Foreword

The Politics of Women’s Empowerment in Post-War Sierra Leone: Where to Go From Here?

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In this reflective essay, I do not intend to repeat what Fredline A. O. M’Cormack-Hale and Josephine Beoku-Betts as the guest-editors have introduced and examined as the experts on the topic of this special issue. They discussed with competency and at length, the academic and professional backgrounds of the contributors, their methodologies and intellectual perspectives, and the quality of their analyses as social scientists.

My essay focuses on the general values of the impressive works done as I try to contextualize them within broader intellectual and policy perspectives. I invite the readers, potential authors and policy makers to critically examine the works that are included in this special issue as they provide concrete knowledge about women and empowerment and post war policy and politics in Sierra Leone. My intent is also to stimulate more intellectual debates about how to reconstruct a new Sierra Leone state in which women will share power equally with the men.

My dictum is that ignorance is a malady, which retards all the processes of social progress in Africa and knowledge is power. There is a significant specific new knowledge in each article published in this issue.

My working premises are that: (1) There will not be any permanent peace and development in Sierra Leone or in any African country for that matter, in the post-war era, until and/or unless women fully participate in peace building, in decision making and in political processes on equal footing as men; (2) The special role of women as researchers, activists, policy makers, or political forces is one of the most determining factors for the advancement of women’s cause; And (3) changing the role of the state in the post-conflict era to promote justice, equality and freedom requires political consciousness and practical involvement of all its citizens. How can we rethink the state in Sierra Leone in which women’s rights and their power are cemented as the foundation for new peace building, social security and economic justice?

Thus, I invite all to interrogate further ideologies, behaviors, actions, policies and cultures of contemporary African politics on the issue of the place
and role of women in the reconstruction of the African states, economies and societies. I call on the students and scholars of social sciences and the humanities on Africa to propose concrete recommendations based on their empirical research projects along the analyses and findings produced in the case studies, which are examined in this special issue on women in Sierra Leone. Finally, this piece carries a congratulatory message to a great work done by the guest-editors and the contributors for developing case studies which are methodologically diverse, comprehensive, and empirically and historically focused.

Before I continue with these brief remarks, I have to enthusiastically congratulate Fredline A. O. M’Cormack-Hale and Josephine Beoku-Betts for having co-edited a monumental critical work using interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives on: “The Politics of Women’s Empowerment in Post-War Sierra Leone: Contradictions, Successes, and Challenges.” Their approaches and those of the contributors are part of a body of critics of classical disciplines in the ways they have been addressing questions of state policies vis-à-vis women’s issues. More importantly, they are focusing on the issues of reconstruction of the state, which implies that they are dealing with the nature of the institutions, their weaknesses and their achievements in projecting the future of the question of women and power in Sierra Leone. I am immensely grateful for their valuable contributions.

The politics of women’s empowerment in post-war Sierra Leone have to be looked at from the broader context of Africa. What can we learn from the cases examined in this special issue that can be beneficial toward reconstructing African states?

I encourage scholars and researchers to engage in more research and intellectual debates with the contributors of the special issues about women, policy, empowerment and its social manifestations in Africa. Politics of empowerment is about specific actions and policies, which can lead to increasing power and influences of women as articulated by the local and national institutions, and those made by regional and international organizations. These actions and policies should support and promote women’s involvements in the arenas of power and those of the decision-making processes.

Indeed, African women played central role at various levels in resisting the European colonization processes of Africa as they participated vigorously in various forms of struggles as political, military, social and educational leaders and members of formal and informal political and social organizations, in the political decolonization movements, and in post-reconstruction projects as citizens, as well as political and economic agents in countries which have produced violent conflicts, civil wars and even the collapse of the states.