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20 Annual 22 Report

ACTIONAID SIERRA LEONE 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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Foreword

Our esteemed readers, ActionAid International Sierra Leone (AASL) is very pleased to share with you its Annual Report for 2022. During this period, we have completed five years of our six-year Country Strategy Paper (CSP), this 2022 annual report presents our achievements, challenges, learning and impact stories amidst the multiple crises including inflation, food, fuel, debt, exchange rate and the ramification of COVID-19 disease outbreak and the Ukraine/Russian Conflict. This situation slightly defined the method of work at AASL during the reporting period, thanks to our very dedicated skilled emergency team in the seven Local Rights Programme (LRPs) across the country.

The multiple crises (food, fuel, local currency depreciation, inflation etc.) that persisted in 2022 exhibited the resilience of our communities, stakeholders, and ActionAid. Adapting to change, AASL was able to make progress to enhance social justice for people living in poverty and exclusion. The Affiliate Programme adopted context specific ways of working approach that ensured continued programme implementation. The effects of the multiple crises as earlier mentioned caused unprecedented economic hardship, gender-based violence, making vulnerable groups especially women and girls most affected with shocks and stress. AASL continued to work with its partners and networks to address rights violations, strengthening the capacities of communities.

AASL's advocacy and campaign activities continued to be significant in its overall operations, but particularly for the cancellation of debt, reconsideration of public sector wage bill of GDP especially for essential service providers (teachers and nurses), progressive tax system and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Law. Significantly, AASL worked with other civil society organizations to demand transparency and openness in the delivery and use of state resources.

AASL Board and General Assembly members effectively carried out their oversight role. All quarterly board and subcommittee meetings were held in person. This level of commitment enhanced the effectiveness of management and the smooth running of AASL. We would like to appreciate the Board and Assembly members for their commitment and oversight role they provided in this difficult time.

We recognize the diverse roles played by our partners, staff, volunteers, and communities throughout the period for which AASL would like to thank all of them for standing with the AP during a period like this.

We would like to express our gratitude to our supporters (in the United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden, Greece) and donors (the European Union, FCDO, John and Grace Perkin, Peoples Postcode Lottery) for their tremendous support to AA and contributions towards strengthening civil society organizations and building the resilience of the poor and excluded people in our communities.

With your support, AASL will continue to fight for social justice, restore the dignity of people living in poverty, and make society a fairer place for all.



Simitie Lavaly Board Chairperson



Foday Bassie Swaray Executive Director





2022 Our Achievements

at a glance



school going adolescents engaged in actions that promote safety for girls and women

300



adolescent girls empowered to lead safety initiatives in empowerment spaces within their schools



out of school adolescent girls reenrolled into formal school





out of school adolescent girls enrolled into skills training institutions/ apprenticeship



AASL sponsored children provided with school and learning materials



men and boys taking actions to end violence against women and girls



women farmers trained and provided with agricultural inputs



women in AASL supported VSLAs in 7 districts save over NLE 500,000



households - approx. 546 flood survivors provided food palliatives and cash



primary school children showing increased literacy levels through participation in reading circles



children learning in conducive classrooms in 5 schools constructed or rehabilitated and provided with furniture



pupils provided solar lamps to enhance their studies

10

teachers enrolled in the Distance Education Programme (DEP) to acquire minimum qualification (Teacher Certificate)



staff supported for capacity-building courses in taught learning, trainings, and professional accreditations

Served as steering committee member for the development of the recently passed GEWE bill into law



Contributed to the consortium action to defend the peace and basic rights in Sierra Leone - A critical look into the August 10 demonstration



Contributed to the review of the 2019 national development cooperation framework



young people trained on disaster risk reduction and prevention





stakeholders converged to commit to actions for climate justice

70



female flood survivors provided dignity kits



Our Major Challenges

Increased general price level: Prices of commodities escalated to an alarming rate and our planned budget grossly affected. Although we accounted for inflation during our plans, the escalated price surpassed the inflationary cap. We did a mid-year budget revision to account for the changes that occurred in the commodity market.

Phaseout of Tonkolili LRP: The Phaseout of Tonkolili LRP left several implications. AASL will lose a minimum of Le 500,000,000.00 from the CS arrangement going forward and our contribution to humanity in Tonkolili scaled out as well. Our implementing partners is also affected and subsequent Board Members from the district might be affected as well. However, we are continuing our robust fundraising efforts considering Tonkolili as one of the disadvantaged districts in our programme.

Funding Constraint: Funding of the AP continues to drop thereby affecting the entire programme delivery. More efforts were made to develop and market more proposals whilst maintaining the regular giving from our funding affiliates.

What We Learnt

- Our proactiveness in the 2023 Plans and Budget process resulted in an early approval by the Board. This in essence means programme implementation will commence earlier enough to avoid backlog and uplift an effective and efficient financial management system.
- The regular programme meetings and monitoring triggered efforts in the field thereby ensuring a satisfactory and consistent programme delivery amidst obvious social and economic challenges.
- Our accountability mechanism and strong internal controls and structures eminently position us in terms of profile and respectability among our peers.
- Limited availability of funding required to finance CSP commitments continues to limit our scope of intervention looking at the numerous needs in the communities.
- Communities can be unreliable and provide incorrect information during rapid assessment periods. This increased error of inclusion and exclusion making data to be erroneous. AASL and partners embarked on data verification to reduce the stated challenge.



Introduction

This reporting year was characterized with multiple crises including inflation, and food crises local currency depreciation, huge external and internal debt (over 3bn USD) making about 75% of GDP ratio, threat of politically induced internal conflict, the scars of COVID-19 and the ramifications of the Ukraine/Russia War. Prices of basic food commodities for example quadrupled and cost on fuel was two times the price compared to end of 2021. Research had proved that in a period of crisis, women and children are often the most affected.¹ This cannot be disconnected from the suffering of women and children in this current Sierra Leone economic crises. To show their dissatisfaction with the current economic situation, though some schools said it was orchestrated by politicians; women around the country planned a peaceful demonstration but was interrupted by the Sierra Leone Police for failing to adhere to police clearance and order. Two prominent politicians were arrested due to their association with the planned demonstration and several women who took on the street but later released.

Gender inequality was conspicuously sharp making women limitedly represented in public and private offices. At home, most faced stereotypic challenges that further debar their personal and collective growth. ActionAid and many other actors worked with the government throughout this period to have a law that guarantees women's socio-economic and political empowerment across the country. Although progress was made towards the end of the year, this process was remarkably challenged especially around the area of reserving parliamentary seats for women. Utterly, most male parliamentarians were never in favour of that clause. Following a presidential accent, parliament needed to have the bill discussed and passed into law, but this process was never completed until parliament recessed in December 2022.

The Government flagship programme on Free Quality Education (FQE) has led to a tremendous increase in enrolment especially in public schools. The FQE is narrowing the gender gap by removing the barriers to access education for marginalized girls and children living with disabilities.

So much investment has been made in the education sector with a 22% budget allocation from the national budget. Notwithstanding, more gaps

including low teacher salary, unclear utilization of school fees subsidies, etc. continue to surface and require redress mechanisms. As living conditions continued to be tougher with conditions of service unchanged, general socio-economic wellbeing on the average Sierra Leonean got worrisome. A faction of teachers called "concern teachers" rose a campaign for pay increase and government responded by proposing a 45% increasement by January 2023 which allowed schooling to continue.

For the first time in the history of Sierra Leone, government announced elections date a year ahead. Way before the elections, politically motivated tension was glaring, and violence abounded. The bye-election conducted in constituency 056 in Tonkolili District, was noted with violence between the two major political parties leaving some people injured.² This was a clear early warning sign ahead of the 2023 elections.

As elections were drawing closer (June 2023), several activities unfolded ahead of the multi-tier polls where citizens were expected to exercise their franchise. Voter registration was completed, and a controversial bill was presented to parliament on the electoral model to be used for electing

^[2] UN Resident Coordinator, PPRC & ECSL calls for investigation into election violence in Tonkolili District | (switsalone.com)



^[1] Womens_children's_and_adolescents'_health_in_huma (2).pdf L

Members of Parliament (MPs) and Councilors. The proposed Proportional Representation (PR) model was heavily contested by the main opposition on the basis that the prevailing context of existing constituencies excludes the use of the proposed model.

In a UN OCHA training co-organized by National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and Unicef, Sierra Leone remained prone and vulnerable to disaster and emergencies. Whilst the country has been faced with different disasters including flooding and mudslides, it has been difficult to make progress in preventing such occurrences over the period. Resources particularly capacity, tools, and equipment to respond to disaster has often delayed timely response measures without the intervention of INGOs.

The level of youth involvement in drugs called for state attention and action. The rampant in-take of drugs such as "Kush" has become a serious security concern. This concern if not addressed will lead to serious human insecurity and emergency.

As a nation, our accountability mechanisms are weak. For the first time in recent years, Audit Service Sierra Leone's (ASSLs) Annual Audit for 2021 reported an unqualified audit opinion. This report raised many concerns from the public, especially when it occurred after the suspension of the Auditor General a year ago. Regardless of the Unqualified Audit Opinion, the report indicated huge financial loss because of irregularities.

Our 2022 Interventions riority 2: Improve public Priority 1 : Engage the Priority 3: Advance accountability for the structural causes of responsive humanitarian provision of responsive action prioritising women violence against basic public services & girl's safety. marginalised women & participation, leadership in girls and promote the recognition, reduction and emergency preparedness, redistribution of unpaid response and prevention. Focus Area 1: Women care work for economic and youth participation justice. in democratic processes strengthened Focus Area 1: Build **Resilience of Women &** Focus Area 1: Violence Young People with robust against marginalised accountable processes in women and girls Focus Area 2: Public **Disaster Response** financial accountability Focus Area 2: Unpaid care improved Focus Area 2: Ensure a & decent work **Community & Women-L** Focus Area 3: An effective Humanitarian and efficient Public Preparedness Service responsive to needs of people

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Women farmers sing happily as they share stories of their harvest and grain store

One member of the women farmers group spreading out the grains from their bumper harvest **GROUNDBREAKING LAW TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S RIGHT:** AASL continued its coalition with Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Women's Forum, 50/50, the Ministry of Gender, LRP Partners and other likeminded organizations to enable the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) bill enacted into law. As a member of the technical committee, we joined an engagement with the Gender Committee of Parliament organized by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs to further influence the process. Though we are met with several stalemates, yet there was progress and a huge glimmer of hope that the bill will be enacted. This bill if passed into law and fully implemented will empower women's socio-economic and political stride in the public, private and not-for-profit making entities.

BUILT GIRLS RESILIENCE AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: Through the "Action to Empower Marginalized Adolescent Girls" (AEMAG) project, girls showed empowerment as they resisted Gender-Based violence in their schools and communities. We re-enrolled 100 girls who were out of school and supported 60 more in skills training in the Bo and Western Area. These girls showed remarkable progress both in school and the skills centre where they were enrolled.

Within this period, we created safe empowerment spaces and facilitated sessions through trained school mentors (2 per school). The empower approach was done through capacity from AASL/Partner to School Mentors/Mothers' Clubs/Community Animators, to adolescent girls (30 per school) and to the rest of the school. The out of schoolgirls were then engaged by our Mothers' Clubs whilst the Community Animators get to adolescent girls whom we had not captured in the project. The empowerment spaces provided adolescent girls the privilege to discuss issues of school related gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health rights and sexual gender-based violence.

PROVIDED LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT TO WOMEN: The VSLA Economic model has been a major boost for our community women. A group from Kono completed another cycle of savings and shared-out profit among its members in May after a 52-week saving effort. A total of Le 84,000,000.00 was shared among its members exclusive of the social funds. Similarly in the Western Area LRP, one share out of Le 19,000,000 was done by the women of Kola Tree. In our Kambia Programme through the EU Project, VSLA groups accumulated a total of Three Hundred and Ten Million, Nine Hundred and Ninety-Four Thousand Leones (Le 310 994,000) from 40 communities. From the total, a total of Two Hundred and Seventy-Five Million, Two Hundred Thousand Leones (Le 275, 200,000) were given out as loan to members on small interest rate upon repayment. The amount of loan given to members benefitted 900 out of 1,000 women who had not got such opportunity before this project began. This is to say, women can now easily access loans with smaller interest rate, can setup small businesses, and be able to support their children in school.

This economic progress maintained by women is a guarantee of getting them out of community loan or avoid going into bad debt in exchange of farm products during harvest season. The Perkins Project in Tonkolili also established and trained 5 new VSLA Groups totaling 150 participants. All the groups were up and running with an expectation that they would save substantially as they showed great interest and cooperation.

As we continue to strengthen the economic wellbeing of communities through the VSLA model, providing further support to consolidate their gains was a worth-taking venture. Our programme in Bo provided seedling (rice and groundnut) to 9 mothers' clubs in 9 communities which boasted about their food demand in the period. Bombali LRP restocked the Rolunk community with small



ruminants (10 he and 10 she goats), various farm inputs (rice and groundnut) and trained its members on modern agronomic practices. Whilst the ruminants reproduced a total of 5, some of the he/she goats supplied got ill and died.

ACTIONAID'S CONTRIBUTION IN POSITIONING YOUNG PEOPLE AND WOMEN IN DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENTS YOUTHS OWNED AND SELF-CONTROLLED GLOBAL PLATFORM: The myth that young people are unserious, disorganized and conflict inclined can be contested otherwise as the Global Platform initiative run and managed by Young People in Bo. Within this reporting period, these young people were able to make and save Twenty-Nine Million, Fourteen Thousand, Two Hundred Leones (Le 29,014,200.00) from a social business venture of printing and photo shooting facility. Besides the income generated from the digital hub, 304 people from the public especially schools and university in the Kandeh Town and Torwama vicinity in Bo have access to a reasonable printing, photocopying, photo-shooting and other facilities from this youth owned hub. Maintaining a functional bank account, running a petty cash, and addressing immediate repairs showed a character of commitment, organized structure and display of knowledge and skills to manage themselves.

OUR EFFORT TO ADDRESS DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE: In transforming young people, Global Platform initiative through support from ActionAid Denmark engaged various youths to curb drug abuse and misuse. In collaboration with the Mental Health Unit from the Ministry of Health and Sierra Leone Police – Southern Division, 40 youths from five ghettos benefitted from a training on the effect of drug on youths' productive potential. These 40 trained youths embarked on outreach, talk to their peers individually and collectively to abandon the intake of dangerous drugs that grossly affects their wellbeing. The outreach was complemented by a series of radio programmes and a symposium reaching about 3,500 youth in 15 identified hotspots within the municipality of Bo. An event like such will slow down the rampant drug abuse amongst youths. AASL will ensure the continuity of such actions to lower the degree of youth violence and crime rates.

SUPPORT PEACEFUL VOTER REGISTRATION

Our Global Platform initiative in Bo embarked on community sensitization on voter registration and send messages to young people about the essence of peaceful and credible elections in the June 24, 2023, multi-tier elections. This contributed to increased turn-out, especially among young people - many of them who had earlier expressed unwillingness to participate in the upcoming elections due to their poor living conditions. We continued the peace message extending the initiative to all our LRPs and where possible in the whole country as we moved closer to the elections.

Similarly, in Bo, through our partner (MoPADA), a training was conducted for women and youths on non-violence electioneering process. In Bombali, a town hall conference was held bringing political actors, youths, and women who had discussions around peaceful elections. Our programme in the Western Area mobilized young people that embarked on street parade to disseminate peace in elections ahead of the June 2023 elections. The training in Bo, conference in Makeni and parade in Freetown which mobilized over 500 participants including major political party representatives who have influence over their subjects, opened discussions backed by solutions in getting through a violence-free election calling on elections' bodies like ECSL, PPRC, NEW, Party Executives to remain transparent, credible, and fair in executing their roles and duties throughout the electioneering process. ActionAid continued to make this known to every party and



hold further discussions and engagements on a peaceful 2023 elections. Mr. Dauda Lamin Koroma is the Crime Officer from the Rogbaneh Police Division - "We should be careful of election offences and crimes such as double registration, forging electoral documents such as identification cards, campaign interruption, campaign dates, and using party Colours to interrupt another campaign are all among electoral crimes that are punishable by law".

MAINSTREAMED ACCOUNTABILITY IN OUR PROGRAMMING OUR 2022 BUDGET PRESENTATION TO OUR CONSTITUENTS

AASL and its partners completed the 2022 Annual Budget Presentation to diverse stakeholders including government, communities, CSOs, partners and donors. "This is a commendable stride as ActionAid's effort seeks to demonstrate that they are a transparent organization and that they are a transparent organization that wants partners and other stakeholders to see and understand how they operate as an organization and their contribution to the development trajectory in Sierra Leone" Rev. Dr. Jonathan Titus Williams, Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development.

Followed by a micro-level engagement in each of the LRP we work, a national session was held where detailed information was shared on our planned work for the period. From a total income of Twenty-Five Billion, Three Hundred and Twenty-Five Million, One Hundred and Fifty-One Thousand, Three Hundred and Sixty-four Leones Sixty-Five Cents (Le 25,325,151,364.65), we presented this total income among LRPs, units and departments. Invitees from ACC, Audit Service Sierra Leone, MoPED, CARL, UNICEF, and community members commended AASL for a sustained and trust-worthy approach like such. Aiah Gbondo-Tugbawa was the Acting Deputy Auditor General in charge of specialized audits said, "the ability of ActionAid to present their plans and budget in an open atmosphere is an indication of their determination to be open, accountable and transparent in all their actions". Calling on other NGOs, the Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) called on other NGOs and government departments and agencies to follow the practice of ActionAid describing this approach as a way of deepening accountability, trust, and an inclusive development approach. A community member said "all these discussions are meant for us in the community. I attended the Western Area Open Information Policy (OIP) and provided a copy of the document, and I confirmed that AASL does exactly what they have on paper. If other NGOs, government, and companies demonstrate an accountable programme work like AASL, the problems of Sierra Leone would be hugely addressed in a short time."

CONTINUED OUR PUSH FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

As a member of Budget Advocacy Network - BAN, we continued to demand for justice to deepen accountability and transparency. We developed a position paper which was broadcast on all major media outlets titled 'the indefinite suspension of the Auditor-General remains a very serious concern for the accountability of public funds. The release was followed by media engagement on Radio Democracy FM 98.1, African Young Voices (AYV), and Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC). This issue remained to be our talking point in fostering public accountability.

SIERRA LEONE'S CONSTITUTIONAL DIALOGUE

With only 50 out of 134 recommendations accepted by the government, AASL and CCYA collaborated to organize a national conference on young people's position. Amid legally minded young folks and other stakeholders including MP representatives, 50 young people from all over the country attended a collective dialogue for an increased understanding of the White Paper.



Adolescent girls tell ActionAid about their inschool empowerment space under the Action to Empower Marginalised Adolescent Girls project

TIME

1 9

NWW.actional

Following a presentation of the White Paper to these young folks, concerns were raised, position paper developed and submitted to the chairman Parliamentary Youth Committee for the attention and action of parliament. Noted below were the concerns raised by young people:

- The age limit to compete for the position of president exempted young people.
- The 50+1 winning clause for presidential election would entrench political divide and justify the adage of the winner takes it all.
- The rejection of the justiciability of social rights of citizens among others
- They however commended government on the following grounds:
 - the separation of the Office of the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice
 - the minimum 30% quota for women's participation and representation in governance.

INFLEUENCED LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES

In Tonkolili, we worked with CEPOE in the engagement of the Tonkolili District Council and its MDAs on Budget processes and how citizens could participate in the local council budget plan and budgeting process. In a dialogue with district and community stakeholders, it was clear that previous budget consultation processes were limited, hence community needs were rarely included in the district council plan for the year. AASL and its partners want to see an all-inclusive budget development process, building programmes that are community rooted and ensuring accountable and transparent processes from design to implementation and closure.

Working with our partners in Bo (MoPADA and BoDBAN), the Local Council Budget tracking exercise was completed and analyzed. It was realized that the budget allotted to water resources and health was not adequate to address the numerous gaps in the sector. Women and Girls whose needs are mostly aligned to these sectors continue to face challenges. In collaboration with the Gender Desk Officers from the two councils, BoDBAN, MoPADA and Global platform will facilitate the increased participation of women and other marginalized groups in the development of the 2023 council budget such that issues that affect women and girls are considered.

In Moyamba, Tax Revenue sensitization was carried out by NeSPE, MoDBEAN and the District Council targeting Kargboro and Timdale Chiefdoms. This was done to enable the council to generate more of its own source revenue to finance gaps in the local development plan. This drive contributed to huge awareness among taxpayers with strong expectation that more revenue will be generated by the end of the year.

In Kambia, we translated Audit Reports into a simplified reader friendly version to harness community understanding, interpretation, and action. A total of 1000 copies were produced and taken to the communities where awareness programmes were done. Forty (40) communities were reached and creating sense out of audit report assured. This would help these communities to ask their leaders hard questions and make arguments from an evidential perspective. We hope more communities are aware and be able to interpret audit reports – a tool they can use to make sound decisions.

In the same District [of Kambia], we had noted that the biggest issue that used to challenge the District Council was accountability and own source revenue generation. The lack of trust in the council also contributed to low tax compliance among citizens of Kambia. This caused a huge loss to the council and outcome of various audit reports, until 2019, was damning. The EU Project established relationship with the council and opened relationship, a more participatory approach to its operations and, strengthen healthy relationship with CSOs. With several accountability trainings including auditing, internal control, inclusive and participatory governance systems etc., Kambia improved gradually from adverse to qualified and now unqualified audit. AASL and BAN continuously engaged with the Kambia District Council and in three years, we all have something



to celebrate. More significantly, their internal revenue window has reopened and has recorded huge gains in the last two years. Budget Tracking information done by BAN for example revealed that the Council raised NLe 1,143,588.1 as against NLE 124,260.27 in 2021 – recording 820% increase. It is hoped that this trajectory continues even after the life of the EU project by October 2022.

GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AGENDA COMPLEMENTED BY ACTIONAID SCHOOLS INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Apart from the Six-Classroom, Water Well and Toilet in Yorgbofor Community, Moyamba LRP; the construction of all school buildings – a three classroom structure in Kono, 6 classrooms with store and office space, two compartment toilets, a library facility and water well in Tonkolili, additional three classrooms in Bombali and Kambia were completed. With the completion of these school projects, at least 1000 pupils have gained access to a more conducive school buildings thereby creating a fine ambiance for learning. The school in Tonkolili (Rosengbeh Community specifically) further provided with 3 pairs of desk-top computers, electrified the library with solar energy and provided solar lamps to 126 pupils to enhance their studies. All the schools reported in this quarter were done with furniture to provide sitting accommodation for the pupils.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT TO ENHANCE QUALITY EDUCATION

Providing training programmes for teachers can boost the school system, and this syncs well with the free quality education commitment. In this reporting period, ActionAid, and its partners supported 16 teachers (6 from Bombali and 10 from Kambia) in the Distance Education Programme (DEP) to acquire minimum gualification (Teacher Certificate) and provide guality teaching in their respective schools. The teachers from Bombali District were enrolled in the EBK University whilst those in Kambia got admitted in the Freetown Teachers College for three years. Similarly in Tonkolili through the Perkins Project, two refreshers were conducted – firstly 30 teachers from 5 communities received training on good school sanitation and hygiene and 30 teachers from 5 communities on Child Center Teaching Technique (CCTT). In the area of Health and Sanitation, AASL distributed veronica buckets, dustbins, shovels, kettles, soap, toilet cleaners, brushes, moping sticks, toilet rolls to embark on regular cleaning exercises. Assessing the schools since the first-year training on good sanitation and hygiene, there has been much improvement in sanitation and hygiene in Perkin' Project operational schools in Tonkolili District. This action will promote good health as a means of having the physical and mental alertness to celebrate. More significantly, their internal revenue window has reopened and has recorded huge gains in the last two years. Budget Tracking information done by BAN for example revealed that the Council raised NLe 1,143,588.1 as against NLE 124,260.27 in 2021 - recording 820% increase. It is hoped that this trajectory continues even after the life of the EU project by October 2022.

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SUPPORTED READING CIRCLES AND STUDY GROUP SESSIONS

The Perkin Project in Tonkolili continued its support to established Reading Circles and Study Group Sessions. For the Reading Circles, two (one for teachers and the other for pupils) were managed. Whilst the teachers meet and discuss key issues affecting pupils' reading circles and other challenges in the school, the pupils circle continued their circle to strengthen their reading ability and numeracy skills. In this reporting period, the outcome of monitoring revealed that reading circles are of tremendous help to the pupils helping them to read and comprehend their notes with little supervision. In the six project schools, more than 70% of pupils from classes 3 to 6 can now read fluently. For the study group sessions, a total of 27 sessions were held (3 times a week) excluding examination weeks. Six teachers are assigned to these study groups with payment of monthly stipend as motivation to continue the sessions. Over the one-year period of this study groups at St. Peter's Junior Secondary Rosengbeh, there was an excellent performance of pupils in the recent public examination result that was published (Basic Education Certificate Examination). The school got a 100% pass rate as compared to the previous years. This shows that the study groups introduced are helping immensely.

PROVIDE LEARNING MATERIALS TO OVER 8000 PUPILS FROM 6 DISTRICTS.

All Child Sponsorship pupils that participated in our usual message collection received learning materials (books, pencils, pens, ruler, and school bags) to cushion the huge burden on their parents. This support remained crucial and contributed to the learning progress of these pupils. Parents expressed appreciations and applauded ActionAid and partners for supporting them and their children in a very difficult time. The funds parents had kept for this purpose were then diverted to something else that can keep the home up and running.

INVIGORATED CHILD SPONSORSHIP (ICS)

In fulfilment of ICS 2, our programme in Moyamba through partner (NeSPE) organized an athletic



Children in AASL supported reading circle gather outdoor just before their reading session

Perkin's project participant reads out loud during inter-school reading competition sports meet that brought together 4 schools from 4 communities. The meet which was hosted in Mokandor community in Kargboro Chiefdom was attended by 148 children who took part in different track and field events. A total of 544 community members, including children, women and men attended and chaired up the event and demonstrated immense joy and appreciation for an event well organized.

EMPOWERED 460 ADOLESCENT GILRS THROUGH THE PEOPLE'S POST-CODE LOTTERY PROJECT

Through the above project, we re-enrolled 100 Out-of-School Girls into formal school, supported a total of 60 into skills training programme that ranged from tailoring, hairdressing, catering etc. We additionally worked with 300 of highly vulnerable schoolgirls to ensure their educational potentials are realized. In all of this, we facilitated monthly girl's empowerment spaces, and worked with Mothers Club members to provide mentoring sessions for out of school adolescent girls at community level. Essentially, we organized several shared learning sessions, community of practice and meetings with boys and men on issues that affect adolescent girls. Girls themselves were organized to champion a girl-led awareness campaign through social mobilization and radio talk shows. The outcome of these engagements contributed to more girls making progress instead of being dropped out of school and continuing to face unbearable challenges in their life journey.

REDUCED RISK AND VULNERABILITY DURING EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS THROUGH OUR ACTIONS LAUNCHED THE CLIMATE JUSTICE SCOPING STUDY DONE BY ACTIONAID SIERRA LEONE

In the presence of our donors such as the EU, UNDP, British High Commission, and key partners including government and CSOs, findings on loss and damage were presented and discussed. From the studies, it was clear that Sierra Leone is among countries that remained grossly affected by Climate Change and programming around such should be government priority. As Sierra Leone had a contingent in CoP 27, it was expected that AASL and government have further discussions on ways of working in tackling the damage of climate induced catastrophe. A documentary was done and aired via television outlets for national attention.

OUR ACTION ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

Ahead of CoP 27 in Egypt, our programme in Bo through the Global Platform, a conference was organized on climate justice. This conference brought 70 young people and key district stakeholders to the S.K. Foyoh Memorial Hall to talk about this topical issue, the damage it is creating and how such could be tackled. The Keynote Speaker who doubled as the Regional Information Education and Communication Officer, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) South, Fomba Sheriff mentioned that the world is faced with a triple damage crisis including Biodiversity Loss, Pollution, and Climate Change Effects requiring collective efforts to stop or minimize the change.

RESPONDED TO THE AUGUST 28, FLOODING AND MUDSLIDE IN FREETOWN

Several disasters occurred within the period but the most impacting one was the August 28, mudslide and flooding that affected 18 communities in Freetown. Following a comprehensive rapid assessment and data collection in all 18 communities led by the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), it came out that 8 fatalities were recorded, including children. The assessment report also indicated that 12,903 people were directly affected from 1,817



households. ActionAid was part of the assessment and data collection. To acquire funding, we requested support from the International Humanitarian and Resilience Team (IHART) submitting a situation report within 24 hours. Receiving from IHART £10,000, we designed a response programme to restore hope through life saving support and prevention. We selected 108 households comprising of 546 people – 47.2% households. The package provided included food items (rice, oil, sardine, salt,), direct cash support of NSL 500, dignity kit exclusively for women household. Additionally, a training was provided to 40 affected people from 8 communities for one day. This was for them to engage their respective communities to prevent and ensure Disaster Risk Reduction.

AASL BENEFITTED FROM UN OCHA DISASTER TRAINING

Jointly organized by the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), UNICEF and UN OCHA, ActionAid Sierra Leone was selected to participate in this capacity programme represented by the Emergency Lead. A capacity assessment test was conducted at the end of the weeklong training and our representative was among the top five. This added profile and recognition to the organization and have been called upon by the NDMA to provide further technical support to its humanitarian programming.

TRAINED 150 COMMUNITY BENEFICIARIES ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION

Through our partner in Kambia (ABC Development), 150 women and young people benefited from a training conducted for three days. This training took place in three different locations (Magbema Chiefdom, Masungbala Chiefdom, Thala-Munu Chiefdom). Each of these chiefdoms brought 50 participants for one day). The Office of National Security led the training in a way that actions were required through the acquired capacity to prevent or reduced anticipated risk of disaster in various communities. Beneficiaries went back and had meetings, house to house awareness on the need to prevent themselves from future disasters. Since this training was conducted, no disaster has been reported from the communities and we are hopeful that loss and damage will continue to be minimized even when disaster occurs at any given point in time.

OUR POLICY AND CAMPAIGN ENGAGEMENTS - GEWE BIII PASSED INTO LAW BY PARLIAMENT

With both financial and moral contributions, ActionAid Sierra Leone (AASL) joined women's rights activists from like-minded organisations to lobby and demand the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill that had been laid in Parliament since 2021. In the period under review, AASL joined women from across the country to support the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA) for the second reading of the Bill. After a year, the GEWE Bill was passed into law by the Parliament of Sierra Leone on Tuesday 15th November 2022. Although the women wanted the inclusion of the Safe Seat Clause in the Bill, they acknowledged the steps made so far with key provisions accepted. The provisions include:

·A minimum of 30% women representation in parliament.

•A minimum of 30% appointive position in governance by the President.

A minimum of 30% of all appointments in private institutions with more than 25 employees.

·Maternity leave extended from 12 weeks to 14 weeks.

•Access to finance and gender mainstreaming across national policies, legal framework, and programs. With the above, it reached a moment for CSOs working on women's rights and governance issues to capacitate women across the country on the content of the act and how to



demand its implementation at all levels, especially in the coming 2023 electoral process.

TAX OBLIGATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY - AASL PLAYED A CRITICAL PART

Taxation is critical to achieving sustainable development, reducing inequality, and strengthening accountable governance. A growing body of research in Sierra Leone has explored the impacts of taxation and tax reforms on citizens, equity, and service delivery. To increase the impact and usefulness of this research, it must be shared with policymakers, civil society actors, stakeholders, and taxpayers. With this aim, the International Centre for Tax and Development (ICTD) and Budget Advocacy Network (BAN) co-hosted a two-day conference in partnership with the National Revenue Authority and Ministry of Finance on 7th and 8th December 2022, at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Aberdeen. We helped to amplify this concept to the public so government can generate more income to deliver on basic gender responsive public services.

SUPPORTED CIVIL SOCIETY TOWN HALL ON PEACE AND NATIONAL COHESION

Following the August protests, AASL collaborated with Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Centre for the Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL), Budget Advocacy Network (BAN), and other organisations to hold a civil society town hall to discuss the role of CSOs in fostering peace and national cohesion. Participants reflected on some of the current challenges in the country, which include division among civil society, deep rooted political divide, lack of trust in state institutions, the role of social media in fueling hate speech, among others. The meeting provided space for CSOs to discuss challenges and the need for stronger partnerships and collaboration.

SUPPORTED THE REVISION OF THE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (DCF)

The 2019 Development Cooperation Framework (DCF) 2019 was seriously criticized by NGOs and CSOs as several of its clauses were meant to constrict their operations and independence. Although many of our recommendations were ignored at that time, this is another opportunity to present major challenges in this policy, especially after it has faced realities. Some of the issues noted then were:

- NGOs limit their registration to only two categories/sectors.
- Mandatory signing of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with respective Sector Ministry before they can commence operations.
- Section 5 of the DCF outlined a cumbersome registration process. NGOs feel this condition can eliminate small NGOs who have limited financial resources to fulfil this criterion.
- Making membership with SLANGO as a requirement for reregistration.
- Assets for completed projects to be submitted to the line ministry or as determined by MoPED. The DCF requires that at least 70% of all donor funds to an NGO must be directed to target beneficiaries and 30% towards administrative costs, including consultancies.
- Local Council shall issue a certificate of compliance with a minimal administrative fee of Le 50,000- fifty thousand Leones.

Again, in the review, AASL and consortium members (NMJD, CARL, Amnesty International, SDI, CCYA etc) after holding several internal reflection dialogue meetings, brought to fore the following:

- · to go green by registering and filling service level agreements online
- central registration for national organisations and district-specific registration for organisations working in a singular district.
- not making registration with SLANGO mandatory
- It is hoped that an acceptable Framework will emerge for enhanced civic space.



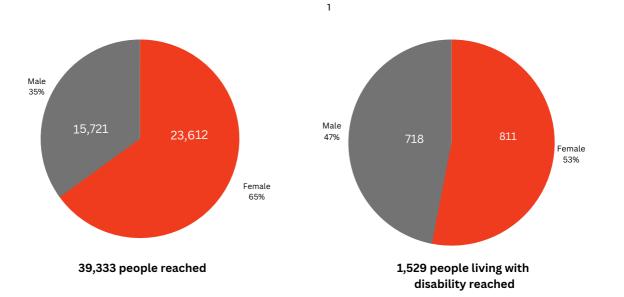
Youth activists of Global Platform Sierra Leone embark on sensitization during 16 days of activism

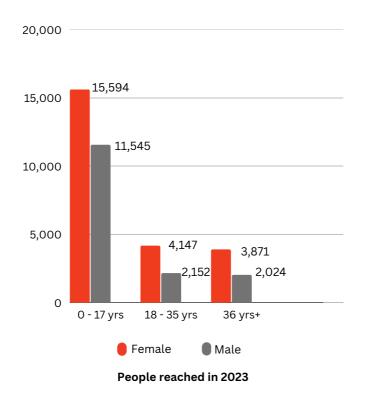
Mothers club embark on soap making as an income generating activity to support their children in school

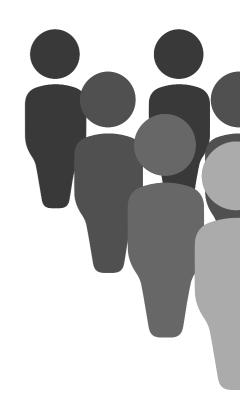
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People Reached

Through diverse actions in 2022, we reached 39,333 people most of whom are marginalized and living in hard-to-reach communities. Our interventions targeted various categories of people including children, in and out-of-school adolescent girls, women's groups, young people, schoolteachers, survivors of gender-based violence, among others, while working with networks and social movements.







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Stories of Change

"If Agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right" – Hawa



In 2021 AASL's Board visited Rolunk community in Bombali district and it was evident that this was a deprived community. The women particularly, were trapped in poverty, struggling to provide food for their children. In response to the community's dire situation, AASL provided seed support to these struggling mothers to engage in agriculture as a group, repaired their dry floor and grain store and provided them training for additional income generation. In less than one year, during a visit to the Rolunk community, the group members heartily sang and chanted in happiness over the change they had experienced. The positive impact of this support was evident in bumper harvest the women

proudly showed off. They could now proudly say that they have enough food, especially for their children, who previously attended school on empty stomachs. Hawa, one of the group members, shared her gratitude, stating, "We reached out to ActionAid Sierra Leone at a time when we needed help the most. We were facing challenges in meeting our basic needs, especially supporting our school-going children. ActionAid provided us with rice seedlings, tools like cutlasses and hoes, and valuable agricultural training. This training improved our skills in various areas, including planting techniques, crop rotation, and proper storage. After the harvest, we had enough to feed our families throughout the year, save for the next farming season, and even sell surplus produce to support our families' needs."

Furthermore, Hawa emphasized, "In addition to the mentioned support, we also benefited from income-generating interventions. AASL provided us with livestock and trained us in soap production, along with a start-up package to sustain the trade. These initiatives have allowed us to secure additional income by diversifying and exploring various sources." The comprehensive support extended to the women of Rolunk acted as a catalyst, transforming their lives and igniting development within the entire community, with a primary focus on improving the well-being of their children."

In a joyful mood, much like many others in her community, Hawa shared that in the past, she lacked the skills that could ensure her self-sufficiency and income-generating capabilities. Now, she enthusiastically conveyed, "*I am now an empowered woman, thanks to ActionAid. I can produce and sell soap, rare animals, and possess additional knowledge, skills, and techniques in farming. Our husbands now appreciate us, and a sense of peace prevails in our homes.*"

As the conversation with Hawa concluded, she underscored the significance of knowledge and skills, stating that money had always been around, but the lack of know-how held them back. She recognized that farming was the solution, firmly stating, "*If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right.*"



High Hopes For Emma: The Impact of VSLAs



The Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) formed and supported by AASL serve as a social and economic empowerment tool that has helped women in many deprived communities. Marginalized women in these communities have used this self-help mechanism to save money, access loans, avoid debts, and solidarize on issues affecting them in their communities.

Emma, a single mother of two and person living with disability, is one of such women. She belongs to the Dalengehneh VSLA group in Masimra community, Masungbala Chiefdom in Kambia district. She shared with ActionAid how she and her family have benefited from the VSLA scheme. "*My husband left me when I*

fell ill and lost my sight. I am left to provide for my children and myself under this difficult circumstance. I harvest palm-nuts and sell them to raise income that I utilize to care for my family. However, the money I get from sales of palm-nuts doesn't suffice to cover all my family's needs. Being a member of this association has helped me in supporting my children's education, providing their school needs and meals. We contribute weekly to the 'Dalengehneh box' and members can get loans from the savings and pay back with little interest over a period".

After a year of saving, the annual savings plus interest is shared among all the twenty-five members of the association, and they then use what they receive to support their families and businesses. "This has been a life saver for me. I sometimes wondered how difficult my life would have been if not for this sustainable intervention. ActionAid has done a great thing for us; it has not only improved our economic situations but has also built a team of women who can rely on one another in difficult times", said Emma.

Introducing income generating skills to VSLAs is a sustainability stride ActionAid adopted to the model to sustain it and build women's resilience to the prevailing economic hardship and devaluing of the local currency. Amidst high hopes for the future, Emma concluded, *"if women are given dollars and taught how to make more, they can change the world.*" Despite the current economic situation, many other women in Emma's group can now meaningfully contribute to their families and society.



"Impossibility is not a fact, it's an opinion – ActionAid has proved me right."



Mabinty, 35, is a physically challenged widow living in Kapairoh community, Magbema Chiefdom, Kambia District. She faced immense challenges after her husband's passing, leaving her with three boys to care for. As a trained tailor, Mabinty depended on just one sewing machine to generate income to take care of her children. She later became a member of the village savings and loan association formed by ActionAid in her community. Explaining her ordeal, Mabinty mentioned, "My tailoring skills and access to a sewing machine proved to be lifelines. I also joined the ActionAid's Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) initiative and consistently paid my contribution nd attended meetings."

"When the covid-19 pandemic hit, economic hardship affected my tailoring business as customers couldn't afford additional expenses beyond their essential needs. I offered most of my services for little to no charges, until my sewing machine broke down, which made me struggle to feed my family and pay VSLA dues. I lost my VSLA membership due to payment lapses, and the social fund couldn't provide sufficient support. Despite my hardships, my hope in God remained strong. Many people thought all was lost for me and it would be impossible for me to bounce back, but impossibility is not a fact, it is an opinion" she added.

ActionAid and its partner, Budget Advocacy Network (BAN), visited Mabinty's community as part of the EU Project monitoring, where they heard her story. Touched by her situation, the team pledged to buy her a new sewing machine, and provide her with a wheelchair, table, and chair to improve her business and build her resilience.

The arrival of the new sewing machine coincided with the reopening of schools and Mabinty secured contracts to sew uniforms. In her words, "*I was able to make Le300, I have not got this amount for over a year now. I am grateful for the support provided by ActionAid and BAN.*"

This timely intervention was a significant relief for her and her family. Mabinty has reconnected with the VSLA group and is determined to continue improving her life and providing for her children. Her passion for making people look beautiful in neatly tailored clothes is kept alive and she looks forward to the future with high hopes.





The Perkin School Project hosts NPSE for the first time

Over 200 pupils from 7 schools who would have travelled to Matotoka - 25kms from their communities now have an NPSE examination centre at their backyard. This is a cost saving dream for parents and a mental/psychological resolve or shock absorber in attempting an examination within their community instead of moving away in a new environment.

John and Grace Perkin are a couple and have supported Tonkolili through ActionAid for over 10 years. This educational project is another phase AASL is getting from the Perkin family. The school component with a six-classroom block, library, water-well facility and two compartments of toilet. This modern structure and the involvement of the MBSSE from Freetown during its

launch made it simple to have a centre approved. The risk of conveying pupils on motorbikes, the shock they get in a different community for an external examination, the costs associated with moving into a distant community are all now resolved by this project.

The principal of the school is Edward Fornah. He made clear that no one has benefitted from this project like the Rosengbeh community. "When the project was launched, I saw it as a dream. Even when the civil works commenced – I was still dreaming. On handing over day, my dream was confirmed to reality. All I needed is now here, and this is attracting many more attention and benefits from stakeholders. My school is now an NPSE centre, I have a library for my teachers and pupils, I have enough benches and enough toilets to keep hygiene in school. I was particularly happy when I heard from the Deputy Minister 1 of MBSSE that she will try to have this school also approved at a center for the Basic Education Certificate Examination(BECE). Hopefully when this happens, the risk of girl child abuse during their two weeks stay in Matotoka to take the BECE will end or at least drastically minimize". The minister is a person who does not make promises to bear ground. She promised for NPSE centre and said a word for a BECE centre too. "I am pretty sure that the BECE centre will come – very optimistic of its coming. We will wait".



HUMAN RESOURCE AND BOARD GOVERNANCE

This section provides a summary of trend in the workforce and of related activities with respect to our Organizational priority 4: "Human Resource and Organisational Development HROD" which includes Strengthen Our People Power, Strengthen Women's Leadership, Work culture and Ethics and Governance Strengthening. This is achieved by attracting and retaining talents and fostering an enabling working environment. Major initiatives in human resources are an integral part of the ActionAid Sierra Leone country model review process.

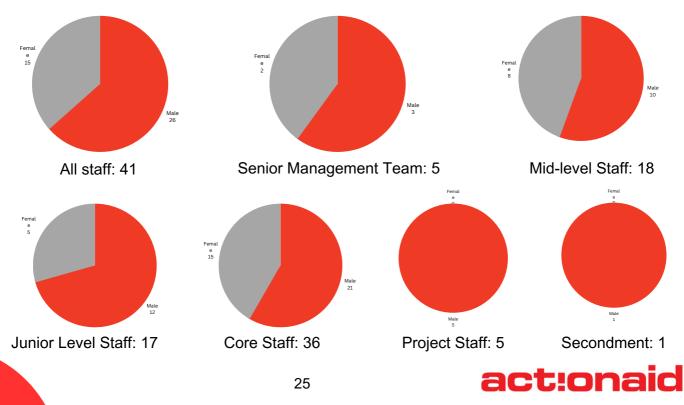
CAPACITY BUILDING/ TRAINING SUPPORT: Seventeen (17) staff were supported for capacitybuilding courses in taught learning, training, and professional accreditations.

Provided support to other countries within the federation: ActionAid Sierra Leone continues to be a centre of excellence and therefore chosen as a centre of support. Our team supported other countries within the federation in various area including Finance, HR, Programmes, and IT.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SHEA) & SAFEGUARDING: Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) & Safeguarding continued to be at the centre of the work we do. We ensured that our partners, right holders, and most of those we worked with during the period made to be aware of our Safeguarding policies and signed up to uphold them. We continued to sensitize staff and communities on the importance of safeguarding and reporting safeguarding related concerns. We encouraged everyone to report safeguarding concerns on this line +23273461436 and ensured we make the workplace and our communities safe for all.

GENERAL STAFFING INFORMATION IN 2022

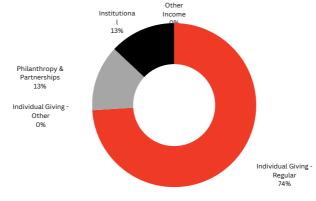
We started the year with a total of 41 staff and ended with the same. Although the staff figure remained the same, we added staff leaving and others joining. ActionAid Sierra Leone has a record of a stable workforce with over 80% of its staff having served the organisation for over five years. Our longest serving staff have worked with ActionAid Sierra Leone for 30years. The figures below gives a summary of staff composition as of 31st December 2022.



FINANCE AND FUNDING SUMMARY

Income

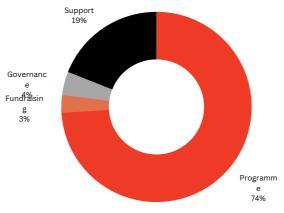
ActionAid Sierra Leone Total Income for the year ended 31st December 2022 was GBP 1,756K, and in 2021, it was GBP 2,234K. This means there was a decrease in Income in 2022 by approximately 21%. The income mix shows that Regular Giving income increased in 2022 by 17% and all other product, including Partnership and Institutional Income decreased by 58% in 2022. 12% of the total income received in 2022 was from the European Union, and 13% from the People's Postcode Lottery in support of the girls-led education project in the western Area and Bo LRP.



AASL Income Split By (%) Product

Expenditure

Total ActionAid Sierra Leone Expenditure recorded for the year 2022 was GBP 1,852K and in 2021 was GBP2,122K. There was a decrease in expenditure recorded in 2022 by 13%. The decrease was because of phased out projects, that reduced the number of staff members before the start of 2022, and by extension, staff and other administrative costs were reduced. There were also reductions in expenditure for projects activities in 2022 because of the phased out of two major projects, EUCSO, and the Girl's Education challenge that was funded by DFID now FCDO. Programme activity cost decreased by 19% in 2022 as compared to 2021. Fundraising Cost decreased by 11% and both Governance and support costs recorded a marginal increased by 0.3% and 0.4% respectively.



AASL Expenditure By RAF %



FUNDRASING COMMUNICATION

AND

Funding was challenging in this reporting period. Whilst the needs of our diverse beneficiaries continue to increase due to exogenous factors, funding opportunities remain highly competitive and political. As AASL operates two prongs of funding (Child Sponsorship Regular Giving and Partnership which involves various proposal writings and marking), funding from both sources kept challenging us making our programme financing stifled. In 2022, we were successful in 4 projects out of a total of 6 submitted proposals for funding. The following projects were successful in the period:

- · Support CSOs as actors of good governance and development in Sierra Leone
- AAI Small Grants on System Change for Economic Justice/Public services
- · Global Platform The Effect of Drug on Young People in Bo
- · Youth-led action to digital challenge

Our Child Sponsorship was remarkably progressive as more children were linked to supporters. Kambia was confirmed as dual LRP in the period, whilst additional profiles were collected in Moyamba and Bombali. By the end of 2022 we were close to 9000 links as compared to slightly over 7000 in 2021. All reports to include Community Voices (CVs), Soft Stories and Facts/Figures were done and submitted.

GRANT MANAGEMENT

In 2022, AASL closed the Action for Inclusive Socio-economic Service Delivery Project in Kambia – a project that was implemented for a period of three years (2019 to 2022). Similarly, we continued to manage the Perkin Project and submitted reports with minimum standards. The Action to Empower Marginalized Adolescent Girls (AEMAG) supported by People's Post Code Lottery was also closely managed. The satisfactory management of the AEMAG Project led to an extension of the project by one-year effective April 2023.

COMMUNICATION

Integrating communication into AASL's programming, including campaigns, child sponsorship through strengthened community engagement using the traditional, new/social media was eminent. The team undertook field activities to produce documentaries, publications, including their own and public media channels. An information dropping WhatsApp group was created for all LRPs to share stories from the field on a weekly basis which was utilized to publish articles and produce donor compelling success stories from time to time.

A new communication and visibility plan to support the newly EU funded project was developed to guide implementation.



MEET OUR DONORS



EUROPEAN UNION



JOHN & GRACE PERKIN

WHERE WE ARE

HEAD OFFICE

97c Wilkinson Road, Off Thompson Bay Road, Church Yard Junction, Freetown + 232 73 461370 Email: aai.sl@actionaid.org

LOCAL RIGHTS PROGRAM (LRPS) KAMBIA LRP

C/O Association for the Wellbeing of Communities and Rural Development (ABC-DEV) 9 Brima Njai Street, Kambia Town, Kambia District +232 88 225735,

BOMBALI LRP (NORTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE)

3 Moses Conteh Street, Off Karma Street, Makeni City, Bombali District +232 76 955887

KONO LRP

C/o Advocate For Social Justice & Development (ASJD), 71 Masingbi Road, Kono District , + 232 76 779392

BO LRP (SOUTH AND EASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE)

10 Hanson Street, Off Torwama Road, Bo Town, Bo District, +232 78965990

MOYAMBA LRP

C/o Network Support for Peace Education (NeSPE) 4 Stella Drive, Off Salena Section, Moyamba Town, Moyamba District, +232 76482741

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