

ActionAid Sierra Leone

2020 Fourth Quarter Report

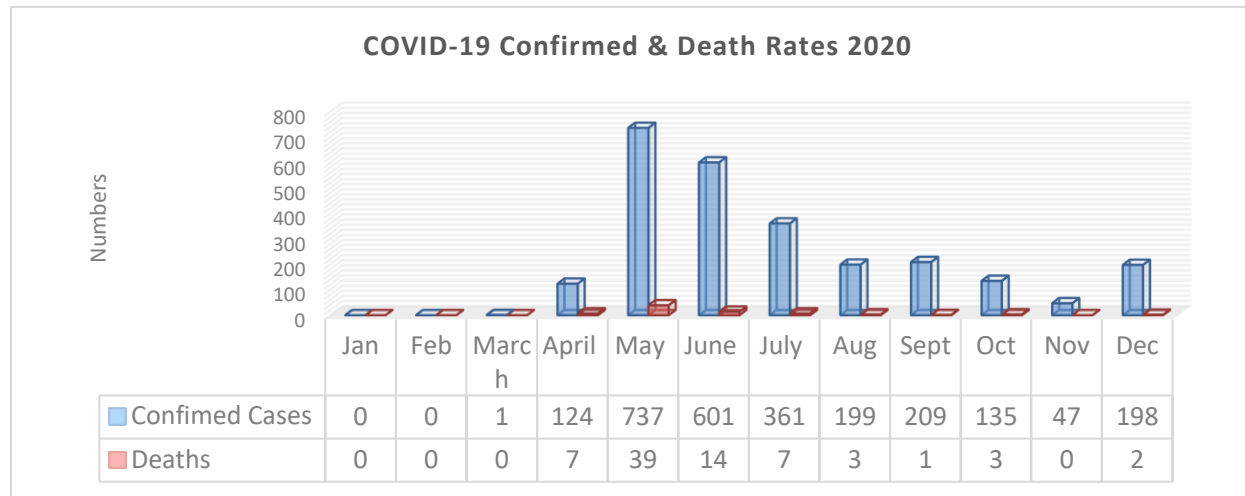


Reporting Period: October to December 2020

Introduction/Context: Briefly describe the context of your work for the reporting period looking at major changes in context or events which have affected your work in the reporting period only (e.g. disasters, livelihoods, security, power relations etc.); and key action (s) taken as a response. In summary provide information on the LRP's/Unit's priorities, population and community targeted and inputs (financial resources) by AAISL as applicable.

The global pandemic stalled every aspect of individual and county development. It touched and disturbed private and public lives in diverse ways. Whilst the pandemic wrecked economic activities because of state regulations to be able to manage an alarming transmission rate, the condition kept the nation's population at bay – either unable to get her daily bread or being put under what is referred to as a shadow pandemic. Many had said, it was never again the corona but rather the hunger, starvation, limited freedom particularly around movements internally and externally. The state was arrested, and government was under pressure by its people to reverse such a horrible situation.

Following a distressing condition in the last two quarters of the year (quarters 2 and 3), this quarter showed some glimmer of hope, courage and a stronger belief of bouncing back from stress and shock albeit slowly. In this period especially in October and November,



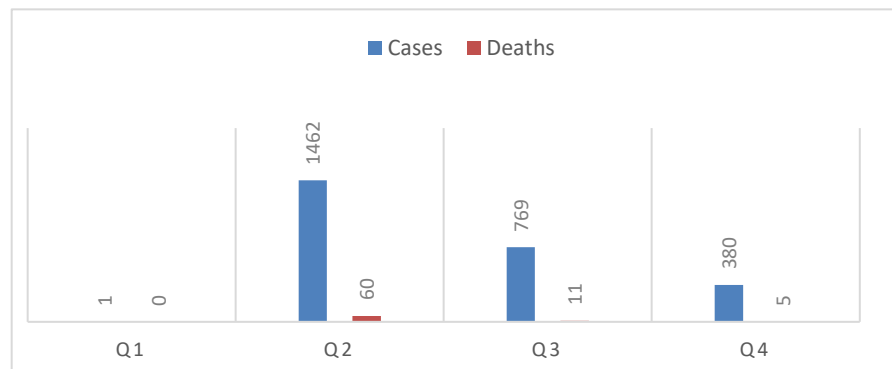
cases of corona were as low as single digits and in many cases pegged at zero – an indication of looking ahead for a Christmas vacation with attributes of fearlessness, rigid state measures that would have contradicted an enjoyable Xmas jamboree. This period was noted to be a retro of coming back to normal life. At this time, the airport had opened to international traveling though was associated with tremendous processes and procedures, anti-

COVID-19 checks, among others. Inter district lockdowns had earlier been lifted and curfew suspended for an initial period of four weeks which even continued after the timeline. All schools and universities had reopened, markets (formal and informal) returned to normal. Congregational prayers, reopening of pubs and bars, office resumptptions etc. were in full gear. All these resulted due to the continuous decline in cases of COVID-19 around the country particularly in October and November. In spite of these huge gains, our

As a nation began coming down with more positive cases in December as compared to October and November – a period associated with the jetting in of many ‘J. Cs’¹ from around the world. It remained scary as we approached the new year of 2021 and it was particularly worrisome on the grounds that government may reinstitute anti-COVID-19 laws and restrictions that are helpful in curtailing the new trend. The graph shown below clearly shows COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths in the year 2020. In this reporting quarter, 380 confirmed COVID-19 cases and five (5) deaths were recorded showing 182 in October and November. The number doubled the last months which is enough reason why the public had attributed the negative trend to incomers from abroad. Our mortality rate is still low comparatively – probably being a reason why people are hard to comply with state regulations.

From what the graph reveals, we saw a downward trend from May. In November though, the drop was massive and celebrating (a record of two digits for a whole month since March) – a reason why we needed no curfew and other rigid government regulations. Almost everything became relaxed with little efforts even to ensure the proper use of facemasks and avoidance of huge crowds and meetings. In this month, it was practically evidenced that lots of meetings had taken place in the public, and private sectors with little attention to COVID-19 regulations. Several occasions were celebrated with mask-devils, beach activities with jampacked crowd assuming that the battle has been fought and the fight is being won. Sadly, December knocked back to say, it is not yet over – returning the trend to three digits of 198 and 2 deaths². Many who were mindful of the associated risk and seizure of normal life had give a warning shot to their families and friends that the disease is still around, and they must be risk averse through self-protection and preventive measures.

Comparatively analyzing quarterly corona trend in Sierra Leone, the fourth quarter (October to December) brought smiles, but ironically December was ridiculous and dreadful – showing one of the worst COVID-19 affected months in the country with 198 recorded confirmed cases. Death rate was however low as just 5 people died from the virus. As presented in the quarterly graph, it is



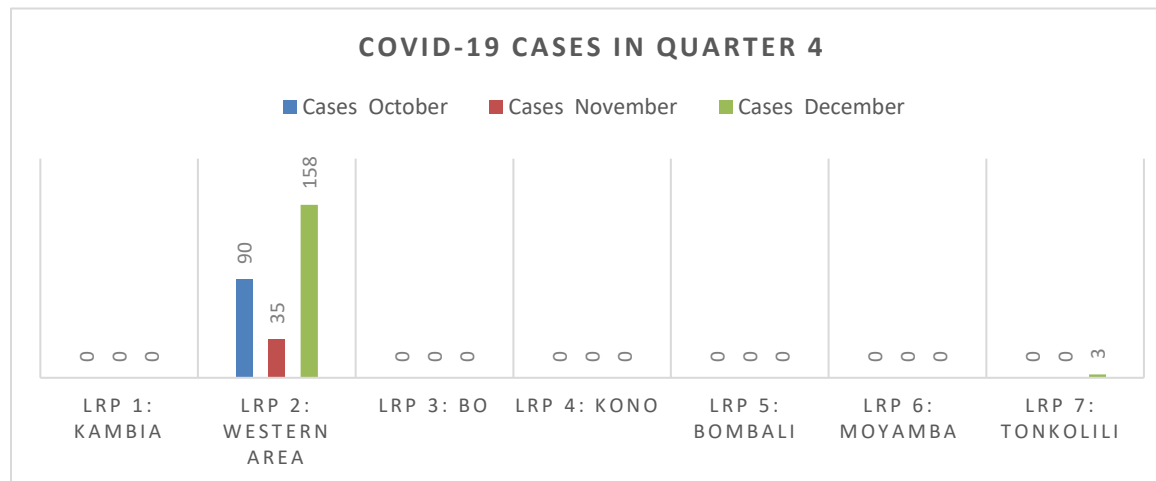
time we consider re-fastening our seatbelts to fight back and win once and for all. Everyone has a role to contribute to the biggest gain and every effort is worth considering. AASL will not lose sight of this and as an entity, we will continue our leadership and actions around the country to defeat the virus. All government regulations had been relaxed in this period – no regular and proper use of face masks, handwashing stations and practices had minimized, clubs resumed and accommodates 100s of enjoyers who felt they had been deprived for quite a long period.

¹ J.C: this means people who fly into the country from another country especially during the summer holidays.

² Ministry of Information Corona Updates

It was expected from several quarters that government would have reinstated some regulations in handling the unexpected rise in cases of corona in December – never allowing such to roll-over to the new year in that trend. Unfortunately, COVID-19 preventive measures were little guaranteed and compliance levels were low around the country. There is a likelihood of losing grounds and experience a second wave. The possible occurrence of a second wave will undermine government huge gains and its partners including NGOs and the private sector will come under pressure once again.

In our LRPs, much more improvement was actualized as almost all our working districts recorded zero confirmed cases as indicated below.



The Western Area continue to be the epicenter and hotspot for the disease. Although our LRPs are now at zero, it is a risk to continue COVID-19 cases in the Western Area – as a sneeze from that city will spread the cold far and wide. The graph below clearly indicates that only Western Area and Tonkolili recorded cases in the entire country. Considering the other LRPs every record showed was zero signifying low risk of contracting the virus. In this vein, operations at various DICOVERCs scaled down – as staff/volunteers were relieved. It was also noted

that demand for resources such as fuel, vehicle, food for quarantine homes etc reduced significantly. Restrictions were relaxed and not many efforts were applied in relation to COVID-19 fight. A significant gain to mention in this reporting period was the effort to engage in SURGE (free and voluntary tests) all over the country. Even when this was done, cases in many parts of the country continue to clock zero. These were the major indicators why people assumed the fight was over and got prepared to celebrate Christmas in splendor and merriments. DICOVERC and NGO weekly meetings scaled down like other pillar meetings. It should be however noted that until the last case is discharged in treatment centre, last case in quarantine home is tested negative and cases remained at zero for months across the country, then we can celebrate as a country. Even in the event we celebrate, we need to closely follow cases in neighboring countries and those who travel internationally.

Women's Right

It is real that not only the corona, but a shadow pandemic is gravely disturbing the health and wellbeing of women and girls. Whilst the fight concentrates on tackling the medical health emergency through the containment of the corona virus, it is unabated that women and girls continue to suffer its consequences in different shapes and forms. An assessment report published by the UN Women titled: Impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls and service provision ascertained the difficulty in obtaining accurate information on current rates of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The report however confirmed that current reports on VAWG cases are most likely an underestimation of the real rates of occurrences and magnitude of the problem, as the pandemic and its circumstances make it much harder for women to report or seek help. Like in the previous quarters of the year, this fourth quarter continue to record cases of VAWG but in most cases are either under-reported or not reported at all. There might be several undisclosed compromises for diverse reasons. As caregivers, women and girls had fought tirelessly to bring food on the family table. With COVID-19, their caregiving intensified but became more and more difficult and riskier. To make ends meet, some women unwillingly sell sex which could be an easier way to access income for their survival – an evidence of this could be traced in many of the pubs and casinos where young girls are found trading their bodies for returns – more prominent in bigger cities and towns like the Western Area, Bo, Makeni, Koidu, Kambia among others. In a separate UN Women Report captioned: *'COVID-19 and its economic toll on women'* published in September 2020 revealed that while everyone is facing unprecedented challenges, women are bearing the brunt of the economic and social fallout of COVID-19. Women who are poor and marginalized face an even higher risk of COVID-19 transmission and fatalities, loss of livelihood, and increased violence.

President Bio's new year's address to the nation conforms to the issues presented in the UN Women Reports. In his message to the nation, the challenges on women were indisputable. As a reason to this, many provisions were provided to include but never limited to the launch of a 500 million Leones Special Credit Facility via the Quick Economic Response Programme to cushion the effect. This was to support the production, importation, and distribution of essential commodities. In similar vein, Finance Minister (Hon. Jacob Jusu Saffa) said in a Budget Presentation to parliament that there was a deference of tax on businesses especially for rice, fuel and other food stuffs, provided cash transfers to 11,000 persons with disabilities, 29,000 informal sector workers in Freetown, Bo, Portloko, Kenema and Makeni to salvage the conditions of vulnerable groups and households across these areas. In continuation, the message indicated that thousands of women were allotted with micro-finance to be able to overcome their livelihood and economic traumatic disorder.

ActionAid and its partners continued to work with women and girls in this difficult time – not only in the restoration of the popular health pandemic but those underlying factors that disregard and discriminate against women and girls, deepening the barrier of their hope which many times are conditioned by patriarchal belief.

Socio-Political Situation

The fourth quarter of 2020 was an impressive period that saw all schools, colleges, universities and technical/vocational training centres in full swing. The countless number of worries in the heart and minds of parents in terms of their children protection and prevention from COVID-19 were dampened as the system had to operate for three months without a reported case of COVID-19. Would that be a reason to bring in extra-curricular events like athletic sports, picnics, jams and graduation ceremonies? As school pupils and students look forward to having these functions endorsed, health professionals must be thinking deeply, making critical analysis and assessments for concrete advise. Whatever might come to the fore, will be pronounced by the government of Sierra Leone in the first quarter of 2021.

Every public examination that had been put on hold were organized and results from all categories released. Outcome of the three public examinations (NPSE, BECE and WASSCE)³ attracted public attention. Whilst the WASSCE results were extremely poor with only 4.5% pass rate in five subjects. When compared to our sister counties like Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia who recorded 68.5%, 65.5% and 64.8% respectively, one is left with no option but to interrogate the reasons responsible for the abysmal performance. Different arguments were put forward ranging from the unserious nature of pupils of present time, stoppage of exams malpractices, poor parenting and the too many extra-curricular activities and functions in and out of schools. Teachers were also accused that much had not been put together to help the pupils. On the side of most pupils, government was never fair with them for not allowing them to involve in examination malpractices – indicative of several messages shared in social media. Notwithstanding the poor performance in WASSCE, NPSE and BECE ushered some smiles. Dr. Moinina David Sengeh – Minister of Basic and Senior Education 88,356 passed the exams making 65% of candidates who sat the exams as compared to 46% in 2019. The top 9 candidates who scored aggregate 7 are mostly female (7 out of the 9). Sadly, six (6) of the nine (9) best candidates are from private schools indicating that the free quality flagship programme requires urgent attention. It is clear for the sake of arguments that indeed education is free, but the bit of quality is far-fetched. To get it right, the government needs to re-examine the nature and conditions of teachers, transforming the minds of parents and conditioning the freeness of education to benefit the very pupils and children for whom the human capital development will mostly affect.

Sierra Leone health sector was exposed in 2014/2015 when the Ebola broke. Since then we had not recovered as there remain huge gaps in the health system. The current pandemic which continue to threaten health structures and systems in advance countries in Europe, Asia and America, Sierra Leone looks forward for immense support from World Health Organization (WHO) to fight a deadly and expensive virus like COVID-19. The sector needed more equipment, more staffing, additional experts in dealing with enigma viruses

³ NPSE means National Primary School Examination; BECE means Basic Education Certificate Examination; WASSCE means West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination.

like COVID. With every other effort that the government had explored, there are insufficient treatment centres around the country, very few laboratories and other urgent facilities that would facilitate medical examinations and treatment. Not discrediting the sector in any way, more is required to be done to have it to international standard in assurance of its people health securing and wellbeing. One could continue to be in doubt as to why Sierra Leone is not badly affected by the virus. Although its facilities are under-resourced, the efforts applied by all need some commendation. Contradictorily to the WHO initial pronouncement that it will be worse in Africa, it has not got worst in Sierra Leone and that story needs to be told. With all the challenges our health system is faced with, yet, we have one of the lowest COVID-19 fatality rate and cases in the world.

The political arena in this quarter was a bit engaging with the conduct of two bye-elections and a re-run of constituency 110 elections for the third time. Outcome of these elections re-elected two seats to the APC and one to the SLPP. Without chaos and acrimony, the process was done, and results announced few days after pulling day. In another development, this quarter brought to the argument table final draft of the decentralization policy and the plan to conduct a midterm census called the ‘**peoples census**’. For the policy, the major concern is the idea of de-politicizing local council elections. Give and take, this idea will help the development aspiration and unnecessary political party tension if it is done for the interest of the country. It can be otherwise a means to undermine development and get the central government more powerful and get a display of hidden powers in control. Once the intension is done in favour of the later, the return to a one-party system cannot be ignored. Similar to this, is the plan to conduct a mid-term census but the fear many have is whether this is not meant to reverse the boundary delimitation implemented by the then government.

Economic Situation & Accountability

The reporting quarter still had government and its development partners attention to the fight against COVID-19. This meant that their revenues were largely skewed to fighting the virus. As government’s plan for the year was diverted to halt the pandemic, supplementary budget approved by parliament was implemented. In a comprehensive Budget Speech by the Minister of Finance (Hon. Jacob J. Saffa) in December 2020, 70% of original commitments (112 of 159) had been either completed or on track as planned. Similarly, 25 out of the 28 approved supplementary commitments to fight COVID-19 making 89% had been accomplished or on the verge as initially planned. What this indicated was that government budget performance was exemplary as indicated in the report. This report resonates to expected delivery but the question to answer was whether the budget was used judiciously. Instances of corruption in the current government as referenced in the Perception Survey published by Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL) which was justified by two seating MPs can be a wake-up call for ACC intervention. The 2019 Audit Service Sierra Leone Report released in December 2020 noted a loss of cash and store irregularities to the amount of Le 177.5m⁴. Reactions from the said report remained controversial especially around the laptop computers that were reported missing.

⁴ Audit Service Sierra Leone Report – December 2020

World Bank Report in the third quarter of 2020 had initially revealed that Sierra Leone's economy will contract by 3.1% in 2021. With the many economic recovery programmes launched and implemented by government, it is now predicted that the economy will only contract by 2.8% as compared to a global estimate of 4.4%⁵. As COVID-19 cases continue to be suppressed save for a disappointing December that showed a worrisome dashboard, economic activities were revamped, and life had started normalizing.

Creating enormous doubts in contradiction to the above was the non-availability of adequate money in various commercial banks. Customers were displeased and the public was frustrated with such economic deprivation. Hosting the Bank Governor in a television interview late December 2020, it was clear that cash was short either because customers had kept their cash away from the banks or the delays in the supply of money by the central bank or both. According to the Bank Governor, the producing company '*Thomas De Larue*' had not met their demand on time – a major reason for the shortage in supplying money. No matter the challenge, assurance was given to the nation that by mid-January, the issue would be resolved.

Security Situation.

Following series of incidences of insecurity in the previous quarters which ranged from an attempted prison break, riotous skirmishes in Tombo, Lunsar, Tonko Limba and Makeni, the nation was calm and quiet in this reporting quarter. The only concern that continue to linger in some minds was that investigations in each of these unrest – some of which led to deaths and the damage of properties are kept under the carpet. The public must be concern about the outcome of the investigations and penalties that are meted on defaulters. It is believed justice denied or delayed can be a time bomb which when exploded would cause immense damage in our society. It can also be a precedence for reference by other governments – a concrete reason why investigations should be completed to a logical conclusion. The government through its judiciary arm therefore has the mantle of responsibility to deliver justice in all these incidences in order to discourage the possibility of similar situations reoccurring around the country. Civil society organizations who had played significant role in all the incidences need to have the courage and impetus to continue seeking and demanding justice for the voiceless and powerless majority. If CSOs are not persistent in demanding justice and prosecution – it will be a shout for a short-while – a condition that would leave many state problems unresolved.

In completion and submission of the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) Report to the government of Sierra Leone, a white paper was released mainly demanding those indicted to repay stolen monies and had some property confiscated. This was a major discussion in the public which if followed can deepen the degree of accountability in state governance. An attempt by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to interview former President Koroma in his hometown of Makeni proved futile. Tens of mask devils crowded that arena of former President Koroma – in some of the cases roads were blocked and songs in defense of the then President composed and sang aloud with vigor and determination in readiness for any rancor. The ACC could no longer show up to avoid a possible confrontation and battle that

⁵ Government Budget and Statement of Economic and Financial Policies for the Financial Year 2021.

would have damaged lives and property. Subsequently though, Ex-President Koroma finally reported to the ACC Head Quarter in Freetown to answer to alleged misappropriation of funds during his tenure as President of the Republic. Engaged in a four hours interview, the Anti-Corruption Commission confirmed that was just the beginning of the investigation. Many more indictees would have to answer to same judgement that would be taken up by the ACC. Ending a 90 days payment period for those indicted and being asked to pay, the nation looks ahead for next steps by government. Main while, appeals are forwarded to the supreme court awaiting precisions.

SWOT Analyses

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. AASL’s rootedness at community, district and national levels position our image and issue-based response. II. The diverse nature of team members creates the required balance in delivery on our programmes III. The entity’s approach of inclusiveness and participation established ownership by beneficiaries IV. Our partnership drive, accountability and open information policy bring honour, trustworthiness and respect in our delivery. V. The structural and internal control systems guarantee our eligibility for several funding opportunities and reduce fraud VI. The decentralized nature of our work fastens programme delivery and exclusive control without much interference. VII. The regular monitoring and internal audit checks unearth critical issues and make us better every other day. VIII. Our decentralized board with diverse people always strengthens checks and balances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. AASL does so much but not communicating their work adequately enough to attract donors II. Investment in internet is low and we continue to be faced with several itches especially now that virtual meetings are one of the new normal III. Data Collection, management and maintenance is challenging due to lack of data in government offices such as statistics Sierra Leone, Local Councils and MDAs. IV. As an Organization, we are highly rated in Service Delivery but low in solidarity and campaigns. This is an evidence of an imbalance HRBA Programme Approach. V. AASL’s CS sponsors expectation for service delivery does compromise the entity’s HRBA two components of Campaigns and solidarity. This position AASL as a replacement of government in the eyes of communities.

Opportunities	Treats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Our long period of serving humanity in Sierra Leone and being part of a federation is an opportunity to attract donors and be competitive in fundraising drives. II. The training and learning provisions for staff, partners and board is a guarantee of getting better every day. III. Our critical role in the CSO space continue to position the organization strongly in national policy work that are pro-poor. IV. We work closely with government through MDAs and Local Councils making our relationship outstanding within the country. V. Provided capacity building for local partners who we now coalesce with in consortium funding opportunities. Shrunken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. The several disasters especially the current COVID-19 has shrunk funding opportunities in the donor community. II. The current Development Corporation Framework (DCF) known as NGO Policy is seen as a policy that will undermine CSO advocacy work and threatens the existence of small NGOs. III. The progressive fall in sponsorship funding and effect of COVID-19 in the donor community will affect AASL's funding IV. The UK Government has been one of the biggest funders in Sierra Leone. The merger of the development wing (DFID) and the British Foreign Office (political wing) means that funds to Sierra Leone is reduced which might affect NGOs and like Government. V. The contentious political tension around the country presents a recipe for commotion and economic disorder. VI. Some CSOs being party political brings negative image to the public for the entire sector

Priority 1: Engage the structural causes of violence against marginalized women & girls and promote the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work for economic justice.

Focus Area 1: Violence against marginalized women and girls.

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activity

Contributed to a 40,000-kilometre walk in ending Violence Against Women/Girls

A global walk for survival campaign was initiated and supported by the federation to send louder voices against the war on women and girls. As the world continue to fight COVID-19, a shadow pandemic on women and girls remained ignored. Whilst many women and girls faced with various forms of abuse and discrimination, required attentions seem not to be focused on protecting and promoting them. They continue to be subjected under indiscriminate sexual and gender-based violence, leaving them unprotected by law and

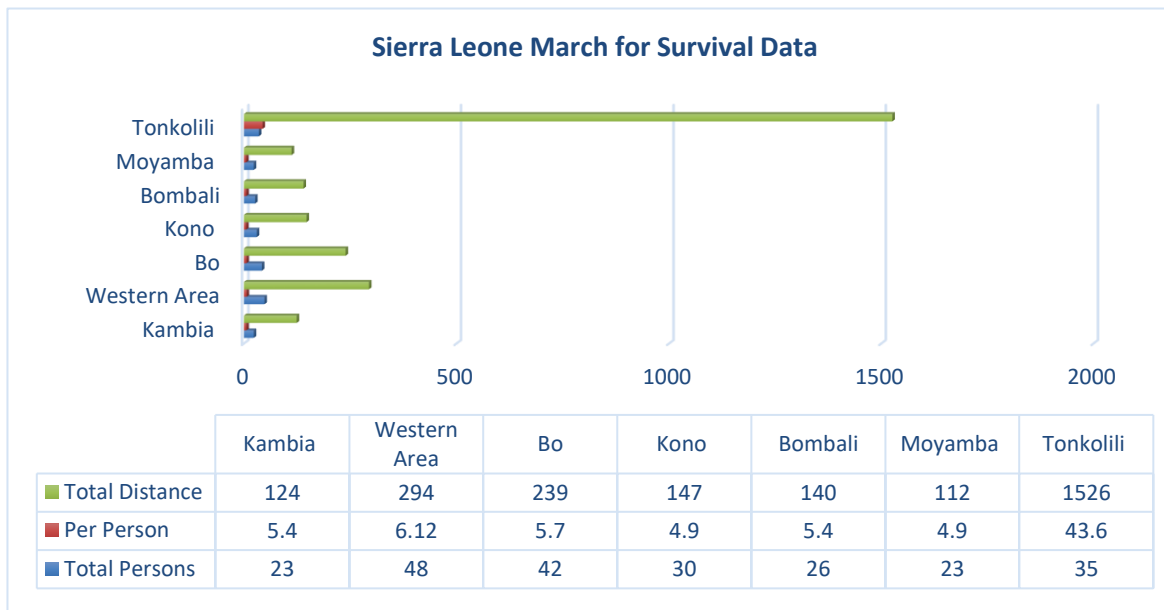
societal structures. ActionAid Sierra Leone staff, board/GA members and its partners engaged in a protest walk calling on the government for a more robust measure in ending SGBV. In the 7 LRPs where we had walked, a total of 2,582km was covered by 227 staff and partners. This was what AASL contributed to the Global Walk of 40,000km as shown below which makes the circumference of the earth. We contributed to walk round the world to say ***'no to violence against women and girls.*** The graph below shows the distance covered by staff and partners in the specific LRPs across the country.

In an evaluation meeting with the international communication team, Sierra Leone was rated high by way and pattern of doing the Walk. Whilst we involved staff and partners and was done in each LRP, our Activista Group in Bo led by Odelia produced a song that was

admired and formally requested as the federation wide song for this purpose. AASL through the communication unit was formally asked to share the lyrics and full song – a song that was titled: We are desperate for change; we are yearning for change, we are shouting for change etc. We worked with several journalists who took the information to various media outlets for more attention from government. In the Western Area, key artists like Fantasy Wiz, King Wahid, Comedian Kindo Amani etc all formed part of the walk. Various commitments were made to call the attention of government that more needs to be done.

Isatu Jalloh, a 22 years old Women's Right Advocate in Kono explained how

she felt walking and sensitizing communities on issues affecting women and girls, ***"I am so inspired today to participate in this walk for survival with a message to eliminate violence against women and girls. As a young woman I believe women deserve to be treated better. What men can do; women can do better. Men should stop molesting our girls and give them the opportunity to reach their potentials. This way of preaching against violence can reach more people than holding a session with selected people seated in the confines of the four walls in a building. I believe many men have been reached today and believe that this message will spread around the district."***



Commemorated 16 Days of Activism in Bo and Moyamba

In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare in both districts, AASL planned and engaged in series of activities to dismantle the structural causes of violence and ways to defeat the cruelty. In Moyamba, radio programmes were organized in which AASL served as one of the panellists. Major discussion points included teenage pregnancy, early marriage, sexual violence and child neglect. Key information on violence on women and girls must have been understood and actioned in communities and schools. As we continue to raise awareness on SGBV, its occurrences minimize either through resistance or fear among perpetrators. In Bo, 30 of our Global Platform members (10 male and 20 female) visited the female correctional centre, identify human right issues and escalate them to the Ministry of Social Welfare. Some of the issues included the lack of basic hygiene facilities in the female correctional center, unavailable safe homes for women who normally report domestic violence in the district. Follow-ups were planned to be made on public commitments made by the ministry during the celebration of the 16 days of activism.

Conducted outreach programmes to end SGBV

A team of 30 Volunteers embarked on a 2-days outreach/sensitization on GBV and safe working environment. These volunteers worked in 3 groups and succeeded in reaching approximately 1000 people (women, men, and children) at 3 schools, 2 crowded marketplaces and 2 hair saloons to connect with women and girls who have had firsthand experiences on Gender Base Violence (GBV). The engagement was done creatively wherein short drama skits were developed to create the space for shared learning on how GBV is present in our society and ways of tackling them. We learnt during the outreach programme that most women are afraid to speak out on issues of domestic violence due to weak structures and poor parenting. At the end of the outreach, people reached fully understood the importance of reporting and were guided on referral pathways.

Continued our campaign against VAW/G through IEC Materials, Jingles and Posters

One of the approaches in taking SGBV to every corridor is through posters, jingles and IEC material distribution containing key information on gender-based violence, child protection, early marriage, sexual and reproductive health messages. They were distributed in all 183 schools (100 in Moyamba and 83 in Kono), to relevant ministries departments and agencies including Kono district council, Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education (MBSSE), The Teaching service Commission (TSC) the Ministry of Social Welfare, and Village Agents. Before the posters were pasted in strategic places in the schools and communities, the project team carefully explained the content of each of the posters to the PVs, HoS and VAs, so that they can explain to the learners and the VSLA group members. The messages on the posters are ‘‘ Let’s stop all violence directed at women and girls-speak up!’’ ‘‘ If a girl or woman tells you she experienced violence, believe and help her’’, ‘‘ Marriage under 18 puts our girls at risk- protect our girls by saying no to early marriage’’, and ‘‘demanding sex in exchange for food, money or materials is violence-speak up if you see this happening’’ a toll-free line 116 is given to call for help if they experience any of these.

Broadcast of Radio jingles in two dominant local languages in Kono and Moyamba Districts were carried out for 16 days, spanning 11th November- 26 November 2020. The two dominant local languages in Kono District are “Kono and Kissi” and Mende and Sherbro for Moyamba District. Feedback received from the MBSSE, TSC, MSWGCA, PVs, CBRVs, HoS, BoG, SMCs parents and pupils on the radio messages were positive. Non-literate parents/care givers who barely talk krio related well with the broadcast of the radio messages in their local languages and expressed hope that subsequent interventions will take similar posture for all to get the information undistorted.

Supported three (3) Female Staff in the GEC-T Project to acquire ToT on good parenting.

Three Project Staff (2 from Moyamba and 1 from Kono) attended a week training on good parenting in Freetown organized by the consortium. These three staff are now role models and must have started reflecting on the contents - as change begins from within. The designated Project Staff now know the effect of good parenting on a community and the nation and it is expected to be cascaded to programme volunteers in the New Year, 2021 who will be using the knowledge to engage with VSLA Groups, School Authorities, Parents and Pupils.

Global Platform Youths interrogated Female Correctional Centre inmates in Bo

The visit to the center was led by a team of 25 volunteers to engage inmates on issues surrounding GBV. The team engaged 10 female inmates in which the youngest inmate was 18years who was also pregnant. These women lamented their knowledge regarding GBV and how they are deprived from some of their sexual reproductive and health rights with the poor accessibility to water and toilet facilities. These women also mentioned that the center should serve as a reform center wherein they will develop skills such that once they have served their time, they will have something to fall back on for their livelihood. The visit unearthed reasons as to why these women are being convicted in the first place, most issues are Gender-based related as these women claimed to have been emotionally abused in their homes. Therefore, there is a need for constant engagements on the structural causes of violence of women and girls as the effects are causing women to suffer in some unfortunate circumstances.

Supported Voice of Women (VoW) and Family Support Units (FSU)

To end SGBV, we are aware of the need work in coalitions, alliances and networks. We therefore provided support to Voice of Women (VoW) during the World Aid’s Day Celebration. This celebration normally brings together women living with the virus to deliberate and push for support in maximising their welfare. Because they are women and living with HIV/AIDs, it is obvious they might be faced with intersectional discrimination thereby worsening their stigma and hope. This occasion was also used to provide hope to these minority – a way that help restore their dignity and right.

In a similar development, the Family Support Unit in Freetown was supported to rally for violence against women and girls. As a component in the Sierra Leone Police, it was a flag raised that more prosecution and charges will be made and more actions to stop SGBV.

Focus Area 2: Unpaid care & decent work.

GEC-T Project enhanced more money and increased hope through VSLAs

The economic activities of women are constricted to backyard gardening and petty commercial intercourse. Areas where more gains are acquired are controlled by men and their cohorts. Because of such huge economic differential, women have not been able to be competitive at household, community, district and national levels. The VSLA concept which ActionAid adopted in 2015 is making huge gains. Women have been able to generate increased revenue over the period and are making personal and collective returns in their localities. Most of the women in our communities can now support their children’s education and collectively contributes to community development needs. In this period of review, two batches of the GEC-T Group accumulated whopping amount that would continue to aid their daily economic undertakings. The matrix below shows how far they have come with their savings groups and Associations.

Batch 2 – Cycle 2					Batch 3 – Cycle 1			
District	Social Fund (Le)	Fines (Le)	Share Purchase (Le)	Total (Le)	Social Fund (Le)	Fines (Le)	Purchase Share (Le)	Total (Le)
Kono	8,724,000	233,000	124,215,000	133,172,000	3,641,000	118,500	44,526,000	48,258,500
Moyamba	9,122,000	259,000	89,613,000	98,994,000	6,446,000	378,000	62,842,000	69,666,000
Total	17,846,000	492,000	213,828,000	232,166,000	10,087,000	496,500	107,368,000	117,924,500

From the table above, women are continuing to generate more income through the VSLA model. In this reporting period, a total of Le 350,090,500 was saved. Of the amount stated, the VSLA second batch second cycle recorded a total of Le 232,166,000. Of this total, 57% comes from Kono and 43% saved in Moyamba. A continuation of this will bring women at strategic leadership and decision-making positions at every level.

In the case of Batch 1 - Cycle 1, data would be ready in January 2021 as some groups have not done their share out. In Kono District,

all 10 VSLA batch-1 groups have successfully completed their second share out. In Moyamba District, 5 out of the 10 VSLA batch 1 groups have completed their share outs. Detail report of the share out will be shared in January 2021 narrative report.

Trained Six (6) EU-Kambia Project Staff on VSLA Methodology

The EU-Kambia Project hired the services of a consultant for staff capacity building on the VSLA methodology. This training was conducted from the 21st - 24th October 2020 with 6 staff (2 females and 4 males) in attendance. The training was also supported by the VSLA and Livelihood Coordinator of AASL. The trainees were taken through the various steps such as group formation and leadership training, correct use of the savings book and ledger, plus the calculations of social funds with the development of the group constitution. These topics were meant to give the participants a thorough understanding of the principles of the VSLA ensuring beneficiaries are in turn given required knowledge and understanding of the model. The outcome of the training was the development of a community roll out plan starting with Samu chiefdom. Preceding the roll out was the chiefdom and community level stakeholder's engagement. In each of these sessions, a thorough explanation was provided on the AASL VSLA approach, target participants, selection criteria and the role of stakeholder for the success of the group. There was total commitment by all stakeholders stating, the approach of working with women for economic empowerment is a sure way for the reduction of poverty and contribute to the reduction of gender base violence as well as foster unity amongst women.

Mobilized and facilitated the formation of Groups

Following chiefdom and community meetings, the selection of VSLA members was done ensuring required steps as mentioned in the training. Specially focus was directed to physically challenged women in the community. The process of self-selection was done through a balloting system giving each one an equal chance. The outcome of this was that beneficiaries were all satisfied and confessed the level of honesty, openness and fairness displayed. After the selection process completed, group management structure was introduced putting emphasis on reliability and trustworthiness of members.

Conducted VSLA Training for 25 Community Women

Following the group formation and agreeing on the executive members, the project team organized a two days training for 25 women in SAMU Chiefdom. In the training, participants able to understand the VSLA concept and promptly agreed on individual contributions, meeting days and time, and patiently discussed the byelaws before everyone consented. At the end of the two days, each community receives the VSLA kits that included a metal box, three counting bowls, three money bags, a ledger, pens and 25 individual pass books. This meant that the group was said to get started.

Transfer of Grants to 200 VSLA Groups.

As part of the intervention of the Medium-Term Response Plan (MTRP), the GEC project targeted grant support to all 200 VSLA groups to cushion the effect of COVID-19. AASL had worked with GEC-T Project District Lead to facilitate the opening of bank accounts of VSLA groups with bankers that are within proximity. The payment of grants to the Bank accounts of VSLA groups was planned in two phases. Phase 1 has been completed for 165 groups in the 4th week of December 2020 (22nd & 23rd December 2020). Phase 2 will be done around Mid-January 2021 and it is expected to target the remaining 35 VSLA groups.

For ActionAid led districts, grants to the tune of Le 8,332,500 have been transferred into the bank accounts of each of 36 VSLA groups in Kono District and 23 VSLA groups in Moyamba District. The remaining 4 groups in Kono and 17 groups for Moyamba are expected to be transferred around Mid-January 2021. The groups have been adequately informed on the arrangements.

The VSLA groups have registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, District Councils as farmer-based organizations so that they can be recognised and supported if opportunities arise.

Payment of Stipend to Village Agents (VAs)

Payments of stipend to 50 Village Agents (25 in Kono and 25 in Moyamba) for a period of 3 months (October-December 2020) were accomplished by the Finance Officers with support from Project Officers. Each VA received a total sum of Three Hundred and Sixty Thousand Leones (Le 390,000) for the three-month period, at a rate of Le 130,000 per month. The stipends paid to VAs have motivated them so much that the groups are now being run with very little support from project staff. The committed level of the VAs cannot be overemphasized. The monthly stipend to VAs is meant for their coaching and mentoring support to VSLA groups, act as liaison between the VSLA groups and ActionAid, as well as to help to facilitate accurate and timely report of VSLA data to update the dashboard.

Roll-out of Financial Education and Business Management Training (FEBM) to VSLA Groups

The Village Agents with support from Project Officers continued their coaching and mentoring sessions of VSLA groups on the third module “Entrepreneurship” of the Financial Education and Business Management Training Manual for all eighty (80) VSLA groups in Moyamba and Kono Districts. Participants went through the following modules: definition of Entrepreneurship, Characteristics of an Entrepreneur, Functions of an entrepreneur, Benefits and challenges of an entrepreneur

In Kono District the sessions were conducted on the 12th, 13th, 14th, 21st and 22nd December 2020 across the various communities and groups. A total of **961 (205M; 756F)** participants were in attendance. Similarly, in Moyamba, a total of **889 (192M; 697F)** participants were in attendance. The revealing impacts of the sessions are immense as all participants appreciated the training, by bringing out

testimonies that have led to successes and failures in starting and running small businesses.

Priority 2: Improve public accountability for the provision of responsive basic public services

Focus Area 1: Women and youth participation in democratic processes strengthened.

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

Launched the Global Platform Initiative in Bo LRP reaching 43 people (24M; 19F)

The launch of Global Platform Sierra Leone youth space attracted various stakeholders including young leaders, volunteers, government officials etc. The primary objective of the event was to showcase this initiative and the available opportunity for our young people. The need to develop young people is crucial and the GP provides that opportunity that would build young people's capabilities and collective power to engage effectively in society. It is also an opportunity for them to show their potential and contribution to community development efforts.

At the end of the launch, AASL's ED committed to strongly support this initiative as it represents the work of ActionAid. With this, Volunteers were fully motivated to give in their time and explore the opportunities within GP in order to represent their society as activists.

Provided training for 30 Youths in Moyamba and Western Area on Evidence-Based Information

The fragility of Sierra Leone has become a serious concern around the country and beyond. Time has therefore come when attention and resources should be committed to disasters and emergencies. In the last two decades, Sierra Leone may have recorded more catastrophic events than ever where more people have left vulnerable and need humanitarian support. ActionAid Sierra Leone through Empowering Youth Led Volunteering in Local Level Responses (YLVO) supported by EU Aid Volunteers trained sixty (60) young people (30 in each LRP) on effective use of social media. This was to shift power and responsibility to young people and their movements and to ensure youths contribute meaningfully to building the nation away from fake information that have the tendency to cause mayhem.

Supported HRDNSL to reach out and service other colleagues at-risks in remote communities

Front line HRDs at risk were reached in ten (10) districts across the country - Western Urban, Western Rural, Kailahun, Bo, Kenema, Kono, Koinadugu, Bombali, Kambia and Port Loko Districts. Reaching out to 219 HRs defenders (48.9%) women as against the planned 200 at risk, we succeeded to demand justice and free them from detention and arrests. As a result, female victims of land grabbing, journalists, youths, CSOs representatives, Parliamentarians and vulnerable women whose rights were violated were supported during the period. Most of them the victims were exonerated from arbitrary arrests and detention after intervention by HRDNSL. More so some

victims were referred to other service providers and received psychosocial counseling services as the case maybe. This intervention was able to strengthen the course of all defenders such that more will have to be done in similar cases going forward.

Responded and supported Human Rights and Abuse related matters around the country

Human Right issues are committed everywhere across the country. This was a challenge like it has been in other reporting periods for HRDs. During the reporting period, over 397 calls on rights violations were received from the field. While some cases were managed by field based HRD, others had the intervention of staff of the secretariat. Staff responded to alert calls on time in the 10 districts largely through mobile phone calls and WhatsApp messages. The actions and efforts of these HRDs both at the centre and district levels cemented the confidence and temerity to engage law enforcing officers and many others. Our gains recorded were many and it will continue to ensure the basic rights of citizens are fulfilled, protected and protected across the country.

Supported Defenders-at-risks to access justice and other referral mechanisms

Nineteen (19) HR defenders (2 Female and 17 male) from Pujehun standing trials were finally released of charges proffered on them as a result of land grabbing at the Magistrate Court No 1 in Freetown. Three (3) other HR defenders in Pujehun (2 male and 1 female) and 1male journalist were evacuated to the human rights defender's safety hub in West Africa. Defenders now feel better protected and satisfied with services provided. The evacuation of three male and one female defender out of sierra Leone was regarded as a major success. One of the evacuated defenders testified in an SMS text to HRDNSL that **"I am now feeling more secured and protected in this country than Sierra Leone"**.

Supported adequate documentation of HRDNSL field activities via digital means

The world has become a technological and no one should be left behind. It is near the time when papers would be useless and less considered and this coalition and network is making every effort to be at par. There is a gradual migration from paper base to electronic soft copies with the use of [Google docs.com](https://www.google.com/docs.com) to maintain confidentiality and protection of sensitive information done. The HRDNSL will continue to build on this and ensure rights are protected and fulfilled.

Produced and disseminated a press Release on HRs defender's situation in Sierra Leone

HRDNSL produced and disseminated a press Release that raised concerns over the intimidation of HR defenders in Sierra Leone on the 2nd October 2020. This was in defense of the high-handedness of Parliament on the 2 HR Defenders from CARL and IGR who produced and disseminated reports on corruption issues pointing at Parliamentarians. The release demanded Parliament to stop the attack and intimidation of HR defenders and recommended that parliament use the findings to improve parliamentary effectiveness and efficiency.

Focus Area 2: Public financial accountability improved

Analysis of impact per Planned Activities

Public Financial Accountability has been a key issue in Sierra Leone. In the year of reporting, several allegations were brought up as referenced from the perception survey published by CARL, Audit Service Report, Commission of Inquiry Report among others. To end corruption in public offices, everyone has a role and AASL is no exception. We were able to execute the following activities in this reporting quarter.

Supported Moyamba District Council to hold quarterly Accountability Meetings with NGOs and MDAs

During this period under review, ActionAid Moyamba LRP worked with the Moyamba District Council to organize an accountability session in the district council hall. This meeting was chaired by the Development and Planning Officer of council. Presentations were done by MDAs, and NGOs on the budgets received on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone. Our expectations were clear prior to the meeting and every MDA and NGO made presentation of the activities and budget versus levels of utilizations and benefits that resulted from such interventions. This process, first of its kind, paved the way for an accountable and transparent process that has created confidence among the masses for their elected officials, NGOs and other MDAs.

National Launch of Budget Tracking organized

The Launch attracted 84 people (28 female and 56 Male) from our four operational project districts and National level stakeholders. It involved our district level operation CSO representatives, District and City Council officials, District level Line Ministries Staff, Local Authorities, colleague allied CSOs at National level and Line Ministry officials. The session looked at the national launch of the budget tracking report which is one of the many accountabilities and transparency products of the project. Following data collection by the CSOs who we worked with at LRP levels, report was collated by Budget Advocacy Network (BAN) for presentation to stakeholders. The process did not only provide capacity to CSOs in checking government budget and expenditure at local council level, it also enhanced them the knowhow of what makes quality service delivery in an accountable and transparent manner. ***Abubakar Kamara of Hope for the Blind Bo recommended that the budget planning process should be inclusive of PWDs; he said in his words “you cannot plan for me without me”.***

Organized National People’s Conference on Budgeting

In attendance were 80 people (26 Females and 54 Males) representatives from the twenty (20) CSOs, Line Ministry Officials across the four operational districts. Local Authorities from the operational districts, media personnel, citizens (service users) consortium partners, youth activists were also present. These participants were involved in the development of recommendations for national level advocacy.

The Peoples Conference was a platform for project actors (CSOs, MDAs, LAs and citizens) to discuss and draw up actionable recommendations from the national Budget Tracking Report to inform national level advocacy. In the launch, key issues presented

included late transfers of funds, low budget ceiling, inappropriate utilization of funds by MDAs, retirement among others were the key bottle necks identified. ActionAid Head of Programme and Policy affirmed that the Peoples Conference is aimed at devising strategies together with LAs, CSOs, MDAs and citizens on how to overcome the challenges. The collective development of actionable plans that will ensure gender responsive public service provision is the target of the Conference. Solidarity statements were therefore delivered by the primary project beneficiaries (women, youths and Persons living with disability). Similar statements were also delivered by CSOs who benefited from the small grants disbursed in the project implementation. Statements were also delivered by consortium partners (ActionAid Sierra Leone, Campaign for Good Governance and Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities).

Focus Area 3: An effective and efficient Public service responsive to the needs of people

Analysis of impact per Planned Activities

Supported the training for Youth and ACDEG Ambassadors on School Reopening and preparedness

On the 9th October 2020, ten (10) young people (5 men and 5 women) were trained at WASH-NET at Brook fields. The overall objective was to support the Government of Sierra Leone's effort in the fight against COVID-19 through community sensitization and monitoring of schools reopening particularly in the East End and some part of western rural district in Freetown. The meeting attracted key stakeholders from WASHNET, AASL, Education for All, DICOVERC, W/A Social Mobilization and the Inspector of Schools Western Rural. Experiences were shared on the challenges and opportunities of reopening schools and updates given on support government and DICOVERC W/A and NGOs have given so far to major schools across the country. Participants got an insight into the government guidelines for school reopening and used it to develop messages for jingles and sensitization. Some of the key messages were: Facemask is for your protection; Wear them Teachers, pupils, and parents; School is the safest place now, send your child to school; COVID 19 is here with us, No one is above the preventive measures; Clean water is important towards the fight against COVID 19.

Supported the monitoring of schools on Preparedness measures.

On the 3rd and 4th October 2019, the trained youths collected information from twenty (20) schools, with photos evidence on facilities such as water buckets, Water-Well, Toilet (where available), and the environment. Some authorities of the schools were interviewed on key issues around the school safety guidelines and its implementation. Findings from the assessment revealed that 50% of those schools visited were prepared to re-open school, while 50% were neither prepared nor looking up for any form of assistant; 70% of the schools visited were challenged with accessing water, this automatically put their toilet facility in very poor shape. Since the last supply of COVID-19 items support to schools, no other supply had been made and only 40% of the school visited had done proper cleaning before school reopened. It was also noted that the knowledge of citizen's on school safety guideline within the areas of the school's vicinity was low. This was enough to say, more needed to be done and we contributed to doing so to enhance and effective and efficient school environment that protects children whilst in their learning course.

Supported Open dialogue meeting with Ministry of Education and parents on assessment findings

The dialogue session was held in different communities at different times bringing stakeholders of the ten primary and Junior Secondary schools in the Rural and Urban communities. The meetings were held at the United Diaspora Morasta multi-purpose Hall old road Waterloo on 17th /10/2020, with a turnout of **35 participants** (20 females and 15 males) and at Pamaronkoh Community Centre on 24th October 2020 with **40 participants** (25 male 20 female). Present at the meeting were parents from children attending the schools, the CTA chairpersons and headteachers /principals and the representative of the Deputy Director of Education Mrs Philomena Momoh. Statements were made for clearly understanding of why government and partners developed the school reopening guideline for COVID-19 which are to prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools, to quickly respond and mitigate onward transmission where infection occurs at Schools and to clearly communicate with parents and the community the status of testing. Sharing, School managements and parents raised every concern about the situation in schools to authorities ranging from **lack of** water, poor sanitation among others.

Supported Sensitization in slums and communities in Eastern Freetown

This action was carried out by the Youth and ACDEG Ambassadors and Activistas as a team in Western Rural and Western Urban. The outreach started from the 10th October and ended on the 23rd October 2020, carrying out six (6) outreaches at Ferry Junction, PWD, Shell old road, Portee, PMB, Old Wharf, K-Steps Old Road, Calaba Town, and Mamboreh community. These youths also reached out to Deepeye water, Whitestone, Yoke Road community, Tombo junction markets, 55-Communities, and Kissy-Town communities. Key messages on sending children to school as the safest place amidst COVID; regularly washing of hands; wearing of mask by parent, teachers and pupils, social distancing etc were shared using megaphones and mini public address systems. They also used the back to school guideline messages written on placards. The campaign was said to be successful as 80% of the children went back to school.

Re-verified 2,600 GEC-T Project Beneficiaries (1089 in Kono and 1511 in Moyamba)

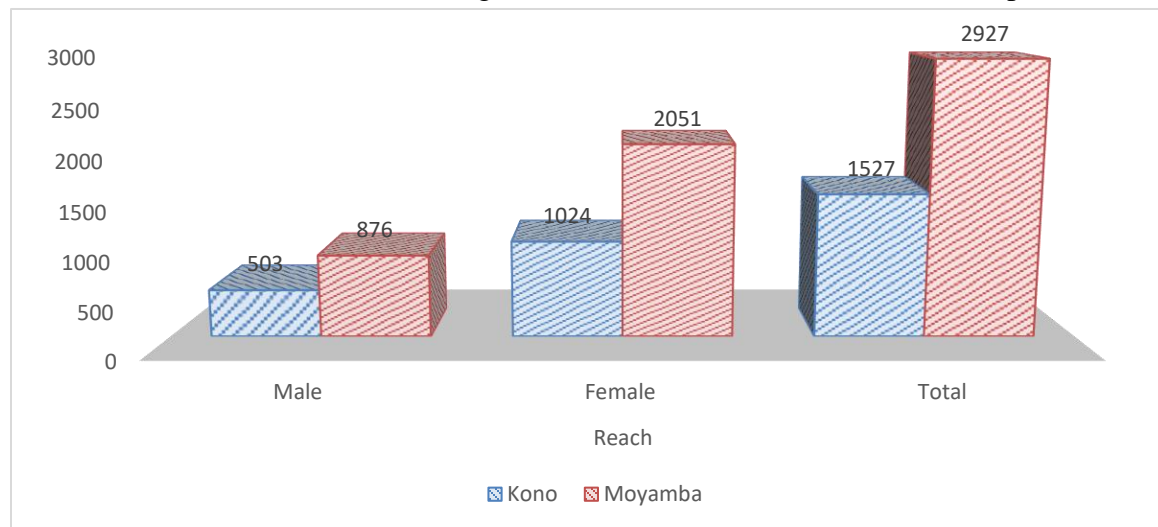
As part of yearly activities in the project, the Project Officers did reverification of beneficiaries and this will continue up to January 2021. Project Staff are knowledgeable in the effective use of Kobo collect, which is the tool for re-verification. The project had 672 beneficiaries that were verified in 2019 as reported by the M&E Officer. Again, these pupils needed to be verified this year 2020. However, the project approved the verification of all pupils that were part of the study group, 2975. This led to an increase in the total number of pupils in the project that were to be verified making 3647 cohorts for Moyamba District alone. In this period of reporting, almost all children had been verified, save for pupils that sat to the BECE and were not in school then. Those children that will not be fortunate to promote, and show up in schools in January, will be verified. One major impact for this process, is that it will enable the project to capture retention and transition of the pupils. In addition, the inclusion of the other children means that the project is going to take a school led approach going forward.

Distributed Bursary Items to 761 Beneficiaries in Kono and Moyamba LRPs

As COVID-19 disrupted schooling, pupils were at home for about seven months. With hardship all over the country, parents were no longer strong enough to have all required materials needed to take their children back to school. The GEC-T Project intervened by reaching out to 761 beneficiaries (609 Moyamba; 152 Kono) with bursaries. Of the 609 distributed to beneficiaries in Moyamba, 135 are boys and 474 are girls. Similarly, of the 152 beneficiaries who have received bursaries, 59 are boys and 93 are girls. Balance stock of 89 bursaries set (63 Moyamba; 26 Kono) have not been distributed as Project Staff are yet to track the absentee beneficiaries when they do their routine visits. They are closely working with the heads of schools, PVs, BOGs, SMCs, CBRVs etc to get these children back to schools and reach out to them for their supplies. Parents were then relived, and these children were able to have enough learning materials to return to school again.

Targeted, Collected and Included Non-GEC-T Beneficiaries through Data Collection

This quarter was a period when decision had been made to include non-GEC-T pupils into the beneficiary list. The said decision required data collection and verification. In this regard, sets of data were collected for these set of children who had been attending study group sessions for 2019/2020 academic year. See breakdown below. These data sets would serve as a basis for verification for the additional caseload that would be targeted under the GATE-GEC MTRP as depicted in the graph below. From the data presented, Kono included an additional 1527 pupils' girls making 67% of total. Similarly, in Moyamba, 70% of the 2,927 newly targeted beneficiaries were girls. What this meant was that the project scope changed which also required changes in all the project deliverables. What is always clear as an organization is the periodization of women and girls. Because of their vulnerability, discrimination and voicelessness, AASL will continue to support women like girls in all its can from local to national and to international levels in order to change the status quo. We will stand by them in emergency periods and



we will fight for them to have placement in politics and decision-making roles.

Distributed 1,420 Solar Powered Radios to 527 PVs, 173 HoS and 720 Beneficiaries

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered e-learning for children after all schools and colleges were suspended by government to enhance safety and security. To cope with this, an e-learning was introduced by government through radio teaching programmes. The challenge then was the access to radios and affordability of batteries. With the GEC-T Project, 1,420 Solar Powered Radios were distributed reaching out to 527 PVs, 173 HoS, and 720 Pupils.

Cumulatively, **1,420** radio sets were distributed (**431** in Kono; **989** in Moyamba). Balance stock of **171** radios (**119** Moyamba; **52** Kono) have not been distributed as beneficiaries are yet to show up for their supplies. Project staff continue to re-visit those communities where the absentee cases were recorded, and as absentees have not been showing up in schools the consortium has recently agreed to track them at home with the support of PVs and community structures.

Resumed 2020/2021 Study Group Sessions

Schools were closed to stop the spread of COVID-19. MBSSE with support from NGOs including ActionAid supported the broadcast of the Radio Teaching Programme in the Kono and Moyamba District as a stopgap measure to ensure that children did not lose out completely. The Government of Sierra Leone relaxed some of the COVID-19 measures and eventually reopened schools in October following marked improvements to the adherence of preventive development measures. **The Chief Education Officer of MBSSE approved the resumption of study groups** in an official correspondence sent to Plan International. Study group sessions effectively resumed in November 2020 with the commitment that all the Government preventive health measures including handwashing, smaller class sizes, social distancing, and the use of face mask are observed. Study groups are now in session with adherence of the preventive development measures observed by PVs, Pupils and Heads of Schools. The sessions are also being monitored by the project staff and are gradually gaining momentum.

Payment of Stipend to Programme Volunteers (PV's) and Heads of Schools (HoS)

Following the relaxation of some of the COVID-19 measures and eventually the reopening of schools in October, the study groups which serves are remedial classes for beneficiaries was also given approval to resume. Although the study groups resumed in November 2020, the GEC Consortium partners had agreed in one of its routine weekly coordination meeting to make the payment of stipends to PVs and HoS retroactive in order to cushion the effect of COVID-19. That is, effecting payments from September 2020 when schools were normally to have reopened to December 2020. In Kono District therefore, all **222** PVs (**191M; 31F**) and **82** HoS (**73M; 9F**), were paid stipend for the months of September, October, November, and December 2020. Similarly, in Moyamba, **331** PVs (**268M; 63F**) and **99** HoS (**80M; 19F**) received stipends for the same period. 5 PVs and 1 HoS were unavoidably absent in Moyamba during the payments. Each PV and HoS received **Le 520,000** for the four months period (**Le 130,000 per month**). PVs as well as the Heads of schools, were elated, especially those in remote communities, where majority of the teachers that teach in those schools are volunteers and not catered

for in terms of salary. Heads of schools were also very happy for the support they received, as they say it will really boost the morale of their teachers and enable them to hold the teachers responsible and effectively engage the beneficiaries in the study groups. **“The payment came at the right time, I am going to buy food for the family at once”**, according to Sahr Kanjie of Gbane Agricultural Junior Secondary School, Gandorhun. This shows how valuable the stipend was to the PVs and the heads of schools as well.

Supported 55 Communities (24 in Bombali, 14 in Tonkolili & 17 in Kono) with recreational Materials

The approved 2020 funds made provision for two message collections – one in March and the other in September. As a result of the persistence of COVID cases in the country coupled with government restrictions and closure of schools, the second message collection was suspended, and budget diverted to respond to the immediate needs of CS Kids. Because of this, the Bombali and Tonkolili LRPs supported 38 sponsorship community schools with recreational materials. In Bombali, 48 footballs - 2 per School, 24 football Jerseys and 144 skipping ropes - 6 per school were distributed. In Tonkolili, **16** schools (**15** Primary and **1** Junior Secondary Schools) in the **14** sponsorship communities received recreational materials including football, football jersey, and skipping ropes. Each of the 16 schools received 2 football, 1 set of football jersey and 3 skipping ropes. These recreational materials have helped in developing children’s interaction, wellbeing and intellect.

Kono on the other side provided 1 football, 1 whistle, 1 inflating kit, 1 skipping rope and 2 sets of football jerseys in each of the 18 schools in AASL’s 17 operational communities. These materials will ensure that children will be retained in schools, promote learning and attendance, and alleviate trauma amongst children during this trying time in the nation.

Supported 24 Communities in Bombali with Reading Materials

In complement to previous support to children, Bombali LRP provided additional learning materials including 780 supplementary readers to 10 sponsorship reading circles. In the same package of support, 30 Sola Lamps (3 per School were distributed. During the distribution exercise, heads of schools and parents were in attendance. They highly expressed their thanks and appreciation to AASL for supporting their children’s educational needs in such a trying moment.

Organized Reading and Spelling competitions between Moyamba and Bo

Through the Million Project, we organized a competition between MDEC Bumpetoke Community in Moyamba District and ICS primary school Gollu in the Bo LRP. A total number of 20 pupils represented their schools, 10 pupils from each school (5 of each was from lower classes 1-3 and 5 from upper classes 4-5). The competition was led by representatives from the Sierra Leone Teachers college and Njala University with support from Ministry of Basic Senior Secondary Education. By the end of the competition, both schools had the same score of 80 but the judges announced MDEC school-Bumpetoke as the best school taking other factors into

consideration viz the pupils' confidence, number of spelling missed etc. All pupils were encouraged to see reading as hobby as it will help them to acquire their academic pursuits.

Priority 3: Advance responsive humanitarian action prioritizing women & girl's safety, participation, leadership in emergency preparedness, response, and prevention.

Focus Area 1: Build Resilience of women & Young People with robust accountable processes in Disaster Response

Analysis of impact per Planned Activities

In complement to previous quarters, AASL continued to respond to COVID-19 not forgetting the shadow pandemic on women and girls in all our working districts. In the quarter of reporting (October to December) we delivered several actions that helped build resilience and strength in recovering from COVID-19 effects. Below are what we did in the period under review:

Pre-positioned/Delivery of food items to Moyamba and Kono Districts with support from GEC-T

Hunger was a major issue in this COVID-19 menace. Many homes were left hungry and barely survive. Children got malnourished and health issues became more severe in most cases. AASL through the GEC-T Project agreed to support the livelihood need of children and their parents. As such, food items comprising 25kg rice, black eye beans, iodized salts, Maggie were propositioned/delivered in rented stores in Kono and Moyamba Town on the 24th December 2020 and 29th December 2020 respectively. Report indicate that Kono received **1,391** bags 25kg white rice, **1,391** black eye beans, **1,391** packets iodized salt and **2,782** packets Maggie. Moyamba received **2,062** bags 25kg white rice, **2,062** black eye beans, **2,062** packets iodized salt and **4,124** packets Maggie. However, the supplier is yet to deliver the **1,319** pieces of one-gallon vegetable oil in Kono District and 1666 pieces of vegetable oil in Moyamba District. ActionAid is leading the procurement and delivery of food at the district headquarter towns of the 6 GEC Operational Districts under the Medium-Term Response Plan (MTRP). The delivery of food items less the vegetable oil has been completed for **5** District (Kailahun, Kenema, Karene, Kono and Moyamba). Port Loko was put on hold because they had not secured rented stores for the delivery of the food items but AASL will continue to work with the PLAN team to get this addressed.

Supported 40 Communities with COVID-19 items through the Global Platform

With funds from the Global Platform Secretariat in Denmark, Volunteers of GP-SL embarked on a wider coverage of COVID19 response in the district where **40** communities in total were reached. The response included hand washing materials for rural communities, provision of protective gears for health personnel in Peripheral health Units (PHUs). These materials included hand washing stations, veronica buckets, soaps, tissues, hand gloves, disinfectant, solar lights, facemasks, and sanitizers. The scope of this intervention was ideal as all 33 AASL operational communities were reached and other public centers within the township had also benefited from this activity. The massive campaign against COVID-19 was done at the right time because the re-emergence of COVID-19 is very high due

to the increased negligence of the public regarding compliance. Therefore, targeted communities are now fully equipped to resist the virus within their localities.

Supported Social Mobilization against CoVID19 in the Western Area

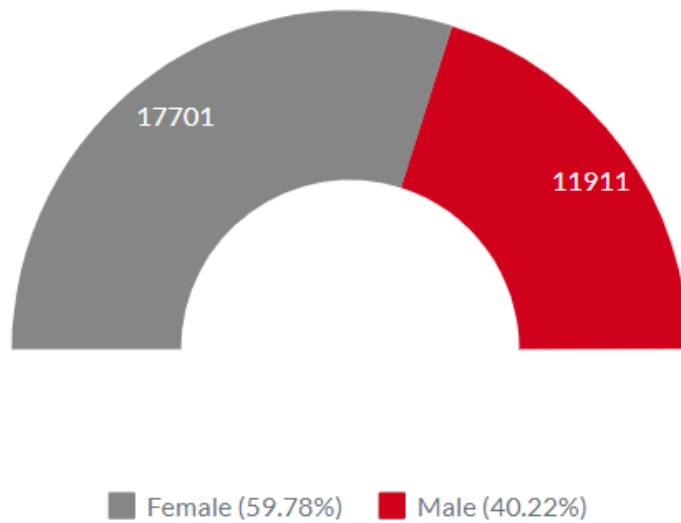
GNDR through EJM was supported by AASL to intervene in social mobilization with the aim of Contributing to community engagement responses in the efforts to address COVID-19-related risks in our communities. Among the actions taken was the sensitizations held at three different location within the Western Urban /Rural District of Freetown involving women, men and youth. Major communities reached included Kroobay, Murray Town, Calaba Town Youth Car Wash Communities and GRAFTON Community/Lorry Park Station. The sensitizers also reached out to Jui Junction and Lorry Park Center. During the three days engagement, the use of facemask and Sanitizer was demonstrated before distribution at each community targeting young people, women and men. The three days engagement emphasized the use of face mask in a proper manner (how to wear, remove and take care of it); Education on how to maintain Physical Social distance and why that was important; Stakeholders who turned out benefited from the programme on the use of facemask, maintaining Hygiene and Sanitation, contact tracing and information, social distance and overcrowding. As a result, **six (6) Community Task Force has been setup to maintain follow-up engagements and information sharing on those who may be affected by COVID 19 and communities violating the COVID 19 guidance rules**

Data Collection, Analysis, and interpretation to the public.

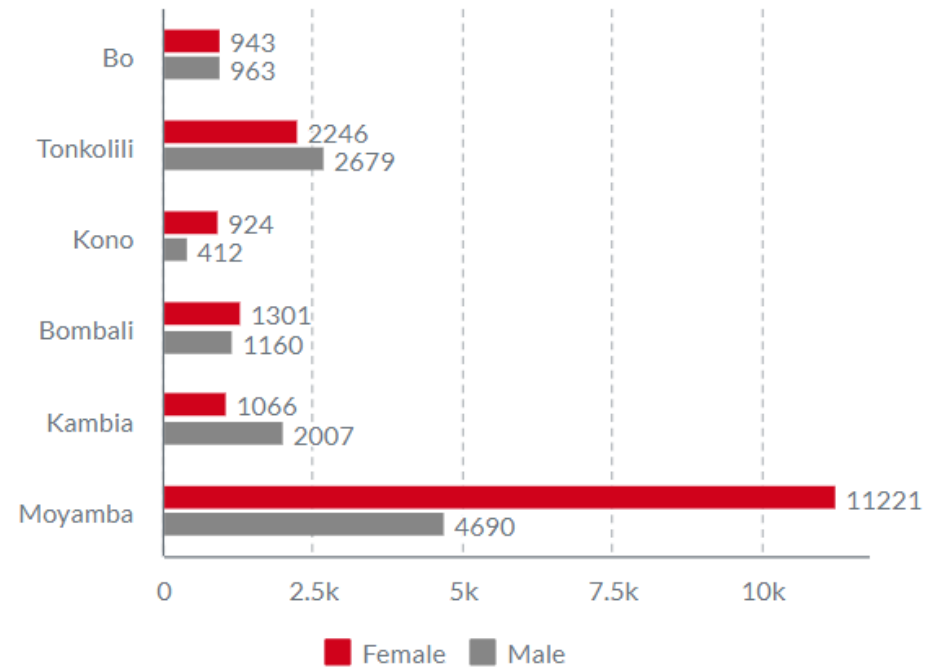
M&E 4th Quarter 2020 Data Update for Programme Quality Sub-Committee Meeting

LRP	Number of people reached in Quarter 4										
	All Female			All Male			People with Disability		Total		Grand Total
	0 - 17 yrs	18 - 35 yrs	35yrs+	0 - 17 yrs	18 - 35 yrs	35yrs+	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Bo	360	419	164	397	396	170	38	51	943	963	1,906
Tonkolili	2,211	17	18	2,643	17	19	3	-	2,246	2,679	4,925
Kono	90	362	472	90	160	162	12	16	924	412	1,336
Bombali	1,225	51	25	1,063	70	27	-	-	1,301	1,160	2,461
Kambia	106	493	467	102	926	979	-	-	1,066	2,007	3,073
Moyamba	2,425	1,020	7,776	1,804	1,684	1,202	-	-	11,221	4,690	15,911
Totals	6,417	2,362	8,922	6,099	3,253	2,559	53	67	17,701	11,911	29,612

People Reached in Q4 by Sex



29,612 People Reached in Q4



Overall Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges

Programme implementation in this quarter was challenged and key of the issues are discussed below:

I. Limited Funding to meet the demand of communities:

Like in all other quarters, this quarter was unable to finance every programme issue in the communities. As we address some, others emerge for our action. Our collaboration with partners including councils, MDAs, and other NGOs, some of the emerging issues were addressed. An example of such was government relief package to vulnerable people especially women. This had to lower the demand among the diverse community needs.

II. Transitional Effect on Programme Work

In this quarter of review, some staff moved into various roles leaving gaps that required close attention. The South-Eastern Region Manager moved into the HoPP's role, and the Western Area District Coordinator moved in the other direction. Similarly, one Project Officer assigned in the GECT-T Project in Kono stepped in as new Programme Officer in Moyamba also ushering someone new into his previous role. These movements had implication on our programme had it not been management's close attention and support to maintain quality.

III. Limited Monitoring of our Programme

COVID-19 measures limited the movement of staff and partners around the country. Although cases had gone low in the reporting period, our staff safety and security had often been considered very seriously to ensure the security of all. This reason and several more could not permit regular field visit to monitor projects. As a stop-gap measure, field officers had visited these communities but seldom to see the effect of COVID on our constituents and finding ways to mitigate them. We also monitored virtually through telephone calls. Headteachers, mothers Clubs, Village Agents, SMC members, local authorities had been reached where there were need for urgent information.

IV. COVID-19 Limited AASL to conduct a Mini PRRP

AASL's plan is always informed by the PRRP that engages our diverse stakeholders to ascertain challenges for subsequent redress. The PRRP which was conducted in this quarter was at a low key. We did not do staff review; document review and the partners and communities were limited in number. This might have provided lost opportunities that we would have captured to be part of activities

in 2021. In addition to the PRRP, quarter reports, context presentations and other critical community issues were taken onto consideration.

V. Relaxation of COVID-19 Regulations remain Risky

The trend of COVID-19 in October and November was ridiculously low and government had therefore lifted the ban on several COVID-19 laws. This was a risk of losing grounds especially within such festive period when many travelers had jetted into the country. In December, case began rising again and till date, we are still experiencing an increased trend every other day.

Lessons Learned

- I. Leading by example was demonstrated by the leadership of AASL as every COVID-19 precautionary measure was demonstrated in public. This was also escalated to our LRPs, our partners and our community beneficiaries. This might be one reason why no staff nor a partner or communities where we worked contracted the virus.
- II. The mini PRRP we conducted revealed the possibility of consultations and involvement of people during plans regardless of prevailing contextual issues. AASL demonstrated this by the consultations we undertook to have or plan in place.
- III. A functional system like AASL where management and board follow on everything prepares the ground for quality work. Feedbacks we had received from Board and GA members position the programme unit better in moving towards the actualization of its goal.
- IV. The possibility of getting a shadow pandemic in every catastrophic event is quite possible. Fighting two pandemics together can be time consuming and highly resource driven.
- V. Nonadherence to rules, regulations and preventive measures in combating a virus to a conclusion has the tendency to undermine numerous gains that might have been recorded. Our December COVID-19 case increase can be of good example.

Key Progress Against Organizational Priorities

Organizational Priority 1: Programme effectiveness, Knowledge Management and Learning

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

Conducted Mini-PRRP in all 7 LRPs to inform AASL's Plans for 2021.

As an organizational culture, we did our usual Participatory Review and Reflection Process to inform the plan for 2021. In the process, tools were developed and a crash session held to have a comprehensive understanding in going through the process. In the conduct of the mini review, COVID-19 preventive measures were observed. We consulted with 50 community members in each of the LRPs, Implementing Partners (IPs), MDAs and Local Councils. Issues that came out of these consultations formed the basis for the activities in the 2021 plans and budget.

Monitored Programme Delivery in all LRPs

AASL monitors its work in diverse ways. Routinely, the Monitoring and Evaluation Desk makes quarterly quality assurance checks, Senior Management too visit the field to have a feel of programme work. At LRP levels, Programme Managers and Officers get to the field regularly to monitor the work partners do. In this reporting period, Bombali for example organized a joint monitoring tour and get the issues discussed with various partners for improvement. During the engagement, community beneficiaries were able to confirm to the review team that, their active involvement and Participation in LRP programme intervention enhanced their knowledge and capacity in managing the interventions of AASL activities implemented in their communities.

Organizational Priority 2: Ensure effective Financial Management System to enhance the efficiency of the programme.

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

We would have hosted the international auditor but the restrictions on travels made it impossible. However, a virtual meeting was held with AASL's International Audit and samples were collected for onwards action by the internal auditor. Findings of the audit confirmed that no major issue was recorded.

Organizational Priority 3: Funding our strategy

Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities

Because the federation had declared red alert, we did not engage in the second message collection. However, profile collections were done as a means of increasing the caseload of links in the Affiliate Programme. In Bombali, we successfully completed the collection of 800 additional child messages and photos for marketing as requested by the Sponsorship Unit. From all indication, if all the 800 profiles collected are being linked to supporters, there will be a tendency for an increase in the funding of the LRP programme activities and in turn will enhance the servicing of all 32 sponsorship communities in the LRP.

Organizational Priority 4: Human Resource and Organizational Development HROD**Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities****Organizational Priority 5: Information, Communication and Technology****Analysis of Impact per Planned Activities**

The installation of Microsoft Teams in all offices and laptops provided the leverage of easy communication in and out of the country.

Overall Challenges and Lessons Learned.**Challenges****Lessons Learned****Story of change/Photo requirement:**

Illustrate the achievements/progress on outcomes and impacts through Stories of change (Only one cumulative story requested). We invite you to share your story of impact from your LRP/Unit that you feel has the most evidence of substantive impact in line with our HRBA, by providing your story here with photos.

- *Please provide at least one story of Change under each Focus Area*
- *For each activity you are required to send at least five (5) good photos not below 5mb and should not be embedded in the report*

“Going together starts from starting together – include us from start” – Nenneh Kumba Jalloh

Inclusive participation has been a gap in the development arena for long. Stakeholders particularly at community and district levels are exempted to participate in development plans. Arguably, a plan for people must include the people. Unfortunately, the people are not knowledgeable of this and often see such as favour.

Nenneh Kumba Jalloh is a 27-year-old gender and child rights advocate. She is well known in Kambia as she has served as the Women’s Forum Network Coordinator for several periods. Her areas of activism include women’s socio-economic rights, women leadership, right to property and children right. Being part of the EU Project implementation, she had attended most of the programmes set so far. With improved knowledge in inclusiveness and participation, she now boldly articulates issues of governance and accountability. According to Nenneh, the training on local governance and accountability were amongst the best trainings she has ever been to. She mentioned

“through the trainings organized by ActionAid, my knowledge about the local government act, the role of council and budget tracking has increased. As women, we are often left out of key decision-making processes in the district, even though we make bulk of the population, affirming that women issues are often under-budgeted and neglected in the district development plan”. Neneh spoke the issues with confidence and committed to work with several other women in the district to have an engagement with council on a new arrangement. In addition, she revealed *“for the past two years, I have never been invited to any meeting organized by the ward councilor. Despite the enactment of the gender laws and campaigns for the 30% quota to women, the inclusion of women in planning and other decision-making engagements remains a huge challenge. As a gender advocate, I will work with all those relevant to change the pattern as I believe if we start together, we can go together”.*

Give to the youth, and it will be given to the community – with youths, the shadow Pandemic will end

COVID-19 Pandemic brought about many issues beyond the health and wellness of citizens. In COVID, people became hungrier, they are more sexually harassed than before, hopes and aspirations lost, and socio-economic opportunities put in shambles. Under rain or sun, in darkness or in light, ActionAid remain unresolved to fight until the fight is won especially in favour of the poor.



Kumba Kaifineh who is commonly called ‘PROGRESS’ is a second-year student at Njala University in Bo. She is volunteering for ActionAid but at the same time part of the Global Platform Youths. Kumba had long ago expressed that the events of pandemics greatly affect women and girls – referring to the situation as invisible pandemic. With trainings provided and a platform created to discuss their issues, they contributed to the social mobilization drive in the Bo township. “The invisible pandemic including harassment, rape and sexual penetration on women and girls is too much. It is time for women and girls to put on their armors. I call on all women to resist and to fight till the last portion of dignity is taken away”

Fear and panic engulf the nation, but denial was eclipsing everything. Youths made up majority of those who had denied the reality of COVID-19. They needed to be involved and they needed to take front role.

ActionAid considered this and brought 30 young people (men and women) to see the reality of COVID and then become champions or agents of change. *“My involvement in the fight against COVID-19 came through ActionAid. I wonder how my mind could have accepted the existence of the virus. Convincingly, I and many of my colleagues take on the streets of Bo to believe and act accordingly. I will continue this selfless endeavour until COVID-19 pandemic and that of the Invisible pandemic are defeated”* AASL hugely considers the work and role of youths in emergencies. We believe that if we *‘give to the youth, it will be given to the community’*.

If the ED walked for survival, who else! GBV must end.

ActionAid staff and partners with support from the Board and General Assembly took the main streets in various locations in what is referred to as ‘March for Survival to address GBV’. During the 16 days of activism when the world presents issues that limit the advancement of women and girls, AASL through support from the International team organized a campaign that sent signal to government that more needs to be done if we are to end violence against women and girls.



Foday Bassie Swaray is the Executive Director for ActionAid Sierra Leone. He led the campaign in the capital Freetown as he and his cohorts marched desperately for change. At the end of the march, he revealed *“we know in Sierra Leone; the leaders and government are trying their best, but I have to be honest to say their best is not enough; for the fact that we have seen an increase in the violation of women and girls in the country. Today, we are calling for stronger commitments to end violence against women and girls, and all forms of discriminations”*. The issue of discrimination is also enshrined in state laws and policies. This is where leaders make their reference and get away with issues that are discriminatory. In the

Director’s submission, this was emphasized *“ActionAid and partners are also calling for stronger laws that would guarantee the protection of women and girls rights in this country. They are calling to speedily conclude the constitutional review process – ensuring all discriminatory clauses be removed from the current constitution. I also call for stronger commitment for our leaders to move beyond the rhetoric to resource relevant institutions like the ministry of gender, family support unit, human rights commission and other relevant institutions with the mandate to protect, promote and fulfill the rights of girls in this country”*.

“Home is not home until home is home – away from home in Lome.

Sierra Leone was once the cradle of freedom and with free press among many other Africa. As a matter of fact, the first modern printing press in Africa arrived in Freetown in 1794 but was destroyed by a French raiding party before it could be used. With this long history of the freedom of the press and freedom of expression, successive governments used the 1964 Criminal Libel Act to repress, intimidate and even terminate dissenting voices. Quite recently, Part V of the 1964 Seditious Libel Act was repealed out of the statutes in Sierra Leone; an action applauded by civil society and the international community.

Meanwhile, a human rights defender (name withheld) has four dependants. His problem started when he attempted to investigate a case of diversion of funds by a mining company into an account of a highly placed government officer. According to the defender, his home was regularly surveillance, broken into, arbitrarily arrested, received a deluge of intimidating SMS messages since June 2020. The

defender said ***“I slept in abandoned houses, garages and at times even in the open field. I felt constantly monitored”***. This was the living situation until reached by HRDNSL staff. The Defender was temporarily relocated to a ***‘safe haven’*** as papers were regularized with the West Africa HRDN. There was need for immediate evacuation to protect and save life. Went through the COVID 19 tests and finally relocated to Lome - Capital of Togo in November.

Telling the story and experience, the defender shared ***“I have been a target to the current government of President Bio because of my stance and position in defending the rights of others. They ensured my safety became a priority up to the time I was about to depart from Sierra Leone. Now that I am in Lome, life for me is far better in terms of safety though face with some challenges. Therefore, I want to extend profound thanks and appreciations to the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network - Sierra Leone for facilitating my relocation. It normally widely said home is home but proudly I would say home is not home until home is home”***.