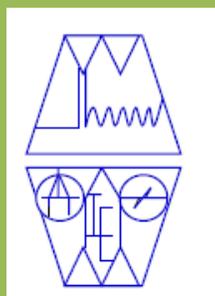


SIERRA LEONE INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS

BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 29TH JUNE-1ST

JULY 2016

COMMUNIQUE



Sierra Leone Institution of Engineers
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The Sierra Leone Institution of Engineers (SLIE) held its biennial conference from 29th June to 1st July, 2016 at the Bank of Sierra Leone Complex in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The theme of the conference was "**National Disaster Risk Management and Preparedness: An Engineering Perspective for Resilience**". Representatives of the Ghana Institution of Engineers, the Nigerian Society of Engineers, the Federation of African Engineering Organisations (FAEO) and various Sierra Leone based stakeholders, representatives of companies, civil society organisations and Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) also participated in the conference deliberations.

The conference deliberated on the following subthemes:

- Stating the case for National Disaster Risk Management and Preparedness-The Sierra Leone Overview and effects of the recent disasters.
- Changes in Climatic Conditions/Global warming.
- Human activities (Environmental Damage, Sand mining, Deforestation, Erosion).
- Regulations/Legislation.
- Regional Lessons learnt from Case studies.
- International aid organisations and their operations in disaster management and mitigation.

The conference is acutely aware that:

1. Sierra Leone faces many natural hazards including meteorological hazards which cover drought, tropical storm thunder and lightning and Hydrological hazards which include flooding and erosion and in addition many manmade disasters caused by deforestation, coastal sand mining, artisanal aggregate mining and other factors.
2. Recent natural disasters have had considerable adverse consequences on lives and property resulting in displacement of people and the concomitant provision of temporary relief to displaced persons.
3. In addressing the issue of Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and the country's preparedness for such occurrences, the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) and its development partners have concentrated more on catering for the immediate needs for disaster relief in the aftermath of disasters-health, energy, infrastructure development and education-rather than in implementing disaster risk reduction strategies because of funding and other constraints.

The conference is appreciative of:

1. Recent steps taken by the Government, development partners, corporations and the public in providing relief for people from communities affected by flooding and other natural disasters.
2. The apportioning of funds, however inadequate for disaster relief purposes in its national budget.

The Conference recognizes that:

1. The Office of National Security (ONS), the primary Coordinator for the management of national emergencies and the Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency (EPA_SL) and their Departments and sub agencies in concert with other MDAs have been very active in dealing with disaster management and related climate change issues but have been hampered by capacity, funding and other problems.
2. Laid down policies, legislation and regulations relating to land, building construction and other appropriate areas of governance, are often flouted by people, thus exacerbating disasters
3. Climate change phenomena such as *El Nino and La Nina* will be frequent and recurrent.
4. Despite the potentially important role that Engineers can play in the phases of disaster mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, this happens more by happenstance in Sierra Leone. This is a situation that should change markedly and swiftly if Sierra Leone is to meaningfully address problems of natural disaster management.
5. Sierra Leone subscribes to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction supported by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction at the request of the UN General Assembly whose goal is focused on preventing new risk, reducing existing risk and strengthening resilience. There is a need for focused action within and across sectors by States at local, national, regional and global levels in the following four priority areas:
 - Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk.
 - Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk.
 - Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.
 - Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Key activities listed under each of these four priorities should be implemented as appropriate, taking into consideration capacities and capabilities, in line with national laws and regulations.

The conference therefore makes the following major recommendations to Government:

1. A statutory agency should be created for disaster management. This will ensure effective coordination and management of disasters. This Agency should be adequately funded and it should ensure that in addition to other natural disasters, flood control is funded in long term strategic planning for disaster management.
2. Climate change should constantly be considered in strategic planning, finance, program design, and project implementation across a wide range of sectors including health, education, energy, tourism, infrastructure, agriculture, transportation, etc.
3. Government should establish an Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for prompt response to any emergency situation.
4. A National Communications Centre for the interception and dissemination of early warning information concerning hazards should be created.
5. Municipal planning should involve the development of master plans, structure plans, area and local plans. Such plans should allow for the creation of more resilient cities that mitigate key risks.
6. Legislation and regulations relating to deforestation, building construction, sand and aggregate mining and several other areas of human activities that could adversely affect the environment, exacerbating disasters should be strengthened and rigorously implemented. The role of these inimical man-made activities in enhancing natural disasters should be considerably reduced and government is urged to have greater resolve to address these problems.
7. The use of sustainable solutions involving non-structural measures should be encouraged to tackle flood issues to reduce the vulnerability of human beings and property exposed to flood risk. Growing recognition is now being given to “soft” or “ecological engineering” options, in which attention is given to sound environmental management as a form of structural defense.

8. Communication and sensitisation measures to educate the public on the dangers of destroying catchment areas, blocking-up natural drainage channels and many other unsavoury practices that will exacerbate disasters should be encouraged.
9. Government should institute a programme to design and implement a central drainage system that is consistent with natural channels in Freetown and other urban areas.
10. Government should actively encourage the involvement of SLIE as an Institution and more Engineers into many aspects of Disaster Risk Management. The ONS has made the gesture of inviting a representative of SLIE to be on its Disaster Management committee. This is welcome but must also be followed by Government's active solicitation (with assistance from SLIE) to other MDAs involved in DRR to get more and varied engineers involved in their work. EPA/NSCC (Environmental Protection Agency/National Secretariat for Climate Change) should actively involve more and varied Engineers in their work. They should also move beyond merely using government employees and engage the services of more private sector Engineers

The conference also makes the following additional recommendations to Government relating to Disaster Management:

1. It must be ensured through effective appropriate regulations that climate proofing is applied in all stages in the life cycle of infrastructural projects.
2. Government is urged to provide basic services focusing on sanitation, solid waste management and water in all areas of the city particularly in the low income areas.
3. ONS, EPA-SL and the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment (MLCPE) should be made to work with Local Government to improve disaster preparedness, response and contingency planning and include a gender perspective which would make the response more effective to meeting the specific needs and concerns of men and women
4. A Sector-Wide Risk Management (following a standardized, systematized model) system must be developed and a national Risk Register developed and constantly managed.
5. It must be ensured that Large companies implement the management strategies as stated in the Environmental Management Plan formulated in their companies ESIA documents.

6. Artisanal miners and other grassroots exploiters of the environment should be sensitized on:
 - a. The consequences of their actions on the environment
 - b. Alternative livelihood activities that are environmentally friendly.
7. It must be ensured that men and women have equal access to natural hazard early warning systems. These will need to be developed based on a number of different bespoke factors down to the district and chiefdom levels.
8. Gender specific data and statistics on impact of disasters must be established, gender-sensitive vulnerability, risk and capacity assessments carried out and gender-sensitive indicators to monitor and measure progress developed.
9. Generally there should be an increase in women's participation in disaster relief coordination and equal access to disaster relief assistance between men and women secured.

The conference also makes the following recommendations which are of a general nature to Government:

1. Encourage the inclusion of a gender perspective on key national issues. Review national policies, strategies and plans and take immediate action to mainstream gender into national development policies, planning and programmes. This is vital particularly at the local government level.
2. GoSL and its national and international partners must work to build and enhance the capacities of professional institutions and pertinent national institutions to enable gender mainstreaming into all development sectors.
3. Establish a policy that caters for water tanks at the bottom of new buildings; harvesting rain water.

Conference also recommends the following to the Council of the SLIE:

1. SLIE should continue its clamour for its voice to be heard on important issues dealing directly or indirectly with DRR policy and Planning and also continue educating the public on such issues.
2. SLIE should periodically engage with technical ministries so that mega projects will benefit from extensive discussions with the Institution.

3. SLIE should help raise the profile of engineering as a viable career path for girls and young women.

Done in Freetown Sierra Leone, this 1st day of July, in the year Two Thousand and sixteen.