



Embassy of the Kingdom
of the Netherlands in
Ghana

ADVOCACY TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S DIGITAL RIGHTS AND MEDIA FREEDOM IN SIERRA LEONE

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

PREAMBLE

The Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG), with funding support from the *Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana*, on 27 January 2026, held an advocacy meeting with 15 media and rights activists to identify digital rights issues affecting women in Sierra Leone, and to propose recommendations to them as part of its ongoing project, “*Enhancing Press Freedom, Women’s Rights, and Accountability Governance in Sierra Leone.*”

Digital rights issues are problems or challenges that affect how people can access, use, and be protected in digital spaces such as the internet, social media, mobile networks, and digital platforms. They relate to how human rights apply online. They matter because they affect: free speech and access to information, education and jobs, personal safety and privacy, and social inclusion and equality.

Over the years, the MRCG has worked with the **Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)**, funded by the **Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana**, to carry out project activities focused on women’s rights online and media freedom in Sierra Leone. Between 2020 and 2024, these activities included a forum on media professionalism and journalists' safety in Sierra Leone, as well as digital literacy programmes addressing online issues related to women’s rights for female journalists and activists across all regions of Sierra Leone. Reports were produced on Women’s Rights Online in Sierra Leone: Policy Gaps and Recommendations for Promoting Gender Equality and Empowerment, an Annual Women’s Rights Online Report on Sierra Leone that examines gendered disinformation, and the State of Media Freedom Reports for Sierra Leone, which investigate freedom of expression issues in the country. The reports highlighted significant challenges to press freedom and digital rights, particularly for women, and proposed targeted interventions to address them.

The advocacy meeting comprised representatives from the Sierra Leone Association (SLAJ), Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), Media Matters for Women, Sierra Leone Reporters Union (SLRU), the Center for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL), Liberty Online TV, the Sierra Leone Association of Women in Journalism (SLAWIJ), the Campaign of Good Governance (CGG), the Sierra Leone Broadcasters Association (SiLBA), Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), the Hawanatu Konneh Network (HKN), the Faculty of Communication Media and Information Studies (FCMIS), and Media Initiatives for Women and Girls Empowerment (MIWGEM).

OBSERVATIONS

During the discussion, the MRCG observed that members raised concerns about digital rights issues, including: Mental and Emotional Harm: Victims experience anxiety and fear; Violence and Harassment: This includes online bullying by partners, name-calling, and, in some cases, women themselves being perpetrators of this violence; Family Pressure: Pressure from family members can exacerbate these issues; Low Digital Literacy: Significant gaps exist in how women access and use technology; Privacy Violations: A major concern is the sharing of private images without consent; Existing cybersecurity laws are not specific enough to protect women; There is a “trust deficit” regarding the testing and enforcement of these laws; The legal framework often fails to protect women from unauthorised recordings in professional settings; Social Norms and Religious Pressures: Cultural and religious expectations often influence online interactions; and Digital Gender Divide: There is an unequal distribution of digital access and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MEETING

1. The Digital Education and Skills Training: Implement courses to equip women with essential digital skills.
2. Legal and Policy Reforms for women’s online safety.
3. Strengthen and specifically target laws to protect women’s digital rights.
4. Effective implementation of existing laws to protect women’s online rights.
5. Emotional Resilience Building: Rights groups to provide training and support to help women build emotional resilience when using online platforms.
6. Research and Data Collection: Commission studies or surveys to improve understanding of women’s digital access.
7. Establishment of Reporting Mechanisms: Rights groups to create accessible and trustworthy systems for monitoring and reporting digital rights violations against women.
8. Media and rights groups to organise listening sessions and focus group discussions with grassroots women, such as market women, to understand their unique challenges.
9. Speedy enactment of the Data Protection Law.
10. All are encouraged to use social media hashtags such as **#WomenSpeakOnline** or **#WomenVoicesMatter** to promote advocacy and support for other women.