

Global Justice Center Sierra Leone Research Mission 2008

The Global Justice Center (GJC) will conduct research in Sierra Leone during June-July 2008 to determine how the GJC's unique perspective on enforcement of international law during times of transition can support and complement ongoing women's rights initiatives through consultations with Sierra Leonean civil society leaders, government officials, civil servants, lawyers, and activists. Sierra Leoneans are well-recognized for their dedication and success in promoting the use of international law in the domestic context (for example, with the passage of the Gender Acts in 2007). The GJC targets all aspects of governance in advocating for equality, especially within the executive and the judiciary. The GJC believes that targeting the judiciary and executive is key both because democracy requires that women be included in all aspects of governance and also because without sufficient familiarity with the new laws in the vital enforcement mechanisms, they may not be enforced or interpreted correctly. The GJC would like to use its research mission to learn how it can help from those who know the situation the best: stakeholders in Sierra Leone. This overview introduces the GJC and its vision for enforcing international legal guarantees to real equality and suggests research questions through which we hope to identify how this vision could be implemented in Sierra Leone.

What does the Global Justice Center do?

The GJC is an independent NGO based in New York City that promotes gender equality at the level of governance. The GJC focuses on advancing the use of international law on gender (treaties, protocols, resolutions, agreements, and international legal decisions) in conflict and post-conflict settings by working with women leaders (both lawyers and non-lawyers) on strengthening international law and taking advantage of the window of opportunity presented during times of transition to promote gender equality through enforcement of international legal obligations.

The GJC has held trainings on gender and international law for judges, government officials and society leaders in five continents; developed legal tools and materials based on existing international law for emerging women leaders in transitional democracies and conflict areas; and provided pro-bono legal advice to NGOs around the world on how to enforce women's rights to political inclusion, peace and security, and justice processes. The Global Justice Center has presented before the Council on Foreign Relations, the UK Parliament, the Iraq High Tribunal, and is part of the United Nations based NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Possible Avenues for Action in Sierra Leone

Our goal is to assess potential for collaboration with the GJC, and determine how best to support local efforts to strengthen international legal guarantees to equality in Sierra Leone.

1. The GJC is interested in exploring the impact of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) on Sierra Leone's domestic laws. The GJC is particularly interested in understanding how positive SCSL decisions on gender could be used for domestic law reform by Sierra Leonean activists and lawyers as well as in Sierra Leonean courts, and how training and resources from the SCSL can be leveraged to advance the position of women in Sierra Leone.
2. The GJC would like to examine the role of women in the judiciary, including both women's participation as judges as well as access to justice (e.g., structural, economic, educational, and political aspects). The GJC hopes to learn what areas of training and sensitization women feel are important for the judiciary.
3. The GJC intends to ascertain how it can complement ongoing efforts to work with activists,

lawyers, judges and policy makers on Sierra Leone's international legal obligations regarding gender.

4. The GJC would like to evaluate possibilities for using the African [Banjul] Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Sierra Leone has ratified and which provides a potentially useful source of standards on gender equality. Similarly, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (which Sierra Leone has signed but not yet ratified) may also prove useful. The GJC is interested in determining how these regional tools are being applied, if at all. To the extent that non-use is the result of limited knowledge, the GJC is well-placed to provide workshops and strategy sessions.
5. The GJC would like to learn which areas of law are currently being targeted for reform, for example, the laws related to rape and other sexual offences (as mentioned in the 2007 CEDAW shadow report) and whether international legal principles inform this reform work. The GJC is particularly interested in how to implement international legal requirements through domestic law reform in order to embed international gender equality guarantees, including affirmative obligations on governments, to ensure *de facto* or actual equality.
6. The GJC shall endeavor to understand better how the customary courts are monitored for compliance with domestic law, including laws relating to gender issues. It is interested in learning about the opportunities and challenges to enforcing equality guarantees under customary law, and how the customary courts fit into long-term strategies for gender equality in Sierra Leone.

The Global Justice Center is excited to learn more about the opportunities for collaboration and action in Sierra Leone, and looks forward to discussing these and other issues with colleagues in Sierra Leone. Please feel free to contact Adrienne Fricke, its Sierra Leone project team leader, at africke@globaljusticecenter.net with any questions.

About the Global Justice Center Sierra Leone Research Team:

Adrienne Fricke is a human rights consultant specializing in the Middle East and Africa. In 2006-07, she was a Clinical Advocacy Fellow at Harvard Law School's Human Rights Program, where she supervised law students providing assistance to lawyers and human rights activists all over the world. Adrienne recently returned from eastern Chad, where she evaluated the viability of a women's health research initiative for Physicians for Human Rights. In 2007, she led a research mission to Sudan on behalf of Refugees International to assess the impact of Sudanese laws on access to justice for rape survivors. Adrienne was a member of the Coalition for International Justice's Atrocities Documentation Team, for whom she traveled to refugee camps in eastern Chad to take witness statements from Darfuri refugees, focusing on the killing of civilians, rape and other sexual violence, and the destruction of villages. In addition to her J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, she holds an M.A. in Near Eastern Studies from New York University and a B.A. in African Studies from Yale University. Adrienne is fluent in Arabic and French.

Stephanie Morin is currently pursuing a J.D. at the New York University School of Law. Prior to entering graduate school, she wrote an honors thesis entitled "The Price of Peace: Sierra Leone's Transitional Justice Model on Trial", which received a Samuel C. Lamport Prize and William Gaston Premium Scholarship Award. From 2005-2007, Stephanie worked at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton LLP, where she helped develop a Post-Conflict Constitution-Making Process Handbook for stakeholders in peace-building processes. She also worked at The World Bank and the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C., designing impact evaluations of microfinance initiatives in Brazil and analyses of President Lula's land policies, respectively. Stephanie graduated from Brown University, *magna cum laude*, with a B.A. in International Relations and speaks fluent Portuguese and Spanish.