

Research Project Title:

Interrogating Young Women's Political Participation in Post-war Sierra Leone

IDRC Project No: 106207-001

Authors: The Sierra Leone Team

Report Type: Final Technical Report

Period Covered: February 2011 –August 2013

Date Submitted: September, 2013

Country/region: Sierra Leone, West Africa

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Abstract

The end of a devastating civil war, 1991-2002, fought by many young people and a peace that was in many ways facilitated by women through the women's pro-democracy movement and the gradual strengthening of democratic governance structures in Sierra Leone, creates the impetus for a critical analysis of the status of young Sierra Leonean women in relation to their political participation, post war.

This study focused on two categories of young women; those in tertiary institutions and those in local government councils across the country and examined how and why they participate politically and what aids and deters their participation. Also examined are the ways in which gender activism during and after the war impacted young women's political participation and ways in which this can be linked to the success of young women in the parliamentary elections in 2007 and local government elections in 2008.

Findings indicate that there are limited spaces for young women's political engagement and that the kinds of barriers faced by both female councilors and female students in tertiary institutions can be directly linked to the existence of male dominated political and socio-cultural institutions such as the *poro* society in rural communities and social clubs in tertiary institutions.

Keywords

Political participation, gender activism, young women, post-war

The Research Problem

With a youth population of over 50%, post-war Sierra Leone is often described as a country of young people. The 11 year civil war, 1991-2002, was fought mainly by disaffected and disgruntled youths or lumpen-proletariats who saw no hope for a bright future in a country ridden with corruption and nepotism and who felt they had nothing to lose in engaging in a senseless and brutal war. However, even though youths formed the core of the rebel movement and are a considerable chunk of the population, they have, post-war, remained marginalized and excluded from the conventional processes of the state and have had little or no say in the decisions that matter to them. The picture is even grimmer for young women whose identity as "women" imposes a special limitation on their political participation and whose inexperience has often been a barrier to their entry into the small political space that is already dominated by men and a few older women. Moreover, the category youth has, in Sierra Leone, become synonymous with young males rather than young females inadvertently creating a barrier to young women's equal participation.

There has been a plethora of studies on the topic of women's political participation and representation of which some have shown that women face pervasive obstacles while vying for office including, social bias, narrow gender roles, restrictive religious doctrines, unequal laws and education, discriminatory socio-economic conditions, male biased party leadership, party political structures including nomination processes and the nature of the electoral system, absence of gender awareness in the planning and execution of the election and lack

of support after being nominated and elected by political parties (Rule 1994; Ballington 1999; Hashim 1999; Nanivadekar 2006). Some studies have also shown that political parties and electoral systems, mainly because they determine who gets nominated for public office, are major determinants of the notable presence or absence of women in national legislatures (Ballington, 2002).

Studies of women's political participation in Sierra Leone also allude to the same structural and institutional barriers identified above. Castillego (2009) lists patronage, political party structures, political will and women's position in society as some of the barriers to women's participation, while Ibrahim (2010) identifies fear of violence, intimidation by secret societies, lack of funds, stigma, party structures and lack of political will as obvious barriers to women's political participation in Sierra Leone.

However, even as these studies interrogate and analyze the structural and institutional barriers that impede women's political engagement and empowerment, the focus has rarely been on the struggles and experiences of young women who form the bulk of the female gender and whose full political participation may be the catalyst for desired change in women's roles and status in patriarchy engrained societies.

This study therefore focused on young women in tertiary institutions, where their presence in campus politics is nondescript and on young female councilors, some of who have become legitimate political actors in order to fully understand how they engage politically and the institutional and structural conditions that have enabled/disabled their political participation.

The Study was informed by the following research questions:

1. What forms have young women's political participation taken in Sierra Leone?
2. What institutional and structural conditions have enabled/disabled young women's political participation?
3. In what ways have the pro-democracy movement led by older women during the war impacted young women's political participation?
4. Do young women face the same or different barriers to political participation as older women?

Research Objectives

This study sought to map young women's political participation at the local government level and in university student bodies. It also sought to track the political engagement and participation of young female aspirants and their strategies for engaging in local council and parliamentary elections in 2012. In essence, the aim was to understand the factors that have enabled their participation thus far and the barriers that impede their full participation in the political arena.

Objectives:

1. To examine the nature of young women's political participation.
2. To examine the ways in which women/gender activism, during and after the civil war, have impacted on young women's political participation.

3. To examine what mitigated the participation and success of some young women in the parliamentary elections of 2007 and the local government elections in 2008.
4. To examine what mitigates female students' participation in campus politics.
5. To see if grassroots activism increased the chance of young women's participation as candidates.
6. To help create a support mechanism as a training package for young women's political participation.

The objectives of the study were met and as such the research questions were to a great extent answered.

Methodology

This was a qualitative study that was informed by a theoretical and conceptual framework that posits that gender equality and the strengthening of women's political participation are essential to postwar reconstruction or that sustainable democracy is dependent on the full participation of women at every level of the process. As such, an action oriented participatory approach that is aimed at transformative social change informed the methodology. What this means is that participants in the study contributed to the design and implementation of the study. Moreover, participants benefited directly from the process by skills gained through training.

In order to effectively answer the research questions and meet the objectives, a number of methods and tools were used that include archival research, focus group and one-on-one interviews and leadership training for participants.

The first step was to create the space for both research assistants and study participants to take part in the design and implementation of the study. Three research assistants were trained on interview techniques as well as on other data collection and documentation processes such as observation, conducting FDGs, transcribing and audio/visual recording.

Pilot focus group discussions were conducted to test skills of assistants as well as to solicit ideas and suggestions on how to design the study. In year one of the project, one-on-one interviews and FDGs were conducted with female councillors and young women in tertiary institutions from all four regions of Sierra Leone. Councillors interviewed for this study were from the following councils; Western Rural and Urban (Freetown), Makeni, Magburaka and Port Loko (North), Bo city and Bonthe (South), Kenema and Kono (East) and students were from Fourah Bay College (Freetown), Makeni Polytechnic (North), Kenema Polytechnic (East) and Njala University, Bo and Njala Campuses.

For year two of the project, workshops on leadership and political participation were conducted for students from three tertiary institutions. These workshops became a support mechanism that is greatly needed for young women's political participation. In all, eighty young women were provided with basic training in essential skills for engagement in the political sphere and to be leaders.

The workshop method was a great success as in the course of two days, students that were very nervous on the first day were on the second day of training able to make a speech in front of an audience. The confidence level of participants grew to the extent that at the end of the workshop female student-centered organizations were formed in all three tertiary institutions. The manual created for the workshop has also become a resource for the students.

Project Activities

1. March 2011—Organized a research methods training workshop for research assistants. This helped the assistants in conducting interviews, documentation and analysis of data as well as in writing their MA thesis.
2. April 2011- February 2012—Field research. Travel to six different research sites to conduct interviews with female councillors and students in four tertiary institutions nationwide.
3. May-June 2013—Workshops on leadership and political participation organized for students in tertiary institutions.
4. May-June 2013—provided seed money for the set-up of young women’s leadership and political participation groups.

A number of lessons were learned in the implementation of this project and key is the value participants placed on the leadership workshops organized in tertiary institutions. This was the first time that such workshops have been conducted in these institutions. Participants were very eager to be a part of this project and to have their voices heard. Participants were surprised that after a year or two, in some cases, the research team came back to build their capacity. The provision of seed money was not a planned part of the project but became necessary because there was so much enthusiasm and commitment on the part of the students to form organizations that will continue with the work started in the workshops.

Research questions:

1. What forms have young women’s political participation taken in Sierra Leone?

In response to this question we found out that politically, young women participated minimally but variedly. Only 10 out of over 110 young women interviewed indicated that they were neither interested nor actively participated in politics. Respondents indicated that they participated as candidates, registrars, voters and as political party and gender advocates during elections. At least 40 respondents indicated that they had worked for the electoral commission as registrars during voter registration processes in past elections. This is a paid position and is an opportunity for students to earn some money. Some indicated that they volunteered with women’s organizations on sensitization campaigns focused on conscientizing women on how and on the need to register and vote, support female candidates and run as candidates. Others worked as campaign team volunteers for candidates.

We classified respondents as young women by using the Sierra Leonean accepted age range for youths, which is 18-35 years. Thus of all 32 councilors interviewed, only 12 were below the age of 35 and considered as young women for this study. All of them have been active in politics at both the community and national levels, organizing women in their communities, being active in the women's wings of their parties and organizing their own campaigns while running for office. Interestingly, even though many students indicated that they participate at the community level, few had participated in campus politics and only 3 had contested the presidency in student union elections in their institutions. Responses about why they did not participate in campus politics varied. As one student responded:

“I am not interested in campus politics because I am here to study and make good grades. One cannot mix politics with studying, especially as a student. My parents always warn me to keep away from campus politics so I don't end up in trouble.”

Student politics is often aligned to national politics and the two main political parties in the country. Campus elections have over the years been associated with violence and interference from politicians in the two main political parties. As a result of the violence, students are often expelled from tertiary institutions and this has led to a lot of pressure from parents who discourage their children from actively participating.

2. What institutional and structural conditions have enabled/disabled young women's political participation?

The 1991 Sierra Leone constitution on the one hand grants equality to all and on the other restricts equality for women. Section 27 (4) D of the constitution exempts certain areas of the law, such as adoption, marriage and divorce, from protection against discrimination, giving preference to what prevails in tradition. What this means is that women's participation becomes solely dependent on traditional norms of certain communities. For example, in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country, women are not allowed to become paramount chiefs because they are not members of an all male society, membership into which entail a ritual undergone only by men. This traditional stance has a spill over effect whereby women in these regions find it extremely difficult to navigate political spaces dominated by men and are discouraged from participating in their communities.

Political party structures in which women are relegated to women's wings of parties, with no power to influence decisions also militate against women's political participation. Women are absent from the main body of their parties where profound decisions are made and are therefore often unable to advocate for membership into party nomination committees that nominate candidates for elections. As a result, few women are nominated as candidates for their parties. A respondent had this to say:

“My first struggle was with the nomination committee. I went to the meeting and had to face 6 men and 1 woman. What can a single woman on a committee do to get more women nominated? I think it's a deliberate act by our parties to keep women out. If I did not have other connections, I don't think I could have stood a chance with that committee especially since many had been bribed by male candidates.”

This respondent raises the issue of patronage and bribery. Politics in Sierra Leone mostly works on a patronage system in which both male and female politicians often have to align themselves with a political “godfather” or patron who in many cases is also the financier of their campaigns. Men often have more access to patrons because of membership into the secret society as well as old boys' networks, such as alumni associations. Three respondents, who attempted to run for a seat in council indicated that they were not nominated because

their opponents bribed nomination committee members and therefore were awarded the party symbol.

The high cost of nomination fees also discourage and prevent women from running for political office. Over 90% of female councillors interviewed listed the nomination fees as well as campaign finances as barriers to their participation and to those of many other women, who though interested could not raise money for their campaigns.

The first past the post electoral system was also identified by women as limiting women's participation. Three older councillors from Kenema explained that the first elections post-war saw more women, including themselves, being interested in running for elections because the proportional representation system was used. The numbers of women vying for elective positions increased but those elected dropped when the country reverted to the first past the post system.

Pre-war, women became members of parliament mainly through presidential appointments. The first postwar elections of 2002 saw the country's first female presidential candidate and 18 women as representatives in a parliament of 124 members. The local government elections of 2004 saw women clinching 60 of the 473 council seats nationwide. Both elections were conducted using the District Block Representation System (DBRS), another form of the PR, in which the country was divided into districts and voters were required to cast their ballots for political parties rather than individuals. In 2007, the country reverted to the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system because, as was argued by both major political parties, Sierra Leoneans were more accustomed to this system and the district boundaries delimitation process had been successfully completed. As a result only 16 women won seats in a parliament of 124 and 86 women won as councilors out of 425 local council seats. Women at local government did better than those at national politics because, as learnt from this study, many were fully engaged and contributing to the welfare of their communities and as such were chosen by their communities. Some young women (teachers, nurses), who provided services to their communities were able to break into politics because they had been exposed to the discourses around women's political participation, through attending workshops organized by older women activists, and because they were encouraged to run by members of their communities.

However, irrespective of all the sensitizations by women on the importance of women's political participation and the lip service by political parties about supporting female candidates, the most recent elections of 2013 were the most difficult elections for women to date. This is because many were denied symbols by their parties including incumbents who lost their seats. The current number of women in parliament is 15 out of 112 and 87 out of over 400 in local councils. In essence, the lack of support from political parties to increase women's participation in the country's political landscape has resulted in the decrease in their representation in parliament since the end of the civil war. Thus, at the parliamentary level female representation reduced from 14.5% in 2002 to 13.5% in 2007 and to 12.1% in 2012 but has stabilized between 18 % and 19% at the local level.

3. In what ways have the pro-democracy movement led by older women during the war impacted young women's political participation?

The women's peace movement was an integral part of brokering peace in war-torn Sierra Leone. At the peak of war in 1996, women were at the forefront of the consultative

conferences of Bintumani 1 and 2, at which they insisted on elections before peace. Even though the position of women was contrary to that of the ruling NPRC junta, who were pushing for peace before elections, that did not deter them from their own position. The junta eventually relented and elections were conducted in 1996. Again in 2000, when there was political tension between the rebel leader and the government of president Tejan Kabba, women mobilized and marched to Foday Sankoh's residence to appeal with him not to renege on his commitment to the peace process. Since the end of the war, women have formed women-focused non-governmental and community-based organizations that continue to advocate for the consolidation of peace and for the creation of gender-sensitive laws and policies. In essence, the intervention of women in the public-political space changed the nature, course and discourse on the peace process and Sierra Leonean politics in general.

Over 90% of councillors and 70% of respondents in tertiary institutions could articulate the role of women during the war and had some understanding of what the women's peace movement was about. Many, about 60% could recall the role of women in the Bintumani 1 and 2 Conferences while 40% mentioned the story of some traditional women in Koribondo in the East of Sierra Leone who stripped themselves naked to draw the attention of the rebels to the fact that they wanted peace. Many of the women in this act were killed but this incident also had a positive impact as it drew the attention of the international community to the plight of women in Sierra Leone during the war.

Respondents were also able to identify the good work done by women focused non-governmental and community based organizations and the impact of such organizations in their lives. This is an interesting finding because on the one hand it shows the limited access to information on women's contributions to nation building and on the other hand, shows that the impact of women's mobilization during the war is still being felt. About 30% of respondents in tertiary institutions and 100% of female councillors claim to have benefitted from trainings and workshops organized by women's groups. Some female councillors indicated that they were cajoled into running for office by some of the women who spearheaded the pro-democracy movement, while others were supported in various other ways, especially with training.

4. Do young women face the same or different barriers to political participation as older women?

We found out from responses to this question that both young and older women experience the same barriers to participation such as cultural barriers to women's presence in the public arena, lack of finances, fear of violence, intimidation by secret societies, stigma, party structures and lack of political will. Young women also face an added barrier of lack of support from other women, whereby older women already occupying the small political space see younger women as a threat rather than as allies. Young women also experience ageism, wherein they are seen as immature and lacking in experience and responsibility. A councillor from Kono explains:

“ I went to a training organized by an NGO in 2007 and was really inspired. Some women I went to the training with suggested that I contest in the 2008 elections to represent our ward in council. I was taken aback and not sure that I could do it. When I finally accepted the challenge, there was resistance from some of the male elders in my community because they felt that I was too young and therefore not mature.”

Project Outputs

1. The creation of a training manual that was specifically tailored for young women trainers in a way that ensures uniformity and consistency in the delivery of the training. The manual will also serve as a resource as it provides information on the rights of young women to participate in the political arena and critical background information on women's participation. It also provides lessons on self-esteem and confidence and how to run and manage a successful campaign for political office.
2. Three Graduate students (research assistants) received training in research methodology. They were trained in interview methods and participated in the design and execution of the study. They were able to identify their peers in tertiary institution and local councils and conducted preliminary focus group interviews with peers to solicit ideas and suggestions on how to design the study.
3. Twenty students trained as trainers in a workshop on skills and support for young women interested in participating in politics. These women were also involved in the creation of the training materials as well as training 60 of their peers in the three of the four regions chosen for the study.
4. Eighty students provided with leadership and political participation training.
5. Women focused organizations set up in three campuses to support women's political participation in tertiary institutions.
6. Identification and documentation of a comprehensive database of women and human right activists, NGO's and CBO's.

Project Outcomes

The findings of this study can contribute significantly to the limited literature on young women's political participation. In Sierra Leone, young women have had to devise alternative strategies to participate in the political, social and economic spheres. Education was identified as topmost for women's effective political participation and for social and economic mobility. Over 70% of the councilors interviewed indicated that they have had to go back to school to build on their academic qualifications. Some participants aspiring for political office indicated that they have had to get married to men they do not necessarily care about because unmarried women in their communities are neither taken seriously nor considered responsible adults. Three of the women interviewed explained that they had gotten married immediately after they declared their intention to run for office and also claim to know many women who have had to do so. Even though there may be no data to support this claim, anecdotal stories and examples of such practices for both men and women abound. To succeed as politicians and to be considered respectable, women are expected to have husbands they defer to and who will in turn protect them. All the young women in tertiary institutions interviewed for this study indicated that political participation often include becoming members of male dominated social clubs that require secret initiation rituals and taking of oaths for membership. These social clubs are also associated to political

camps/parties. Belonging to a political camp on campus becomes essential for political, social and educational survival. Non-membership leads to marginalization and acts as a barrier to political participation. “Campism” thus becomes a new barrier to young women’s political participation. Its divisive role in determining political outcomes and educational success stood out clearly in this study.

Young women who refuse to join have had to devise other strategies, such as becoming religious or peace activists before launching into a political career. 43 of the respondents indicated that they were members of religious and peace groups before actively participating in politics. 15 respondents had held positions as ministers 2 had contested for the presidency and 1 for the vice presidency. The others were supporters of various political camps. The fact that young women have to devise alternative strategies for participation is a reflection of the fact that politics remains a male domain and is seen as such by both men and women.

Acceptance by the community, through grassroots activism is another important finding of this study. Young women who are teachers and nurses in their communities and are actively involved in community development processes were often urged and supported by community members to vie for political office. All 32 councilors interviewed indicated that they were involved at some level in community work and were provided with trainings in political participation by organization such as the 50/50 Group, NDI and campaign for Good Governance. In essence, grassroots activism and training helped galvanize some women to participate in politics.

An interesting finding in this study is around the issue of mentorship and support by older women’s activists and women’s organizations. Whereas the majority of women in council claim to owe their participation in politics to groups such as the 50:50 Group, Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), National Democratic Institute (NDI) and ENCISS, for encouraging them to run for political office and provided necessary training, the majority of young women in tertiary institutions have neither heard about most of those groups nor benefitted from any trainings. These groups have not been visible or accessible to young women in tertiary institutions. It can be argued that the focus of women’s empowerment groups mainly on women in national politics and not on young women in tertiary institutions has contributed to the invisibility of young women in campus politics and in essence the subsequent low number of women in politics. As some of the participants suggested, the more young women are exposed to and participate in campus politics the likelihood that they may want to participate in national politics.

Education is seen by participants as an enabler to women political participation as it believed to contribute to women’s assertiveness, confidence and knowledge about their rights. Lack of education therefore becomes a barrier. As a result, many female community leaders that are not formally educated hesitate to run for public office even though they are very capable of leading and bringing about desired changes in their communities. In a society with a less than 30% literacy rate for women, this in effect contributes to the low participation of women in politics.

The barriers created by male led secret societies and clubs are evident for both councilors and students in this study. The threat of forced initiation into the *poro*, an all-male secret society, was identified by many councilors as a major obstacle to participation, whereas the initiation ceremonies of “social clubs” in tertiary institutions, which border on cultism, are a serious barrier to young women’s political participation in tertiary institutions.

After the workshops and at the request of participants, each institution was provided with seed money of two hundred and fifty dollars to set up women-centered organizations in their institutions—Northern Polytechnic in Makeni, Njala University in Bo and Fourah bay College in Freetown. Makeni and Freetown have chosen to go with the tentative name of “50/50 College Chapter” and Njala with “Young Women Organizing for Real Change (YWORC).” The main aim of these organizations is to support women’s political participation in tertiary institutions. They also hope to embark on general women’s empowerment sensitization exercises in their institutions addressing issues of sexual harassment, academic excellence and retention of female students in tertiary institutions.

Observations

- ❖ Community and family support especially male members were important and essential in the decision to run for political office.
- ❖ Communities were very proactive in seeking women as candidates
- ❖ Consent was always sought from family members mainly husbands or elders in family such as older brothers.
- ❖ Community activism and type of occupation (teacher, nurse) created the space for women’s political participation. These occupations make young women very visible in their communities, their good deeds are noted and they are repaid by being asked to represent their communities in the political arena.
- ❖ In many situations, civil society groups were instrumental in creating the space for women’s participation by directly going into communities and advocating for the support of women as candidates.
- ❖ The experience sharing and training facilitated by female politicians from other parts of Africa served as motivation for many Sierra Leonean female political aspirants.
- ❖ The provision of campaign materials such as posters and t-shirts by some civil society organizations for aspirants eased the financial burden of many aspirants.
- ❖ Men were still key players and in many instances determined whether a woman participated or not politically.

- ❖ There is a big support gap for young women in tertiary institutions. There is no presence of CSOs on campus that provide information, education, support or mentorship for those who are willing or interested in participating in politics.
- ❖ There is undue pressure on councilors to provide various financial supports to community members—from paying school fees to contributing to funerals, wedding ceremonies and initiation rites.
- ❖ Communities are insisting on choosing and presenting their candidates to their political parties for the award of symbols and threatening to vote against their parties if they dare to impose candidates on them.
- ❖ The study shows that councilors feel obligated to lobby NGO's to provide basic facilities for the wards they represent in council. These include the construction of schools, health centers, community centres, markets, water wells, bridges, donation of learning materials, awareness training for their communities, and also the establishment of agricultural projects. The importance of this cannot be overstated as it is a determinant factor in their chances for reelection.
- ❖ Councilors feel they have become very empowered through the work they have been able to do in their communities. Politics has enabled them to improve themselves educationally and has exposed them to travel both internally and externally. Their travel experience has also helped them to become more accepting of people irrespective of tribe, class, party and to be more responsive to the needs of the people they represent.
- ❖ The majority of councilors interviewed declared their intention to seek reelection.
- ❖ Young women in tertiary institutions need more mentors to encourage and guide them to become more politically active. They also need to be provided with requisite skills for effective participation.

Annex 1: Survey questions.

Survey on young Women's political participation

Instructions for community members

The Gender Research and Documentation Centre and the Political Science Department, USL, in collaboration The 50/50 Group is conducting a national study on young women's political participation in local government and tertiary institutions. You are kindly requested to respond to the questions below in order to provide preliminary data for the study. You are requested to provide your name and telephone number just in case we want to do a follow up interview with you. You are however not obligated to provide us with your information and can decline to do so.

Name:

Tel number:

Sex:

Age:

Community:

Occupation:

1. Do young women participate in politics in your community? If yes, how? If no, why not?
2. Do you think that young women should participate in politics? Why or why not?
3. What do you think needs to be done to encourage young women to participate in politics in your community?
4. What do you think prevents young women from participating?
5. Were there any young female candidates in your community in the last elections? If, yes did you vote for any? why?

Survey on young Women's political participation

Instructions for gender/human rights activist, NGOs and CBOs

The Gender Research and Documentation Center and the Political Science Department, USL, in collaboration The 50/50 Group is conducting a national study on young women's political participation in local government and tertiary institutions. You are kindly requested to respond to the questions below in order to provide preliminary data for the study. You are requested to provide your name and telephone number just in case we want to do a follow up interview with you. You are however not obligated to provide us with your information and can decline to do so.

Name:

Tel number:

Sex:

Age:

Name of organization:

Position held:

1. Do you or your organization work on promoting young women's political participation? In what ways?
2. Do you have any programs for young women's political participation?
3. How would you describe the work that you do?
4. What do you think gender activism is?
5. What form did it take before, during and after the war? Or What do you think constituted gender activism during the war?

Survey on young Women's political participation

Instructions

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Name:

Tel number:

Sex:

Age:

Course of Study/dept:

Year:

1. Have you ever been involved in politics?
2. If yes, in what ways have you participated in politics? - On a partisan basis? In students politics?
3. If no, why not?
4. Are you a member of any club, org or political party?
5. When did you become involved and why?
6. Which role/positions do you hold?
7. How many young women do you know that are currently involved in politics?
8. In what way(s) are they involved?

9. What are some of the things that influenced you to participate in Campus or Local Council Politics?

10. What are some of the things that /enabled your participation or made it easy for you to participate?

11. Do you know of organizations that facilitate young women's participation in politics?
If yes, please state?

12. How effective do you think they are?

13. What you think these organizations do?

14. What are some of their programmes that facilitate young women's participation in politics?

15. How effective are these programs?

16. How do you think these programs can be improved?

17. What other programmes do you think will be relevant to enhance young women's participation in politics?

Annex 2-Interview Questions

Research on Young Women's Political participation

Questions for current and potential councillors

1. Please briefly give us your political history. This includes your participation in community/national politics as well as the 2007/2008 elections and before becoming a councilor. Where and when you started? Why you participate, etc.
2. What made it possible for you to participate in politics?
3. What do you think enabled other young women to participate in the parliamentary elections of 2007 and the local government elections in 2008?
4. Do you have a political mentor (s) or someone (people) who encourage (s) you to participate in politics? If so, how do they do so?
5. Do you know of any organizations that work on issues of political participation?
6. If so, what do these organizations offer in terms of services?
7. Have any of these NGOs been an influence in your participating in politics?
8. Did you attend any political participation workshop before, during and after your campaign?
9. Where do you receive assistance from?
10. In what ways have you been influenced by older women's activists?
11. In what ways have you been assisted by older women's activists?
12. What barriers do you think prevent young women from participating in politics?
13. Do you think the challenges are the same faced by older women? Men?
14. If yes, why? If no, why not?
15. How have you been able to overcome these challenges?
16. What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?
17. What strategies do you think other young women have used?
18. What do you think needs to be done to encourage younger women to participate in politics?
19. What has being actively engaged in politics done for you? Others?
20. What impact have you made as a politician?
21. Did you head or were a member of a community based organization before becoming actively involved in politics?
22. If yes, what activities did your organization involve in?
23. What challenges did you face?
24. How has your work in your community impacted on your participation in politics?
25. What do you know about the pro-democracy movement during the war?
26. What would you say is the impact of that movement on the current status of women?

Young Women's Political Participation

Questions for Focus groups

1. Have you ever been involved in politics?
2. If yes, in what ways have you participated in politics? - On a partisan basis? In students politics?
3. If no, why not?
4. What are some of the things that influenced you to participate in Campus or Local Council Politics?
5. What do you think needs to be done to encourage female students to participate in campus politics and younger women to participate in politics in general?
6. What are some of the things that /enabled your participation?
7. Do you know of organizations that facilitate young women's participation in politics?
8. What are some of their programmes that facilitate young women's participation in politics?
9. What barriers do you think prevent young women from participating in politics?
10. Do you think the challenges are the same faced by older women? Men?
11. If yes, why? If no, why not?
12. How have you been able to overcome these challenges?
13. What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?
14. What strategies do you think other young women have used?
15. What do you think needs to be done to encourage younger women to participate in politics?
16. Do you or did you ever head or were a member of a community based organization before becoming actively involved in politics?
17. Have you ever attended any political participation workshop?
18. What do you know about the pro-democracy movement during the war?
19. What would you say is the impact of that movement?

Research on Young Women's Political participation

Questions for Tertiary Institutions

1. Please briefly give us your political history. This includes your participation on and off campus. Where and when you started? How you participate. Why you participate, etc.
2. Do many young women participate in campus politics?
3. If yes, why and how?
4. If no, why?
5. What has being actively engaged in campus politics done for you? Others?
6. Do you have a political mentor (s) or someone (people) who encourage (s) you to participate in politics? If so, how do they do so?
7. Do you know of any organizations that work on issues of political participation?
8. If so, what do these organizations offer in terms of services?
9. In what ways have you and/or other young women on campus been assisted to participate?
10. Did you attend any political participation workshop before, during and after your involvement in campus politics?
11. If yes, what was the focus of these workshops, how effective were these workshops and what impact have they had on you?
12. In your opinion, what are the barriers that prevent young women from participating in politics on campus and generally? What has been your own experience?
13. Do you think the challenges are the same faced by older women? Men?
14. If yes, why? If no, why not?
15. How have you been able to overcome these challenges?
16. What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?
17. What do you think needs to be done to encourage female students to participate in campus politics and younger women to participate in politics in general?
18. Do you head or are you a member of a community based organization?
19. If yes, what activities is your organization involved in?
20. What challenges does your organization face?
21. How has your work in the community impacted on your participation in politics?
22. In what ways have you been influenced by older women's activists?
23. In what ways have you been assisted by older women's activists?
24. What do you know about the pro-democracy movement during the war?
25. What would you say is the impact of that movement on the current status of women?

