



ACTIONAID **SIERRA LEONE'S** **NEWSLETTER**

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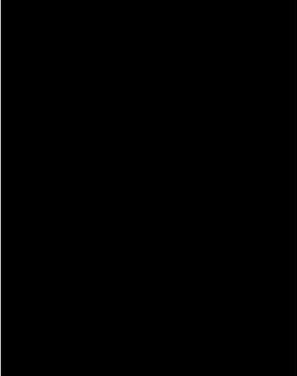


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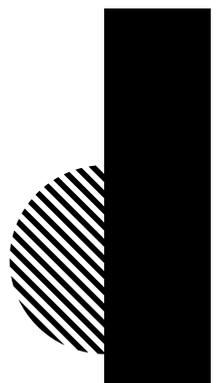
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@2025 ACTIONAID SIERRA LEONE



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Foreword

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the fifth edition of our newsletter! This issue is filled with inspiring stories and impactful milestones that highlight our commitment to education, advocacy, and community resilience.

Education remains at the heart of our work, and we are excited to share how digital learning is transforming the classroom experience and making education more accessible; especially for children living with disabilities. We celebrate the inspiring journey of a once-sponsored child who has now graduated from college and working in the humanitarian sector.

This edition also highlights key institutional milestones, including the presentation of our 2025 plans and budget to stakeholders. We are strengthening our partnerships, launched a safe-space initiative with support from UNICEF, and unveiled a girl-led research report.

Our advocacy breakthroughs with partner organization; POPDA, backed by an EU-funded grant, and the inception of an IrishAid-funded project focused on climate governance, demonstrate the growing impact of our work on policy and systemic change.

During the celebration of International Women's Day, we reflected on the power of collective action for gender equality and celebrating women within the organization who are pacesetters.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your continued support, collaboration, and shared vision drive our mission. We hope these stories inspire you as much as they inspire us.

In solidarity,
Foday Bassie Swaray
Executive Director
ActionAid Sierra Leone.



HOW DIGITAL LEARNING IS TRANSFORMING THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE; ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Through the support of Imagine Worldwide, the digital learning initiative is revolutionizing classroom experience, especially for pupils living with disabilities. This initiative that uses tablet-learning to tackle literacy and numeracy challenges, is active in 19 primary schools across 5 chiefdoms in Sierra Leone.

Sonnie, a class two pupil, is mastering the use of a tablet to enhance her learning, despite having impairment in both hands. **“In my hands is a tablet I use to learn math and English. Although it requires both hands to operate, I have learned to navigate it efficiently and often complete my work at the same pace as my classmates”**, she said with pride.

According to Mrs. Sesay, Sonnie’s teacher, **the tablet learning has enhanced understanding of different subjects for the pupils. When the madam is talking on the video, they follow along, and it makes my work easier in class,**” she shared.

Ibrahim, another pupil living with hand impairment, praised the device saying. **“I prefer using the tablet to learn over writing with pen and paper, which is very difficult for me. While it hasn’t replaced writing with pen, it makes learning much easier and enjoyable”**, he said.

“These tablet sessions have made teaching children living with disability facile and has as well improved attendance of pupils in our schools, while drastically reduced late coming.” Mrs. Koroma added.



ACTIONAID SIERRA LEONE PRESENTS ITS 2025 PLANS AND BUDGET TO COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

“We invite all other NGOs and CSOs in the country to do the same because you cannot ask duty bearers to be accountable when you are not accountable yourself”- Chairperson, ActionAid Board of Directors, Hon. Mohammed Albert Tarawally.

The 2025 Open Information Presentation (OIP) by ActionAid Sierra Leone (AASL) brought together donors, community representatives, government officials, and other development partners to discuss the organization’s achievements, challenges, plans and budget.

The Chairperson in his opening remarks emphasized the significance of collaboration in driving sustainable development. He highlighted how collective efforts from NGOs, government bodies, and donors contribute to real progress. **“We are happy to join ActionAid in the actualization of their principle of accountability”- Eric Massallay, Director of NGO Affairs, MoPED.**

According to AASL’s Executive Director, Foday Bassie Swaray, **“ActionAid’s concept of accountability is deeply rooted in our theory of change, in our human rights-based approach, and in our global and national policies. Accountability remains an integral part of how change happens”.**

A community representative, Mamusu Sesay, talked on how ActionAid has contributed to the development of their community and support to their children in school. **“ActionAid supports sponsored children in my community with learning materials which eases the financial burden on us, the parents”.**



FULL CIRCLE: SIA FAYIA'S INSPIRING JOURNEY WITH ACTIONAID

Sia Fayia's story is one of resilience, determination, and the transformative power of education. Growing up in a community with limited educational opportunities, she is a recipient of ActionAid's child sponsorship scheme, which helped her access schooling despite her family's financial struggles.

Excelling academically, she ranked third in her National Primary School Examination and continued her education through secondary school with ActionAid's support.

University brought new challenges. As ActionAid's sponsorship ended with Senior Secondary School, Sia had to trade alongside her mother to raise funds for her education, receiving additional support from her uncle. Her perseverance paid off; she balanced sales and studies, interned with ActionAid, and graduated with Division one in Gender and Development Studies.

Today, Sia is employed by an International Development organization dedicated to providing humanitarian aid and support to children in and out of school. She is committed to giving back to her community, helping other children realize their potential and pursue their dreams.

Reflecting on her journey, Sia shared, **"I cannot forget the support ActionAid, my teachers, and my community have given me. They trained me to become strong and thrive in every aspect of life. To every girl, I encourage you to stay focused and determined; you can achieve anything you set your mind to."**

At ActionAid, we remain steadfast in our mission to provide educational opportunities for children and support them to change their lives and communities.



CELEBRATING EDUCATION WEEK: SHOWCASING OUR IMPACT IN SIERRA LEONE'S EDUCATION SECTOR.

Education is the foundation of national development, and every year, Education week in Sierra Leone serves as a vital platform to highlight progress, challenges and innovations in the sector. This year, ActionAid Sierra Leone participated in the celebration, reinforcing our commitment to improving learning opportunities for children and young people across the country.

The event in which we exhibited our work in the education sector including the digital learning initiative funded by Imagine Worldwide, was an excellent opportunity to engage with key stakeholders, including government officials, educators, pupils and other development partners.

The Executive Director of ActionAid Sierra Leone, Foday Bassie Swaray spoke on the broader vision, saying, **“The Celebration of Education week has shown the importance of collaboration in achieving our shared goal in making quality education accessible to all children. We look forward to another year of impact and transformation in the education sector of our beloved mama salone.”**

Reflecting on the significance of this celebration, AASL’s Northern Regional Manager, Fatmata Fornah-Jalloh stated: **“Education is the key to unlocking potentials, and this event allows us to showcase how our work is transforming lives. By investing in teachers, pupils and learning resources, we are building a stronger foundation for Sierra Leone’s future.”**

At the end of the ACE week, a Certificate of Participation was awarded to AASL from the Government of Sierra Leone by the Chief Minister, Dr. David Moinina Sengeh, as an evidence of our hardwork in supporting the empowerment of women and children through our interventions in the education sector.



THE LAUNCH OF A SAFESPACE INITIATIVE WITH UNICEF

AASL, in collaboration with UNICEF Sierra Leone, has launched the Safe Space and Life Skills Sessions across five districts in Sierra Leone (Bombali, Koinadugu, Tonkolili, and Kambia, Pujehun), reaching 3600 adolescent girls out-of-school. This initiative provides three sessions per week in 150 Safe Spaces across 75 communities, equipping girls with essential life skills to make informed decisions about their futures.

At MakompBana, Rosaline Tarawalie, a teacher and Positive Parenting trainer, emphasized the need for open communication between parents and children. **“Even at the most difficult moments, don’t push them away; listen and support them,”** she advised.

19-year-old Isatu, one of the participants of the safe space initiative shared her story and stated, **“I know I am a promising girl, if I return back to school, I will make this community proud”**, she affirmed.

These Safe Spaces serve as learning hubs where adolescent girls gain knowledge on gender equality, reproductive health, and financial literacy. The program also includes vocational training opportunities, helping participants develop skills that can lead to self-reliance or reintegration into school.

UNICEF representatives at the event, led by the Country Representative, Rudolph Schwenk commended ActionAid and facilitators for their dedication to tackling child marriage, school dropout rate, and gender-based violence. The program will run for nine weeks, after which participants will be assessed for school reintegration or vocational opportunities.

With strong community and parental support, this initiative is a step toward ensuring a safer and more empowered future for adolescent girls in Sierra Leone.



SHIFTING THE POWER: LAUNCH OF THE GIRL-LED RESEARCH REPORT

What would the world look like if girls themselves were the researchers, not just the 'subjects'?

This report gives us a glimpse; straight from their perspectives, their experiences, and their interactions with other girls.

On the 14th of February 2025, we witnessed a groundbreaking moment as girls from Freetown, Sierra Leone and Abuja and Jigawa, Nigeria presented the findings of the Girl-Led Research Report - a multi-country project implemented in Sierra Leone and Nigeria with support from ActionAid UK.

The Girl Researchers shared critical insight into the reality of girls in their communities, challenging norms and advocating for change.

Speaking at the Launch, Foday Bassie Swaray, Executive Director of ActionAid Sierra Leone reaffirmed our commitment, stating: **"We are committed to ensuring that the voices of girls are heard. We will continue to provide spaces for them to raise the issues they face and actively contribute to solutions. Their leadership is key to building a just and equitable society for all"**.

"When girls lead research, we uncover truths that are often overlooked. This report amplifies our voices, our experiences, and our insights, bringing out data that truly represents us" - said a girl researcher.

A huge thank you to all the girls, stakeholders and supporters who made this possible.

We are pleased to unveil our new Executive Director in the person of Mr. Foday Bassie Swaray.

Our new ED has worked for ActionAid for over 12 years rising through the ranks of project officer to that of Head of Programmes and Policy.

"We are all in this together, with your support we can achieve a lot" says ED Foday Bassie Swaray who is all set to provide vision and direction for ActionAid Sierra Leone through the new country strategy, that will help build the resilience of Women, Girls and above all Communities with an aim of minimizing poverty.

Join us as we journey into a new era!



REAPPOINTMENT OF AASL'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: A VISIONARY LEADER DRIVING POSITIVE CHANGE IN SIERRA LEONE

We are pleased to announce the reappointment of our Executive Director, Foday Bassie Swaray for another five-year term. His visionary leadership has been instrumental in driving positive change across Sierra Leone, championing climate action, gender equality, initiatives against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and poverty eradication. As we embark on a new chapter, his leadership is key in executing our new five-year strategy: **Transformative Action for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Communities.**

Over the past five years, Foday has spearheaded remarkable initiatives that have strengthened community resilience, shaped policies, and supported marginalized people. His ability to mobilize stakeholders and drive sustainable solutions has positioned AASL as a leading voice in social and environmental advocacy.

As we move forward with implementing the country's strategic plan, Foday's leadership will be crucial in driving its success. His passion, dedication, and results-driven approach inspire confidence that the next five years will bring even greater impact.

We congratulate him on his well-deserved reappointment and look forward to working together to build a more just, inclusive, and sustainable Sierra Leone.



BAKERY



POPDA ACHIEVES ADVOCACY BREAKTHROUGHS WITH EU-FUNDED GRANT

The Polio Persons Development Association (POPDA) is making significant strides in advocacy on disability issues and community development, attributed to the 57-Thousand Leones-plus grant secured through the EU-funded project implemented by ActionAid and Women's Action for Human Dignity (WAHD) in Bombali District.

Matthew Tholley, Director of POPDA, shared the association's journey and milestones: **"This grant has played an immense role in ensuring our advocacy for disability reaches its peak."** It has strengthened POPDA's internal operations, particularly project management and financial systems. **"With the grant, we went through comprehensive training, developed a manual on financial usage, and have since won over four to five additional grants, including the construction of a borehole. "**

The revival of POPDA's bakery, once defunct, stands as a testament to the grant's impact: **"Our bakery had long collapsed, but with the grant, we acquired a mixing machine. The launch of the renovation project will take place soon. Recently, the Minister of Social Welfare visited and commended our progress, including projects like the market initiative, which was approved after we demonstrated our enhanced writing and advocacy skills."**

Increased accessibility and representation are further examples of the grant's influence: **"Through advocacy efforts because of the grant received, we can now boast of a ramp at the District Council, which makes the council more accessible to us to present our issues that need to be addressed. Our slogan, 'Nothing for us without us,' remains at the forefront of our efforts."**

Tholley ended with a call for continued support for the community of people living with disability.



STRENGTHENING LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE CLIMATE GOVERNANCE; INCEPTION WORKSHOP OF IRISH AID-FUNDED PROJECT

ActionAid Sierra Leone and partner, MoPADA recently held an inception workshop to launch a new project funded by Irish Aid, aimed at strengthening the technical capacity of local organizations to engage effectively with local councils and Ministries, Departments, and Agencies on climate governance and social accountability. This initiative seeks to foster meaningful dialogue and collaboration within an open and unrestricted civic space, ensuring that local voices contribute to climate resilience and sustainable development.

This project is implemented in two districts, Kailahun and Tonkolili, strengthening the capacities of local organizations to spearhead climate action and undertake activities that will enhance inclusive and accountable governance particularly in both the climate and education sectors. The project will collaborate with key public institutions such as the Local Councils, EPA, MoPED, SLANGO, and Ministry of Finance, especially on awareness and understanding of the NGO Policy and Service Level Agreements, Carbon Credit Policy process and understanding climate policies, and its impact on the ecosystem.

Speaking at the meeting, Foday Bassie Swaray, Executive Director of ActionAid Sierra Leone emphasized the importance of equipping local organizations with necessary tools to engage effectively with decision-makers. **“This project is not only about strengthening technical skills; it is about supporting communities to hold their leaders accountable and shape policies that directly affect their lives”**

As the initiative moves forward, ActionAid and MoPADA remain committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that communities have a voice in climate governance and that social accountability mechanisms are strengthened for long-term impact.



CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025



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JOSEPHINE ETHEL LUKE
 AASL'S ONLY FEMALE DRIVER

BREAKING BARRIERS BEHIND THE WHEEL

MOTIVATION

DESPITE THE PROGRESS MADE IN VARIOUS INDUSTRIES, DRIVING, ESPECIALLY IN PROFESSIONAL AND CORPORATE SETTINGS, REMAIN A MALE-DOMINATED FIELD. BUT THAT NEVER DETERRED JOSEPHINE. "BEING A FEMALE DRIVER IN THIS ORGANIZATION IS REWARDING, AND I TAKE PRIDE IN SAFELY TRANSPORTING OUR STAFF WHILE MAINTAINING A HIGH LEVEL OF PROFESSIONALISM," SHE SAYS.

FOR HER, EVERY DAY ON THE JOB IS NOT JUST ABOUT DRIVING HER AASL COLLEAGUES TO THEIR DESTINATIONS; IT'S ABOUT BREAKING BARRIERS AND INSPIRING OTHERS. HER PRESENCE AT AASL IS A SYMBOL OF PROGRESS, BUT JOSEPHINE KNOWS THAT THERE IS STILL MORE WORK TO BE DONE. SHE IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO ADVOCATING FOR MORE WOMEN IN THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR, ENCOURAGING THEM TO TAKE UP ROLES TRADITIONALLY SEEN AS MEN'S WORK. "I BELIEVE IN ADVOCATING FOR MORE WOMEN IN THIS FIELD AND SUPPORTING MY COLLEAGUES THROUGH TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION," SHE ASSERTS.

IMPACT

SHE UNDERSTANDS THAT HER ROLE IS BIGGER THAN HERSELF. IT IS ABOUT PAVING THE WAY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF WOMEN WHO ASPIRE TO CHALLENGE NORMS AND REDEFINE POSSIBILITIES.

JOSEPHINE IS ALSO A FIRM BELIEVER IN EXCELLENCE. SHE DOES NOT JUST SEE HERSELF AS A DRIVER BUT AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF PROFESSIONALISM AND DEDICATION. BEYOND THE STEERING WHEEL, JOSEPHINE REMAINS AN ADVOCATE, MENTOR, AND ROLE MODEL FOR YOUNG WOMEN CONSIDERING CAREERS IN TRANSPORTATION. SHE KNOWS THAT THE ROAD SHE HAS CHOSEN IS NOT AN EASY ONE, BUT IT IS ONE WORTH TRAVELING.



ActionAid Sierra Leone joined the Government of Sierra Leone and partners to celebrate the International Women's Day.

This year's Global campaign theme for IWD is: **"Accelerate Action"** - emphasizing the urgency to expedite progress towards gender equality, and the official theme of the UN observance of the day is **"For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment"** - calling for actions that unlock equal rights, power, and opportunities for all, envisioning a feminist future where no one is left behind.

We continue to reaffirm our commitment to advancing gender equality, amplifying women's voices, and advocating for a just and sustainable future for all.

We also utilized the moment to recognize Josephine, **ActionAid Sierra Leone's** only female driver, who is making headway in a male dominated field. Her dedication inspires us to keep pushing for equity and inclusion.



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MATCH ORGANIZED BY ACTIONAID AND NESPE

ActionAid and partner, NeSPE organized a women's football match in Timdale Chiefdom, celebrating the strength, resilience, and talent of women in sports while advocating for equality and inclusion.

Through this match, we're showcasing the talents of the incredible women and girls who continue to defy the odds and make their mark using sports.





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