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FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

It is with deep appreciation and renewed commitment that I welcome you to this latest edition of our newsletter. Each story featured here reflects not only the progress we are making but also the resilience, leadership, and collective power of the communities we work alongside.

Over the past months, we have taken bold steps to strengthen public accountability across Sierra Leone, creating platforms for citizen engagement, promoting transparency, and amplifying community voices in governance processes. We believe that when people are informed and included, accountability becomes a way of life.

In this issue, you'll also read about the urgent realities of the climate crisis and the inspiring work being led by young people and community leaders to demand climate justice. From local advocacy to national conversations, we are proud to support a movement that centers sustainability, equity, and the voices of those most affected.

We are also proud to highlight the important work we're doing to support women and girls' empowerment through education, leadership development, and training programs that are strengthening their capacities to becoming voices in their communities and the nation as a whole. In one community, a water well we helped restore has brought relief to families who had long suffered from water scarcity.

Finally, the recent National People's Convergence is evidence of the power of dialogue and collective action. It brought together citizens, civil society, and decision-makers to shape a shared vision for better governance and people-centered policies.

All of this is possible because of your support, your partnership, and your belief in what we do. As you read through these pages, I invite you to reflect not only on the impact of our work, but on the hope, it carries and the future we are building; together.

Best Wishes,
Foday Bassie Swaray

Executive Director
ActionAid Sierra Leone.



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ActionAid through EU Project Contributes to Improving Public Accountability in Sierra Leone: Grantee Success, CSO Growth, and Policy Influence Highlighted in Kono District.

The impact of the Enhancing CSOs Participation in Governance and National Level Policy Processes project funded by the European Union in Sierra Leone is seen through grantee success stories, significant growth within Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and tangible influence on local and national policies.

Alpha Alhassan Conteh, coordinator for Advocacy for Accountability on Service Delivery, a grantee organization, shared his journey: "As one of the grantees, this grant has allowed us to solidify our organizational structure, and with this funding, we've moved from volunteer-based work to establishing routine and administrative work by recordkeeping and proper processing of our official documents. This is a significant success for our organization."

He also noted strengthened relationships and recognition gained with local councils: "The project has helped strengthen the relationship between us and the councils, especially in local-level policies development, and we aspire to influence these at the national level"

Conteh also emphasized the project's impact on their operational skills and increased recognition within the CSO space: "ActionAid enlightened us about networking and building coalitions for grant applications, opening doors for both individual and collective actions. This network facilitates easier review and strategizing. Also, our recognition with duty bearers has been top-notch. We have been making critical input in policy dialogue."

Alex Komba Fomba, Director for Youth Empowerment for Advocacy in Human Right and Development and chairman of Kono's civil society organizations, a non-grantee of the project, declared the project's value: "The training was very timely for Kono. While finance is crucial, capacity strengthening was paramount for our organization. My team was positively impacted especially in project writing, resource mobilization, administrative setup, and community synergy."

Ibrahim Ahmed Sam-Bokarie, Coordinator of Community Mobilization for Concern Citizens Governance Network, another non-grantee, shared his experience: "We had several valuable trainings. While our grant application wasn't successful, missing an opportunity isn't the end; our relationship with ActionAid continues." He emphasized personal and organizational growth: "The training enhanced my personal and organizational development, especially in policy work at local and national levels and collaboration with local councils. Post-training, we secured credit from other organizations, greatly enhancing our staff's capacities, particularly in financial reporting and proposal writing." He expressed hope for future opportunities: "I would love to see an extension of such projects and hopefully be more engaged in it through securing a grant."

Rebecca Julie Yambasu, the Deputy District Council Chairperson for Kono district, lauded ActionAid's transparency and impact: "My impression of ActionAid is that they are very transparent and accountable. They always involve stakeholders in budget discussions for all activities. Their work across the district, especially in infrastructure and human capital development, is a significant help to the government. Their community-based approach is commendable, especially given the government's resource constraints." Yambasu highlighted improved collaboration: "This EU project has helped in making the council more visible and bridge the gap with the people." She also noted strengthened CSO participation: "It has strengthened CSO participation in governance and encouraged constructive criticism through the network of ActionAid and ASJD."

These diverse perspectives show a clear picture of a project that is not only fostering sustainable growth, but also enhancing civic engagement, and influencing policy, leaving a lasting positive impact on the Kono district.



ActionAid Sierra Leone Launches the Girl-led Research Report

ActionAid Sierra Leone held a national launch of the Girl-led Research Report, placing girls at the center of identifying and bringing recommendations to issues that affect them most.

The launch brought together girls from different communities, community stakeholders, government agencies, development partners and activists in a powerful show of solidarity and support for girl-centered and girl-led approaches to knowledge and change.

The research explore critical themes including Teenage pregnancy and it's consequences, financial difficulties and the effect on girls' well-being and education, drug abuse - school dropout and disempowerment of adolescent girls. By leading the process from framing the research questions to data collection and analysis, the girls challenged traditional power dynamics and demonstrated their capacity as change makers.

According to the Executive Director of ActionAid Sierra Leone, Foday Bassie Swaray, this is part of ActionAid's commitment to amplifying the voices of girls, especially in contexts where they are most marginalized. "We prioritize women and girls empowerment and recognize them as agents of change; which can only be achieved when the power is shifted to girls to participate in proffering solutions to the problems they face."

"It has been an educative and awakening experience for us as girls to lead this research. I believe the girls we interviewed were more open to share their experiences with us because they know we understand them and can relate with what they are going through"- Girl researcher.

The Keynote speaker, Dr. Isata Mahoi, Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs, commended ActionAid for this initiative and emphasized the need for child protection which development partners should continue to support.

We are grateful to ActionAid UK for supporting this initiative and ActionAid Nigeria for their dedication to our shared goals.



Bringing Water to the Doorstep of Tembedu Community

Tembedu community struggled with water crisis for years and it is one of the communities with the highest number of sponsored children in Kono district.

Families endured long, risky journeys to distant swamps and aquifers to fetch water that was neither safe nor sufficient. Some community people shared their before and after experience with us:

"There was no clean water supply in this community, we used to go far into the forest to fetch water from an aquifer set up by the men in the community. That water was not enough for the community and because it settles on the ground, it was with many impurities which affected the water quality. We waited for long hours for the water to gather enough to fill one bucket. We had to wait until midnight, in long queues just for a turn," said Aminata Sheriff, in charge of monitoring the water-well in the community.

Saio Kargbo, a Pregnant woman in the community, recounted her experience. "In the early days of my pregnancy, it was difficult to get even a small amount of water to wash. When I sent my child to the forest to fetch water, it took him almost an hour to return. My heart would race with worry because of the risks involved; he had to cross the highway, to get to the other side of the road, where the aquifer it."

"Because the water from the forest is contaminated, it caused a stomach infection and other complications that led me to being admitted to the hospital twice in a few months. But the water from the well rehabilitated by ActionAid is clean and safe and I have not experienced any health issues since I started drinking it and using it to cook," she added.

Amie Bangura, a sponsored child shared how daunting the task of fetching water from the 'Gboro' (valley) was. "The journey to fetch just a bucket of water takes about an hour to and from, sometimes I got late to school because of the amount of time I used to fetch water. Also, the road leading to the aquifer is very bushy and lonely, I was always scared to go alone. On days when I get so scared, I run back home without getting the water. The only times I felt safe enough to go get water was when I went with my friends, we felt more comfortable walking in groups".

"Since the water-well was rehabilitated in our community, all our worries have ended. I always go to school early now, we just take a few minutes from our houses to get to the well, get as much water as we want and walk back home. The water is very clean to drink and do all house chores."

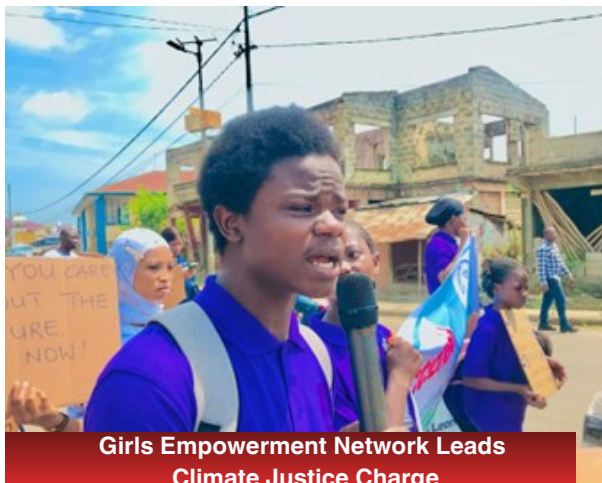
This water-well is a symbol of relief, safety, and community empowerment for the people of Tembudu.

Call to Action

Access to clean water is the beginning of lasting change, we took the first step by supporting the community to access clean water, but the journey doesn't stop there.

You can join us for even greater impact

For more information on how to support communities, contact: aasl@actionaid.org.



Girls Empowerment Network Leads Climate Justice Charge

The Girls Empowerment Network Sierra Leone (GEN-SL) is spearheading a climate justice initiative that aims to instill environmental responsibility across all levels of society. Led by the Executive Director, Lamin Sheriff, the organization is taking a holistic approach, from grassroots sensitization to engaging with key stakeholders.

Sheriff outlined the organization's commitment to fostering a culture of environmental stewardship: "Observing the current events causing hazardous circumstances in our society, our organization has taken a stand to explore how best we can integrate climate justice by sensitizing colleagues, parents, and school authorities, enabling them to treat the environment with care and firmly oppose deforestation, land degradation, and other harmful practices. Climate justice focuses on what we can do to save the environment, as the saying goes, 'My environment, my responsibility.' That's why we are committed to the path of climate justice."

Highlighting the effectiveness of community-based engagement, often undertaken with ActionAid's logistical and organizational support, in raising awareness and inspiring action, Sheriff noted: "I was a guest speaker at the ActionAid match to sensitize communities, especially lorry and bike-riders' union. It was unique as questions about the climate crisis were raised, and answers provided. The match was a platform to garner more support for the climate justice initiative as more young people came on board with the idea and take the message to their communities."

The tangible impacts of environmental degradation are starkly evident in regions like Kono. "Kono district was once known as a very cold place, but now, the extreme heat forces us to open our windows in the middle of the night, which unfortunately creates an opportunity for thieves to encroach," Sheriff pointed out, illustrating the direct security and social consequences of climate change.

GEN-SL's strategy, often implemented with ActionAid's support, involves multi-pronged engagement. "Our organization began with sensitization, and currently, we are engaging the media. As I speak to you, my team is out engaging with schools, universities, and even at the chiefdom level."

His message to the nation, particularly Kono district, is a call to collective action; "We all need to work together to achieve climate justice because a better environment leads to a better life."



Support to Women's Empowerment and Community Development through Teacher-Training

Mary Kabia, a dedicated teacher in Tembedu Community, Kono District shared a powerful testament to the transformative impact of ActionAid's support. Her journey, from teaching with sheer passion but without formal certification to becoming a confident educator on the cusp of graduation, highlights the significance of supporting communities through women's empowerment.

"I was a community teacher without a certificate for over nine years. Because of my commitment to educating children in my community, ActionAid supported me by funding my university education to acquire a Teaching certificate."

The transition to the Eastern university, facilitated by ActionAid, presented its initial challenges. "My first day at college was very challenging. I found myself in a very strange environment, but I stayed motivated because of my goal of empowering myself and being more knowledgeable about teaching the children."

"Since my enrollment at the university, I have become more eloquent, and I have gained a wealth of knowledge beyond my previous understanding. Because of my academic progress, I not only teach primary school pupils, but also secondary school pupils now."

In closing, Mary expressed her heartfelt appreciation and hopes for ActionAid's continued work. "My message to ActionAid is for them to be steadfast in their strides and continue to support women in the community." Her story stands as a powerful example of how tailored support can unlock potential and empower individuals to become confident contributors to their communities.





ActionAid Sierra Leone and Partners held a National People's Convergence on Governance and Policy Dialogue

The national People's Convergence is part of broader efforts to strengthen the role of CSOs in influencing national policies and contributing to good governance, in line with democratic principles and development goals.

In his statement, the Executive Director of ActionAid Sierra Leone, **Foday-Bassie Swaray**, emphasized its commitment to national development through collaboration with the **European Union in Sierra Leone** to strengthen CSOs. "Our relationship with the EU spans over a decade, and together, we strive to see a more formidable civil society. He emphasized that CSOs should use this opportunity to bridge gaps and make tangible progress.

Keynote speaker, Julius I.K. Foday, the International Aid and Cooperation Program Manager at the European Union, noted that service delivery, policy formulation, and analysis involve various initiatives to transform how key actors are held accountable for their actions, decisions, and the quality of services they provide in a defined framework. He continued by stating that policy enforcement can only be achieved when those in authority take responsibility for their duties and answer to those they serve.

"The successes we have recorded over the years as CSOs are attributed to our capacity strengthening through this project," said Aminata Lewoh Sow, representative from implementing partner, WAHD SL. She added that the project has placed them in a better footing with other NGOs in delivering more needed social services in their respective communities.

The Convergence concluded with CSOs' position paper to state Actors for prompt action on three burning issues highlighted in the policy.

Testimonies from interns were delivered. One of the eight male students from Njala University attached to Community Action for Sustainable Development (CASD-SL) described the process as a skill acquisition ground.

"Before this time, I was unable to write reports, but now I have made much progress on that. I was also part of the development of the proposal for the ActionAid grant," he remarked.

He further stated that he had little knowledge of CSOs. "I used this project as my dissertation topic. I single-handedly wrote on it with in-depth understanding," he disclosed.

The Convergence concluded with CSOs' position paper to state Actors for prompt action on these three burning issues highlighted in the policy.





Welcoming New Leadership: ActionAid Sierra Leone held an Induction Meeting for Board Members

We are delighted to announce the successful induction of our newly appointed Board Members, marking a significant milestone in our journey of growth, accountability, and strategic transformation.

The new Board Members bring a wealth of experience, expertise, and diverse perspectives drawn from fields such as governance, finance, development, Law, Fundraising and communications.

Their appointment reaffirms our commitment to transparency, good governance, and strengthening our impact across all levels of our work.

During the induction, Board Members were taken through key aspects of our organisational structure, strategic priorities, policies, and programming work. The session also provided an opportunity for mutual engagement, sharing of visions, and setting expectations for collaborative leadership.

Speaking at the event, the Executive Director, Foday Bassie Swaray, expressed appreciation and welcomed the new Board with optimism. "We are confident that with your leadership, we will continue to advance our mission with renewed purpose and boldness," he said.

The Board Chair, Mohamed Albert Tarawallie also noted the importance of responsive and inclusive leadership. He expressed that they look forward to working closely with management, staff and partners to ensure the organisation remains true to its values while adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities.

As we look to the future, we are inspired by the collective strength and wisdom of our new Board. Their presence signals a new chapter, one grounded in shared purpose, strategic oversight, and a deeper connection to the communities we serve.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations and warmest welcome to our new Board Members. Together, we will continue to champion positive change and uphold the principles that guide our work.



Masuba Mother Reclaims Her Son Through UNICEF Supported Positive Parenting Education Program

Fatmata Kamara, Chairlady of Masuba community and member of the ActionAid positive Parenting Education Program, is a parent whose life has been touched by this initiative.

“There were serious challenges with my son,” Fatmata recalled. “He was completely out of control. He stopped going to school, talked back at home, and refused to help with anything. I was lost, and as a mother, it was heartbreaking.”

Some other parents in the community face similar issue as Fatmata, she found herself at a crossroads; unsure of how to handle her son’s behavior, struggling with feelings of failure, and looking for answers.

Her turning point came when she attended the first Positive Parenting session facilitated by ActionAid through the UNICEF-supported program.

“After just the first meeting, I came home with a different mindset. I took the advice I was given and decided to approach my son calmly. We had a heart-to-heart talk, something I hadn’t done with him in a long time,” she said.

What is also appreciated by the community is the inclusion of men and boys in the programming, families in Masuba are learning that change is possible; and that it often begins with a single conversation rooted in understanding and oneness. “This project has changed the dynamics in Masuba especially for girls, this simple step sparked a transformation”

“Now, my son wakes up early, helps with chores; washes pan, sweeps the house, and even cooks; before going to school,” she beamed. “His teachers say he’s now focused and performing well in class. They were shocked by the change, but I told them it’s because of the Good Parenting sessions.”

“He used to be so distant, but now we laugh together. He tells me things. His younger brother is even copying him. The bond we have now didn’t exist before,” she added.

Beyond her own family, Fatmata has become a passionate advocate for the program within her community. Some young girls spoke of how they used to suffer under the harsh treatment of their parents.

Now, many of those same parents are treating their children better, thanks to the weekly sessions. “Different topics are taught, keeping it fresh and engaging.”

As Chairlady, Kamara now helps guide other parents by sharing her own experience. “I’ve taken on the role of advising others. I tell them, ‘Don’t beat the children, it doesn’t solve anything. Talk to them, show them you love them, and listen. And it’s working. We are seeing real change.’”

With gratitude and conviction, she concluded:

“I appreciate ActionAid and UNICEF. This program is not just helping individual families; it is transforming communities. I urge all parents to embrace it. Our children deserve better, and this program shows us how to be better parents to them.”

ActionAid supports Women Farmers in Kakamba with Tools, Seeds, and Capital.

In a bid to boost agricultural productivity and improve women's livelihoods in Kakamba and surrounding communities, Women's Action for Human Dignity Sierra Leone - WAHD SL, with funds from ActionAid Sierra Leone, has trained Women Farmers Associations on agronomical practices and distributed essential farming input and equipment.

Alie Amara Conteh, Project Officer at WAHD, emphasized the importance of training and support to the local farmers: "In partnership with ActionAid, we organized a training on New farming techniques, including financial management systems used in agriculture; for women whose major source of livelihood is farming in Kakamba community."

This intervention is based on a community-led needs assessment done by ActionAid known as Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP). It was clear that these communities wanted to go into larger scale farming, but they were challenged with machinery, seed, and capital to embark on such a project.

Each of the communities; Kakamba, Kagberek Gbomkapr, and Mahabhum, has received one machine, four bags of groundnut, four bags of rice, ten tarpaulins per community, plus cash of five thousand Leones (Le 5,000).

Speaking during the presentation in Kakamba, the community councilor expressed heartfelt appreciation to ActionAid and WAHD:

"This is a big opportunity for us to scale-up farming and make agriculture more profitable. We have received a machine, groundnut and rice seeds, and tarpaulin. We want to thank ActionAid and WAHD for that. I want to give them the assurance that we are going to use and take good care of the items we received. As the councilor, I will make sure I monitor the process of what these items are here for," he said.

The initiative reflects ActionAid's continued commitment to sustainable development through community empowerment, especially for women, in rural Sierra Leone.

"The women in this community toiled with little returns. We didn't have many seeds to plant and equipment to make farming easier and more profitable. But with this Tiller, farming will be less stressful and more efficient. This is not the first time ActionAid had supported us; they have supported community empowerment initiatives for over twenty years" - chair lady of Kakamba Community.



Tonkolili Leaders Unite to Tackle Climate Challenge, and Enforce Climate Justice



"Some of our people are sleeping outside now because of extreme heat,"- Chief Issa Bernard Turay.

In a bold step toward climate resilience and environmental governance, key stakeholders in Tonkolili District have pledged to intensify efforts in addressing climate-related challenges, including extreme heat, illegal mining, deforestation, and waste management.

The meeting, convened by ActionAid with funding from Irish Aid project title: "Strengthening the Role of CSOs and Local Actors in Climate Governance, Accountability and Civic Space" brought together Paramount Chief, DMSP Chairman, Chief Administrator of the district, law enforcement agencies, youth leaders, and women's groups to map out strategies for mitigating climate change effects and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations.

During the deliberations, Paramount Chief Issa Bernard Turay underscored the urgent need for action, citing the worsening impacts of climate change on communities, stressing the importance of enforcing climate policies that promote adaptation and resilience.

The discussions centered on key environmental issues plaguing the district, with stakeholders identifying illegal mining as a major contributor to land degradation and water pollution. In response, the Sierra Leone Police assured their commitment to enforcing climate justice by taking decisive action against illegal mining activities, particularly those along the Rokel River.

Additionally, Women and youths pledged to collaborate with local authorities in eradicating unregulated mining operations, recognizing the long-term damage they inflict on the environment and livelihoods and as well urged Local authorities to develop by-laws aimed at curbing indiscriminate waste disposal.

The stakeholders collectively agreed on the formation of a Climate Justice Committee at district and community levels, with a designated focal point person to oversee the implementation of climate action plans, and enforcing tree-planting initiatives by strengthening laws against deforestation. Chief Administrator of Tonkolili District emphasized the need for a multi-sectoral approach in tackling climate challenges and urged all relevant institutions to take proactive steps.



"Gud Kombra Nar Gladly Family": Positive Parenting Program Support Communities to Curb Teenage Pregnancy and Strengthen Family Bonds

This is part of the "Expanding Cross-Sectoral opportunities for the empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Reduction of Teenage pregnancy and Child marriage through Gender Transformative engagement and social protection (CASH +) Programs" funded by UNICEF Sierra Leone.

The participants of the Positive Parenting Education Program have officially received their certificates, as part of an initiative to address teenage pregnancy, child marriage, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Sierra Leone.

This program is implemented by ActionAid Sierra Leone across five districts: Bombali, Koinadugu, Tonkolili, Kambia, and Pujehun.

Speaking at the certification ceremony, Mariama Mohamed Barrie, Project Manager, underscored the importance of parental involvement in achieving long-term change. "Today, we are certifying the first set of participants in our Positive Parenting Education Program here in the Kunsho and Mabanta and other communities," she announced.

She emphasised that sustainable change requires a shift in societal norms. "We cannot achieve our goals without transforming mindsets. That's why we're engaging parents to support and reinforce the empowerment their daughters receive in the safe spaces," she said.

One of the certified participants, Alusine Fornah, the Town Chief of Kunsho, expressed deep gratitude for the initiative. "I'm truly honoured to receive this certificate. This program has helped improve the relationship between parents and their children," he shared.

Another participant, Ada Koroma from Makolo, praised the project for restoring harmony in her family. "Before, I had constant tension with both my husband and children," she said.

"After going through the parenting lessons, I've started applying them at home, and things are getting better." She believes that this initiative has the power to transform communities from within.

ActionAid and Ministry of Health Train Women and Youth on Mpox Awareness in Sierra Leone

With support from Disaster Management and Response Fund ActionAid, AASL in partnership with the Ministry of Health, has launched a training program focusing on community women and youths to raise awareness about Mpox. This disease has already recorded over 4,300 cases in Sierra Leone.

"This figure is alarming, but with everyone's effort, we can stop Mpox in Sierra Leone," said Mohamed Conteh from the District Health Management Team (DHMT) Bombali.

The Northern Regional Manager of ActionAid Sierra Leone, Fatmata Fornah-Jalloh stressed the seriousness of the situation. "Mpox is real, and we must take precautions. This is not the time for denial like we did with Ebola and COVID-19, which ended up damaging our economy."

She called for stronger awareness efforts through peace ambassadors, many of whom have already been involved in various ActionAid projects.

Mohamed Conteh Ricks, Principal Health Education Officer at DHMT, highlighted the value of the ongoing partnership with ActionAid. "This partnership complements our efforts and resources. It helps us reach further."

He urged all Sierra Leoneans to take the virus seriously. "I appeal to the trainees, to go into hard-to-reach areas and spread the message."

Elizabeth Zainab Serry, one of the participants shared her experience. "It was an amazing training. I didn't know much about Mpox before. Now I understand it can spread through sex or even a handshake. I'm ready to educate my community."

Alex Abu Koroma, School Quality Assurance Officer for Bombali District, applauded the effort. "This is a laudable initiative by ActionAid. It shows how serious the disease has become, and we must all work together to fight it. The DHMT made it clear; prevention is better than cure, especially given how quickly the virus can move through communities."

The Mpox sensitisation session by ActionAid going on in six operational districts in Sierra Leone, is part of its commitment to the emergency response in all the countries it works.



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