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UN AGENCIES WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



Monday–Friday,
24th–28th March 2025

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Welcome to the **UN Agencies Weekly Highlights** – your trusted source for dynamic updates, impactful stories, and transformative work shaping Sierra Leone and beyond. Dive into powerful narratives of resilience, partnerships driving sustainable development, and the vibrant faces behind the initiatives. Stay informed, inspired, and ready to act. This is where stories meet solutions – because together, we can drive the change the world needs.

Just released! Explore the 2024 Annual Results Report – a compelling look at how the UN and its partners are delivering real impact across Sierra Leone. From progress on the SDGs to powerful community-led initiatives, see how we're turning commitments into action.

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Govt, UN & Dev. Partners convene inaugural JSC on the new CF.

As the Government of Sierra Leone, the UN Country Team, and Development partners commenced implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF or CF) for the next six years starting January this year, the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) Meeting, co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, met last week to review and approve the committee's TOR and the 2025 Joint Work Plan.



The purpose of the JSC is to provide strategic oversight and direction to the CF process and ensure its alignment to evolving country contexts, national, regional and international development processes, mechanisms and goals, and links with other processes such as the Voluntary National Review (VNRs).

It will also support resource mobilisation as well as development financing opportunities, monitor progress, challenges, and opportunities and steer its implementation, including guidance on resource management.

The CF is aligned with the Government of Sierra Leone's development priorities, reflecting efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030.



In her opening remarks, RC Seraphine Wakana emphasised that the global context has changed due to funding issues during the first year of implementation and that the focus should be on new ways of working to see **"how we can remain efficient and effective."** She also reiterated the importance of strengthening reporting mechanisms for transparency.



Minister Kenyeh Barlay noted that the process of developing the CF was participatory and expects that the collaboration will continue in that same manner. She recognised the 43% funding gap during year one of implementation and the need to step up resource mobilisation. **"We should focus on innovative resource mobilisation strategies,"** she said.

Presentations were made on the TOR, and the Joint Work Plan and linkages to the Medium, Term, National Development Plan, the SDGs and other global agendas. The strategic discussions that followed these presentations centered on data, strengthening joint programmes, as well as continued resources mobilisation, especially in the context of changing global priorities.



ECA team in town to assess S/Leone's capacity building needs.

Last week, the UN Resident (RC) Coordinator Seraphine Wakana hosted Adam Elhiraika, Director of the North Africa Subregional Office of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and his team in Sierra Leone.

Their mission was to understand the country's public debt management landscape and assess capacity-building needs to strengthen fiscal resilience and promote sustainable finance. The RC expressed optimism that this mission would bolster Sierra Leone's public debt management system and enhance the necessary capacities to improve fiscal resilience.



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To address the costly domestic debt, Sierra Leone has introduced a new Medium Term Debt Strategy for 2023-2027. This strategy aims to extend the maturities of domestic debt, lower interest costs, and advance debt transparency by regularly providing and publishing adequate information on the Ministry of Finance's website.

The project includes diagnostic assessments and technical assistance, such as training, advisory services, and tools.

The Government of Sierra Leone will be supported in addressing high debt levels while promoting low-carbon and resilient development pathways. This involves enhancing the public debt management capacity for transparent, accountable, and effective management, developing sustainable financial products, and investing in climate adaptation and resilience.

These efforts aim to unlock new industries, create revenue sources, generate employment, support new skills, and foster economic growth, ultimately building fiscal resilience and reducing debt distress.



23 Inland Valley Swamp rice farmer-based orgs supported with equipment.



IFAD continues to drive impactful initiatives across Sierra Leone, ensuring food security, agricultural innovation, and community resilience.



Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), recently commissioned and handed over various rice and vegetable production, processing machines, and post-harvest equipment to 23 inland valley swamp (IVS) rice farmer-based organizations (FBOs) in Sierra Leone.

The equipment, provided by the IFAD-funded Agriculture Value Chain Development Project (AVDP) through MAFS, includes power tillers, reapers, threshers, rice milling machines, rice perboilers, destoners, and winnowers.

Each of the 23 groups, consisting of 25 members, also received grain stores, drying floors, water facilities, latrines, and solar-powered irrigation boreholes to enhance yields and improve production quality. Dr. Kpaka expressed gratitude to IFAD and other donors for supporting the AVDP and the "Feed Salone" initiative, which aligns with the Government's efforts to boost productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, add value to local rice production, and reduce rice import dependency. He encouraged farmers to brand their products to reflect Sierra Leone's agricultural potential and promote local rice consumption.

Madam Monica Kwame-Greene, Project Manager of AVDP, highlighted ongoing support for farmers, including technical training, quality agricultural inputs, cash-for-work initiatives, and market access for smallholder farmers. In 2024, AVDP developed over 1,850 hectares of swamps, with plans to develop and rehabilitate 1,800 hectares in 2025, aiming for a total of 6,000 hectares. The event concluded with Dr. Kpaka's visit to Moyamba Junction, where he inspected and operated the new equipment and facilities.



FAO enhances reforestation and conservation policies to protect Sierra Leone's biodiversity.

FAO, with funding from the European Union (EU) has formally transferred four Toyota Land Cruiser Hardtop vehicles to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), as part of its ongoing support towards sustainable forestry management in the country. The vehicles will aid in the effective monitoring of forestry activities, support reforestation efforts, and bolster the implementation of policies aimed at conserving Sierra Leone's rich biodiversity. The ceremony took place at MoECC, on Wilkinson Road, Freetown.



Saeed A. Bancie, FAO Representative in Sierra Leone, remarked, "The provision of these vehicles is a testament to the collaborative effort between the EU, MoECC, and FAO in addressing the challenges posed by deforestation and climate change. These vehicles will enable field officers to carry out their work more efficiently, thus directly contributing to the sustainable management of our forest resources."

Elizabeth Hawa Ellie, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry, noted, that the vehicles "are not just machines; they symbolize our commitment to the sustainable development of our forestry sector. They will enhance our capacity to enforce regulations, protect our forests, and engage with local communities in collaborative conservation efforts."

Gerald Halter, first Counsellor and Head of Cooperation at the EU said, "We reaffirm our commitment to supporting Sierra Leone's journey towards sustainable forestry management. By enhancing the capacity of MoECC, we are not just investing in vehicles; we are investing in the future of Sierra Leone's forests and the well-being of its people."



To stimulate economic growth, ILO supports review of Salone's feeder road policy.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has taken a leading role in collaborating with the Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA) to review the country's feeder road policy at a workshop held at the Country Lodge in Freetown.



International
Labour
Organization

The initiative, driven through the EU-funded Opportunity Salone programme, aims to create linkages in agricultural-producing communities for economic benefits and the creation of decent jobs for Sierra Leone youths, women, and persons living with disabilities.

It will enhance connectivity by facilitating better access to essential services like markets, healthcare, and education, especially during the rainy season; economic growth by reducing transportation costs; and sustainable road maintenance practices incorporating public-private partnership and community involvement.

The workshop brought together technical personnel from SLRA, the Road Maintenance Fund Administration (RMFA), the Districts Councils, the Ministry of Works and Public Assets and the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, among others.

Participants expressed the timeliness of such a gathering, as they are hopeful that the process will lead to a better institutional approach and structure for implementation, thereby significantly impacting the country's infrastructure and labor sectors.

Chief Technical Advisor of the Opportunity Salone programme Tonderai Manoto, represented the Country Director of the ILO Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone Vanessa Phala.



At CLA Conference, UNIDO stresses commitment for Salone's environmental goals.

At the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Conference hosted by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in Freetown this week, UNIDO Country Representative Mariatu Swaray emphasised her organization's commitment to collaborating with the Government of Sierra Leone, local communities, and international partners to achieve environmental goals.

Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 9, SDG 12, and SDG 13, UNIDO focuses on promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development, low-emission, climate-resilient development, and job creation.



The Rep. highlighted the urgency of addressing environmental challenges such as deforestation, land degradation, climate change impacts, and sustainable waste management, stressing that these are global concerns requiring collective action and innovative solutions. She commended the resilience and determination of the EPA and associated agencies in tackling these issues.

UNIDO is actively involved in initiatives promoting sustainable industrial practices, renewable energy adoption, and efficient use of natural resources. The organisation supports the climate parliament, an international multi-partisan network of legislators working to combat climate change and protect the living planet, by providing knowledge and tools for enacting and overseeing green policies and reforms, attracting investments to improve access to clean energy and reduce climate vulnerability.

Over the next 24 months, UNIDO will lead a climate learning and adaptation initiative with support from the GCF and the Climate Parliament.



Additionally, UNIDO will engage youth and promote women-led businesses through training and mentoring, empowering them to succeed in the market.

The conference aimed to build trust and investment in EPA's programs and foster collaboration among stakeholders.

EWASME Project to boost the growth women-led rice SMEs in 2025

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has presented a comprehensive 2025 workplan to the Steering Committee of the Empowering West African Women Small & Medium Enterprises (EWASME) Project in Freetown. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Fredrick Ampiah, UNDP Resident Representative, and Hon. Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security.



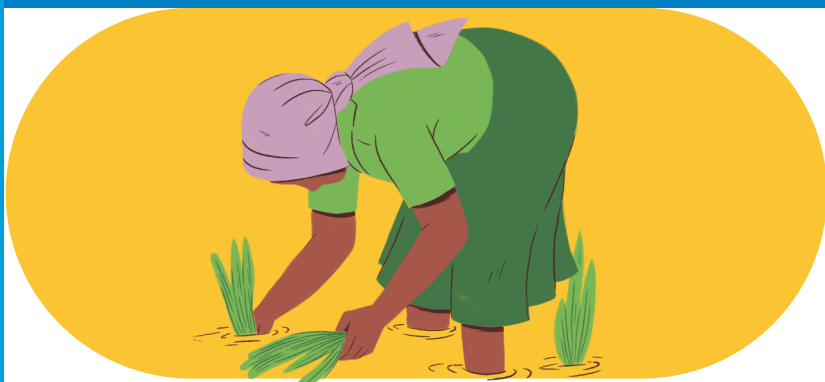
Mr. Ampiah recognised the Paramount Chiefs' crucial role in the project's community-level success and emphasized the importance of their continued commitment and partnership to ensure the project's timely and effective implementation.

Dr. Kpaka emphasised the project's transformative potential and its significant impact within the Feed Salone initiative. He urged for a faster implementation pace to ensure women-led SMEs fully benefit.

Attendees included Paramount Chiefs from Kambia, Tonkolili, and Bonthe Districts, as well as representatives from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

The EWASME project, implemented across Senegal, Guinea, Niger, and Sierra Leone, aims to empower over 1,000 women-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises in the rice value chain. This initiative is a collaboration between UNDP and IsDB, with funding from the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) of the World Bank.

For 2025, the EWASME project seeks to bolster women-led SMEs in the rice value chain and foster sustainable economic growth. The project will provide capacity building, matching grants, coaching, and mentorship programmes to support selected women-led SMEs to enhance business skills, strengthening linkages and expanding opportunities for women-led SMEs, while addressing policy and structural barriers to SME growth.



UN Women, MoGCA & UN Partnership end two-day workshop to strengthen gender responsive policies & actions in SL.

UN Women, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs through the UN Partnership for Gender Mainstreaming with support from Irish Aid has ended an intensive training for Gender Focal Persons in Government Ministries to strengthen gender-responsive policies and actions on updating and refining Gender Action Plans for the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Implementation framework in Sierra Leone.



The objectives of this workshop are to: assess progress made in gender mainstreaming across government ministries, identify challenges and gaps in the implementation of the GEWE Policy and Act, enhance coordination and collaboration between gender units and key stakeholders and strengthen strategies for integrating gender equality into governance structures.

During the training, the focal persons highlighted key transformations in the advancement of gender transformation in their Ministries, since the establishment of the Gender Units.

Climaxing the workshop, partners convened a High-Level Panel discussion on the importance of Gender Equality highlighting commitments to support Gender Units to integrate gender-responsive strategies in line with the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022. Participants of the panel included Honourable Mr. Hindowa Boakai Bindi, Deputy Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs, Setcheme Jeromine Mongbo, UN Women Head of Office, Sibeso Mululuma, UNFPA Officer-in-Charge and Hannah Kargbo, Executive Director, Girls Advocacy Development Network GADNET.

“Let us ensure that the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022 becomes a living reality not just a legislative milestone, but a catalyst for meaningful change in the lives of all Sierra Leoneans.” Says the Deputy Minister.



UNFPA joins Govt. for regional engagements on the Safe Motherhood & Reproductive Health Bill.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information and UNFPA, recently hosted a series of regional discussions with young people on the Safe Motherhood & Reproductive Health Bill across various regions of Sierra Leone.



The youth-led events aimed to clarify key provisions of the Bill and dispel any misconceptions surrounding it. Young participants shared their insights and actively discussed how the bill will impact their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

UNFPA remains committed to ensuring that the sexual reproductive health and rights of young people—especially women and girls—remain a priority.



UNFPA debriefs MoPED on Salone's participation at CPD58.

UNFPA held a meeting with the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Hon. Kenyeh Barlay, to debrief on Sierra Leone's participation in the upcoming 58th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD58) under the theme "Ensuring Healthy Lives and Promoting Wellbeing for All at All Stages."



The debrief included discussions on the Power of Data Initiative, led by the Ministry with support from UNFPA and other UN agencies. Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs, Dr. Isata Mahoi, emphasised the importance of gender-responsive data for sustainable development.

At CPD58, Hon. Barlay will also participate in a side event focused on the role of midwifery services in reducing maternal mortality and improving maternal health.

UNFPA hosts capacity building sessions for implementing partners.

To support the implementation of UNFPA's 8th Country Programme for Sierra Leone (2025-2030), two capacity-building sessions were held for Implementing Partners on March 20 and 27.



These sessions focused on Financial Management and Results-based Reporting, designed to enhance effective resource allocation and accountability, optimize budgeting processes and improve programme sustainability.

UNICEF supports Mpox vaccination campaign launch.

With support from UNICEF and in collaboration with key partners, the Ministry of Health launched the Mpox vaccination campaign on Thursday, March 27.

unicef 
for every child

UNICEF Representative, Rudolf Schwenk said: “UNICEF is proud to support the Government of Sierra Leone in protecting health workers, communities and children and the delivery of 61,000 doses of the Mpox vaccines reflect strong solidarity and rapid action against the disease.”



Minister of Health, Dr. Austin Demby was one of the first to receive the vaccination as a show of motivation and good leadership. Few weeks ago, UNICEF facilitated the delivery of 61,000 Mpox vaccines to Sierra Leone with support from GAVI, WHO and Africa CDC.



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