

SIDE-BY-SIDE

CHARACTERS

Chairlady	<i>50/50 representative chair of national meeting on women</i>
Chief	<i>Paramount Chief</i>
Mme. Yele	<i>Headlady of village</i>
Sis. Adama	
Ms. Martha	
Sis. Fudia	
Shellac	
Aunty Kumba	
Gladys	

Chairlady: Chief, my brothers and sisters – all protocols observed. First of all, I want to welcome you all to this very important meeting and I thank you all especially the chiefs who leave their busy schedule for attend this meeting which as chairlady of the women’s development committee have called.

SFX: Audience (loud applause)

Chairlady: As you know, anytime there is a 50/50 meeting, I am the one who come and represent the group and take back to my organization what happens at the meeting. meeting. The last 50/50 meeting we had, we focused on a number of issues. But the most important matter that was discussed was how we can come together to mobilize and enhance women in this country. Yes my sisters and brothers and our honourable chiefs, We want to make sure that more women take part at all level of governance in this country. We want to also make sure women is an integral part of all decisions concerning other women.

SFK: (clapping and cacophonous chatter)

Chairlady: I am going to stop here to take some questions from you. *(pause) (silent chatter)* Please raise your hands if you have any question. *(pause) (A woman raises her hand)*

Chairlady Yes madam Yele.

Madam Yele: Chairlady, Chief, me sister en broder dem a want for tell Chairlady thanks for holding this 50/50 meeting and for bringing us all together, regardless of tribe status or religion. Woman and man come to this meeting for you to tell us what has happened at the last meeting. You are one person who every meeting you go to you come back to the village and tell us so we become aware and can do something to build our community and out village. I believe that if we the woman them don’t stand up and talk for ourselves about we own business to build woman capacity to put them in place to build this country.

We the woman them got plenty problems O in this community. But ehey, there is nobody anywhere in this country to fight for women's rights except the Women NGO them. And the few who are at decision making level are in Freetown and they have not made a dent in the many problems women have. We go to all their meetings and agree on what we need in our community. But when the time come they come back and star talking about other things and they have not addressed the first few problems yet. If you will allow me madam chairlady I would like to ask my company them. How many of them are over 40 years?

SFX: fustle of hands raising.

Madam Yele: And how many of you know what a real road look like. Some of you have been lucky to travel to Kenema, Freetown, Bo, Myombo but the majority – well and some of you travel to Liberia and Guinea because it is easier, majority of you have never seen asphalt road. Not so? So I think this idea that the chairlady come to talk about is very good.

Chairlady: Thank you sister Yele. Chief Ngobeh, I see your hand was up.

Chief: I too want to tell you thanks for what you are doing for us in the meeting – all the time. You never fail. You always come back and tell us what happen – you give us a progress report I think they call it. But is one thing I want to understand, You said you want to build up the woman them but themselves inside government. Is this not where all the decisions take place? You know that as chief, it is me who is one of the two chiefs that is inside the parliament. Do you believe that is enough?

Chairlady: Sister Adama, you are dying to talk.

Sister Adama: Chief with all dew respect sir. We are glad that you represent us in the parliament all this time, but I think that it is full time now to make a woman represent this community in parliament.

Chairlady: I thank all of you for your contributions today. The interesting thing is all of you are correct. Chief O, Madam Yele O, and even sisiter Adama, what we are trying to say is, woman O, man O, must be on equal footing when you are talking about community business. Because is it not man and woman make up the community? Is that not so?

SFX: Loud applause

Chairlady: So man and woman must be there. 50/50 – nothing less – no so? I want us all to chant this three times. 50/50 – nothing less.

204 voices chant to a cresenda: 50/50 – NOTHING LESS, 50/50 – NOTHING LESS, 50/50 – NOTHING LESS.

SFX: a burst of healthy applauses (clapping and foot stomping)

Chairlady: This is fantastic that the man them, our brothers join us today to talk about the advancement of Salone woman them – cause a their woman them. Is not that so. Give them the men them that support woman’s rights and 50/50 women’s participation at in politics, of woman participation, as permanent secretary, of woman participation to head them banks, of woman participation in all level of decision making.

SFX: (Applause)

Chairlady: Woman going to talk about the things that will improve women lives (to herself (because god knows Sierra Leone women are among the poorest in the world) the saddest thing is that they don’t even know they are poor. Man going to talk about ehem... as old folks use to say “all kondo lay en bele na gron, you nor know us wan youn belle day at am.” (all lizards lay on their belly and don’t groan, you don’t know which one of them have a belly ache).

SFX: (laughter. applause and talking among the people)

Chairlady: Make I tell you, apart from parliament, there are numerous other places where woman can take decisions that will affect woman and woman would know better. The men are there in pass the majority and what have they done to enhance women’s lives or to even address the MDG’s to take the woman out of poverty?

SFX: Applause

Chairlady: Some of the places they put a token woman to say a woman is there. That is no longer acceptable. How the man going to know how we feel. As I said, apart from Parliament or even appointment to Minister and elected to the local council, let us take 50/50 of the Civil Service Woman as Permanent Secretary, Woman as Ambassadors, Woman heading some of the parastatals and well we own woman is head of the Electoral Commission and we must give her credit. Yes, as woman we must celebrate when a woman get high office because that is not normal. Is time for us to walk side by side with our men. Not behind them or in front of them O.

Chairlady: *(applause, chatter and Pause)* yes Miss Martha

Miss Martha: *(hesitatingly)* What is permanent Secretary..... ma?

SFX: (mumbling from the meeting)

Chairlady: Miss Martha first of all, I would like to thank you a lot for the way you and some of your friends come to this and you always give us battle. That is fine when the young ones them begin taking interest on those kinds of thing we are discussing. Because you are not tomorrow’s leaders. You are today’s leaders waiting for the opportunity. So am pleading with the community, make all the young people come when we call meeting

All of you in better positions, and all who have education and college degree
(interrupted by Ms. Gladys)

Gladys: what is degray ma?

Chairlady: Who would like to Answer Ms. Gladys?

Aunty Kumba: You know how we have the school under the tree and teach the children them to read and write? Well a same way they have big school what we call college and University inside Freetown, inside Kenema, and inside Bo and other places. And when we finished one school for some time we move on to the next and the next. Like how Chief himself, you call him doctor, he went to college and get book learning so chief know plenty, plenty something about the country and the world. Is the same way all man and woman have to make their contribution as a group to move the women forward so the communitites and the country the can go forward?

SFX: (applause)

Chairlady: Thank you Aunty Kumba for that explanation.

Yes for answer you question. The Permanent Secretary is the head of the ministry apart from the Minister that the President pick. The Permanent Secretary is responsible for a lot of things in the ministry: money, people, and him or her must make sure every thing is going well and also the Ministry them link through the Permanent Secretaries. All of our permanent Secretaries are men. We need 50/50. The civil servants all men. We need 50/50. The women who are there a very junior civil servants and some them have the qualifications.

Shellac: Excuse me madam chairlady. I want to say that the man them don't understand the woman them problem. They don't even promote the woman them or encourage them to develop inside the work place.

SFX: (Applause)

Sister Fudia: That is true. My colleagues them what I went to college with and we all graduate together have all gotten big jobs. We the women with the same degree or higher get the junior or clerical jobs. The men have progressed up in to the top but we the woman them who have higher degree remain at the bottom. The men get to go away and do course to improve themselves. I tried to get some of these courses and five years now, nothing.

If the permanent secretary was a woman it would have been easier for me go and talk to her. I am not saying she should promote me if I am not qualified, but I would stand a better chance of exploring my own potential. When I try to talk to the man he told me that it is me who take time off to go have babies – to go on maternity leave so I could not be serious about the job. He told me that the men them don't take leave to go give birth to babies. So he is giving the man them the best jobs and promote them accordingly because they cannot get pregnant.

I tell you my people, when he was transferred the replacement was another man. It was worst for me. When I went to him he wants me to do things that were not ethical. How could I do that with my boss and in the office too? That not possible. You know what that man said to me?

Audience: *(together – you not serious, Laughter and chatter)*

That incident made things worst for me. I don't talk to him anymore about my progress on the job. What I don't agree to do what he told me to do, he said I am not serious and I know what to do if I want him to give me promotion.

SFX: (laughter among the crowd and talking)

Martha: That is true mam. That is why I don't have a job for two years since I left school. We have to put more women them in big positions at the community level, the regional level and at the country level so that we can move this country forward once and for all.

Chairlady: Well I see that all of you agree with me that the best way to empower women is to put them in decision making positions; in parliament, in cabinet, in the civil service, in the parastatals, in NGOs in all walks of life, so that they can address the issues that are affecting them and deal with these issues so woman cannot be cheated.

Chief: make a get the final word. I have listened to everything all of you have said here today. Even those of you who use to sit in the corner and not say anything, talked hear today. When chairlady begin her talk, I remembered that woman want to take work from the man them. But then as I begin to listen, I understand, and realize that for the good of everybody, woman and man have to work side-by-side to create a healthy country and for our development.

I have a confession to make. I know about the different Resolution them that come out of the UN that our government signs them agreement in 2000. The Security Council Resolution called 1325. That resolution stressed the importance of their *(meaning the woman them)* equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision- making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

I will go further and add the African Charter. It say:

"2. PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES'
RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA (adopted July 2003) Article 9
Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process

1. States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that:

a) women participate without any discrimination in all elections;

b) women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes;

c) women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programmes.

2. States Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making.”

Chairlady: I thank you chief for that Resolution them that you bring out. Let us give the Chief a big round of applause.

SFX: (Loud applause)

Chairlady: I am really glad that it you the chief that told the women about the Resolution from the UN, the African Charter and I want to add CEDAW, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women. It says:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Article 8

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.”

I thank you and I pledge to support any you all in everyway possible.

Thank you chief. Now, when you talked about working side-by-side with the women them I remember this song we usually sing in this meeting.

Led by the chairlady – the large audience burst out exuberantly into this song:

Song:

Side by side by side,

Side by side by side,

No longer men in front and the women at the back
but men and women working, side by side side by side

SFX: Everyone sing and clap – (fade out)...

*****END*****