement Officers (CEOs) who are also trained in the delivery of the legal education album. The Paralegals and Community Engagement Officers are providing supervision to the Peer educators during the weekly learning session. The learning is design to last for **6 months**. This session started on the 26th July 2021 and ended in February 2022.

3. 40 SME Executive members have enhanced skills to effectively manage the affairs of their business enterprises.

The expected outcome of this activity is to ENHANCED the capacity of the SME leadership in entrepreneurship and management skills.

In the Just concluded OSIWA funded project - ***Building the Legal capacity of Women Petty Traders through integrated Legal and Economic Empowerment in the Western Area***, a follow-up plan was to 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. A key activity is '**training**' to enhance the capacity of the SME leadership in entrepreneurship and management skills.

Moving forward, under this NaCCLE and OSIWA funded project, LEWAF has conducted an intensive 5 days' refresher *training sessions* in business leadership and management skills for the executive members – 40 in total of the SMEs. Using a *tested and successful Business Development & Leadership training manual*, the training targeted business operations and management skills – a gap already identified in the 5 SMEs in the past project and needed improvement. These are as follows: Organizational Management; Developing Business Plan; Record Keeping; Financial Management; Operational Management including Marketing, Sales and supply chain management; and product costing, pricing and savings.

4. 5 SME has been awarded the grant to boost the capital based capacities



Also, in the Just concluded OSIWA funded project, in addition to ‘training’ identified as a gap to enhance the SME leadership in entrepreneurship and management skills, another critical gap is ***additional 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***. The justification for additional funds was based on the premises that, 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***. For all the already existing 5 SMEs, this tend to be a more notable reality when considering the fact that the ***Start-up Capital*** was wrongly projected and were not able to make the predicted profit margin as of end of last project. Fortunately, the framework has been developed and foundation laid moving forward. It was therefore vision that 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 the **Economic** capacity the 5 SME business.

Achieving this has been projected under NaCCLE and OSIWA funded project, where all five SMEs will be awarded grant of \$400 each to boost the capital based capacities. In the first phase of the project, I grant to warded to one SME MAMISH Women’s Corporative and in last phase of the project, the remaining 4 SMES has received their grants. The disbursements were done through bank transfers into the various SME business bank accounts with the Rokel Commercial Bank.

However, it has been observed that ‘individual membership participation’ in the running of their business still remains weak. Some members’ are more into their personal business engagement and still thinks their SMEs is not making profit that should start realising benefits for them.

Objective 3: Advocacy and Outreach: ENHANCED ‘Community-Based Justice Advocates’ Networks

Under this Project, the structure and legitimacy of the 2 Community-based Justice Advocates (CBJAs) Networks established by the past OSIWA funded Project will be ENHANCED. It is also expected that, the new peer educators under this project will be incorporated in the cadre of existing CBJAs and will benefit from the advocacy training and other related activities under this project objective.

The activities include, development of advocacy plan, training of CBJAs in strategic advocacy using the already developed advocacy manual, recognitions by local authorities through accreditation and launching event.

5. **Advocacy Plan developed and Peer-Educators trained on Strategic advocacy:** The expected outcome of the activity under this project is to see 'Women Advocacy and Social Support Network ENHANCED'. So far, a user friendly advocacy plan has been developed and on the 26th and 27th August 2021, a minimum of 20 and maximum of 40 Peer Educators has benefited from strategic advocacy training conducted by the advocacy Officer and Legal Officer with support from paralegals.



Above: Group Work - Identifying Advocacy Topics and developing Advocacy Messages. Below: Group Presentations



OPEN-FIELD LEGAL EDUCATION EXHIBITIONS:

The *open-field legal education exhibition* was a core project deliverable. It was a platform designed to show case, if the 1000 women that completed the six months legal education using a picture-base tool actually learnt as expected. Once again, it demonstrated the model adopted to engage and teach women the basic laws is actually an effective model.

The invitees, including Human Rights Commission (HRC) Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone (LAB-SL) and Min of Gender and Children Affairs, NAMATI – Sierra Leone key stakeholders from the Western Area Rural



District etc. were amazed to have learnt that the Community Based Justice Advocates (CBJAs) are the ideal products of this legal empowerment initiative.

To attract public interest and eventually witnessing the **EXHIBITION** event, the project organized 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, 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 as National Coalition for community legal empowerment (NaCCLE), Western Area Rural District Civil Society Forum (WARDCisof) etc. community stakeholders including Member of Parliament, Imams, pastors, tribal authorities, community Chiefs; and the media including SLBC, AYV etc both television and radio provided full broadcasting coverage.

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 example, KAILONDO BARRAY, with the legal empowerment messages – National Land Policy, Police arrest and Detention etc.



Another key event climaxing the open field legal Exhibition is the launching of the 2 Community-Based Justice Advocates' both from the Western Area Urban and Rural districts. Facilitating this session, the National Coordinator for National Coalition for Community Legal Empowerment Mr. John A. Lahai said "If this model can be roll-out all across the Sierra Leone, ALL women are likely to know the law and their rights in the homes and communities. He congratulated the CBJAs and admonishes them to use their new legal knowledge to reduce community problems and complement the effort of the government to bring peace in their communities.



The newly inaugurated '**Community Based Justice Advocates**' (CBJAs) - **Sited**) flanked by dignitaries from the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies; including Community Stakeholders from Freetown Urban and Rural Areas; and Civil Society Organisations. These included: Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, the Headman of Waterloo, The Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police, the National Coalition for Community Legal Empowerment (NaCCLE), NAMATI-Sierra Leone (Innovation in Legal Empowerment), Community Local Authorities and Stakeholders; the Hon Member of Parliament, Sierra Leone Association of Non-governmental organisations, community religious clergies; the Legal and Program team of LEWAF.

Participants 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.

'I am very pleased to be part of this life changing experience. Years back, violence against women and girls in the communities I have been living, did not seem like violence to me. I thought it was a normalcy because it was meant for society to see women as underdogs. But however, since I joined LEWAF, my perspective on women's worth and development has completely changed, especially since I became a member of this community-based justice advocacy group, and with this training, I can now go back to those communities and start advocating for my fellow women and girls whose rights are being tampered with. I am very happy!' one of the participants, Emma Bangs expressed.

Another participant, Saffiatu Fofanah said; *"Today, I can proudly say that I am a professional advocate and what can be more uplifting! Because I would not finish school, I thought I would never be of any significance to society. But to my surprise, LEWAF came and proved me wrong by giving me the opportunity to be part of this incredible advocacy group. Now I can help other vulnerable women and girls gain their self-worth and help protect their rights through advocacy campaigns in my community and beyond. I feel so empowered"*

"I believe that this training is going to transform my life completely. I have always been interested in fighting for the rights of young girls, but I did not know how to go about it considering my level of education and exposure. But here I am today, enhancing my skills through this project. I want to commend LEWAF for this amazing opportunity they have given me. I am so grateful!" Mabinty Mansaray, another participant exclaimed.

KEY ISSUES OR CHALLENGES

Thus far, within this project implementation, LEWAF has not experienced any significant issues or challenges that possess serious threat to the successful implementation of the project moving forward.

- 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.

EMERGING TRENDS IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION/ LESSONS LEARNT

The need for people to learn the laws and know their rights within the ambit of the laws is increasingly becoming popular trend in communities. The benefit gained by Women who participated in the legal education project has demonstrated that the model used is very ideal. The invitees that witnessed the 'Open Field Legal Exhibition event' expressed their admiration for the approach LEWAF used to teach illiterate women the basic laws in the four gender laws and the sexual offences Act. Recommendations from key invitees from the Ministries Departments and agencies to replicate the model across the country were overwhelming. These included the Hon Minister of Social Welfare, the Chairperson of the Human Right Commission, the Sierra Leone Legal Aid Board, the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone police etc.

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 134 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 **'Physically mobilized'** and eventually joined the project in 2014 amidst extreme difficulty, the 129 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 through their community stakeholders – Local Authorities.

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

APPROACHES TO RESPONDING TO THE EMERGING TRENDS

A possible approach is to roll-out the Legal Education to benefit other Women and Girls across Sierra Leone. However, the need to establish and set-up more Women's economic empowerment activity is very much required to sustain out legal empowerment effort in a constructive and productive manner.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

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 36 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**.

PARTNERS INVOLVMENTS DETAILS

As much as possible, LEWAF have maintained the involvement of partners to implement this project. The National Coalition for community Legal Empowerment (NaCCLE) is our subsidiary donor partner for this project, and has support LEWAF in project activities' review and adjustments. The Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police supported in assessing the outcome of Legal Education and the local authorities like the chiefs supported in community case resolutions. NaCCLE etc

Overall the participation of Partners as expected is encouraging and satisfactory.

PLAN FOR FINAL PHASE

This is final report of this project. However, LEWAF will be working till December to consolidate and sustains the gains of the project.

