

**HUMANIST WATCH SALONE (HUWASAL)
2012 ANNUAL REPORT**



**29 HUMONYA AVENUE KENEMA CITY
KENEMA DISTRICT
EASTERN PROVINCE OF SIERRA LEONE**

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We wish to extend thanks to our generous donor partners such as UNDP Access to Justice Programme, Amnesty International Sierra Leone, International Rescue Committee (IRC/GBV Programme), International Foundation for Election System (IFES) and Global Xchange/ VSO for both financial and technical support accorded to Humanist Watch Salone towards the implementation of its programme-projects in 2012. Moreover our sincere thanks and appreciation goes to our Advisory Board for providing support towards effective and efficient running of the day –to- day affairs of Humanist Watch Salone. Special and heartfelt thanks to our civil society partners and state actors and lastly, we extend a very big thanks to all our staff members for their restless effort behind the successes of our activities in 2012.

Introduction and Background of Humanist Watch Salone

Humanist Watch Salone (HUWASAL) is an indigenous human rights and development organization established in 2003 by a group of visionary and courageous human rights activists and development workers. The organization started as Community-Based organization and is now registered with Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) as National Non- Governmental Organization.

HUWASAL overriding aim is to create a forum for the protection and promotion of the rights of marginalized and vulnerable people through advocacy and socio-economic and political empowerment. The objectives include;

- Promote the consolidation of peace building effort in Sierra Leone,
- Facilitate and encourage active participation of women, youth, children, people living with HIV and AIDS, and physically challenged in all aspects of community development programmes,
- Embark on active campaigns against Sexual and Gender- Based violence (SGBV), discrimination of vulnerable groups, including women, children, physically challenged, youth as well as people living with HIV/AIDS, and HIV-AIDS prevention and control, drug abuse and environmental protection,
- Advocate for the promotion, protection and respect of human rights and the advancement of inclusive democracy and
- Work towards poverty alleviation

HUWASAL envisages a developed society that empowers marginalized populace and vulnerable groups to fully participate and meaningfully exercise their potential in governance and development initiatives. The organization overall mission is to strive towards the enhancement of sustainable peace and development in Sierra Leone through active participation and inclusion of marginalized populace such as women, children, youths, physically challenged and people living with HIV/AIDS in the society.

HUWASAL work in highly devastated war affected rural communities, designing and implementing community-demand driven programmes, geared towards community reintegration and empowerment in the Kailahun, and Kenema Districts. HUWASAL pursues a multi-sectorial approach to development through interventions in micro finance, good governance and human rights, child protection and youth empowerment, women empowerment and gender equality, HIV/AIDS prevention and control, environmental sanitation and personal health promotion, food production and community development. HUWASAL mainstreamed gender and HIV/AIDs in all its programme-project activities.

Since inception, Humanist Watch Salone has been implementing projects to promote development Communication towards addressing social, and developmental issues through knowledge building , bridging social and development gaps, and behavior change among local communities focusing on youth , women, and stakeholders for sustainable social change and development.

Since its inception, this report is the eight annual report of the organization.

Accomplishment

Under the reporting year in review, activities accomplished under the organization issues of focus were ;

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

One major key task of Humanist Watch Salone is women and girls social, economic and political empowerment. The actualization of women and girls social, economic and political empowerment more especially in the rural communities of Sierra Leone is yet faced with challenges due to the entrenched traditional beliefs and practices that are highly discriminatory against women and girls in all aspects of their social life. Therefore, activities of HUWASAL towards women and girls empowerment Programme has been through social change processes aimed at creating an impartial environment where women and girls can inclusively participate in development opportunities. Humanist Watch Salone, its Partners and communities of target are utilizing five steps toward helping women and girls to bring their status to the global trend, these are ; Gender sensitization and awareness raising, Social mobilization, Economic and political empowerment, Organization/ network building and strengthening as well as building on change.

. Under this reporting period, HUWASAL undertaken activities on women and girls programme were as follows:

- Conducted community outreach activities through community meetings, community drama and discussion sessions in schools on issues related to women and girls vulnerabilities, violence against women and girls and women social and political rights reaching 3870 participants (Male 2580 female 1290)



Participants during school outreach session on sexual exploitation and harassment at Wallace Agricultural Junior secondary School, Daru, Kailahun District



Mr. James B. Bundu- SDO for Kailahun District (MSWGCA) facilitating session at Provincial Islamic Junior Secondary, Daru, Kailahun District

- Provide business skills training utilizing Competence based Economies through Formation of enterprises (CEFE) model for ten Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA groups) of which women constitute its membership for a total of 250 participants in Kenema district. This training started in 2011 and it continue in 2012



CEFE Training at Waiima-Tokpombu, Small Bo Chiefdom, Kenema District

- Conducted capacity building trainings for community duty bearers, women and women’s groups, youth and youth groups and CSO partners on SGBV, national laws against SGBV and human rights of which topics were tailored according to participants’ profile for a total 550 participants (355 male and 195 female)



Community stakeholders' training on SGBV, Human rights and the 3 Gender Acts at Manowa, Pejeh Bongre Chiefdom, Kailahun District



Community stakeholders' training on SGBV, human rights and the 3 Gender Acts at Dodo, Dodo chiefdom, Kenema District

- Conducted 25 radio discussions on SGBV , human rights and HIV/AIDS, environmental protection, women inclusive participation in elections and other emerging social issues that affect women and girls .
- Provided direct support to 48 survivors of SGBV to access medical treatment, transportation, daily sustenance allowance and accommodation in following up complaints process during police investigation and to access justice through court litigation

Child Protection Programme

The issues of children and women advancement are link programmes. The underserved situation of children in communities of HUWASAL operational areas in the Eastern Province is hooked on the hard economic conditions faced as it increases the risk of child exploitation and abuse. Addressing issues of child interest remains one of HUWASAL's priorities. 2012 child protection activities were;

- Conducted community awareness raising activities on child sexual exploitation and abuse , child labour and teenage pregnancy
- Monitor and document 30 cases of child exploitation and abuse which include child labour, abduction of girls and other forms of cruelty to children.
- Provided direct support to 27 minor survivors of sexual violence and other forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse through functional referral pathway.
- Follow-up on referred case

Health

Right to health which includes maternal and reproductive health is to be recognized, respected and fulfilled by all governments around the globe as a road map to the achievement of the MDGs. In an effort to improve on maternal health care service, removal of user fees for basic package of essential health services through Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI) was launched by Government in 2010 for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five. To enhance effective and efficient FHCI services, monitoring of the system need to galvanized effort of the community by capturing the experiences of women and girls who are potential end users of the service. Against this backdrop, HUWASAL is working in collaboration with the Civil Society Coalition on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Campaign in Sierra Leone to promote community demand for accountability in maternal health care service delivery as a pilot phase with support from Amnesty International, targeting 3 communities (i.e. Blama, Panguma and Samia Town) in the Kenema district. The exercise was concentrated on monitoring of maternal health care services through human rights framework focusing on the three delays (i.e. delay in taking decision, delay in accessing the health facility and delay in accessing medical services) as well as the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of services of maternal health care and organizing community stakeholders' dialogue sessions to discuss on findings and fuel actions for improvement. The main drive is to strengthen community based monitoring and oversight role by empowering them to raise their voices in addressing issues related to maternal health in their respective communities



Community dialogue session at Samai Town, Kenema District on maternal health care services



Cross-section of participants of the community dialogue session at Panguma, Lower Bambara Chiefdom, Kenema District on maternal health care services

Good Governance and Human Rights

Promoting popular participation and inclusive democracy is recognized as a core principle for better governance and respect of human rights. To further achieve this, HUWASAL was able to undertake the following activities.

- Regularly monitoring of the police, prison and courts which include ; Magistrate, High and Local courts. The court monitoring exercise was carried out in partnership with CSO Court Monitoring Network, which HUWASAL served as Cluster Head for Eastern Province. The exercise focuses on observation of court processes and providing paralegal services to court litigants with 22 CSOs involved.
- Monitored, document and report human rights abuses and violations. In 2012 fiscal year activities 124 cases of human rights abuses and violations were reported to HUWASAL, documented and jointly undertook advocacy with CSO Partners in addressing reported human rights abuses and violations. Reported human rights abuses and violations include land grabbing, property deprivation (not only affecting women but as well as other vulnerable groups),SGBV incidents including domestic violence , perversion of justice in local courts and chiefs' courts couple with excessive fines.
- Organized community event in celebration of the International Human Rights Day(December 10) in collaboration with CSO partners , Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and UNIPSIL Human Rights.
- HUWASAL as Eastern Province focal organization for Non- State Actor(NSA) which is coalition of society organizations working on Public Financial Management(PFM) activities was able to carried out PFM related activities in the Eastern province of Sierra Leone. These activities include community awareness raising on citizen budget, monitoring of local councils development planning and implementation including procurement process as well as identification of gaps and challenges in local councils' service delivery thus inform advocacy for improvement.



Political dialogue session in Daru, Jawei Chiefdom, Kailahun District



Participants in Bunumbu town, Pejeh West Chiefdom, Kailahun District acting a skit on how women are excluded in politics during the political dialogue session after 2012 elections

Youth Empowerment

HUWASAL worked with Globa Xchange volunteers through VSO towards creating a learning forum to inspire local communities to address Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) as well as recognized and support young people participation in 2012 elections. Key activities were weekly radio discussions and community outreach sessions through meetings and drama. Communities reached include, Panguma (Lower Bambara chiefdom), Kpandebu (Dama chiefdom), Blama (Small Bo chiefdom) in Kenema district and Daru (Jawei chiefdom) in Kailahun District. The activities provided a necessary support for community members including women, young people and local chiefs to set up information network and learn together on issues of common. Furthermore, HUWASAL collaborated with other youth serving agencies in addressing problems affecting young people socio- economic and political empowerment through joint advocacy effort.. 420 participants (250 male and 170 women) attended the outreach sessions on SGBV and women and youth participation in 2012 elections .



Christopher M. Briama- Programme Manager facilitating discussions in Panguama, Lower Bambara Chiefdom , Kenema District on Youth and women active participation in 2012 elections



Cross-section of participants during outreach session in Panguama, Lower Bambara chiefdom, Kenema District on youth and women active participation in 2012 elections

Affiliation

Networking is one way to strives to enhance HUWASAL capacity for better service delivery through information sharing, experiences and other resources with liked-minded institutions and agencies at various levels. In this vein, HUWASAL is an affiliate member of the following civil society coalitions and networks;

- Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
- Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP) Civil Society Network.
- Kenema and Kailahun Districts Human Rights Committees and serve as coordinating agency of Human Rights Committees in the Eastern Province.
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Consultative Forum and serve as Focal Organization for Eastern Province.
- Focal civil society organization for Open Government Initiative (OGI) in the Eastern Province.
- Budget Advocacy Network (BAN) and Non-State Actor (NSA) and serve as Regional Focal organization for the Eastern Province.
- Kenema District Civil Society Coalition.
- Clean up the Word (Global environmental campaign Group).
- Eastern Region GBV Steering Committee and Kailahun District Gender Working Team and serve as secretary for the Eastern Region GBV Steering Committee.

- Amnesty International-Sierra Leone Coalition on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Campaign and serve as chair organization for the Coalition Management Committee(CMC) and
- International Association for volunteer Effort (IAVE)
- West Africa Humanist Network

Funding Sources

The funding sources with regards HUWASAL's Programme- projects implementation in 2011 fiscal year were :

- UNDP Access to Justice Programme in Sierra Leone.
- International Rescue Committee(IRC)
- Amnesty International Sierra Leone
- International Foundation for Election System (IFES)
- Global Xchange through VSO- Sierra Leone
- Individual members contribution.
- Income generation activity(ie. Commercial rice farming)

Lessons Leant/Outcomes

Despite successes attained from undertaken activities, there were lessons learned on issues that need attention for redress. These lessons learned include the following;

- Poor road network leading to the organization target operational locations in rural communities is one main contributing factor towards the poor livelihood of people living in rural communities , feeder roads are deplorable and sometime, nearly cut-off from motorist during the raining season. Therefore, rehabilitation of feeder roads need attention as such intervention will increase rural community dwellers access to market thus improves their livelihood.
- The issue of property inheritance right is a concern as most women in the rural communities reported to have been deprived from their late husband and family property. It is because communities are still with the beliefs and practices despite the enactment of the Devolution of Estate Act 2007, that a male child has legitimate cultural right to inherit property. To enhance women full recognition as members of the family with legitimacy to inherit property, there is yet a need for continuous community sensitization on women's property rights in the provinces/ rural communities of Sierra Leone.
- Teenage pregnancy yet remains a serious concern in communities as hindrance towards the achievement of girls' education effort by government, civil society organizations and donor community. The issue of teenage pregnancy is identified as key factor for an increasing rate of girls' drop- out from school. Therefore, this need to be address through coordinated community approach.

- Cost- related in both local and ordinary courts' systems is posing serious challenge for women and other vulnerable groups to access justice. As most often survivors of SGBV who are mainly women and girls are financially inept to pursue cases in courts. So provision of support to SGBV survivors and other vulnerable groups in following up complaints process during police investigation and to access justice through court litigation is an integral in improving access to justice for the vulnerable groups.
- Though key politicians always promised to uphold to non- violence politics but this commitment is not put into realities as they want to maintain what they described as their stronghold by all means. In light of this, these politicians can undermine democratic principles by using their supporters at the grass root levels, who are more or less illiterates to intimidate those who are not in support of their political party. As a remedial action, there is a need for intensive civic education on civil and political rights as well as roles and responsibilities of individual citizen, political parties and national democratic institutions during pre-elections situations. Such initiative will serve as positive preparedness for a more tolerance and accommodative elections in Sierra Leone
- Women in rural communities are still subjected to the wishes of their male counter parts in terms of their voting decision. The female participants raised this as a concern as most women were faced with violence from their husbands and boyfriends because of their refusal to support candidate of their male partners' choice during 2012 elections. Such attitude of men in rural communities is identified as one of the factors that debar women full participation in politics in rural sittings.
- It was clearly pointed out that low participation of women in politics at rural levels is because of their inability to mobilize electorates including their fellow women. They have less knowledge and skills development opportunity that will enable them to compete with men who have more outstanding knowledge and skills in politics.
- Though civil society organizations and government are restlessly engaged in gender sensitization; yet cultural barriers are still bottlenecks for women active participation in politics and traditional leadership. In most communities, especially in Kailahun District, women are not given a chance to community leadership as they are still upholding to their old adage that state "A hen cannot crow" or "A knife use by a woman is not sharp enough to fight" meaning a woman is not strong to have authority over men. Such discriminatory beliefs against women need to be shifted if durable solution is to be achieved with regards women political empowerment

- The issue of maintenance and support is another economic insecurity problem women are encountered with in rural communities. Most of the young men are often perpetrators of teenage pregnancy. They normally abandoned responsibilities of providing support for their children thus subsequently increase economic burden on the child mothers and their families.
- According to lessons learned during CSOs court monitoring exercises, there are abounding evidences for an increase of cases involving women, youths and other vulnerable groups with less financial background which were given unfair justice processes by the local chiefs likewise the local courts' officials. According to reports from court monitors, in some instances women were fined for talking loudly above their husbands, considered it to be disrespectful to the husband as culture expect women not to talk loudly among gathering of men not alone when talking to their husbands. For example, in Mongo section, Gbense Chiefdom in the Kono district, a woman in person of Sia Josiah, a wife of Komba Josiah complained her husband at the local court No. 2 for sexually abusing her. The town chief and other authorities looking at this complaint as culturally prohibited for a woman to complain her husband for forcing her to have sexual intercourse, considered sexual intercourse as matrimonial services of a woman to her husband, they influenced the court to withdraw the matter for home settlement. Moreover, in the case that was before the Local Court No. 2 in Kissi Tongi Chiefdom, Kailahun District, a woman(defendant) was only fined because of the pre-conceive mind of the local court officials, that underneath any friendship among women is the arrangement of boyfriend relationship or extra-marital relationship. Such belief undermines the equal treatment of women in local court as compare to men especially in marital related matters. These lessons cut-across in Kailahun, Kono and Kenema districts with regards unfair processes of justice delievery in both local courts and chiefs' courts. The unfair justice delievery in rural communities is characterized by the low knowledge of community leaders as well as local court personnel on human rights based approach in the delievery of justice. Moreover, communities are with limited understanding on the processes, rules and procedures of the local court as well as the limitations of community leaders in the process of traditional justice delivery which are the primary sources of justice for rural communities,
- Survivors blame is one main contributing factor to the culture of silent on GBV incidents, community members sometime heap blame on survivors for most of the violence they faced in the hands of their male counterparts. Most of the blame is attributed to lack of respect for their husbands, failure to take order of the man which they feel a woman can be beating for as means of correction

- The issue of child exploitation and abuse in the forms of child labour, street selling and other exploitative work are yet to be address in rural communities of the Kenema and Kailahun Districts. Though Government has enacted the Child Rights Act 2007 but the realization of rural communities adherence to child friendly practices are not visible due to their inadequate knowledge on Child Rights Act as well as community reluctance to accept idea of human rights, considered as culturally inappropriate and/or western idea.
- Despite some relative progress made in the implementation of Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI), yet remain challenges. These challenges include shortages of appropriately qualified healthcare staff in terms of meeting the increased demand for services that resulted from the launch of the FHCI, unavailability of essential drugs and other medical equipment, shortages and stock outs are widespread and ineffective system of monitoring and accountability especially at rural community levels.
- Even though some Traditional Birth Attendances (TBAs) are working cooperatively with the Health Centers by accompanying pregnant women to the Health centers; yet still home delivery aided by TBAs is visible in some communities which is identified as a contending issue to be address in improving maternal health care services.
- Although HUWASAL and partners are strongly advocating against the issue of compromise with regards cases of sexual abuse of young girls and domestic violence; yet compromise is still a bottleneck in the drive towards improving women and girls' access to justice. According to lessons learned working on the task towards the prevention and response to SGBV issues, shows compromising of SGBV cases has not only one reason but several reasons depending on the social and economic status of victim and families. To mention few of the reasons why SGBV cases are compromised without legal action taken against alleged perpetrators include; inadequate knowledge and understanding of communities on the referral pathway and available services as well as laws that intend to protect women's rights, women fear not to lost their marriages if legal redress is taking against their husband when they are abused in domestic relationship, family connection between the victim and alleged perpetrator's family members, frequent adjournments of SGBV cases while in courts(i.e. Magistrate and High courts), financial inability of victim and families to pursue matters in court, due to high cost of court system, inadequate knowledge of community residents including parent of victims on the consequences of SGBV.
- The risk in advocating for women and girls' rights need not to be over emphases, due to entrenched cultural beliefs and traditional practices which put men at an

advantageous social position , perpetrators and families often regards the work of Human rights activists as something that undermined their cultural norms, this seem to create an unsecure environment for human rights activists. Against this, initiating and strengthening effort to provide defend for Human Rights Activists will be of imperative towards the promotion and protection of human rights and social justice.

Conclusion

Though 2012 fiscal year operation was characterizes with series of challenges among was inadequate funding yet outcomes of implemented projects were achieved. This was as a result of community driven approach adopted in the execution of activities which engendered community sense of ownership thus laid foundation for sustainability. We look forward for new partners in scaling- up our activities in the quest to build a just and equitable society of Sierra Leone.



SIGNED BY:

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