

ActionAid Sierra Leone

2020 Second Quarter Report



Community Awareness led by women.

Introduction/Context: *Briefly describe the context of your work for the reporting period looking at major changes in context or events which have affected your work in the reporting period only (e.g. disasters, livelihoods, security, power relations etc.); and key action (s) taken as a response. In summary provide information on the LRP's/Unit's priorities, population and community targeted and inputs (financial resources) by AAISL as applicable.*

Sierra Leone like many developing countries was seriously affected by the virus in this period. As a country, our international trade was stalled, hence, lowering government revenue to had responded adequately to the disaster and other basic public services. Our health system remained weak and the number of health workers limited to easily handle the pandemic. As the nation succumbed to the virus on the last day of the first quarter, panic and fear engulfed the nation. Retrospective to the Ebola scourge, everyone was looking forward to government position and action to handle the situation.

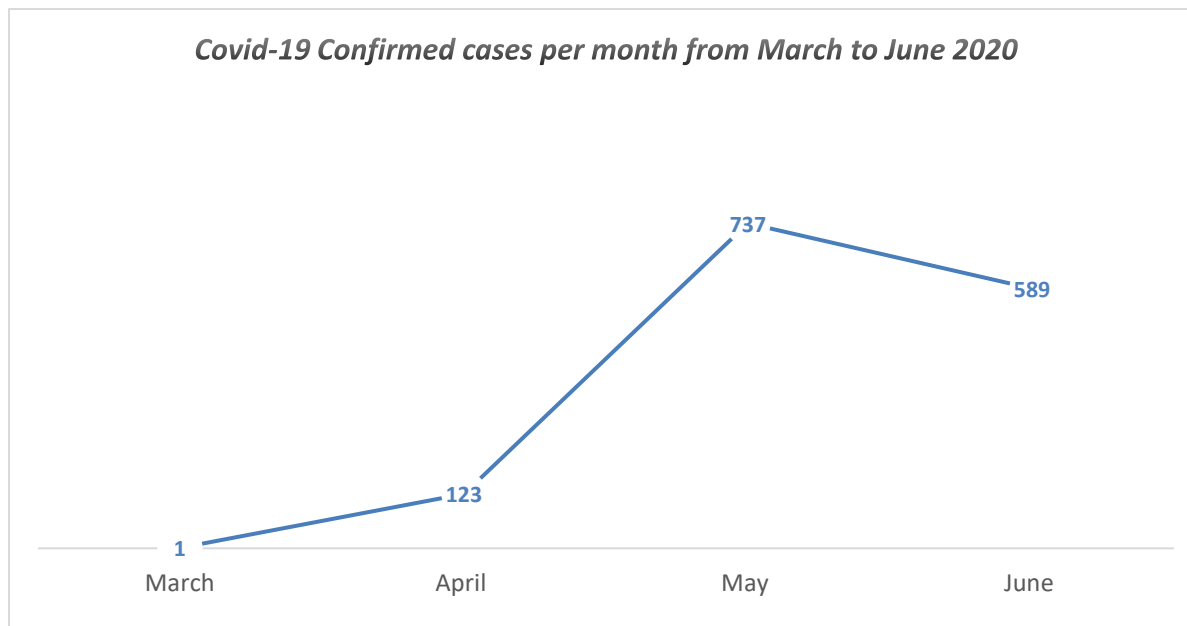
To prevent the nation and its people from the virus, a state of emergency was slammed, our international airport and all land borders temporarily closed. Because the situation kept worsening, tougher restrictions were announced and these included a curfew from 9:00pm to 6:00am, ban on inter-district travels, and no church or mosque congregations. Additionally, sporting events were suspended, schools closed, weekly markets stopped, and pubs/clubs/cinemas all banned.

As a way of handling the virus, government had set up structures (the presidential task force, National and District Response Centres) to work with other stakeholders (the medics, NGOs, Local Councils etc) in order to overturn the spread of the virus.

Regardless of the above structures, the challenges to contain the virus were many. Districts were without treatment centres – causing a lot of confrontation not to be taken to another district for treatment. In addition to the challenges, the care for quarantine persons became a concern – in many cases, persons in such facility had complaint of insufficient food or not getting food, inadequate supply of water and claimed to be kept in sub-standard facilities. Corona related messages had not been consistent – for instance, someone declared dead of the virus was later announced to be alive leaving lots of perceptions from the public. The late dissemination of asymptomatic cases also

created doubts in the minds of many. Some schools of taught kept asking why such message was never brought to the fore when the outbreak began. The fact that people had doubts, many had not yielded to government restrictions like the proper use of facemasks, social distancing, regular handwashing, among others – having the view that the virus is a prank.

The ban on weekly markets, inter-district travels and curfew were all detrimental on the economic activities of low-income earners including micro-businesswomen in villages, okada riders, drivers, and farmers.

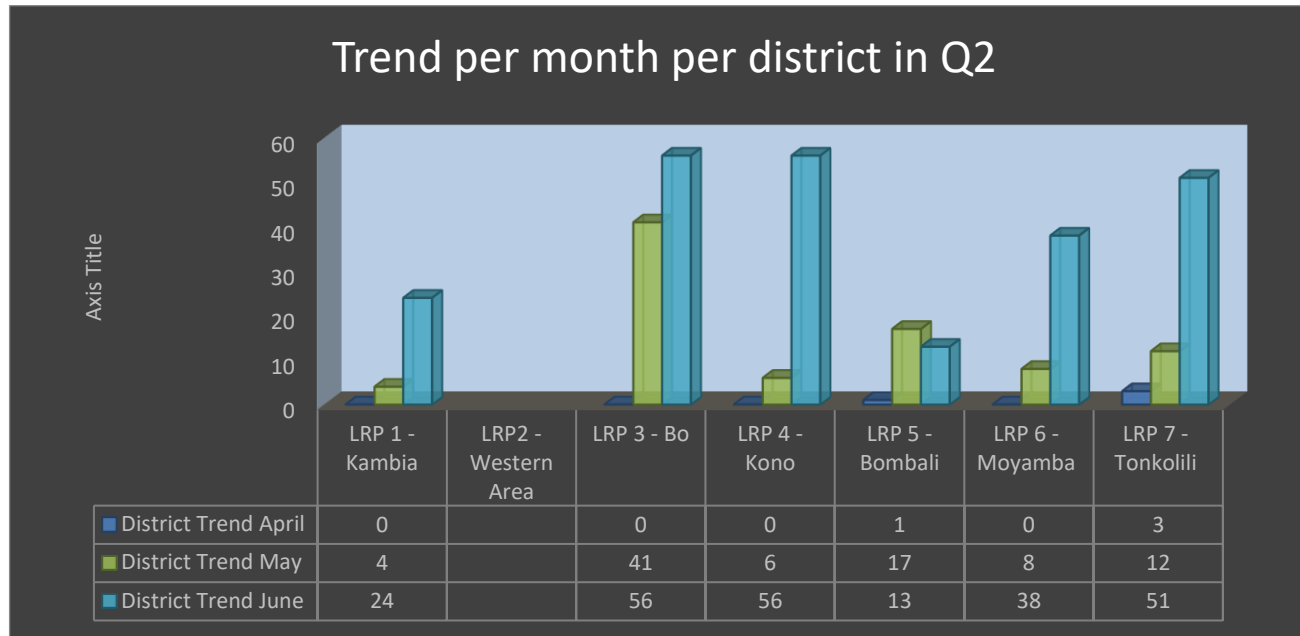


By the end of the second quarter, every district had recorded at least a case – showing evidence of community transmission. Although the spread of the virus in the entire country remained worrisome, the trend slowed in June as shown in the graph. The lowering of cases might have been a reason why government had relaxed some restrictions including the inter-district travels and curfew period.

Source: *National Corona Virus Emergency Response Daily Update*

Like in many other districts, all seven (7) ActionAid’s Operational Districts have recorded COVID-19 confirm cases. This shows that as an organization, there was need to increase our focus and strengthen our relationship with the health ministries and government response teams to be able to map our strategies for actions. In the first month of

the quarter, only Tonkolili and Bombali recorded CIVID-19 confirmed cases. In the second month, transmission reached out to all AASL’s working districts as indicated in the graph thus:

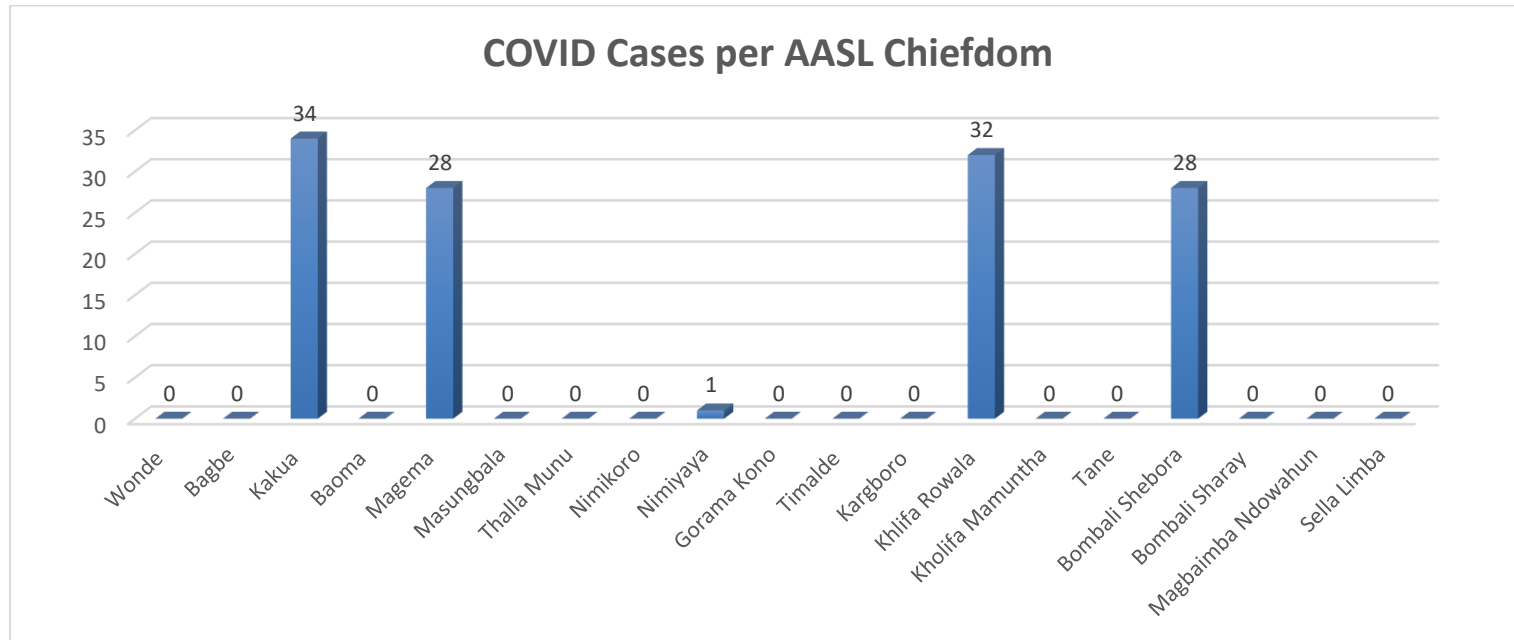


Although all AASL’s operational districts had recorded cases in the quarter, it was noted that only five (5) out of 19 chiefdoms had Corona cases. More specifically, only Kambia Town in the Magbema Chiefdom and Western Area communities had recorded cases within the period as indicated in the chat below. This would not have been achieved without our tremendous preparedness measures in

the communities we work. Even though we had few AASL communities infected, these settlements were however constraint with the COVID-19 restrictions including but not limited to inter-district travels and suspension of weekly markets. These restrictions challenged their trading thereby affecting their income flow and livelihood conditions. The ultimate outcome is hunger and starvation at community level.

Another restriction that affected our communities in the period was the suspension of schools. Hundreds of children were left to support their parents in trade. Girls therefore were at risk of getting pregnant or drop out of school due to many other factors. The effects of the pandemic had greatly affected livelihood activities and our constituents expecting our timely intervention as was done during the Ebola Scourge.

In addition to the consequences of COVID-19 on the living condition of our beneficiaries, Our young people who were massively in the transport sector were badly affected. Most of them who were motor-drivers, bike riders and fishermen envisaged a disrupted income flow and by extension their way of life. Of these, the ‘stay at home’ restrictions extremely affected our poor beneficiaries. Below is a chart showing AASL’s affected chiefdoms in the second quarter of 2020.



Women’s Right

The rate of violence against women and girls in this quarter was alarming. As several women face domestic violence in this period, so also girls suffer sexual penetration and rape. Umaru Fofana is the BBC reporter for Sierra Leone and published this in his facebook page “I just spoke to a distraught mother. Her four-year old daughter is a victim of rape. A retired policeman married and living with his family is alleged to have defiled her. The child can’t even walk. She’s taken her to the Rainbo Centre – the only place to take such victims to in Sierra Leone – and it’s an

NGO. They say she needs a specialist doctor. She has no money and does not even know where to go next. Chuks still with her, deteriorating further. Arrests have been made”. In the same month of June, another alleged rape case on a five-year-old Khadija Saccoh to death attracted public attention and outrage. The alleged perpetrator was held under custody as investigations unfold. Several other girls may have faced similar violations indicative of the Deputy Director of Education in Kenema during partners meeting said ‘150 girls were already pregnant in the district’.

Education.

Schools were shut down and children had spent all their time at home during this quarter. The radio listening programme had not reached every district referencing Kono as a case. Some children may not have benefitted from this government provision. Those who are within the reach of coverage must have been challenged with lack of radio sets or money to buy batteries for this purpose. The drop-in economic activities and increase in living condition had caused many children engaged in trading goods including facemasks in support of their parents.

Public examinations were suspended to avoid crowding and prevent particularly children in schools. Later in the quarter when the government made an announcement that schools for examination classes should resume, doubts had been expressed on the extent to which school children would be safeguarded. Commitment from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) confirmed that schools would be provided with handwashing facilities, ensured social distancing, and encourage the use of facemasks as a safety measure.

Security Situation.

Within this reporting period, there were skirmishes of insecurity across the country. In April for example, there was an attempted jail break that left 2 prison guards and 5 in-mates dead¹. Also in May, youths took to the street in Tombo Community; burnt down the police station and hospital – an event that occurred just few weeks after similar riot took place in Lunsar Community in the Northern Province; also leaving the home of the paramount chief vandalized and completely burnt down.

¹ <https://www.barrons.com>

Economic Situation

The pandemic might have had a serious effect of government domestic revenue generation in this period. Because the country was locked down, revenue from domestic and international trade might have dropped exponentially. According to the Sierra Leone Economic Update by the World Bank in June 2020, Sierra Leone's economy would contract by 3.5% in 2020 due to COVID-19 infections both domestically and globally. Borrowing from abroad remained the way forward as domestic financing continue to challenge the government.

In communities, the ban on weekly markets, inter-district travels, the cutting down on passengers in boats, cars, motorcycles, and busses negatively affected the income level and flow of low- and middle-income earners. The closure of bars, cinemas, pubs, social events like football left many young people losing their jobs. The closure of many hotels and guest houses or the lack of customers also led to several redundancies.

Our Coverage and actions.

Covering an estimated 50% of Sierra Leone's political geography, ActionAid's operations became challenged because of the current pandemic. Some activities slated for intervention were not feasible and was on the verge to be re-purposed what must fit into the prevailing context. Notwithstanding, we were able to work with the districts Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) now DICOVERC to respond to the crises and demand accountability from all spheres. We have also networked with other CSOs to advocate for the relaxation of some measures to better the livelihood of poor people.

Analysis of the Overall progress against targets on CSP Programme Priorities and Focus Area:

Catalogue and analysis of Achievements for the year (quantitative and qualitative data, including numbers of people reached, types, and the perspectives and testimonies e.g. quotes, from rights holders and stakeholders.

Priority 1: Engage the structural causes of violence against marginalized women & girls and promote the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work for economic justice.

Focus Area 1: Violence against marginalized women and girls.

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activity

Support FSU & MSWGCA to prosecute VAW/VAG cases

Our support to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs resulted to the speedy prosecution of 15 cases of violence against women and girls related to child neglect and sexual penetration. Through our local partners ‘**Integrated Action for Rural Development (IARD)**’ we provided stationeries, fuel, transportation, accommodation, and refreshment to survivors during court sittings. *“Investigation process have been very challenging especially when the perpetrators are in far to reach areas. We are usually challenged with fuel,”*. The District Social Service Officer – Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s affairs said such support will help reduce the spate of violence against women and girls.

Focus Area 2: Unpaid care & decent work.

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activity

Facilitate house to house awareness campaign on Unpaid Care model

Building on our community outreach and awareness programmes on the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work on women and girls, Bo LRP engaged in a house to house campaign to have the view of men on possible measures that could be appropriate in reducing the burden of care on women and girls. Not seen as new model, a good number of men from the 5 communities heartily recognized this fair model and had long been looking forward in ways to reduce it such that more time would be spent on productive work that earns the family more revenue for increased livelihood. The number of men who now recognize and provide support to their wives have significantly grown.

Supported Domestic Helpers Organizations to commemorate the International Day for Domestic Workers.

Domestic Workers have gained significant knowledge and understanding on the human rights issues associated with their job. This was achieved through supporting them to commemorate the International day for Domestic Workers (IDDW) – a forum that was used to raise awareness on convention 189 that emphasized the rights and dignity of

domestic workers. This category of workers was able to develop and present a position paper on how to make a decent work a reality. The position paper was widely circulated in social media for more attention and action.

Provided Food Basket, Facemasks and raise awareness among Domestic Workers

Food baskets of Sixty (60) women were replenished with basic food items (cups of rice, Maggie etc). This helped the targeted women have food on their table, most of whom were stopped by their employers because of the Pandemic.

In addition to the above, we produced and distributed 50 face masks to DWs and partners for use as they go along their daily chores to raise awareness to the plights of these women.

We were able to engage extensively through media engagement (radio and TV programmes) to raise awareness on the issue and called on policy makers and employers to respond to the call for formalization of these category of women contributing so much to society.

Monitored and Recorded GEC-T VSLA Gains

The VSLA groups in Moyamba and Kono continued to make progress and was an opportunity to remain resilient to the sufferings of the COVID-19. Unable to reach out the communities in person due to the corona virus safety and security measures, Project Officers kept in touch through phones to know the level of inroads they had made. Batch one recorded Eighty-One Million, Four Hundred and Fifty-seven Leones (Le 81, 457,000.00) in the month of April. No information was available from Moyamba in this period.

Batch two recorded a total of Three Hundred and Twenty Million, Five Hundred and Ninety-Six Thousand, Seven Hundred Leones (Le 320,596,700.00) from the two project districts (Kono and Moyamba). The groups in Kono recorded 59% of the total savings. Members who belong to these groups can easily access loan and keep their livelihood unhindered.

Priority 2: Improve public accountability for the provision of responsive basic public services

Focus Area 1: Women and youth participation in democratic processes strengthened.

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

Global Platform Start-Up in Bo.

As a way of starting a Global Platform where young people can benefit from capacity building opportunity, Bo LRP hosted two successful meetings targeting 26 (10 males, 16 Female). Outcome of the meetings left them an interim executive, a zoom invitation from Italy, Invitation to network with GP Ghana and planning to have an induction online with ActionAid Denmark. In the zoom conversation with ActionAid Italy, the conveners were very much impressed and commitment to work on a project that would get the two representatives in Italy for shared learning and actions.

Community Scorecard training for CSOs and Network staff in Bombali.

Score carding has become a common participatory accountability approach for most NGOs. In our EU CSO targeted districts (Bombali, Kono, Bo and Western Area) we replicated a ToT that had been conducted in the first year of the project to 40 CSO/Network beneficiaries in each location – 52.5% of them were women for a period of three days. This to a large extent sharpened the ability of CSOs/Network on how to properly execute score-carding processes and what gains it will bring to the accountability drive in our work.

Data collection, Validation and Launch of community scorecard

Following similar engagement in the first year of the project, trained CSOs/Networks collected data on Gender Responsive Public Services in 20 communities in each district targeting 30 people per meeting to ascertain their views. The same data was collected from Ministries, Department and Agencies, Local Councils and Traditional Authorities. *Using various tools including Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions, communities confirmed their involvement and participation in local council planning processes, understanding of state policies and laws and have their views in budgeting and development. Nonetheless, they expressed concern of their no permission to have a say in council meetings. These community views were later validated and launched at community and district levels. A total of 50 stakeholders mostly key duty bearers attended at district level and 100 people attended the launch at community level.*

Support CSOs with Small Grants

AASL and its implementing partners provided grant to 20 CSOs (5 per district) in Western Area, Bo, Kono and Bombali to the tune of €6,400. This came about from an earlier assessment done showing a weak institutional capacity of these CSOs. In each district, 5 of such CSOs were targeted and granted with a total of €1600. It is believed that, the grant will help the CSOs develop their institutional capacity. *As a result of this intervention, the targeted CSOs have improved the status of their administrative components of their institutions ranging from their filing systems, chairs and shelves, computers, printers, modem, standing fans, Flip chart stand etc. By this, the CSOs have become strengthened and able to respond to issues that bothers the lives and conditions of poor citizens.*

Commemorated African Liberation Day

AASL in partnership with the African Rising Movement (ARM) commemorated the African Liberation Day with the theme: “*Active citizenship against COVID 19*”. The day/week was observed with series of action including a nationwide call in response to the theme – done by activists, CSO leaders, women’s group leaders through WhatsApp reaching 5000 citizens. Additionally, a virtual conference was organized on the theme via Zoom with one international guest from the ARM secretariat and national guests including AASL Executive Director. The conference was educative, and members expressed the need for such in near future.

Supported a MASK-UP Campaign through Partners

Through Centre for Coordination for Youth Activities (CCYA), African Rising Movement (ARM) produced and distributed 1000 customized Africans Rising Face Masks in the ‘**MASK UP**’ Campaign to vulnerable communities/groups. This was enhanced by community sensitization in Funkia central market (Funkia petty traders union) and Goderich in Western Rural and to the Regional Headquarter Towns in Bo, Kenema, Bombali. A massive regional engagement was undertaken in the regional towns on the theme which raise the profile of the Movement and the call to action about the fight against the pandemic. ARM-SL also contributed to the call for fund raising campaign to support the change of the narrative on how Africa is handling the fight against COVID 19. This too was done via social media.

Increased Donor/Partner Visibility through the Production and Distribution of IEC Materials.

Through the EU CSO Project, we increased donor visibility in the 3 districts and the western area. The visibility of ActionAid and partners (CCYA and CGG) were also increased. This visibility drive came because of a key recommendation by the EU Delegation during their first-year monitoring visit on the project. Following their recommendations, the under-mentioned materials were produced and distributed to stakeholders in the project operational communities, Line Ministries, local councils, Partner CSOs and Networks. The Rollup Banners were strictly distributed to local councils and key line ministries including MAFFS, Education, Health, Social Welfare. We also reached out to the National Commission for Persons with Disability, partner organizations, networks, and Paramount Chief. Among the visibility items were t-shirts, posters, and bumper stickers.

Focus Area 2: Public financial accountability improved

Analysis of impact per Planned Activities

Organized Accountability Campaign through Social Media on the use of COVID-19 Funds

ACDEG Youth Ambassadors from the 3-project districts – Bo, Western Area and Bombali in April 2020, mounted a social media campaign demanding for accountability on 2020 COVID funds. This was based a proposed regulation that was rumored to be laid in Parliament that leaked to the public. Due to this engagement, the Ambassadors contributed to getting government to deny the COVID fund regulation, and since then its ugly head has gone down. Links on actions can be accessed – <https://www.facebook.com/810695322385075/posts/3062758267178758/>.

Worked with partners to resist the suspension of Accountability measures.

AASL in partnership with Budget Advocacy Network (BAN) and other accountability platforms/networks produced and published on social media expressing concern over the suspension of key accountability laws that will undermine public trust in Sierra Leone government's corona virus response efforts. This was in response to the propose leaked regulations that was to be laid in Parliament. This further contributed to the stop of the regulation and government denial of it

Contributed to Audit Report Scorecard for 10 MDAs

AASL participated and contributed to the production of an Audit Report scorecard on ten MDAs under the Non-State Actors (NSA) Audit Network) supported by the Ministry of Finance. This was followed-up with assessment on the 2017 and 2018 External Audit recommendations released on the use of public resources by MDA's, but which are scientifically increased year in year out despite public accountability reforms by government. Key findings revealed that in 2017, 3 out of the 10 MDAs (Mostly those Category A MDA's with huge budgetary and donor support) had outstanding performance with ratings of 100% (meaning that they resolved all audit recommendations); while 4 were within the range of 60-70 percent (meaning implementation of audit recommendation was highly satisfactory); while one did not implement anything at all with 0% rating. In 2018 only 1 out of 10 MDAs' was rated 100 % while only 2 rated 50 % and the rest with very poor and significant concerns. Some of the reasons ranged from lack of political will, lack of punitive measures for non-performers, capacity, poor record keeping etc.

Focus Area 3: An effective and efficient Public service responsive to the needs of people Analysis of impact per Planned Activities

School construction in Kono, Moyamba and Kambia.

Infrastructure is a major gap in the sector of education in Sierra Leone. To complement government effort, we have completed a three-classroom building in Mosam Community in Moyamba, making progress in constructing a 3-classroom building for 300 pupils in Bumpe – Kono District and another three-classroom building in Roponka – Kambia District. All these projects are undertaken by partners save for the one in Moyamba that the LRP completed. These projects will help reduce congestion, improve seating accommodation, and add value to the conduciveness of the learning environments. Joseph Yeanie is the Head Teacher of the constructed school in Moyamba with two separates of three drop-holes each – ventilated pit latrines. He said, ***"It is dream come through as we have been calling on ActionAid for long to help us with school building. The building we have been using was not ideal for learning as we have series of challenges during the rains. The attrition rate was also worrisome but with this new structure, we are hopeful for more enrolment"***

Completed Education Needs Assessment:

As Corona stroke and transmitted across the country, most activities risky to implement especially with the government restrictions against gathering. An assessment was therefore done to determine what was feasible. In several meetings held with district stakeholders including MBSSE, TSC, Local Councils, District Corona Response Team, we considered supporting radio learning programme, handwashing facilities in schools etc. This was to be able to fit into the pandemic and contribute to the impact on children and women.

Supported Radio Teaching Programme in Kono through the GEC-T Project

Thousands of children benefitted from ActionAid supported radio learning programme in Kono. As we collaborated with the MBSSE, TSC and local councils, our Project Officers mobilized project kids and Programme Volunteers (PVs), embarked on regular monitoring and ensured the utilization of the digital learning by the children. Outside our boundaries, other agencies like World Vision procured radios and reached out their constituents. We are also advocating to the MBSSE and TSC to find ways to ensure continuity after the support ends by the 18Th July 2020.

Provided stipend to 556 PVs in Kono and Moyamba LRPs through the GEC-T Project

At this difficult economic period, 556 Programme Volunteers (PVs) received stipend for four months. Each Programme Volunteer (220 in Kono and 336 in Moyamba) received One Hundred and Twelve Thousand Leones (Le 112,000.00) per month. This implies each of these PVs pocketed Four Hundred and Forty-Eight Leones (Le 448,000.00) – which is good income to offset some challenges faced during this trying time. This served as a moral booster to help monitor children in the radio listening programme.

Mapped and conducted Baseline Assessment for the EU Project in Kambia

Part of the project requirement is to map out targeted groups, institutions, and communities. We were also required to do a baseline to help measure project progress and impact over time. The mapping exercise identified a good number of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Local NGOs, a network, and a body of CSO. Regardless of the existence of these structures, the baseline data revealed that, they neither have the required capacity and equipment to run an organization, nor they have existing policies and procedures as mandated by law. It was also indicated in

the baseline report that most community structures are not adequately involved in development processes by local councils. Budgets are hardly interpreted due to low capacity. There is also the need to increase the level of accountability between and among agencies, council, and the people.

Conducted Inception for Project Staff, Partners and Council Personnel

A total of 23 project related stakeholders including staff from ActionAid, ABC Development, Budget Advocacy Network (BAN) and Kambia District Council. As a result of the two days sessions, relevant stakeholders charged with implementation appreciated the knowledge and understanding they gained about the project. The project narrative, budget and EU processes and procedures were discussed. The inception ended with a consensus agreement to crash activities to catch up with the lost time. Report for the activity was completed by the project manager and team and had been submitted to ActionAid and other implementing partners.

Launched “Who Cares Report”

AASL and the Public Service International – Sierra Leone (PSI-SL), launched the AA Federation wide report produced in May 2020 titled “**Who cares for the Future: Finance Gender Responsive Public Services**” on the 23rd June in commemoration of the International Public Service Day (IPSD). The report launch was done virtual via Zoom with international and national Speakers that gave deeper insights into the report findings and recommendations both from a global and national perspective. A total of 23 participants (mostly CSOs) participated in the launching. The aim is to raise awareness of the civil populace on the fact that actions debt, austerity and tax could deliver system change for public services in Sierra Leone; understanding of which can help put pressure on government to resist IMF public sector wage bill containment which is their new term for ‘caps’ or ‘ceiling’. On the advocacy front, letters/policy brief presenting Sierra Leone findings and recommendations were sent to the Ministry of Finance and the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. A response had been received from the Office of the President acknowledging the policy brief and heartened by the findings and expressed anticipation of a productive partnership.

Priority 3: Advance responsive humanitarian action prioritizing women & girl’s safety, participation, leadership in emergency preparedness, response, and prevention.

Focus Area 1: Build Resilience of women & Young People with robust accountable processes in Disaster Response

Analysis of impact per Planned Activities

We responded to the outbreak in many ways; in line with our humanitarian response signature i.e. ensuring a community led response with high levels of accountability with women proving leadership.

Awareness on COVID-19 through Community Outreach in Kono and Bombali.

AASL and partners lowered the myths, moderately increased the level of acceptance amidst several misinformation, disinformation, and fake information over social media on the reality of COVID-19. These gains resulted from our community outreach, awareness programmes on the transmission mode of the virus, signs, symptoms, and preventive measures. In our regular community outreach, efforts were also made to inform the masses on reporting mechanisms through 117, and measures to take in collectively preventing themselves and their communities.

Awareness on COVID-19 through Jingles and Radio Discussions in Moyamba, Kono and Bo LRPs

In addition to the community outreach in our northern regional hub, Moyamba and Kono LRPs and partners engaged in Social Mobilization through the production and airing of COVID-19 jingles in Moyamba LRP and radio discussions in Kono and Bo LRPs. These engagements were done in major community tribes including Mende, Temne, Sherbro, Kono, Fula, Kissy and Krio). The jingle and radio discussion programmes greatly helped many traditional people better understand the virus, what are the preventive measures and the need to visit the nearest health facility if suspected with signs and symptoms.

Supported Quarantine Homes with food and non-food items in Bo and Moyamba LRPs

ActionAid and partners in Bo and Moyamba cushioned the burden on the district response teams by supporting quarantine homes with food and non-food items. Whilst Bo LRP and partner provided 50 bags of rice (50kg), Moyamba LRP and its partner NeSPE supported with 20 bags of rice, 5 bags of sugar, 10 gallons' oil, 10 box tea leaf and 2 dozen soap. These supports were timely and appreciated by the DEOC and people in quarantine homes who were stress due to the state of affair were salvaged. *“A sigh of relief, a big boost for the DEOC which will*

reduce the burden particularly to cater for people in quarantine,” said the Moyamba DEOC Coordinator, Hon Joseph Kaindor.

Provide handwashing materials in Bombali, Tonkolili, Kambia, Moyamba and Kono

In our Northern Region (Bombali, Kambia and Tonkolili), AASL supported 79 communities with handwashing materials including 148 veronica buckets, 148 small buckets and 148 handwashing liquid soap. The exercise was jointly done in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, District Councils, and the District Health Management Teams. Handwashing was hence practiced by individuals, households, and traders.

In Moyamba, 99 buckets and 99 dozen of soap were distributed to 33 communities in Timdale and Kargboro for regular handwashing. Each community benefited from 3 buckets and 3 dozen soaps. The distribution was done by AASL staff and members of the District Covid-19 Emergency Operations Centre members. During the distribution, community members were sensitized on the Covid-19 preventive measures and to ensure the youths and women support the process in ensuring their communities are safe.

Kono LRP also provided handwashing materials in 17 communities from three chiefdoms which enhanced personal hygiene and through regular handwashing. Betty Mondeh who 58 years old was present when the Veronica bucket and soap were presented to her community (Moimandu). She did the demonstration of hand washing for others to emulate and she explained; *“I would like to say that this gesture is very much welcome in our community. ActionAid is like a mother to us. They are always at our doorstep when we need them”*.

Supported District Response Team with Fuel in Moyamba.

ActionAid supported the Moyamba District COVID-19 Response team with 1000 litres of fuel to ease the challenge of mobility during social mobilization, alerts, transporting swab, contact tracing and surveillance. The Moyamba District Medical Officer, James Jongopie in his appreciation message said that *“the support received from ActionAid is a manifestation of the fact that they have been following the challenges being presented at the DEOC meetings. The support reflected the needs of the DEOC operations,”* In routine visit made by the Vice President in the South, the Moyamba District Medical Officer strongly presented the work support ActionAid provided which was also recognized by the VP.

Undertake participatory needs assessment to inform our long-term response.

In a bid to capacitate hospital staff in the Moyamba District Government Hospital with Infection Prevention and Control guideline and protocols on the Covid-19, a training on same was conducted for them. This training entails standard precaution, rational use of PPE, instruction to IPC and health care associated infection, waste management, environmental cleaning, and line-listing management. This training was facilitated by Medical Doctors who participated on Case Management Training of Trainers. The training helped to build knowledge and understanding among medical personnel.

Focus Area 2: Ensure a Community & Women-Led Humanitarian Preparedness

Analysis of impact per Activities implemented

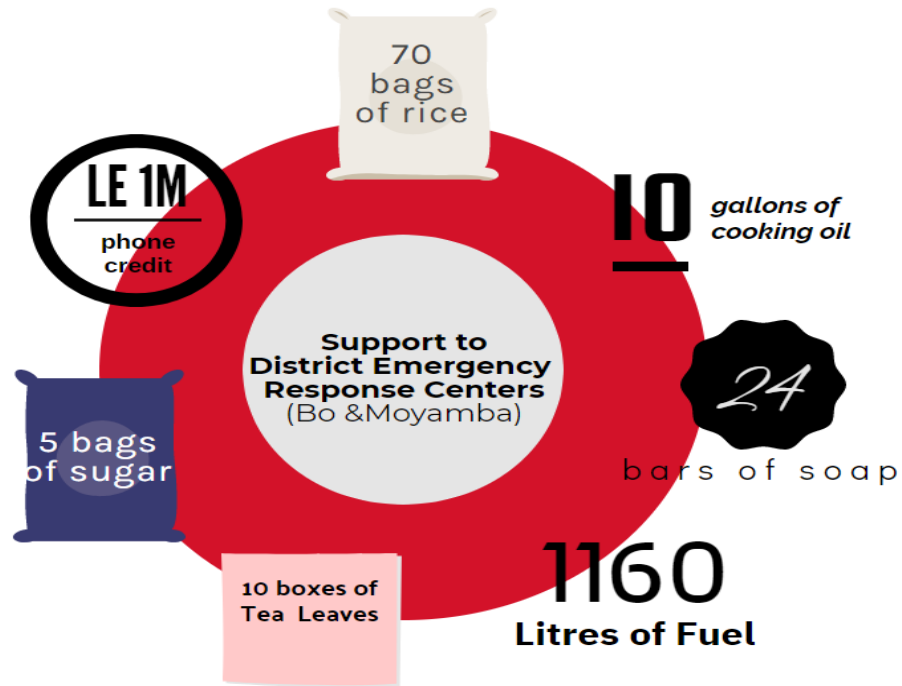
Conducted Neighborhood Watch training in Kono

A total of 51 (3 Youth males, 7 youth females, 10 men, and 38 women) volunteers participants benefitted from the above training. The participants gained knowledge on monitoring, sensitization and reporting of suspected cases in the communities to the appropriate authorities. As a result of the neighborhood watch exercise, one household with 9 inhabitants (2 women, 3 boys, and 4 girls) was quarantined at Tembedu. Umu Fengai is from Mambudu community and she is 1 out of 38 women that benefited from the crash training. She was so thrilled after the training and said, *“ActionAid has done it again. They are never tired of capacitating the community people before, during and after crisis. The knowledge I have attained today will be used for the greater benefit of my community. I promised to do my utmost in this fight to end Covid-19”*.

Summary COVID-19 cases in AASL operational areas

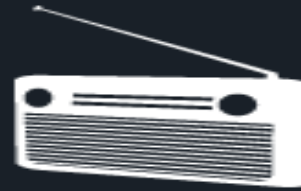
7 of **7** AASL operational districts with covid-19 cases
6 of **18** AASL sponsorship chiefdoms with covid-19 cases
7 of **182** AASL sponsorship communities with COVID_19 case

COVID-19 Response at District Level



COVID-19 Response at Community Level

Radio panel discussions and jingles aired across 5 AASL operational districts with key messages on covid-19 awareness, prevention, health and safety precautions



Handwashing facilities (veronica buckets, bar/liquid soap, small buckets) provided to 129 sponsorship communities to enhance communities' safety and prevention from covid-19



Distribution of posters and flyers with key messages on Covid-19 across all AASL operational districts to raise awareness on safety and prevention, solidiarise with communities and advocate for gender responsive emergency response



Community sensitization outreach across 7 districts to raise awareness on Covid-19 symptoms, prevention, help lines and government safety regulations.



51 (13M, 38F) neighbourhood watch members trained at community level and watch groups set up in 17 sponsorship communities.



Overall Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges

- I. The rate of denial is so high that government and its partners are finding it extremely difficult to contain the virus within a shorter period.
- II. There are many limitations in the management of quarantine homes – precisely inadequate and untimely supply of food and nonfood items; Poor hygiene facilities; minimal psychosocial support; less attention or support to people with pre-existing conditions, high number of persons at home quarantine rather institutional/government quarantine.
- III. Dissemination of fake news, high level of misinformation and disinformation is challenging the containment of the virus.
- IV. The two stay at home – each lasting for three days always left many poor households badly hit with livelihood issues especially for children who needed to be fed.
- V. The lockdown measure led to food shortage in districts and communities like other essential commodities. This situation led to high prices thereby affecting poor people’s living conditions.
- VI. Limited availability of resource constrained our ability to respond adequately to the issues that prevails in our communities and the district by extension. High expectations from the community people. For instance, after the supply of the buckets, community people started requesting for face masks and other IPC materials.
- VII. The panic and fear in many minds have limited hospitalization of sick people. This is causing lots of health issues across the country.

VIII. Programme activities were stalled due to government restrictions to contain the virus. This led to the realignment of interventions which requires organizational processes and procedures.

Lessons Learned

- I. The use of teams and other virtual meeting processes was a way of keeping closer to we, provide updates and share learnings in the pandemic.
- II. Decentralization of structures was a step to easily tackle issues in the various district's command centres but not including local authorities in the chiefdoms constrained the fight at that level.
- III. Localizing structures with adequate funding cannot get work done appropriately without relying on partners and private people for support.
- IV. Heavily making the fight political rather than technical will continue to challenge successes that are required over time.
- V. The role of NGOs helped minimized several challenges faced by the district's response teams.
- VI. There was knowledge gap in the community with regards the understanding and transmission of the virus. Using the local dialect of the people ensured better understanding amongst natives.
- VII. Well managed VSLA model can economically empower community women and be able to resist the effect of emergencies like this uncertain time.
- VIII. Collaborations will cement cordiality and relationship between partners as in the case of the EU-CSO Project, GEC-T Project that had done so well in the districts of operations.

- IX. The radio teaching programme was a stop-gap measure that aided the schooling of many children in poor communities.

Key Progress Against Organizational Priorities

Organizational Priority 1: Programme effectiveness, Knowledge Management and Learning

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

Our plans in 2020 was disrupted by the pandemic. Like government and other agencies, ActionAid took a position to repurpose its plans and budget. The various LRPs were assessed based on needs and consultations with all relevant partners/stakeholders including our LRPs IPs, District Response Teams, Ministries, Departments and Local Councils etc. The repurposed interventions link to COVID-19 prevention and response and ensuring livelihood support to women and children in our communities.

A total of eight (8) project staff have gained additional knowledge, skills, and ability in project management due to the support we provided. Other staff members are doing postgraduate courses through the support we provided. We remained together and shared updates through virtual meetings internally and internationally. One such meeting is ‘meeting with the ED’ – a meeting where staff were reassured of our work and plans during the pandemic.

Organizational Priority 2: Ensure effective Financial Management System to enhance the efficiency of the programme.

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

We would have hosted the international auditor but the restrictions on travels made it impossible. However, a virtual meeting was held with AASL's International Audit and samples were collected for onwards action by the internal auditor. Findings of the audit confirmed that no major issue was recorded.

Organizational Priority 3: Funding our strategy

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

We ended our message collection exercises with high turn-out. Collection rate was less than 5% and follow up measures were stalled due to COVID-19 restrictions. We completed logging for onwards submission to our numerous supporters.

Organizational Priority 4: Human Resource and Organizational Development HROD

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

Organizational Priority 5: Information, Communication and Technology

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

The installation of Microsoft Teams in all offices and laptops provided the leverage of easy communication in and out of the country.

Overall Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges

1. Due to the COVID19 outbreak, there had been a delay in follow up processes for sponsorship programme.
2. Working from home requires high technology which had posed several challenges in the period
3. The slow rate of providing travelling passes stall the urgency of some of our activities during this period.

Lessons Learned

- Virtual meetings significantly helped ease work during this pandemic. Staff were able to provide regular information through meetings.

Story of change/Photo requirement:

Illustrate the achievements/progress on outcomes and impacts through Stories of change (Only one cumulative story requested). We invite you to nominate the example of impact from your LRP/Unit that you feel has the most evidence of substantive impact in line with our HRBA, by providing your story here with photograph.

- *Please provide at least one story of Change under each Focus Area*
- *For each activity you are required to send at least five (5) good photos not below 5mb and should not be embedded in the report*

‘We shall overcome’ Mabinty said.

The COVID-19 has affected many people in Moyamba District. Whilst some are infected, others are held under quarantine in difficult circumstances. Mabinty Kemokai age 23, is a secondary contact and in a quarantine home



with 9 children. Amongst her kids, is a one month 5 days’ baby. They were line listed because their aunty tested positive with whom they are staying with. **“It was shocking when we heard that our aunty was positive, and we were to be quarantined. I was very worried especially on how to cope with the children in such a strange and worrying situation,”** said Mabinty. Mabinty is now left with no option but to take care of the children with no option. Mabinty’ s difficult challenge was how to take care of the baby especially with food. However, the timely intervention of ActionAid salvaged my worries. **“We are very happy because with the support from ActionAid, other NGOs and the government, we have been**

receiving food since we were quarantine,” said Mabinty. ActionAid supported the District Emergency Operations Centre with 20 bags of rice, 10 gallons of oil, 5 bags of sugar and 10 boxes of tea leaf for quarantine homes.

The rate of stigmatization is high and with this people are afraid and have not easily accepted to either be quarantined or taken to treatment centres. **“We are being stigmatized by neighbors and passerby’s which affects us, especially the kids. The good side of it is that ActionAid and other members in the psychosocial pillar headed by the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children’s affair have been engaging us by counselling and cautioning**

perpetrators through media and community engagement. With the support from the psychosocial team, we feel affectionate and have confidence that all is not lost” Mabinty continues. “On behalf of my family, I want to thank ActionAid, other NGOs and the Government for the support they are providing for us during this challenging moment. We hope for the better as we await our result and I believe we shall overcome,” Mabinty ended.

“Everybody is a potential solution to end the chain of transmission’ – Sitta, at 39.

Sitta Gborie (39) is married with 5 kids (2 boys and 3 girls). Sitta is a petty trader and does subsistence farming in the Canaan community, Nimikor chiefdom. The outbreak of the corona virus has disturbed both her business and agricultural activities. She was selling used clothing and other articles. The inter district lockdown disturbed her business.



Sitta is one of the women selected as a neighbourhood watch due to her experience on disaster training during the past Ebola scourge. *‘I have benefitted from two different disaster trainings. I have been working with the disaster team on preparedness; even before the coming of ActionAid team. I know some people will hate me, call me all sort of names like ‘civilized Kongosa’ as a member of the neighbourhood watch. I care less of such name calling. If this covid-19 did not end early, lot of lives will be lost as our country is not well equipped with the facilities to care for infected people. I may also not be able to support my children’s education. My business has collapsed, I cannot*

support my farming activities this year”. Sitta paused and frowned as she continues. *“I do not know what the future holds for me and my family. I can confirm without doubt that the coming weeks, months, and year are bleak. I am in despair of my condition. The only thing that is putting smile on my face is that I am part of the fight and together, we can end this threat”*. Sitta was able to convince the mothers’ club members of which she is the secretary, to be involved in community sensitization and neighbourhood watch in other to keep her

community safe. Sitta continued; *‘I think everybody is important in the covid-19 fight. If we seat without acting until there is a recorded case here, our children are not safe, even ourselves. Everybody is a potential carrier of the disease and everybody is a potential solution to end the chain of transmission. We should know who is coming and leaving this community. People who call us names are short sighted. I believe in doing positive gossiping for our safety. Therefore, I have vowed to report to the authorities any strange face that I will see in the community. I want my kids to be in school again. They are losing a lot, and they have lost a lot already. We used to attend trainings on Rights Based Approach, Unpaid Care Work, and a lot more. Today, we cannot come together. Our social capital that put us together is what covid-19 has destroyed. Let us protect our community or else we are not safe.’* Sitta concludes.

Deepening Council’s accountability at local level.

The EU CSO-LA Project covers four districts including Bombali. This governance project dealing with CSOs and Networks, provided several trainings, data collection and analysis that would inform the challenges of development in the district. John Yamba Kanu is the Deputy Chairman for the Bombali District Council. In our engagement, he said *“ActionAid is one of the key development partners in the district council can rely on. They are credible and sincere in their operations and transformation of lives”*. Following several sessions and trainings around inclusion and participation of stakeholders in development processes, John explained *“ActionAid is has made connections between council, CSOs, Networks and communities. There is an increased inclusion, participation, and accountability in developmental programmes in the district. As an organization, they always make their interventions visible to the council. Since the inception of the EU, CSO, LA Project in Bombali District, District Council has been a very important player in this project starting from the Baseline Survey, Consultative Meeting, Validation Meeting and to this present moment”*. Our trainings have reached out to many of the council staff likewise to networks and civil society organizations for constructive engagements. John continued by expressing



“staff from the Bombali District Council have benefited from many of the capacity building trainings and meetings in this project including myself. This project has succeeded in breaking the barrier between District Council and the communities we serve through the meetings we attended together”. Through such interactions, there has been improved relationship between the council and its communities. In addition to the transparency measures, we took council to the people. This provided platform for communities to be part and learn the proceedings in meetings like such. In John’s opinion, *“rotating District Council Meetings across the district has been a key challenge, though it has been happening but there has not been enough fund to reach out to large number of participants. During this period, ActionAid has supported four (4) District Council Rotational Meetings”*. Our EU CSO-LA project has been so impactful that communities, networks and CSOs now express curiosity to know local council operations and contribute to its processes and procedures.

Leaning is eminent in crises.

The rate of COVID-19 community transmission led to schools being short down and learning for children wrecked.



Not knowing exactly when the virus will be contained, the government of Sierra Leone introduced the radio teaching programme. This came along with its challenges – children from poor homes have no access to radio; some have but cannot afford to procure batteries especially with difficult livelihood conditions. The most challenging aspect is the unavailability of the opportunity in some districts including Kono etc. ActionAid brought this to the Ministry of Education but with a snail pace to intervein, we had to intervein by getting the recorded versions into the district. Contracting two radio stations, the e-learning program began, and it was a programme worthy to present in the district. In one of the communities benefitting from the radio listening programme – a Mr. Sahr Fengai, a teacher had to coordinate and monitor children in that community. According to him *“This radio programme is actually useful during this pandemic. Engaging them in this manner can help to reduce the loss in school and continue to sharpen their minds on essential topics that were not covered during normal schooling.*

These children and I listen to the radio as can be seen closer to the black cloth on the makeshift. We have time for discussions and from that exercise and homework is provided to the children” The programme has not only benefitted ActionAid’s project boundaries, other organizations have come up to provide radio sets and encouraged their beneficiaries to benefit. When asked, Mr. Fengai said *“It is true that other organizations are benefiting. I know World Vision procured radio sets and distributed to households for children to be engaged in this trying and uncertain time. They too monitor their radio listening project and apply similar approach to ensure they children are benefitting from the programme”*. The would-be challenge is around continuity after the 36 days ActionAid’s contract with the radio elapsed. Efforts are being made to discuss this with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), other NGOs and the public through meetings and radio programmes. It is likely possible that the facility will continue even after the project of ActionAid ends.