

FEMALE LEADER ATTENDS WOMEN'S COLLOQUIUM IN U.S.

From December 6 to 17, 2011, the Chairperson of Kono District Council, Finda Diana Konomanyi participated in the Women in Public Service Project in Washington, DC organized by the U.S. Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues and the Special Representative to Muslim Communities.

Ms. Konomanyi was one of more than forty distinguished women from across the globe who shared ideas with each other as well as U.S. women leaders. Program participants visited Denver, Colorado and Pensacola, Florida where they had the opportunity to interact with grass roots organizations and learned about the American volunteer spirit that often serves as an aid to community development. Ms. Konomanyi was deeply shocked to see poverty in Pensacola. As a goodwill gesture, she donated \$500 to two brothers from medium-income families who were seeking donations to buy laptops for recent graduates in Pensacola without computer access. Ms. Konomanyi said she was touched that people in the U.S. who are themselves fighting poverty could also find the resources to help her



people in Sierra Leone. In addition, she found the people of Denver, Colorado to be warm and open minded. She plan to maintain social network links and hopes to foster a mutual relationship between Denver and her home town of Kono in eastern Sierra Leone.

She said that the training at the Colloquium was insightful and enriching, and she is grateful to the U.S. for hosting her. Ms. Konomanyi especially enjoyed the training sessions focused on going for what you want and how best to go for what you want -- dealing with women using their negotiating power to overcome challenges to achieving their goals. "I am now going to embark on a series of projects on how to use my knowledge gained and implement the act of volunteerism to benefit the Kono People and get them to believe in me as a woman," she said. She also intends to galvanize women in different walks of life in her community from professionals to grass roots to pool together and develop one another; to be seen as leaders and partners with men, and not just to challenge them for authority. To sum up her memory of the Colloquium, she said "Hillary Clinton is the best thing to happen to America".

Launched by Secretary Clinton in March 2011, the Project is a partnership between the State Department and the Seven Sisters Women's Colleges to create training, mentoring and networking opportunities for emerging and aspiring women leaders in the field of public service. Nearly 200 nominations were received for this exciting opportunity. The fifty that have been selected represent a geographically and professionally diverse group of women who have demonstrated leadership in public service.

An eight-day International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) complemented the Women in Public Service Project. This exchange program took place from December 6 – 14, 2011 and commenced a week prior to the Women in Public Service Colloquium at the State Department. The IVLP program includes professional appointments designed to introduce participants to women who exhibit leadership in public service at the national, state and local levels.