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Foreword

Dear Readers,

It is with great delight that we welcome you to our maiden newsletter. This year’s journey on the quest to changing lives and positively impacting society has begun.

In the last couple of months, AASL has engaged in a series of activities to champion the fight to eradicate poverty and social injustices which we would like to share with you in this edition. With support from the European Union in Sierra Leone, we commenced the implementation of a project geared towards building the capacity of civil society to meaningfully participate in national level policy processes in Sierra Leone.

It features our Open Information Presentation which encompasses the sharing of our Annual Plans and Budget at district and national levels, in fulfillment of our commitment to be more accountable and transparent to our right holders, donors, government, partners and other stakeholders.

With support from John and Grace Perkin, we constructed, installed and handed over solar equipment, desktop computers and accessories to St. Peter’s Catholic School in Rosengbeh community, Tonkolili district in a bid to enhance access to quality education for children in that district.

Thanks to players of People’s Postcode Lottery, AASL is able to support 360 adolescent girls both in and out-of-school by providing them with start-up kits and learning materials to build their capacity and ensure they become self-reliant.

AASL joins the world in celebrating the International Women’s Day (IWD), and accordingly organized a week-long activity including a “Tea-time on Gender Equality”, “Symposium on Wealth Tax for Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality”, a football match for women in sports, and collaborated with the Government through the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs to celebrate in the provinces.

We remain grateful to all our donors, supporters, organizations and individuals that have collaborated with us in our work to achieve social justice, gender equality, and the ultimate eradication of poverty in Sierra Leone.

Happy Reading!

Foday Bassie Swaray
Executive Director
“ActionAid has given me hope. I’ve received all my school needs, empowerment trainings and psychological support from the organisation. I am physically challenged and it is tedious for me to travel from my community to school every day. My family’s economic situation is not helping matters so I eventually dropped out of school for some months. It was around that time I got in contact with ActionAid and became part of the AEMAG project. Since then, the trajectory of my life has completely changed for the better. If ActionAid hadn’t intervened, I don’t know what would have become of me.”

This is the testimony of Bendu Jombo, an adolescent girl re-enrolled in school.

“When everyone shunned me because of my disability, ActionAid embraced me. I was uncomfortable to mingle with others but ActionAid through the empowerment sessions has boosted my self-esteem. Not only that, I have been enrolled in the ‘Useful Hands Vocational Institute’ where I am currently pursuing a hairdressing course to become self-reliant. I have also received a start-up kit including all necessary equipment I need to setup my trade” stated Hawanatu Turay, a skills training beneficiary of the Action to Empower Marginalized Adolescent Girls project.

“The Action to Empower Marginalized Adolescent Girls” project funded by players of People’s Postcode Lottery is a 15 months project geared towards the empowerment of 360 adolescent girls both in and out of school. The implementation of the project commenced in October 2021 and ended in December 2022.

“Because of how impactful the project has been, the donor called for an extension to March 2024.”

The project supports the education of girls in Western Area and Bo district in Sierra Leone. It also perfectly resonates with the Government’s “Free Quality School Education” program and the “Radical Inclusion Policy”, which creates a platform for girls to access education regardless of their circumstances.

The direct beneficiaries reached are 300 girls in school across 10 communities in Freetown and Bo. These girls get empowerment sessions facilitated by school mentors trained by ActionAid. They are also supported with learning materials and other necessary items to ensure they stay in school. There are other 60 girls supported with skills training in tailoring, hairdressing, and catering. They receive start-up kits to prepare them to practice of their skills.
Some pictorial highlights of the Symbolic Distribution of start-up kits and learning materials to adolescent girls both in and out-of-school (AEMAG project)
The European Union to “support CSOs as actors of good governance and development in Sierra Leone” has granted ActionAid and its implementing partners; Advocate for Social Justice and Development (ASJD) and Women’s action for Human dignity (WAHD) the sum of Eur785,000 for the implementation of a 30-month project in BO, BOMBALI, and KONO.

The project titled “ENHANCING CSO PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL LEVEL POLICY PROCESSES” has the overarching aim of improving public accountability for the provision of responsive basic public services. The key aim of this project is to facilitate inclusive CSO participation in dialogue with government on development policy and practice through supporting CSOs and their networks to create an enabling environment for Civil Society to operate as actor good governance at all levels. The locations of implementation cover the southern (Bo), northern (Bombali), and eastern (Kono) provinces of Sierra Leone.

What is the project trying to address?

Policy Related: CSOs, CBOs and grassroot organisations in Bombali, Bo and Kono face considerable challenges, limiting their potential role in promoting democracy, including skills deficits and opportunities to interact with government.

Independence: The political alignment of some CSOs deepen division and weaken the possibilities for CSOs to champion common causes of national concern. Lack of progress in developing common CSO movements, and the fragmentation of civil society.

Funding and sustainability challenge: Smaller CSOs, particularly those based outside of the capital, struggle to secure funding for their work, in part because of the absence of fundraising skills but also because of a scarcity of funding for governance work. Limited Engagement at National Level policy processes – Development, Accountability, Transparency.
Signing of MOU with EU to implement projects promoting women’s empowerment
Following the presentation of Plans and Budget of all LRPs to the different District and Community stakeholders, ActionAid Sierra Leone presents its Plans and Budget to the Nation inviting all National stakeholders, CSOs, MDAs, its partners, and the Media.

The core purpose of this yearly presentation is to advance the need to support accountability and transparency in Sierra Leone, enhance our collaboration with key stakeholders and improve knowledge, trust, and communicate the achievements of our interventions.

This resolution is guided by our commitment to transparency, and sharing information with right holders, partners we implement with, our staff, donors and the government. AASL pledges itself to informing stakeholders how much money is available for developmental work, our focus areas and how it is been used.

The Executive Director of AASL, Foday Bassie Swaray expressed that this process of openly sharing information started in 2007, and it is not only a part of the organisation's ways of working, but it is also the right thing to do. ActionAid defines Accountability as a responsible use of Power. “In our work, we receive money for and on behalf of communities from supporters and donors, that is why we strive to provide the relevant information to our multiple stakeholders to be able to hold us accountable”. He added that “our concept of accountability is deeply rooted in our theory of change, our Human rights based approach and in our global and national policies.”

The Director of NGO Affairs, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development; Eric Masallay declared that ActionAid has been a major partner in development and he can attest that the organization has always exceeded expectation. He also said that the level of accountability exhibited by ActionAid ensures the sustainability of the programs and projects implemented which is evident in the high level of ownership shown by communities in which they operate.
According to the Head of Women in Crisis movement, A partner of AASL; Juliana Conteh, AASL has greatly contributed to building its organisation’s capacity and has been actively engaged with the community people to share all the plans and budget for the implementation of activities with them. ActionAid also ensures to monitor all the activities implemented in communities throughout the year. “I am certain that the resources received for the people will be used judiciously as that has been a norm for AASL” she added.

Aminata Kamara, a right holder said that AASL has implemented numerous developmental initiatives in her community, and she expressed gratitude on their behalf. “Personally, it is because of the interventions and training of AASL I can boldly use my voice to contribute meaningfully to not only my home but my community as well.”
ActionAid Sierra Leone hands over second component of the Perkins Project to St. Peter’s School

The event which was held on the 4th of January 2023 at the St. Peter’s Catholic Junior Secondary School in Rosengbeh, Mayossoh Chiefdom of Tonkolili District featured the handing over of the second component of the “Improving access to quality education for children in Tonkolili District” project funded by the late John and his wife, Grace Perkins. “The sole purpose of us being here today is to give to the school, the community, and the district,” stated the Head of Program and Policy of AASL, Mohamed A. Fofana. Representatives from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Teaching Service Commission, Free Quality School Education Program, Tonkolili District Council, and the Chiefdom were in attendance.

The apparatuses handed over to the school by the Executive Director of ActionAid, Foday Bassie Swaray are, a library furnished with tables, chairs, shelves, standing fans, 3 desktop computers, other IT equipment, 232 assorted textbooks, with hygiene and sanitation materials added to the six classroom building, two VIP toilets, eight solar panels, six solar batteries, a water well, and 126 solar lamps provided to the school by ActionAid Sierra Leone. All together, these have improved the learning experiences of the pupils and enabled them to perform better both in school and public examinations.

The Director of Planning of the Tonkolili District Council, Ibrahim Sowa laid emphasis on the transparency of ActionAid Sierra Leone. “AASL is renowned for calling on stakeholders to discuss the funds they receive and state exactly what they intend to do with it. Rosengbeh community is privileged to be a beneficiary of the interventions of ActionAid as the organization has always been transparent and accountable to the people.” He also implored the community to take full ownership of this development and ensure its sustainability. School which have a ripple effect on national development.
Alpha Nehmahu representing the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education stated that he is “grateful to AASL for complimenting the Government’s efforts in making free quality education accessible to children in Rosengbeh Community”. “ActionAid is true to its name and always come to the rescue of communities in need. Our educational system has been in a deplorable state, that’s why the Government brought up this initiative and is always ready to work with organisations like ActionAid to make a better Sierra Leone” put in Abu Mohamed Koroma, representative from the Free Quality School Education program.

The Executive Director of AASL, Foday Bassie Swaray while giving his keynote address intreated the community people to protect the school as they would their houses and properties and to keep the children in school which have a ripple effect on national development. “One of our values at AASL is independency. If there is a need, we intervene regardless of religion, ethnic backgrounds, or geographic locations. We also believe that education is one way to eradicate poverty and that can be achieved through providing schooling materials for the children which will positively impact the trajectory of their lives.”

Musu Conteh, Head girl of the school expressed appreciation to AASL for providing all the facilities they need to be in a conducive learning environment. She promised that they will utilize all what have been provided and not engage in anything that will jeopardize their education.
Academic performance of Pupils improved through the construction of schools

In the outskirts of Kambia District, at Masimra of Masungbala Chiefdom and Lal-Gberay of the same chiefdom, AASL continues to make headways especially in the educational sector. The challenges of these communities regarding access to quality education prior to the intervention of AASL are quite similar.

Before AASL’s operation in Lal-Gberay and Masimra of Masungbala Chiefdom, the school structures there were below average. ActionAid has since been focused on the construction and renovation of numerous schools to increase the chances of children that are living in these inopportune communities to easily access Education. In Lal-Gberay, AASL partnered with Steven Caulker foundation to build the Ahmadiyya Muslim Primary school.

According to the principal of Ahmadiyya Primary School in Lal-Gberay, Bali S. Bangura, the school has yielded massive improvements. "We had a dilapidated structure before AASL built a new school for the pupils. ActionAid has also employed and trained teachers who have proven to be very influential to the pupils’ progress. This has equally contributed to the performance of the pupils even in public exams; For the National Primary School Examination (NPSE), 100% of our students hit the pass mark”.

In Masimra village, class congestion and Poor infrastructure were sighted as major problems faced by children of this community. The children and commuters expressed their gratitude to AASL for the newly constructed school. Pa Hussein Bangura, the town chief stated that ActionAid has constructed multiple schools in their community and they are grateful because "If the schools had not been constructed in our community, the children would not have access to quality education; it is only Action Aid that always comes to our rescue."

Morlai Santigi Bangura a teacher at the Kambia District Council School (KDC) stated that "we are very grateful for the intervention of AASL because without their support we would not have enough classrooms to accommodate all the pupils and it would be difficult to control the classes". He further stated that distance was another issue their children had to deal with. Previously, the pupils had to walk for miles to attend schools in neighboring communities but all that has been solved as a result of AASL’s intervention in their community.

Abdulai M. Kamara, a nine-year-old pupil who attends Ahmadiyya Muslim Primary, thanked AASL for the construction of the school in their community as someone like him who has leg injury cannot walk for long distance.
The Celebration of International Women’s Day 2023

ActionAid Sierra Leone organized a series of activities for the celebration of IWD including A Symposium on Wealth Tax for Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality, Tea time on Gender Equality, and partnered with the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs and other developmental allies at our various LRPs.

The “Tea time on Gender Equality” was a pre-engagement activity for IWD which was organized on the 7th of March at AASL’s conference room where staff met for a frank and critical discussion on a range of issues surrounding Gender Equality.

Discussions on the theme of this year’s celebration and the position of AASL’s women’s forum were tabled, ActionAid’s stance on women’s rights and Innovation and Technology, and ultimately recognition and acknowledgment of women who have made an impact on participants’ lives and how Innovation and Technology can improve such impact. Additionally, there was an opportunity to thank and honour the women in all departments of the organization for their hard work, dedication and encourage all for a bigger push toward equality and solidarity in the workplace. AASL Women’s Forum actively championed this activity and created awareness of important legal instruments especially the GEWE Act as well as bringing on ideas and proposals that focus on protecting and promoting the affairs of women and girls in the society and sharing their leadership journeys.

The Symposium on “Wealth Tax for Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality” was held on the 9th of March as a post IWD event and observation of Global days of Action for women’s rights 2023 that brought together female and male champions including Tax campaigners from western Area. The importance of technology to enhance women’s innovations at all levels was presented by a Digital Analyst. Solutions to current challenges of digitalization for women were proffered. There was also a presentation on wealth tax for a nation, its relevance for funding Gender-responsive technology for enhancing innovation for gender equality and how a nation can start the process. The discussions were led by the moderator and recommendations catalogued and will be submitted to the Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Finance for consideration.

At the Northern region, AASL partnered with the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs and other Developmental allies to celebrate IWD at the Makeni City Council Hall, Bombali District. The event propagated women’s empowerment and Ending violence against women and girls. It was climaxed by the Ministry’s presentation on the Gender Empowerment Act.

At the South-Eastern region, we took the game to the field for the community women in Bomotoke, Timdale Chiefdom in Moyamba.
Some Pictorial highlights of the IWD events

SYMPOSIUM ON WEALTH TAX FOR INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY
Some Pictorial highlights of the IWD events

TEA TIME ON GENDER EQUALITY
Some Pictorial highlights of the IWD events

IWD IN THE NORTHERN REGION LRP
Some Pictorial highlights of the IWD events

IWD IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN REGION LRP
ActionAid presents over Le33m budget for 2023

ActionAid in the News

The United States Support WFP’s Response as High Food PRICES INCREASE HUNGER IN SIERRA LEONEFOW

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THE UNITED STATES SUPPORT WFP’S RESPONSE AS HIGH FOOD PRICES INCREASE HUNGER IN SIERRA LEONEFOW

T he United States World Food Programme (WFP) announced the US$1.2 million from the United Nations Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide emergency food and development assistance to reduce food insecurity and poverty in Sierra Leone, where 90% of households have irregular access to safe and nutritious food. “Sierra Leone imports a large quantity of its food, and with the global food and fuel crisis, compounded by the ongoing conflict in neighboring countries, households have not had enough food to eat,” said Victor Toro, WFP’s Country Representative and Director.

Toro has also been of the point that people now buy fewer commodities from their incomes, which is increasing hunger levels. “With the new funding, WFP will provide food to the most vulnerable communities, expand homes in the capital, and improve food security and nutrition,” he said. The advantage of this project is that it will improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, especially children, women, and the elderly, who are the most affected by the crisis.

In a statement, the U.S. Ambassador highlighted the importance of this support, saying, “These funds will help to reduce food insecurity and provide assistance to the most vulnerable communities, including school children and small-scale farmers.”

The project will focus on providing food assistance to the most vulnerable communities, including school children and small-scale farmers. It will also support the government’s efforts to improve food security and nutrition, and will help to support the country’s recovery from the crisis. The project will be implemented in collaboration with the government, local communities, and other partners, and will ensure that the assistance reaches the most vulnerable people.

The U.S. support will be used to purchase food supplies, improve nutrition programs, and support community-led initiatives to improve food security and nutrition. The project will also provide support to the government’s efforts to improve food security and nutrition, and will help to support the country’s recovery from the crisis. The project will be implemented in collaboration with the government, local communities, and other partners, and will ensure that the assistance reaches the most vulnerable people.
The Nature Newspaper Friday 17th March 2023

GLOBAL FOUNDATION AWARDS AMAZING WOMEN

ActionAid Supports Marginalized Adolescent Girls In Freetown

ActionAid-SL Urges Government for Zero Emission Road Transport

International Women’s Day

Theme: "DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality"

Symposium - On Wealth Tax and Technology for Gender Equality

Promoting sexual equality though wealth tax and technology for gender equality

TAX MOVEMENT AND ACTION CALL FOR ELIMINATION OF BIAS IN TAX SYSTEM

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