



KOFI ANNAN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING TRAINING CENTRE POLICY BRIEF 8/ 2013

1325 and Policing in West Africa: Interrogating the Sierra Leonean Case

Fiifi Edu-Afful

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- There is the need to review and appraise the policy on accelerated promotion for women since it is having a destabilizing effect on the operations of the Sierra Leone police
- Rather than merely bringing women into the policing structure, a conscious effort must be made by the top hierarchy of the police administration to properly integrate women's issues and be more open to the idea of female advancement within the service.
- The police administration must administer stiffer punishment to policemen and officers who constantly harass their female colleagues as a way of discouraging them from achieving higher positions within the service.
- Efforts at strengthening women's participation in the security sector must go beyond the rhetoric of numbers to incorporate and show genuine commitment to the participation and contribution of women.
- In order to fully implement the principles behind this accelerated promotion scheme, the excessive oversimplification and politicization of women's issues must stop.

Introduction¹

Following the adoption of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security in October 2000, a number of interventions have been initiated globally to integrate women's issues in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.² These interventions have been geared

towards equal participation of women and men in the security sector, representation of women at all decision-making levels and the expansion of women's roles in global peacekeeping operations.³ Additionally, this resolution sought to safeguard women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence. Sierra Leone is still in the process of post-conflict reconstruction after a decade-long civil war from 1991-2002.⁴ With women and children being

¹ This policy brief is based on an extensive fieldwork conducted by the author in August 2013 as part of a broader research project being undertaken by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centers (KAIPTC)/ Training for Peace (TFP) programme.

² UN Security Council (2000) *Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security*, S/RES/1325 (2000).

Available at:
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f4672e.html>. (Accessed 16 November 2013).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Abdullah, I., (2004). *Between democracy and terror: the Sierra Leone Civil War*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

the most affected by the reported high incidence of rape, amputations, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and abduction,⁵ Resolution 1325 provided opportunities for women to reclaim their legitimate place in society. Thirteen years after adoption of the resolution, a number of critical questions have been raised about how the police in Sierra Leone have embraced the participation of women within its ranks. The lack of uniformity in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the inability of most police institutions in the sub-region to integrate women's rights and gender equality issues within the police set-up presents a challenge to improving peace and security in the sub-region. A number of recent studies have analyzed the commitment of Sierra Leone at national level and at the level of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) to fully implement UNSCR 1325. The studies show inconsistencies in implementation processes.⁶ Additionally, some of this research has explored why international efforts to promote fuller inclusion of women in post-conflict peace and security have failed.⁷ This Policy Brief takes the discussion one step further and considers how, despite a number of positive results, state institutions have contributed to the worsening situation. Additionally, the Policy Brief focuses on the challenges that confront the gender mainstreaming agenda of the Sierra Leonean police by evaluating the recruitment, selection, training and deployment of policewomen. Consequently, it examines the hyper-masculine nature of the Sierra Leonean police that creates an environment of hostility for women who desire to join the police profession.

⁵ See Oosterveld, V., (2009). The Special Court for Sierra Leone's Consideration of Gender-based Violence: Contributing to Transitional Justice? *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 73-98.

⁶ Ibrahim, A.F., (2012). The Integration of a Gender Perspective in the Sierra Leone Police. Geneva: DCAF.

⁷ Ibid.

Political Efforts towards the implementation of 1325

As part of its formal commitment to full implementation of Resolution 1325, the government of Sierra Leone incorporated into its three major gender laws (Domestic Violence Act, Divorce Act, Registration of Customary Marriage and Devolution of Estates) aspects of this distinctive Resolution.⁸ The country has also adopted and ratified a number of regional, sub-regional and international conventions and legal frameworks that promote gender equality and non-discrimination.⁹ Moreover, institutions in the security and justice sectors such as the police, military and the correctional services have introduced policies that provide equal access opportunities for female officers, prevent discrimination within their ranks and promote the rights of women. Indeed, all these policies are a stark reminder of the need to place women's empowerment higher on the agenda. However, beyond these efforts, the commitment of the government and the political elites to full implementation of this momentous Resolution has been sluggish and lackadaisical. At best, what the decision makers have been doing is the unsolicited politicization of issues involving women's participation in the governance process.¹⁰ Overall, the slow speed of post-conflict reconstruction, coupled with the lack of genuine political commitment and the conventional gender-related stereotyping have fundamentally impeded the pace at which the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 can be achieved.

⁸ Nana Pratt, Elizabeth Sam and Rosaline McCarthy, (2010). Security Council Resolution 1325: Civil society monitoring report on Sierra Leone. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. Available at <http://www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Sierra-Leone.pdf>. (Accessed 5 September 2013)

⁹ Sierra Leone has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the African Union Gender policy, Solemn declaration and the Dakar Declaration on Gender Parity, among others.

¹⁰ Author field notes, August 2013.

Recruitment and Selection into the Sierra Leonean Police

Globally, women are underrepresented in policing.¹¹ Even those women who manage to enter the institution encounter fierce resistance from male officers and the organization as a whole. Traditionally, cultural beliefs and practices assign masculine features to the security agencies and policing is largely seen as a male preserve. However, unlike the Sierra Leone Military, the police profess to be an equal opportunity employer when it comes to recruitment and selection of personnel into its rank and file. Besides, there is a large disparity in how many men and women express their desire to join the police force. As a result of this disparity, there are many more men in leadership positions than women. In its effort to raise the number of female police officers and female officers in decision-making positions, the Sierra Leonean police introduced a gender mainstreaming policy termed the Accelerated Promotion Scheme (APS)¹² in 2005 as part of the National Action Plan for Resolution 1325. This scheme, together with other policies such as the decentralization of recruitment and the lowering of entry requirements especially for female recruits, is set to increase the number of policewomen in Sierra Leone.

The APS policy was to serve as an incentive to draw women graduates into its fold. The simple reason was that the police service was unable to attract qualified women to join its decision-making hierarchy. Nonetheless, in spite of its attractive offer, the APS policy has failed to achieve its stated policy objectives. Eight years after its introduction, the scheme has been able to add fewer than 20 female graduates into the service.¹³ First, the scheme has generated animosity and

tension between male and female police officers. This promotion imbalance has affected the morale of some male personnel and affected the cohesion needed to combat crime. Some male officers have refused to serve under their female colleagues, while others have vehemently resisted the responsibility of patrolling or serving in the same duty post with their female counterparts. Secondly, the scheme has also destroyed the comradeship between policemen and policewomen and created unhealthy competition between them. Thirdly, this scheme has become a reference point of ridicule whenever women's performance in the service is called into question.

Appointments and Promotion

Most women who find their way through the recruitment system are not in critical positions. Eighteen percent of policewomen still find themselves in supporting or subordinate roles, mainly responsible for pseudo-police duties or undertaking custodial tasks such as managing women, juveniles and morality issues.¹⁴ Thus, they are mostly in units such as the family support divisions (units that deals with cases of domestic violence, abuse of young girls, child abuse etc.), traffic wardens, community service and gender units.¹⁵ Transfers and deployment for female offices are largely limited to these units. There are hardly any women in high-ranking divisions such as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the more active departments such as the Operation Support Division, the firearms and the criminal prosecution units. The reason assigned for this identified gap is the usual stereotypical assertion that such divisions are better served with men at the helm of affairs.

¹¹ Archbold, C.A. and Schulz, D.M., (2012). Research on Women in Policing: A Look at the Past, Present and Future. *Sociology Compass*, Vol. 6, No. 9, pp. 694-706.

¹² This policy places women at the rank of sergeant once that person meets the basic entrance requirements and has completed six months' training at the Police College.

¹³ Author field notes, August 2013.

¹⁴ Author field notes, August 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Main Challenges to the full implementation of 1325 in the Sierra Leone Police

In spite of the significant progress that UNSCR 1325 has helped to generate in the security sector, especially the police, a number of obstacles continue to stall women's progress and threaten to erode the gains made so far. One major challenge has to do with overcoming the age-long traditional and cultural value systems that ascribe certain roles to men and women. Overwhelmingly, policewomen are most often boxed into "sex-appropriate" duties of child care and responsibility for domestic chores. When women initiate moves to break into the police ranks by undertaking the full range of police duties, they face stiff opposition from their male counterparts, with tacit support from the institution. This opposition comes in the form of suppression, ridicule, name calling, sexual harassment, discrimination in appointments, promotion and job assignments.¹⁶ The ability of women to function is also under constant scrutiny and examination.

Additionally, they are either constantly threatened with early or forced retirement or transfer to remote areas far from their family.¹⁷ Although the Sierra Leonean police have a policy on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), policewomen routinely suffer from such abuses. In 2012 alone, the Complaints, Discipline and Internal Investigation Department (CDID) recorded nearly 1,500 disciplinary cases of various forms throughout the country, after which nearly 90 male police officers were dismissed.¹⁸

Another challenge is the training regime for policewomen. Apart from being separated from the training school, there are no special facilities to cater for the specific needs of women. For instance, women are forced to share the same toilet facilities with their male counterparts. In a country that is predominantly Muslim, this presents a

disincentive to women who might want to join the police institution. Besides the already identified challenges, there are other auxiliary but still important challenges. These include: the high illiteracy rate among women; lack of political will among the ruling class to properly harmonize national laws with regional and international instruments; inadequate funding for the implementation and evaluation of Resolution 1325; and the lack of effective coordination and allocation of associated responsibilities.

To some extent, even peacekeeping operations are becoming a hindrance to full implementation of Resolution 1325. The Sierra Leone police have reviewed training manuals to encourage more policewomen to take part in peacekeeping operations. Currently, Sierra Leone sends more female police officers to peacekeeping missions than their female colleagues in the military.¹⁹ Some have argued that this state of affairs is as a result of satisfying international requests and placing the country in a position to gain easy access to more international funding. Others have argued that this relatively high presence in peacekeeping has also become an exit route for policewomen who are considered by their male counterparts as a threat to their own rise into senior management positions. Such female officers are quickly "shipped" to peacekeeping operations to reduce, if not erase, their desire to reach the topmost positions within the service. Consequently, female officers who manage to go on peacekeeping operations lose some momentum and are either sidelined or placed on schedules that do not allow them to develop themselves.

Conclusion

It is apparent that the UNSCR 1325 presents the only framework that emphasizes the progressive role that policewomen can play in the peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction process. Despite the

¹⁶ Author field notes, August 2013

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ As of October 2013, Sierra Leone had 41 policewomen on missions as against none from the military.

limitations identified in this Policy Brief, there has been some progress in the number of policewomen recruited into the Sierra Leonean police. This Brief has examined the political efforts towards the full implementation of Resolution 1325, especially in the security agencies. Specifically, this has been accomplished by discussing the challenges associated with the recruitment, selection and promotion of female officers and how their male peers and the police institution act in ways that restrict their entry and advancement. Some progress has been made so far with regard to the recruitment, selection and deployment of policewomen, but there remains a need to strengthen the legal frameworks for equal participation. Furthermore, there is the need to enhance the role of women in the police force to enable them to properly integrate into the existing peace and security plan.

Recommendations

- There is the need to review and appraise the policy on accelerated promotion for women since it is having a destabilizing effect on the operations of the Sierra Leone police;
- Rather than merely bringing women into the policing structure, a conscious effort must be made by the top hierarchy of the police administration to properly integrate women's issues and be more open to the idea of female advancement within the service;
- The police administration must administer stiffer punishment to policemen and officers who constantly harass their female colleagues as a way of discouraging them from achieving higher positions within the service;
- Efforts at strengthening women's participation in the security sector must go beyond the rhetoric of numbers to incorporate and show genuine commitment to the participation and contribution of women; and
- In order to fully implement the principles behind this accelerated promotion scheme, the

excessive oversimplification and politicization of women's issues must stop.

About the Author

Fiifi Edu-Afful is a Researcher with the Conflict Peace and Security Programme at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Ghana. He holds an Mphil in Development Studies and a BA in Political Science and Psychology, from the University of Cape Coast and the University of Ghana, respectively. He is a specialist on issues bothering on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in peacekeeping operations. He also facilitates training modules on gender and peacekeeping and conflict related sexual violence. He is currently a PhD Candidate in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Fiifi.Edu-Afful@kaiptc.org

About the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC)

The KAIPTC is an internationally preferred centre of excellence that provides globally-recognized capacity for international actors on African peace and security through training, education and research to foster peace and stability in Africa.

www.kaiptc.org

The opinions expressed in this policy brief do not necessarily reflect those of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, its Governing Board or donors. Authors contribute to KAIPTC publications in their individual capacity.



The Government of
Norway



The Government of
Denmark



The Government of
Sweden