

**His Excellency,
The President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
C/o The Secretary to the President,
Office of the President
Republic of Sierra Leone
State House,
Tower Hill
Freetown.**

26th April 2022

Your Excellency,

A call for urgent action for Africa Union (AU) member states on exacerbated food prices following Ukraine war.

First of all, we salute AU's swift response statement on 28th Feb 2022 to the reported blocks on African Citizens trying to cross the Ukraine border: this unacceptable treatment is shockingly racist and in breach of international law. We also applaud the AU 2022 theme "***Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the Africa continent***" The theme is significant in addressing malnutrition and improving food security across the continent.

While recognizing the importance of the theme, as leaders of ActionAid programmes in over 19 countries across Africa, we are gravely concerned by the increases in food prices that had already reached record highs when the Ukraine conflict began and that are getting worse as each day passes. The war in Ukraine seriously disrupted the food supply chain. African countries are major trading partners with Russia and Ukraine for supplies of wheat, edible oil and fertilizer. Half of the grains distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) through its food support programmes come from Ukraine and Russia.

The rising price of food has disproportional impacts on people living in poverty, particularly women and children. It is also so critical in humanitarian crises, such as the worsening climate-induced drought in the Horn of Africa where over 14 million people are facing severe hunger and water shortages. The Cyclone in Southern Africa Countries affected 2.7 million people. There are also millions of refugees and internally displaced people in the Horn and West Africa because of political crisis and conflicts. In the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, other humanitarian crises including the humanitarian crisis in Africa are not receiving enough economic, political and public support.

Latest analyses of the Cadre harmonise' (CH) <https://www.food-security.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/108-FNS-March2022.pdf> indicates that 27.3 million people need immediate food assistance between March and May 2022 in the Sahel and West African region. Additionally, it noted that since 2020, the situation in some countries of the Gulf of Guinea is worrying, notably in Sierra Leone where 1.2 million people need food and nutrition assistance.

In addition to the above there are now 100 million low-income urban dwellers who are hard hit by the rising food prices, many of them women headed households. People in the continent are already grappling to cope with the economic fallout of the Covid 19 pandemic and this is placing women and girls at increased risk of gender-based violence and exploitation – as always happens at times of hunger.

1. We call on your excellency to address the ever-increasing food prices
 - Your government must take policy measures to subsidize food accessibility to low-income people in particular women and children.
 - Your government must increase social protection safety nets and other measures to improve the income of people in urban and rural areas to cope with the increasing food prices
 - Your government must invest in building national food reserves to act as buffers and reduce vulnerability to food shortages and price rises.
 - Your government should scale-up support to smallholder farmers, especially women smallholders and sustainable agroecological approaches to farming, so farmers can improve soil fertility for crop production, without the use of expensive fossil-fuel chemical fertilizers.
 - Your government in the medium-term need to accelerate climate justice as a continental and international priority - as climate change is expected to drive 122 million more people into poverty by 2030.

2. While addressing the immediate needs with urgency the above policies can only happen if African countries act collectively and united to get the necessary fiscal space to fund them. Thus, we appeal to your government to collectively resist any pressures to impose austerity policies and cuts to public spending – which all too often are recommended by the IMF in response to rising prices. In the face of the current conflict, the climate crisis and Covid, African countries need to invest more, not less, in gender-responsive public services. Instead of austerity, governments ought to invest in ambitious and progressive tax reforms that pass the burden on those richest individuals and companies who are most able to pay.

3. We also call on your government to engage and remind the EU, USAID, and all other donors and the wider public, of the importance of adequately supporting the humanitarian crises in our continent

4. We call for a greater action by your government to monitor the ill-treatment of Africans in Ukraine and neighboring countries and engage with the EU in ensuring the respect and fulfillment of peoples’ human rights including racial discrimination and abuse.

5. We also call on citizens across Africa and their institutions to ensure consumer rights through monitoring food, fuel and related prices and by acting against selfish traders who take advantage of the disruptions in food supply chains.

ActionAid is a global federation that works closely with citizens, civil society organizations and social movements to empower people living in poverty and exclusion to fight for women’s rights, social justice and an end to poverty. At ActionAid, we help people use their own power to bring about real change for women, communities, and societies. We are present in 46 countries, 19 of which are in Africa, reaching thousands of communities.

Signed: Executive Directors and Country Directors of ActionAid programmes in Africa:

ActionAid Burundi	ActionAid Senegal
ActionAid DRC	ActionAid Sierra Leone
ActionAid Ethiopia	ActionAid Somaliland
ActionAid Ghana	ActionAid South Africa
ActionAid Kenya	ActionAid Tanzania

ActionAid Liberia	ActionAid The Gambia
ActionAid Malawi	ActionAid Uganda
ActionAid Mozambique	ActionAid Zambia
ActionAid Nigeria	ActionAid Zimbabwe
ActionAid Rwanda	

For further information, kindly contact Foday Bassie Swaray Executive Director, ActionAid Sierra Leone.

ActionAid Sierra Leone

**97c Wilkinson Road
Off Thompson Bay
Church Yard Junction
Private Mail Bag 1058**

**Phone+232 73 461370
Email aasl@actionaid.org
<https://sierra-leone.actionaid.org/>
Freetown, Sierra Leone**