

Where Have our investments in women gone?

An Impact Assessment of the GEWE ACT of 2022 on Women's Participation in Parliament and Agricultural Productivity in Sierra Leone

Policy Brief 006/March 2025



Acronyms

- ADB	African Development Bank
- APC	All People's Congress
- AVDP	Agricultural Value Chain Development Project
- C4C	Coalition for Change
- GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
- FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
- FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
- GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
- IGR	Institute for Governance Reform
- IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
- MAF	Ministry of Agriculture
- MoGCA	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
- MP	Member of Parliament
- NGC	National Grand Coalition
- NPAC	Public Accounts Committee
- PCMP	Paramount Chief Members of Parliament
- SCP	Smallholder Commercialization Programme
- SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
- UN	United Nations
- UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
- UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
- UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
- WELP	Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods Project

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE	5
2.1. CONTEXT OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN SIERRA LEONE.....	5
2.2. OBJECTIVES AND KEY PROVISIONS OF THE GEWE ACT 2022	5
2.3. KEY PROVISIONS OF THE GEWE ACT 2022 INCLUDE:	6
3. METHODOLOGY	6
3.1. DATA COLLECTION	6
3.1.1. <i>Archival Data from Parliamentary Attendance</i>	<i>6</i>
3.1.2. <i>Surveys of Farmers in Select Districts Including Women Farmers</i>	<i>6</i>
3.1. DATA ANALYSES	7
3.2.1. <i>Correlation Between Female Representation in Parliament and Legislative Productivity</i>	<i>7</i>
3.2.2. <i>Evaluation of Financial Assistance Outcomes on Women Farmers and Agricultural Productivity.....</i>	<i>7</i>
4. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS	7
4.1. FEMALE REPRESENTATION BY PARTY ACROSS THE LAST THREE PARLIAMENTS IN SIERRA LEONE	7
4.1. GENDER REPRESENTATION WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT (2012–2028).....	8
4.2. GENDER AND AGRICULTURE – ACCESS TO LOANS AND GRANTS IN SIERRA LEONE	9
5. FINDINGS FROM DATA ANALYSES.....	10
5.1. WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT	10
5.1.1. <i>Comparison of total parliamentary attendance rates before and after the GEWE Act</i>	<i>10</i>
5.1.2. <i>Comparison of female parliamentary attendance rates before and after GEWE.....</i>	<i>10</i>
5.1.3. <i>Party-Based Attendance Patterns in the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments (2018 vs. 2023)</i>	<i>11</i>
5.1.4. <i>Effects on parliamentary effectiveness measured through general attendance.</i>	<i>12</i>
5.1.5. <i>Effects on parliamentary effectiveness measured through individual attendance of both women and men. 13</i>	<i>13</i>
5.1.6. <i>Analysis of Gendered Attendance Patterns in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)</i>	<i>14</i>
5.1.7. <i>Challenges and opportunities arising from increased women’s representation.....</i>	<i>15</i>
5.2. AGRICULTURAL GRANTS TO WOMEN FARMERS	16
5.2.1. <i>Sample of farmers</i>	<i>16</i>
5.2.2. <i>Impact of extending agricultural grants to women farmers.</i>	<i>16</i>
5.2.3. <i>Comparative analysis of agricultural output before and after grant allocation.</i>	<i>17</i>
5.2.4. <i>Barriers faced by women farmers in accessing grants and technical support.</i>	<i>18</i>
6. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF GEWE.....	19
7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEWE ACT IN SIERRA LEONE.....	20
8. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	21
9. CONCLUSION	23
10. References	23
11. Appendix 1:.....	24
APPENDIX 1: FEMALE MPS 2012 TO 2017.....	24
APPENDIX 2: FEMALE MPS 2018 -2-23.....	24
APPENDIX 3: FEMALE MPS 2023 -2028	25
APPENDIX 4: FEMALE CHAIRPERSONS - SESSIONAL COMMITTEE LIST 2024.....	26

1. Executive Summary

This brief presents an assessment of the impact of a landmark law, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022, on women's participation in parliament and agricultural productivity in Sierra Leone. Enacted in 2022, the purpose of the GEWE law was to increase women's representation in public and private institutions and expand economic opportunities to access finance, land, as well as business incentives. Among its key provisions is the requirement that at least 30% of elected and appointed positions be held by women, including in Parliament, local councils, and corporate leadership. The Act aims to dismantle historic structural barriers to women's participation and institutionalize gender equity across governance systems.

After three years of implementation of GEWE, this paper attempts to answer two policy questions: a) Is increased women's representation in parliament making parliament effective in attendance at the plenary and committee sittings? Is increased support to women farmers in agriculture leading to greater food productivity, particularly rice? The study utilized official records of parliamentary sittings in 2018/19 and 2023/24 and committee meetings to produce a comparative analysis of the effect of increased representation parliament. It also analysed data collected by IGR on the yields of 2,000 smallholder farmers supported by Government of Sierra Leone's (GoSL) Ministry of Agriculture to understand the distributive impact agricultural support on productivity of men and women farmers.

The study finds that while the proportion of women in Parliament rose significantly from 13% in 2018 to 30% in 2023, women are underrepresented in leadership roles. Only 7 (seven), 4 (four) from the SLPP and 3 (three) from APC, of the 40 committees are led by women. That is, only 17.5% of the committees are headed by women, far below the threshold established by GEWE Act. Data also reveals that female MPs outperform their male counterparts in parliamentary attendance. Even with their 25% member of the committee, female MPs attended 62.07% of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) sittings compared to male MPs (57.09%). These figures reinforce findings from the broader parliamentary dataset, where women demonstrated greater commitment to legislative discipline and institutional reliability. However, there is a general decline in parliamentary attendance, particularly among ruling party MPs, with regression analysis indicating a positive association between female attendance and overall institutional participation.

In the agricultural sector, women farmers supported by the GoSL experienced greater yield increases (126%) than their male (49%) counterparts receiving the same support. However, more male smallholder farmers (8.27%) are receiving agricultural support than females (5.73%).

Based on the research findings, the paper recommends:

- a) Charity begins at home: Parliament should consider increasing women's representation in leadership role within Parliament to reflect the 30% representation required by law.
- b) GoSL to expand women-targeted agricultural grants and support services for women farmers to increase overall agricultural productivity.

- c) Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA) to strengthen the institutional capacity and enforcement mechanisms for GEWE-2022 compliance as well as develop a robust monitoring and evaluation systems with gender-disaggregated indicators to track progress and impact.

These measures are critical to ensuring that the GEWE Act achieves its full transformative potential and contributes meaningfully to inclusive national development.

2. Background and Rationale

2.1.Context of Gender Inequality in Sierra Leone

Despite notable progress in recent years, women and girls continue to face systemic challenges across social, economic, and political spheres. Socially, entrenched patriarchal norms and cultural practices such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and limited access to education disproportionately affect women and girls, particularly in rural communities. Economically, women constitute much of the informal workforce and are often unrepresented in formal employment, financial services, and land ownership. Historically, women's participation in decision-making remains low. Female representation in Sierra Leone's national legislature hovered around 13%, far below the global average. These structural barriers have contributed to a cycle of exclusion, limiting women's voices in governance and policy-making processes, and undermining broader development outcomes.

The objective of this policy brief is to provide evidence-based analysis and practical policy recommendations to support the effective implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022, with a specific focus on increasing women's participation in governance and improving their access to agricultural support. The brief draws on recent research examining the evolving role of women in Parliament—including the significant increase in female representation in the Sixth Parliament—as well as the persistent barriers women face in accessing loans and grants in the agriculture sector.

The rationale for this policy brief stems from the recognition that legal reforms such as the GEWE Act, while necessary, must be matched with deliberate policy actions, institutional support, and inclusive financing mechanisms to ensure transformative impact. The expanded role of women in Parliament presents a critical opportunity to strengthen advocacy, oversight, and policy influence for broader gender equity. At the same time, addressing women's limited access to agricultural finance is vital for unlocking their economic potential and contributing to national food security and rural development. This policy brief therefore aims to inform decision-makers, development partners, and civil society actors on actionable pathways to accelerate gender equality through political inclusion and economic empowerment.

2.2.Objectives and Key Provisions of the GEWE Act 2022

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act of 2022, represents a bold legislative response to address the persistent gender disparities in Sierra Leone. The Act amongst other things aims to promote women's full and equal participation in all spheres of public life, particularly within political, administrative, and economic institutions. Its primary objective is to

establish a legal framework that mandates affirmative action and institutional reforms to close the gender gap.

2.3.Key provisions of the GEWE Act 2022 include:

- (i) **A legal quota requiring a minimum of 30% representation of women** in elected and appointed positions across public and private sectors, including Parliament, local councils, political party lists, and boards of public institutions.
- (ii) **Equal employment opportunities**, mandating gender-balanced recruitment, promotion, and leadership development in public institutions and private sector institutions.
- (iii) **Support for women’s economic empowerment**, including provisions for access to finance, land rights, entrepreneurship programs, and business incentives for women-led enterprises.
- (iv) **Mechanisms for accountability and enforcement**, including penalties for non-compliance, oversight responsibilities by the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs, and periodic progress reporting by institutions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

3.1.1. Archival Data from Parliamentary Attendance

This policy brief draws on archival records from the Parliamentary Attendance Registry, focusing on a six-month period at the beginning of both the Fifth Parliament (2018–2023) and the Sixth Parliament (2023–2028). This data provides a valuable lens through which to assess the level of female participation in legislative processes, their engagement with parliamentary business, and overall legislative productivity during the initial stages of each parliamentary term. The analysis also considers the composition of parliamentary committees and the frequency of contributions by female MPs in plenary sessions. The data comprises of information from 32 sittings in 2018 and 26 sittings in 2023 for a total of 58 sittings.

3.1.2. Surveys of Farmers in Select Districts Including Women Farmers

In assessing access to agricultural finance, primary data was collected through a structured survey of 2,000 smallholder farmers across selected districts, including Bo, Bombali, Kenema, Kono, Kailahun, and Moyamba. The sampling included both male and female farmers, with a deliberate oversampling of women farmers to ensure gender-disaggregated insights. Among the respondents, a subset had received agricultural grants or loans from government and donor-supported schemes, such as those under the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP) and the Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP). The survey captured data on access to and usage of farming inputs, yields, market access, training received, and perceived barriers to financial access, with specific attention to gender dynamics.

3.1.Data Analyses

3.2.1. Correlation Between Female Representation in Parliament and Legislative Productivity

Two levels of analysis were conducted to explore the relationship between female representation and legislative performance across the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments.

At the first level, the analysis focused on individual MPs attendance patterns by gender. A logistic regression model was employed, using gender as the main explanatory variable, to determine whether female MPs were more or less likely to attend parliamentary sittings compared to their male counterparts. This level of analysis helps to quantify whether gender influences attendance behavior at the individual level across the two parliamentary terms.

At the second level, the analysis examined aggregate attendance patterns per parliamentary sitting. Specifically, it measured the percentage of female MPs in attendance during each sitting, alongside the overall attendance rate of all MPs. A regression analysis was conducted, with the percentage of female MPs attending each session as the primary explanatory variable, to assess its influence on overall attendance rates. This approach was used to determine whether higher female attendance is associated with improved collective parliamentary participation.

Both levels of analysis contribute to understanding whether greater female inclusion in Parliament—as promoted under the GEWE Act—correlates with stronger institutional commitment and participation, thereby informing broader discussions on gender and governance effectiveness.

3.2.2. Evaluation of Financial Assistance Outcomes on Women Farmers and Agricultural Productivity

The farmer survey data was analyzed to evaluate the impact of financial assistance on women’s agricultural outcomes, comparing recipients and non-recipients across a major key indicator; yearly yield assessed as the kilograms of harvest. The analysis also explored structural barriers such as access to land, extension service delivery and financial help, helping to assess whether existing agricultural finance schemes are effectively reaching and benefiting women. The findings contribute to understanding how gender-responsive agricultural financing can be scaled to support women’s economic empowerment in line with the goals of the GEWE Act.

4. Literature Review and Context Analysis

4.1. Female Representation by Party Across the Last Three Parliaments in Sierra Leone

Table 1 below illustrate how female representation in Sierra Leone’s Parliament has significantly increased over the last three legislative terms, both in absolute numbers and in party distribution, though still falling short of the national and international benchmarks for gender parity. In the Fourth Parliament (2012–2017), only 16 women served as MPs, constituting 13% of the total 124 members, with the APC contributing 9 female MPs and SLPP contributing 7 while no women were represented among the Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMPs). The Fifth Parliament (2018–2023) maintained a similar level of female representation—19 women (13%) out of 146 MPs. Notably, it was not until the Sixth Parliament (2023–2028)—following the

enactment of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022 mandating at least 30% female representation—that a significant increase was recorded: 43 women were elected, accounting for 29% of the 149 MPs. Of these, the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) contributed 26 female MPs (60.4%), All People’s Congress (APC) 16 (37.2%), and Paramount Chief Members of Parliament (PCMPs) one female member (2.3%). This notable improvement is largely attributed to the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Act, which mandates a minimum of 30% female representation in government and public institutions.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Fourth Parliament (2012–2017)</i>	<i>Fifth Parliament (2018– 2023)</i>	<i>Sixth Parliament (2023– 2028)</i>
<i>Total MPs</i>	124	146	149
<i>Female MPs</i>	16	19	43
<i>% Female Representation</i>	13%	13%	29%
<i>Main Political Parties Represented</i>	APC, SLPP	SLPP, APC, C4C, NGC, Independent	SLPP, APC
<i>Party with Most Female MPs</i>	APC (9 female MPs)	SLPP (8 female MPs)	SLPP (26 female MPs)
<i>Key Highlights</i>	Female MPs concentrated in Tonkolili (APC) and Moyamba (SLPP); only two parties represented.	Slight increase in party diversity; female MPs from 4 parties and 1 independent; stagnant female % overall.	Significant increase due to GEWE Act (30% quota); better regional balance in repre

4.1. Gender Representation within Political Parties in Parliament (2012–2028)

An analysis of female representation as a proportion of each party’s total parliamentary seats over the last three parliamentary terms in Sierra Leone reveals important insights into the degree of gender inclusion within political party structures, beyond absolute numbers. While the All-People’s Congress (APC) contributed the highest number of female MPs in the Fourth Parliament (2012–2017), this accounted for only 12.86% of its total membership, whereas the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) achieved a slightly higher proportional representation of 16.67% of its members being female.

<i>Parliament Term</i>	<i>SLPP</i>	<i>APC</i>	<i>C4C</i>	<i>NGC</i>	<i>Independent</i>
<i>Fourth Parliament (2012– 2017)</i>	16.67%	12.86%	–	–	–
<i>Fifth Parliament (2018– 2023)</i>	16.33%	10.29%	25.00%	25.00%	33.33%
<i>Sixth Parliament (2023– 2028)</i>	32.10%	29.63%	–	–	–

In the Fifth Parliament (2018–2023), the overall representation of women remained stagnant at 13% of the total House, but intra-party gender ratios show nuanced variation. SLPP’s proportion

of female MPs remained about 16%, while APC's share fell to 10.29%, indicating a lower prioritization of gender inclusion despite numerical presence. Interestingly, smaller parties such as C4C and NGC showed higher proportions of female representation—25% each, and independent MPs recorded the highest female share (33.33%), albeit from a smaller base. This suggests that emerging parties and independent platforms may have offered more favorable entry points for women, although their overall political influence remained marginal.

A transformative shift occurred in the Sixth Parliament (2023–2028) following the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, which mandates at least 30% female representation. The SLPP significantly increased its internal gender representation to 32.10%. Similarly, the APC also demonstrated considerable improvement, reaching 29.63% female representation—a notable leap from previous terms.

These figures highlight that while overall female representation has improved, progress has largely been driven by structural reforms like the GEWE Act, rather than internal party transformation alone. Going forward, sustainable gender equity in politics will depend not only on legal quotas but also on internal party reforms, leadership positioning for women, and institutional accountability to maintain and deepen inclusive representation across party lines.

4.2. Gender and Agriculture – Access to Loans and Grants in Sierra Leone

Despite accounting for over 60% of the agricultural workforce (FAO, 2018; MAF, 2019), women face persistent barriers in accessing critical resources such as land, finance, and extension services. Structural inequalities—rooted in socio-cultural norms, limited land ownership, low financial literacy, and exclusion from leadership roles—have continued to marginalize women's contributions and hinder their economic empowerment (World Bank, 2020). Studies reveal that women are underrepresented in formal credit systems, with only 15% accessing formal loans compared to over 40% of men, often relying on informal lending mechanisms like community savings groups, which provide limited capital for growth. Moreover, most financial institutions require land as collateral—yet women's access to land remains restricted under customary tenure systems, despite reforms such as the Customary Land Rights Act 2022 (Namati, 2020).

To address these disparities, the government and development partners have introduced several genders-responsive interventions such as the Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP-GAFSP), Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP), and the Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods Project (WELP), which aim to improve women's access to finance, inputs, and agribusiness training (MAF, 2016; IFAD, 2021; GoSL, 2022). The enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022 marks a significant policy milestone, mandating a minimum of 30% female inclusion in public and private sector institutions, including agriculture (GoSL, 2022). However, the literature emphasizes that beyond legislative reform, effective implementation, institutional coordination, and tailored financial products are critical to achieving transformative change (World Bank, 2020; UNCDF, 2020). Addressing gender inequality in agricultural finance is essential not only for advancing women's empowerment but also for enhancing productivity and driving inclusive economic development in Sierra Leone.

5. Findings from Data Analyses

5.1. Women's Representation in Parliament

5.1.1. Comparison of total parliamentary attendance rates before and after the GEWE Act

The table presents a comparative summary of individual Member of Parliament (MP) attendance rates between the years 2018 (Fifth Parliament) and 2023 (Sixth Parliament). The data highlights a notable decline in attendance over time, with the proportion of MP's absenteeism significantly increasing from 8.78% in 2018 to 19.20% in 2023.

This trend suggests a deterioration in institutional participation, despite the fact that the Sixth Parliament is operating under the newly implemented Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, which has increased the numerical representation of women in Parliament. While earlier regression analyses demonstrated that female MPs positively influence attendance rates, the overall decline in attendance observed here indicates the presence of countervailing structural or institutional factors undermining broader engagement.

One plausible explanation is that the decline in parliamentary attendance in 2023 may reflect both ruling party complacency due to incumbency and majority dominance, and opposition disillusionment over limited influence in a heavily SLPP-controlled legislature.

<i>Total Attendance</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>No</i>	8.78%	19.20%	13.47%
<i>Yes</i>	91.22%	80.80%	86.53%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%

5.1.2. Comparison of female parliamentary attendance rates before and after GEWE

The table below provides a comparative overview of female MP attendance rates between 2018 (Fifth Parliament) and 2023 (Sixth Parliament). The data reveals a modest decline in attendance among female MPs over the two periods, with the proportion of women attending parliamentary sittings decreasing from 88.39% in 2018 to 83.36% in 2023. Consequently, the share of female MPs not attending increased from 11.61% to 16.64%.

While this decline is notable, it is important to interpret these figures within the broader context of overall parliamentary attendance, which also experienced a more substantial decline over the same period—from 91.22% in 2018 to 80.80% in 2023. The comparison suggests that female MPs have consistently maintained higher attendance rates than the parliamentary average, underscoring their continued commitment to legislative participation. In both years, female attendance rates remained above the overall average, reaffirming findings from regression analyses that demonstrated a positive association between female presence and institutional engagement.

However, the slight decline in women's attendance in 2023 warrants further reflection. It may reflect broader institutional or systemic constraints affecting all MPs—such as reduced session frequency or weakened enforcement mechanisms. Nevertheless, female MPs continue to

outperform their male counterparts in terms of consistent participation, reinforcing their role as drivers of legislative discipline and institutional reliability.

<i>Female Attendance</i>	<i>Year</i>	
	2018	2023
<i>0</i>	11.61%	16.64%
<i>1</i>	88.39%	83.36%
<i>Total</i>	100.00%	100.00%

In conclusion, despite a modest decline, female MPs remain more reliable in attendance compared to the parliamentary average, and their sustained engagement highlights the importance of deepening their roles not only numerically, but also substantively—through enhanced leadership roles, committee participation, and policy influence. Ensuring that this high level of participation is translated into greater influence within parliamentary processes is critical to maximizing the gains of the GEWE Act 2022 and sustaining inclusive legislative governance in Sierra Leone.

5.1.3. Party-Based Attendance Patterns in the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments (2018 vs. 2023)

The data provides valuable insights into attendance behavior across political parties in Sierra Leone’s Parliament, revealing both inter-party variation and temporal shifts between 2018 and 2023. In the Fifth Parliament (2018), the overall attendance rate was relatively high, with 91.22% of MPs attending sittings, and only 8.78% registering absence. Among the parties, APC (92.78%) and SLPP (92.11%) showed the highest attendance rates. Smaller parties also demonstrated commendable participation: C4C (91.02%), NGC (90.63%), and PC MPs (83.96%). The only notable outlier was the Independent MPs, with a significantly lower attendance rate of 78.13%, likely due to weaker party oversight and accountability structures.

<i>Attendance:</i>	<i>Party</i>						
	APC	C4C	Independent	NGC	PC	SLPP	Total
<i>2018</i>							
<i>0</i>	7.22%	8.98%	21.88%	9.38%	16.04%	7.89%	8.78%
<i>1</i>	92.78%	91.02%	78.13%	90.63%	83.96%	92.11%	91.22%
<i>Total</i>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

By contrast, in the Sixth Parliament (2023), there is a marked decline in attendance across all parties, with the overall rate dropping to 80.80%, a sharp 10.4 percentage point reduction from 2018. Interestingly, PC MPs recorded the highest attendance rate (86.54%) in 2023, an improvement from their 2018 figure. APC’s attendance rate also declined to 81.98%, while the SLPP, despite holding a commanding majority and being the ruling party, registered the lowest attendance rate at 79.01%. This shift suggests a possible complacency effect associated with incumbency, as ruling party MPs may perceive lower urgency to participate actively in parliamentary proceedings. Conversely, the reduction in APC attendance may reflect opposition MPs’ disillusionment or strategic

<i>Attendance:</i>	<i>Party</i>			
	APC	PC	SLPP	Total
<i>2023</i>				
<i>0</i>	18.02%	13.46%	20.99%	19.20%
<i>1</i>	81.98%	86.54%	79.01%	80.80%
<i>Total</i>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

disengagement, possibly driven by perceptions of legislative ineffectiveness in a Parliament dominated by the SLPP.

In summary, the data demonstrates that while attendance was generally robust in 2018 across all parties, the 2023 decline reflects deeper institutional and political dynamics, including ruling party complacency, opposition demoralization, and the changing structure of party representation under a Proportional Representation system. These trends raise critical questions about parliamentary accountability, legislative effectiveness, and the impact of political context on institutional performance.

5.1.4. Effects on parliamentary effectiveness measured through general attendance.

The aspect of the study employed linear regression modelling to investigate the determinants of total attendance per parliamentary sitting, focusing on the influence of female MP attendance and year, while controlling for other variables not shown in the table. The dependent variable is the total number of MPs present per sitting, serving as a proxy for overall institutional engagement.

<i>Total attendance</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>
<i>Female total attendance</i>	3.00	0.02
<i>Year</i>		
2023	-66.50	0.37
_cons	79.27	0.39

The results indicate a strong positive relationship between female MP attendance and total parliamentary attendance. The coefficient for female attendance ($\beta = 3.002$) suggests that for every additional female MP present at a sitting, total MP attendance increases by approximately 3 members. This relationship is statistically significant, as indicated by the small standard error (0.0197), suggests that female presence has a positive institutional effect, potentially enhancing the collective participation of MPs.

On the other hand, the 2023 has a substantial and negative effect on attendance. The coefficient for 2023 is -66.50, implying that when parliamentary sittings are dominated by MPs elected in 2023, overall attendance decreases by an average of 66.5 MPs, compared to those under the 2018 elections system.

The general decline in parliamentary attendance observed in 2023 may, in part, be attributed to the dynamics of incumbency and political dominance, particularly the arrogance often associated with the party in control of the State House. The fact that the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)—the ruling party with a commanding majority—registered lower attendance rates compared to the All-People's Congress (APC), the main opposition party, suggests a degree of complacency among ruling party MPs, who may feel less pressure to participate actively given their numerical advantage. On the opposition side, the decline in attendance may reflect a resignation to political marginalization, with some APC MPs perceiving their legislative contributions as inconsequential in a Parliament overwhelmingly controlled by the SLPP. This sense of institutional futility may discourage regular participation, reinforcing a disengagement loop that undermines the overall effectiveness of parliamentary oversight and democratic deliberation.

We further changed the dependent variable to attendance rate per parliamentary sitting—defined as the proportion of MPs present during a session—again based on the two key explanatory variables: the number of female MPs attending each sitting and the year 2023 which saw opposition boycott of parliament at the beginning of the session.

The results show a statistically significant positive association between female attendance and overall attendance rate. The coefficient for female attendance ($\beta = 0.0202$) indicates that for each additional female MP present in a sitting, the attendance rate increases by approximately 2 percentage points. Given the extremely small standard error (0.00013), this effect is highly precise and robust. These findings reinforce earlier analyses, confirming that female participation in legislative sessions is a strong predictor of overall institutional engagement, possibly due to enhanced professionalism, peer influence, or symbolic leadership effects that encourage broader MP attendance.

In contrast, 2023 continues to show a significant negative effect on attendance rates. The coefficient of -0.4529 implies that sittings in 2023 are associated with a 45.3 percentage point reduction in the attendance rate. This is a substantial decrease and provides compelling empirical support for the argument that super majority and control of the statehouse by the same party may weaken MP accountability and commitment.

5.1.5. Effects on parliamentary effectiveness measured through individual attendance of both women and men.

This aspect of the study employed a logistic regression model to investigate the determinants of Members of Parliament's (MPs) attendance in Sierra Leone, using data from parliamentary attendance registries during the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments. The analysis explores how various factors—including gender composition in sittings, political party affiliation, MP gender, and the electoral system—affect the likelihood of MPs attending parliamentary sessions. The model uses odds ratios to estimate the probability of attendance, with the All People's Congress (APC) and the constituency-based representation system serving as reference categories.

<i>MP Attendance</i>		<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>
<i>Total female attendance</i>		1.15	0.01
<i>party</i>			
<i>C4C</i>		0.84	0.19
<i>Independent</i>		0.29	0.07
<i>NGC</i>		0.81	0.25
<i>PC</i>		0.76	0.09
<i>SLPP</i>		0.83	0.06
<i>female</i>		1.08	0.09
<i>Year</i>			
<i>2023</i>		0.04	0.01
<i>_cons</i>		0.97	0.16

The results show that the number of female MPs present in a sitting has a significant and positive effect on overall attendance. Specifically, for each additional female MP in attendance, the odds of any given MP attending increase by approximately 14.8% (odds ratio = 1.1476). This suggests

that greater female presence in parliamentary sessions may have a positive peer effect, potentially contributing to an environment of increased accountability or professionalism that influences broader participation.

Political party affiliation also emerged as a significant predictor of attendance. Compared to MPs from the APC, MPs from C4C, NGC, Paramount Chiefs (PC), and SLPP all demonstrated lower odds of attendance. Notably, SLPP MPs were found to be 17% less likely to attend sessions compared to their APC counterparts (odds ratio = 0.83), indicating a substantial attendance gap.

Gender was also a significant factor influencing attendance. Female MPs were found to be approximately 7.7% more likely to attend parliamentary sittings than male MPs (odds ratio = 1.0765). This aligns with previous empirical findings in other parliamentary contexts that suggest women often exhibit higher levels of legislative discipline and institutional commitment.

In summary, the regression results underscore the influence of gender dynamics, political party structures, and institutional design on legislative behavior. The findings not only highlight the positive impact of female representation on parliamentary attendance but also point to potential institutional weaknesses in party dominance and incumbency arrogance. These insights carry important policy implications, particularly in the context of GEWE Act implementation, electoral reforms, and strategies for improving legislative effectiveness in Sierra Leone.

5.1.6. Analysis of Gendered Attendance Patterns in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

The attendance data from the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) reveals moderately high participation levels overall, with 58.33% of sittings attended on average. However, when disaggregated by gender, some important nuances emerge. Female members attended 62.07% of PAC sittings, slightly outperforming their male counterparts who recorded 57.09% attendance. These figures reinforce earlier findings from the broader parliamentary dataset, where women demonstrated greater institutional commitment and attendance consistency.

Despite these positive attendance patterns by women, the committee remains male-dominated in both numbers and leadership. Of the twelve committee members, only three are women, representing just 25% of total membership, which is below the 30% threshold prescribed by the GEWE Act. Furthermore, both the chairperson and deputy chairperson positions are held by men, which further entrenches gender imbalances in decision-making power and limits women’s influence on committee direction and oversight functions.

<i>Attendance Freq.</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>0</i>	145	41.67
<i>1</i>	203	58.33
<i>Total</i>	348	100

The data thus suggests that while female MPs in the PAC exhibit strong participation and commitment, their underrepresentation in numbers and absence from leadership roles undermines the potential for substantive gender inclusion. Enhancing women’s representation in key oversight committees like the PAC is critical, not only for promoting gender equity but also for strengthening the transparency and accountability functions of Parliament through more diverse and inclusive perspectives.

5.1.7. Challenges and opportunities arising from increased women's representation.

The findings from the logistic regression analysis reveal critical insights into the implications of increased female participation in Sierra Leone's Parliament, particularly following the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act. As the data suggests, female MPs exhibit higher levels of attendance compared to their male counterparts, and their presence in parliamentary sittings positively correlates with overall institutional participation. These findings present both notable opportunities and emerging challenges that merit careful consideration in legislative and policy discourse.

Opportunities

The most significant opportunity arising from increased female representation is the potential for improved institutional discipline and legislative engagement. The analysis demonstrates that each additional female MP in attendance is associated with a 14.8% increase in the likelihood of broader MP participation, suggesting that female MPs may contribute to fostering a more accountable and participatory parliamentary environment. This aligns with global evidence that women often bring collaborative, inclusive, and conscientious approaches to governance. Their increased presence could lead to more consistent legislative participation, enhanced debate quality, and improved focus on issues such as social protection, health, education, and rural development—areas where women legislators have historically demonstrated policy leadership.

Moreover, the higher attendance rate among female MPs (7.7% more than their male peers) underscores their potential as role models, particularly in a political culture where absenteeism and weak institutional commitment have previously undermined the effectiveness of Parliament. Increased female presence also strengthens the representative legitimacy of Parliament, ensuring that legislative decisions better reflect the demographic makeup of the population, thereby deepening democratic inclusion.

Challenges

However, the increased presence of women in Parliament also surfaces several practical and structural challenges. While female MPs exhibit higher attendance, they operate within political and institutional contexts still dominated by patriarchal norms, which may constrain their influence over legislative priorities and decision-making processes. Tokenism remains a risk, as evidenced by party strategies during recent elections, where some female candidates were fielded in non-competitive constituencies to satisfy quota requirements without real prospects of success. This can limit the substantive impact of women's representation if not matched with meaningful roles in parliamentary committees and leadership positions.

Furthermore, increased female participation may unintentionally highlight broader systemic weaknesses, particularly in institutions where male attendance or engagement declines. The analysis showed that male MP attendance is negatively associated with the number of female MPs attending a session on gender and other social services related matters (in a separate regression not reported here), raising important questions about institutional dynamics, underlying biases, or resistance within the legislative culture. Such trends could indicate latent gender tensions or

discomfort in adapting to shifting power dynamics, underscoring the need for transformative institutional change and gender-sensitization efforts within Parliament.

Moreover, recent data also reveals broader declines in overall parliamentary attendance, with the Sixth Parliament recording lower participation levels (80.8%) compared to the Fifth Parliament (91.2%). Notably, while female attendance remains high, this has not been sufficient to counterbalance lower engagement by male MPs, particularly within the ruling SLPP, whose members recorded the lowest attendance rate in 2023 (79.0%) despite holding the majority. This suggests that incumbency-related complacency and perceptions of legislative inevitability may be undermining broader institutional participation. On the opposition side, there appears to be a resignation to limited influence, with MPs expressing disillusionment about their relevance in a chamber dominated by the ruling party—an environment that may also affect the morale and impact of female opposition MPs.

Finally, despite their increased presence and higher attendance, female MPs continue to be underrepresented in key parliamentary committees and rarely hold leadership positions such as committee chairs, majority leadership roles, or speaker appointments. This limits their influence over legislative direction and priority-setting, effectively marginalizing women from the core decision-making structures of Parliament. Without deliberate efforts to ensure women's inclusion in influential committees and leadership hierarchies, the benefits of numerical representation may fall short of achieving substantive equality and institutional transformation.

5.2. Agricultural Grants to Women Farmers

5.2.1. Sample of farmers

A total of 474 rice farmers were surveyed for these analyses. Rice farming is chosen many reasons. First, it is the primary crop grown by farmers regardless of gender. Second, it is a top priority for government that has attracted increased government investment. In our sample 40.5% of respondents were female, while 59.5% were male, out of a total sample of 474 farmers. The data highlights that women constitute a significant share of rice farmers, reinforcing their central role in agricultural production. However, the lower proportion of female respondents may also reflect gender-based barriers to land access, finance, or visibility in formal farmer groups, issues that are critical to address in the design of inclusive agricultural financing and support programs.

Gender	Freq.	Percent
Female	192	40.51
Male	282	59.49
Total	474	100

5.2.2. Impact of extending agricultural grants to women farmers.

The table shows a clear gender disparity in access to agricultural grants among surveyed farmers. Overall, only 7.24% of all farmers reported having received agricultural grants from the government or other agencies, indicating a generally low coverage of financial support within the farming population. When disaggregated by gender, the data reveals that only 5.73% of female

farmers received grants, compared to 8.27% of male farmers. Conversely, a staggering 94.27% of female farmers and 91.73% of male farmers reported receiving no grants at all.

These figures highlight a double-layered challenge: not only is agricultural grant access limited across the board, but female farmers are disproportionately excluded from such support. This pattern reinforces longstanding concerns about gender inequalities in access to agricultural financing and productive resources, often driven by barriers such as lack of land ownership, limited access to information, lower financial literacy, and institutional biases in grant allocation mechanisms. Despite women constituting a significant portion of the agricultural labor force, their lower uptake of grants reflects structural inequalities that undermine their productivity and economic empowerment.

The findings underscore the need for more gender-responsive agricultural support schemes, targeted outreach, and inclusive financing models that ensure equitable access to grants, particularly for women farmers who continue to be marginalized in mainstream agricultural development programs.

Agricultural grants	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
0	94.27%	91.73%	92.76%
1	5.73%	8.27%	7.24%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

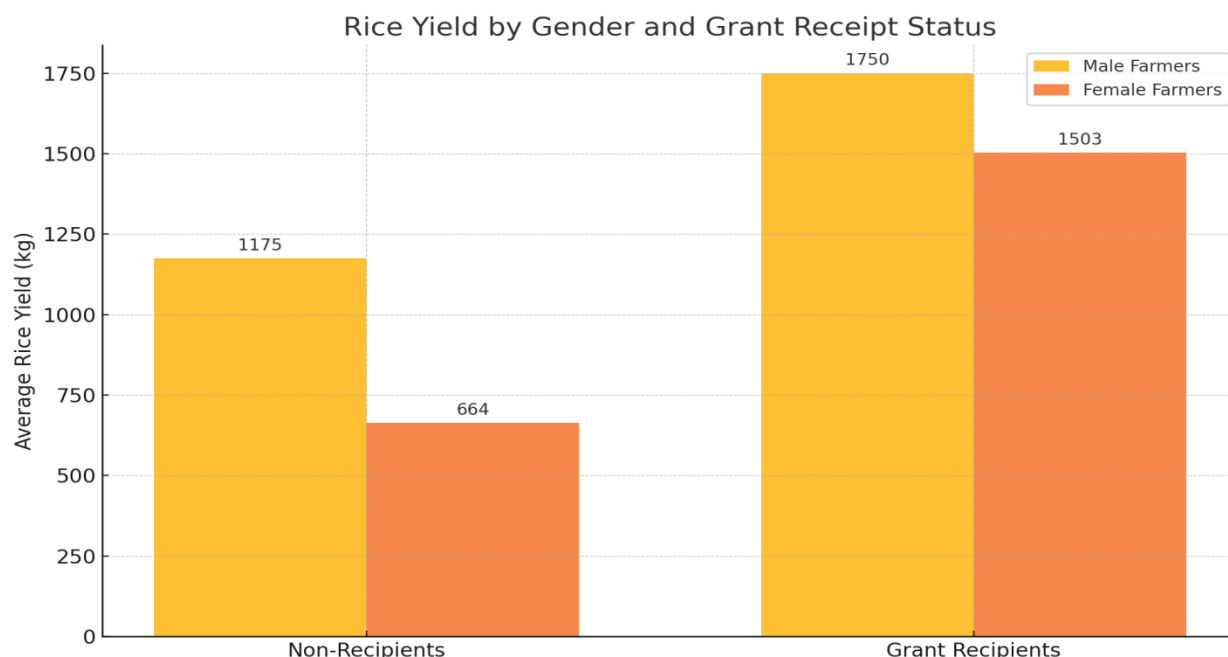
5.2.3. Comparative analysis of agricultural output before and after grant allocation.

The data illustrates clear gender disparities in rice productivity, while also highlighting the significant impact of agricultural grants on yield improvements for both male and female farmers. On average, male farmers produced 1,223 kg of rice, compared to 711 kg for female farmers, indicating a substantial baseline gender productivity gap. This gap is further reflected in yields among non-recipients of grants: male farmers without grant support averaged 1,175 kg, while female non-recipients produced only 664 kg.

However, the impact of agricultural grants on productivity is strikingly more pronounced among female farmers. Female recipients of agricultural grants recorded an average yield of 1,503 kg, more than doubling their productivity (126.36% increase) compared to non-recipients. In contrast, male recipients of grants produced an average of 1,750 kg, representing a 48.94% increase over their non-recipient counterparts. These findings suggest that female farmers benefit more significantly from agricultural grant support, possibly due to a lower initial baseline and higher marginal productivity gains when constraints such as access to inputs, tools, and training are alleviated.

At the aggregate level, the average yield for grant recipients across all farmers was 3,253 kg, compared to 1,839 kg among non-recipients, yielding an overall growth rate of 76.89%. These results underscore the critical importance of targeted agricultural financing and support schemes, not only to boost productivity but also to bridge the gender gap in agricultural output. Given the

disproportionately low access to grants among women (as shown in previous tables), the findings strongly advocate for more inclusive and gender-sensitive agricultural policies, ensuring that female farmers receive equitable access to grants, training, and extension services, where the returns on investment are demonstrably higher.



Agricultural yield in kgs	Yield (kgs) Average	Grant received		Growth rate with help
		No	Yes	
Male	1223	1175	1750	48.94%
Female	711	664	1503	126.36%
Total	1015	1839	3253	76.89%

5.2.4. Barriers faced by women farmers in accessing grants and technical support.

Based on the data presented, several key problems faced by women in agriculture in Sierra Leone emerge clearly:

Limited Access to Agricultural Grants: Only 5.73% of female farmers reported receiving agricultural grants compared to 8.27% of male farmers, indicating a clear gender gap in access to financial support and agricultural inputs. This suggests that women are often excluded from government and donor assistance schemes, likely due to structural barriers such as limited land ownership, weaker linkages to formal farmer groups, or institutional biases.

Lower Agricultural Productivity: Female farmers consistently exhibit lower average yields compared to their male counterparts. Without grant support, women produce 664 kg of rice on average, significantly lower than 1,175 kg for men, reflecting underlying inequalities in access to inputs, training, extension services, and productive resources.

Higher Potential but Unequal Investment: When women do receive support, their yields increase by 126.36%, compared to a 48.94% increase for men, highlighting that women have higher marginal productivity gains but are systematically underserved. This underlines a critical missed opportunity for improving national agricultural productivity through more equitable investment in female farmers.

In summary, the data underscores that women in agriculture face systemic disadvantages in accessing financial support and inputs, resulting in lower yields, even though they have the potential to outperform men when properly supported. Addressing these challenges requires gender-targeted agricultural policies and funding mechanisms that ensure women are not just included, but equitably empowered within the sector.

6. Challenges in Implementation of GEWE

6.1. Weak Institutional Capacity and Enforcement Mechanisms:

Although the GEWE Act 2022 mandates gender quotas and institutional reforms, many government agencies lack the capacity, tools, or budgetary support to enforce these provisions effectively. The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, which is responsible for oversight, remains under-resourced and often lacks adequately funded and functioning district-level presence to monitor compliance. Even though the UN Women, with funds from Irish Aid, has set up Gender Units in 30 Government Units, a 2023 report by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone noted that some public institutions had not established gender units or integrated the 30% quota in recruitment practices due to lack of guidance and technical support.

6.2. Political Tokenism and Lack of Genuine Inclusion:

While the number of women in Parliament has increased under the GEWE framework, there are concerns about tokenistic inclusion rather than substantive participation. In some political parties, women are included in party lists to meet quota requirements but are given low-ranking positions that reduce their chances of winning elections. During the 2023 general elections, several parties placed female candidates in constituencies considered "unwinnable," essentially fulfilling the quota without ensuring actual representation. This finding echoes a report by the UN Women in the aftermath of the 2023 elections which suggests that political Parties should improve on their internal democracy by ensuring that their structures, activities, legal frameworks and rules and regulations governing elections, nominations and symbol awards are gender sensitive, inclusive transparent and accountable .

6.3. Resource Constraints and Funding Gaps:

Successful implementation of the GEWE Act requires significant financial and logistical support, yet the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and other implementing bodies face chronic underfunding. With limited operational budgets, there is insufficient capacity to conduct nationwide awareness campaigns, provide training to institutions, or support women candidates. For example, during the post-legislation rollout in 2023, district gender officers lacked transport and communication resources, which hampered outreach in hard-to-reach areas such as Falaba and Bonthe. Furthermore, local councils and decentralized structures have not been provided with adequate budget allocations to integrate GEWE mandates into their operations.

6.4. Limited Awareness and Public Education:

The success of any legislative reform depends on public understanding. However, many citizens, especially in rural areas, are unaware of the GEWE Act and its provisions. Civil society organizations such as 50/50 Group and SEND Sierra Leone have been leading sensitization campaigns, but coverage remains limited. For instance, a 2023 community dialogue session in Kailahun District revealed that some women were not even aware of their right to demand 30% representation on local development committees or ward councils.

6.5. Inadequate Monitoring, Data, and Accountability Systems:

Another barrier is the absence of robust monitoring and gender-disaggregated data systems to track implementation progress. There is currently no central database or public dashboard tracking gender representation across sectors, making it difficult to hold institutions accountable. Reports from development partners like UN Women have called for stronger performance indicators and real-time reporting systems to support enforcement.

7. Opportunities for Strengthening Implementation of the GEWE Act in Sierra Leone

7.1. Leveraging Partnerships with International Organizations and Donors:

One of the most promising opportunities lies in strategic partnerships with international organizations and development partners. Institutions such as UN Women, the World Bank, UNDP, IFAD, Irish Aid, and the African Development Bank have consistently supported gender equality initiatives in Sierra Leone through technical assistance, grants, and capacity-building programs. For example, UN Women has supported the Women's Political Empowerment Project, which provided campaign training and mentoring support to female candidates during the 2023 elections. Further, through coordination of UN Agencies (UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP), technical and financial assistance have, in the past, been given to the MoGCA to promote the implementation of the GEWE Act. These partnerships can be further harnessed to support the enforcement of the GEWE Act, provide funding for institutional reforms, and promote cross-country learning and best practices.

7.2. Capacity-Building Initiatives for Public and Private Institutions:

To translate the GEWE Act into actionable change, there is a critical need to strengthen the institutional capacity of both public and private sector actors. This includes training on gender mainstreaming, recruitment reforms, gender-responsive budgeting, and inclusive leadership

development. Targeted workshops and technical support for ministries, departments, local councils, and state-owned enterprises can help embed the 30% gender quota into operational plans and policies. For example, SEND Sierra Leone has pioneered capacity-building for women's cooperatives and local councils in implementing gender-inclusive service delivery. The private sector can also benefit from tailored training on diversity and gender equity in corporate governance.

7.3.Enhancing Public Education and Community Engagement:

Widespread public understanding and community support are crucial for the success of the GEWE Act. Grassroots sensitization, civic education, and community dialogues can help dismantle harmful gender norms and build local ownership of the law. Civil society groups like the 50/50 Group, Women's Forum Sierra Leone, and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) have demonstrated success in mobilizing communities and changing perceptions about women's leadership. Expanding such efforts through radio programs, community theatre, school clubs, and religious forums can foster an enabling environment for women's participation and accountability from below.

7.4.Digital Tools for Tracking Compliance and Impact:

Investing in digital systems and technology-driven tools offers an efficient way to monitor compliance and evaluate the impact of the GEWE Act. A centralized digital dashboard could allow government institutions to report on gender representation in real-time, while also making data accessible to the public and development partners. Tools such as mobile-based surveys, SMS reporting systems, and GIS mapping of women's representation across sectors can improve data collection and transparency. Digital innovation also enables better collaboration between ministries and simplifies performance audits. A precedent can be seen in Rwanda's gender monitoring platform, which Sierra Leone could replicate or adapt.

7.5.Policy Harmonization Across Sectors:

To sustain progress, the GEWE Act must be mainstreamed across all sectors and harmonized with other national policies and strategies. Aligning the Act with the National Development Plan, Local Government Act, Customary Land Rights Act, National Youth Policy, and sectoral development plans (e.g., agriculture, education, health) can reinforce synergies and avoid implementation silos. For example, integrating GEWE provisions into the Public Sector Reform Strategy and budgetary frameworks will institutionalize gender equality in service delivery and governance. Cross-sectoral task forces and inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms can facilitate this harmonization and ensure that gender inclusion becomes a national standard across all levels of development planning.

8. Policy Recommendations Based on Research Findings

8.1.Promote Substantive Representation of Women Beyond Numerical Targets

While the GEWE Act has led to a significant increase in the number of women in Parliament, the research shows that women remain largely excluded from parliamentary leadership roles and strategic committees. To address this, political parties and parliamentary authorities should implement internal party reforms and affirmative actions that ensure women are not only elected but also strategically positioned in legislative leadership and agenda-setting structures.

8.2. Institutionalize Attendance Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

The study highlights a concerning drop in overall parliamentary attendance—particularly among ruling party MPs—despite increased female representation. The establishment of transparent, real-time attendance tracking systems, tied to performance evaluations, allowances, or public reporting, is critical to improving legislative commitment and accountability across all parties.

8.3. Reform Electoral Systems to Reinforce Accountability

Findings from the regression analysis indicate that the year 2023 is associated with significantly lower attendance rates, likely due to weakened constituency linkages. Electoral reform should therefore consider hybrid models that preserve gender inclusion gains while restoring direct accountability to constituencies, ensuring that elected representatives remain responsive and engaged.

8.4. Expand Access to Agricultural Grants for Women Farmers

The agricultural data reveals that women benefit more significantly from grant support than men, yet remain severely underrepresented among grant recipients. Agricultural financing programs must adopt gender-targeted disbursement frameworks, such as quota-based grant allocations for women, simplified application processes, and active outreach to rural women farmers to bridge this access gap.

8.5. Invest in Women-Centered Agricultural Extension Services

The research demonstrates a strong correlation between support and productivity gains, particularly for female farmers whose yields more than doubled when grants were received. There is a need to expand extension services specifically tailored to women, including training in improved agronomic practices, business planning, climate resilience, and post-harvest value addition.

8.6. Strengthen Institutional Capacity for Gender-Responsive Policy Implementation

Despite the legal provisions of the GEWE Act, enforcement remains weak across many institutions. Capacity-building efforts should prioritize the establishment of gender units in all ministries and local councils, accompanied by technical support, budgetary resources, and monitoring tools to operationalize the Act's requirements effectively.

8.7. Develop a National Gender Impact Monitoring and Reporting Framework

The study points to a lack of consistent gender-disaggregated data and outcome tracking. A centralized national gender monitoring system should be developed, integrating data from Parliament, agriculture, finance, and other sectors to measure real progress in women's inclusion, access to resources, and institutional engagement. This should be supported by periodic independent evaluations and public dissemination of results.

8.8. Foster Political Culture Transformation Through Civic Education

Findings suggest that structural barriers to women's leadership are reinforced by societal norms and low civic understanding of the GEWE Act. Government and civil society should collaborate to scale up civic education and gender equality awareness campaigns, targeting communities, traditional leaders, youth, and the private sector to shift attitudes and build broad-based support for women's empowerment. In addition the media landscape should be improved in terms of content, tools, access, monitoring and censorship to enable women's sustained political participation in governance and elections.

9. Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence that the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022 has yielded measurable progress in women's political representation in Sierra Leone. The increase in female parliamentary membership—from an average of 13% in previous parliaments to nearly 29% in the Sixth Parliament—marks a significant milestone in the country's journey toward gender equity in governance. However, the research also reveals that numerical representation alone does not guarantee substantive influence. Female MPs continue to be marginalized from key decision-making roles such as parliamentary leadership and committee chairmanships, limiting their ability to shape legislative priorities. Moreover, a general decline in parliamentary attendance—particularly among ruling party MPs—raises concerns about institutional accountability and suggests that entrenched political behaviors and institutional culture still undermine the transformative potential of increased gender inclusion.

In the agricultural sector, the study highlights a similar pattern of structural exclusion, with female farmers disproportionately underrepresented in government and donor-supported agricultural grant programs, despite evidence showing that women exhibit higher productivity gains when such support is received. Regression and yield analyses clearly demonstrate that female farmers, when given access to resources, can outperform their male counterparts in relative terms—yet their access to these opportunities remains limited. These findings reinforce the argument that gender equality must go beyond legislative mandates to address the systemic and institutional barriers that continue to constrain women's economic and political agency. Achieving genuine empowerment will require not only stronger enforcement of gender policies but also deliberate investments in capacity-building, institutional reform, and inclusive resource allocation across all sectors of national development.

10. References

11. Appendix

Appendix 1: Female MPs 2012 to 2017

No.	Name	Constituency	District	Party
1.	Hon. Alice Foryoh	01	Kailahun	SLPP
2.	Hon. Bernadette Lahai	13	Kenema	SLPP
3.	Hon. Helen Kuyembeh	75	Bo	SLPP
4.	Hon. Emma Kowa	76	Bo	SLPP
5.	Hon. Gladys Gbappie Brima	82	Moyamba	SLPP
6.	Hon. Mima Yeama Stephen	84	Moyamba	SLPP
7.	Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay	85	Moyamba	SLPP
8.	Hon. Mabinty Kadijah Sillah	28	Bombali	APC
9.	Hon. Patricia Brown	37	Kambia	APC
10.	Hon. Mabinty H. Bangura	42	Kambia	APC
11.	Hon. Isata Kabia	50	Port Loko	APC
12.	Hon. Mabinty Forna	65	Tonkolili	APC
13.	Hon. Rosemarie Bangura	66	Tonkolili	APC
14.	Hon. Songowa Bundu	61	Tonkolili	APC
15.	Hon. Rosaline J. Smith	103	Western Urban	APC
16.	Hon. Abie Kalokoh	51	Port Loko	APC

Appendix 2: Female MPs 2018 -2-23

No.	Name	Constituency	District	Party
1.	Hon. Catherine Zainab Tarawally	037	Bombali	APC
2.	Hon. Khadijatu Davies	110	Western Rural	APC
3.	Hon. Haja Miatta Amara	112	Western Rural	APC
4.	Hon. Cecilia Mabinty Bangura	065	Karene	APC
5.	Hon. Hajaratu Faith Samura	117	Western Urban	APC
6.	Hon. Rugiatu Rosy Kanu	113	Western Urban	APC
7.	Hon. Rose Marie Bangura	55	Tonkolili	APC
8.	Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay	94	Moyamba	SLPP
9.	Hon. Josephine Makieu	14	Kenema	SLPP
10.	Hon. Alice Jebbeh Kumabeh	92	Bonthe	SLPP
11.	Hon. Neneh Lebbie	86	Bo	SLPP
12.	Hon. Zainab Kama Brima	10	Kailahun	SLPP
13.	Hon. Bernadette Wuyatta Songa	08	Kailahun	SLPP
14.	Hon. Massay N. Aruna	85	Bo	SLPP
15.	Hon. Hawa Roseline Siaffa	05	Kailahun	SLPP

16	Hon. Matilda Y. Lansana Minah	PC	Pujehun	PCMP
17	Hon. Haja Meama Kajue Koroma	PC	Moyamba	PCMP
18	Hon. Rebecca Yei Kamara	29	Kono	C4C
19	Hon. Lolloh Emilia Tongi	01	Kailahun	IND

Appendix 3: Female MPs 2023 -2028

No.	Name	District	Party
1.	Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi	Kailahun	SLPP
2.	Hon. Hawa Rosaline Siaffa	Kailahun	SLPP
3.	Hon. Margaret Feimata Johnson	Kailahun	SLPP
4.	Hon. Wuyatta Bernadette Songa	Kailahun	SLPP
5.	Hon. Rugiatu Tarawalli-Mussaffa	Kenema	SLPP
6.	Hon. Alice Kornya Sandy	Kenema	SLPP
7.	Hon. Juliana Aliematu Fatorma	Kenema	SLPP
8.	Hon. Mariama Ella Goba	Kenema	SLPP
9.	Hon. Lucinda Fina Keillie	Kono	APC
10.	Hon. Rebbeca Yei Kamara	Kono	SLPP
11.	Hon. Sia Mahawa Tommy	Kono	SLPP
12.	Hon. Marie Kamara	Bombali	APC
13.	Hon. Catherine Zainab Tarawally	Bombali	APC
14.	Hon. Hawa Conteh	Koinadugu	APC
15.	Hon. Mabinty Fornah	Tonkolili	APC
16.	Hon. Rose Marie Bangura	Tonkolili	APC
17.	Hon. Rugiatu Kamara	Tonkolili	APC
18.	Hon. Mabinty A. Taylor-Bangura	Kambia	APC
19.	Hon. Adama Bangura	Kambia	SLPP
20.	Hon. Cecilia Mabinty Bangura	Karene	APC
21.	Hon. Memunatu Jalloh	Port Loko	APC
22.	Hon. Aminata Sesay	Port Loko	APC
23.	Hon. Rachael Christiana Bundor	Port Loko	SLPP
24.	Hon. Abdul Karim Kanu	Port Loko	SLPP
25.	Hon. Massay Aruna Gahinteh	Bo	SLPP
26.	Hon. Neneh Lebbie	Bo	SLPP
27.	Hon. Amie Nyava Moriba	Bo	SLPP
28.	Hon. Beatrice Maaya Kangbai	Bo	SLPP
29.	Hon. Bintu Fatmata Bockarie	Bonthe	SLPP
30.	Hon. Alice Jebbeh Kumabeh	Bonthe	SLPP

31	Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay	Moyamba	SLPP
32	Hon. Umu Pyne	Moyamba	SLPP
33	Hon. Hawa Kallon	Pujehun	SLPP
34	Hon. Mariama Munia Zombo	Pujehun	SLPP
35	Hon. Rugiatu Rosy Kanu	Western Urban	APC
36	Hon. Adama Conteh	Western Urban	APC
37	Hon. Mariama Bangura	Western Urban	APC
38	Hon. Princess K. Daramy Nabbie	Western Urban	SLPP
39	Hon. Fatmata Sarah Soukenak	Western Urban	SLPP
40	Hon. Miatta Haja Amara	Western Rural	APC
41	Hon. Zinabu Bah	Western Rural	APC
42	Hon. Beatrice Iyamide Langley	Western Rural	SLPP
43	Hon. Haja Meama Kajue Koroma	Moyamba	PC

Appendix 4: Female Chairpersons - Sessional Committee List 2024

1. Health and Sanitation: Hon. Bernadette Wuyatta Songa - SLPP
2. Marine Resources: Hon. Neneh Lebbie - SLPP
3. Trade and Industry: Hon. Veronica K. Sesay - SLPP
4. Labour and Social Security: Hon. Rebecca Y. Kamara - SLPP
5. Social Welfare: Hon. Haja Miatta Amara - APC
6. Gender and Children's Affairs: Hon. Catherine Zainab Tarawally - APC
7. Information and Civic Education: Hon. Rosemarie Bangura - APC