

*I would not like to recall the bad and ugly days with the RUF. I have been psychologically traumatised due to my own experience of the war. I have been a victim, eyewitness in the event of unimaginable brutality, amputation, rape, and other physical assaults on women and other victims. (A quote from Frances, who was abducted by the RUF during a raid on her village at the age of 11 years)*

Sierra Leone is emerging from what is generally acknowledged as the most inhuman and cruel conflict in recent times. The amount of damage, mayhem, rape, arson, torture, and other horrific acts that characterised Sierra Leone's 11-year conflict are unparalleled anywhere in the world. The girl child unfortunately became easy prey to the cruelty and barbarity of the combatants and even, sadly, to some of the peacekeepers that were sent to protect her. Like many other poor countries around the world, women and girls in Sierra Leone continue to be the primary victims of discrimination, exclusion, poverty, illiteracy, family violence, and armed conflict. Women and children are not considered in the planning stages of wars and conflicts, nor do they usually feature much in development planning during times of peace. Yet they end up bearing the brunt of violence, war, poverty, and the effects of poor social and political planning.

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