



The Law Relating to Civil (Statutory) Marriages in Sierra Leone

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THE LAW RELATING TO CIVIL (STATUTORY) MARRIAGES IN SIERRA LEONE

Civil or statutory marriages in Sierra Leone are governed by the Civil Marriage Act, 1910¹ as amended by the Civil Marriage (Amendment) Act, 1965², supplemented by the Christian Marriage Act, 1907 as amended³ as amended by the Christian Marriage (Amendment) Act, 1965.⁴ H.M. Joko Smart notes on this branch of Sierra Leone family law as follows:-

It will therefore suffice to mention that the general family law governs monogamous marriages under various statutes in force in Sierra Leone, namely the Christian Marriage Act [and] the Civil Marriage Act...The Christian Marriage Act provides for marriage services conducted in church, and the Civil Marriage Act for marriages which take place before a Registrar...Any discussion of family law under the general law would concern mainly marriages taking place under the Christian Marriage Act and the Civil Marriage Act, as it is marriages under these Acts and their legal effects on their parties thereto and their children that constitute the main body of Sierra Leone non-customary law.⁵

The Civil Marriage (Amendment) Act, 1965 and the Christian Marriage (Amendment) Act, 1965, both referred to above require that neither of the parties to civil marriage be a party to a subsisting marriage and that, if the woman is under 18 years of age, at least, one of her parents or guardians has given consent to such civil or Christian marriage.⁶

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¹ 2 *The Laws of Sierra Leone*, Ch. 97, 1081-1090 (1960)

² 1965 Supp. to the Laws with an Index of Legislation in Force, A55-A56

³ 2 *The Laws of Sierra Leone*, Ch. 95, 1068-1077 (1960)

⁴ 1965 Supp. to the Laws with an Index of Legislation in Force, A89-A90

⁵ H.M. Joko Smart, *Sierra Leone Family Law* (1983) at 19-20; *see also*, B. E. Harriel-Bond & U. Rijinsdorp, *Family Law in Sierra Leone* 1-22 & 56-58 (1975)

⁶ *Supra* notes 2 & 4 at 56 & 90.