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UN AGENCIES WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



Monday–Friday,
31st March–4th April 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.

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At PSC meeting in Bo.

Gola-REAP gains momentum with bold leadership from Salone & Liberia Govts.

The inaugural Joint Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting for the GOLA-REAP (Resilience, Empowerment, Access and Peacebuilding) project was convened in Bo, Sierra Leone, on 3rd April, co-chaired by the Internal Affairs Ministers of Sierra Leone and Liberia, respectively.

The 30-month project, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, aims to strengthen social cohesion, improve border management, and support sustainable livelihoods in the shared Gola Forest landscape.



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It is jointly implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The Joint PSC provides strategic oversight and fosters collaboration to ensure effective project implementation. Key milestones achieved at the meeting included validating the project governance structures and the 2025 joint work plan, reflecting on lessons from previous PBF projects in the region, and enhancing stakeholder collaboration.

The inaugural meeting convened diverse stakeholders critical to GOLA-REAP's success. Madam Seraphine Wakana, the UN Resident Coordinator of Sierra Leone and her counterpart in Liberia, Christine Umutoni, were in attendance together with Liberia's Deputy Internal Affairs Minister.

In attendance also was Sierra Leone's Minister of Planning and Economic Development, the Resident Minister- South and the Acting Minister of Youth Affairs.



Representatives from immigration and law enforcement authorities, environmental agencies, implementing UN missions, the Mano River Union Secretariat, local District Councils, the Gola Rainforest National Park, civil society organizations, and implementing partners in both countries were also present, signaling the ownership and commitment towards GOLA REAP.

Looking ahead, the Joint PSC representatives committed to implementing the approved work plan, initiating baseline assessments and project activities, and convening the next PSC meeting to monitor progress.



Continued collaboration between governments, UN agencies, and local organisations will be crucial in achieving the project's long-term objectives and promoting peacebuilding and sustainable development efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.



In Bo, Kenema & Pujehun field visits.

Res. Coord. engages with beneficiaries of development programmes.

During her three-day mission to Bo, Southern Sierra Leone, primarily for inaugural Project Steering Committee meeting of the Gola-REAP project between Liberia and Sierra Leone, UN Resident Coordinator (RC) Seraphine Wakana interacted with beneficiaries and witnessed firsthand the positive changes in beneficiaries and communities.



On Thursday, 3rd April, the RC visited the Fistula Surgery Theatre at Bo Government Hospital, a facility supported by UNFPA through a partnership with the Government of Iceland and the Ministry of Health. It is aimed at accelerating progress towards eliminating Obstetric Fistula.

She met a 16-year-old fistula survivor who shared her experience of losing her baby after prolonged labour and subsequently dealing with constant incontinence. Following her surgery, she is now on the path to recovery.

The RC also met the Hospital Medical Superintendent and Matron for the fistula ward, and they discussed prevention mechanisms and community education to challenge harmful norms of treatment in terms of Improving identification, referral, and access to fistula surgery and reintegration efforts like providing psychosocial support, vocational training, and skills development for survivors.



That afternoon, the RC was at an Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) in the Yamandu Community. Through IFAD, the Agriculture Value Chain Development Project (AVDP) has developed 10 hectares of Inland Valley Swamps for rice farmers and provided production and processing facilities and machinery to increase productivity and reduce post-harvest losses.

Women at the IVS were growing vegetables as a third crop after they had harvested their rice, which will be used not only for additional income generation but also to enhance household nutrition. The RC also visited and interacted with oil palm farmers in the Kalia community supported by IFAD. A female youth contractor explained to the visiting team the agronomic practices they had learnt from the farmer field school on the cultivation and management of their oil palm farms.



The RC started Friday, the next day, with a visit to Largo, Kenema District, where UNICEF and UNDP are working with the Defense for Children International (DCI) on the "**Promote the Creation of an Enabling Environment for the Conduct of Peaceful Elections and the Strengthening of Social Cohesion in Sierra Leone**" project. The UN Peacebuilding Fund project promotes an environment enabling peaceful and credible elections by strengthening national conflict prevention and response systems, building trust, and fostering peaceful civic engagement before, during, and after the electoral process.

It includes the involvement of adolescents, youth, women, and the community, as well as religious and traditional leaders, promoting citizens' engagement through community dialogues, raising awareness on peace and youth participation, and tackling misinformation and hate speech.

She heard about the project's impact from around 20-25 community members, including traditional/religious leaders, parents, and adolescents/youth. She reiterated that the PBF project has significantly impacted all the communities across the districts involved, including Kenema, Bombali, Port Loko, Kono, Western Area Urban, and Western Area Rural.



The adolescents narrated stories of how they got into forced marriages/ relationships with bike riders and older men in the community, which prevented them from going back to school.

With the support from the project, they were empowered to return to school. A visibly happy mother explained how the project had also impacted her daughter. **"Now, she is back in school, very articulate, and once, she represented the town at the District Council engagement in Kenema, which led to bringing the celebration of the Day of the Girl Child to Largo. I am so proud of what my girl and the rest have achieved,"** she said.



In Kenema town that afternoon, the RC and team joined the bike riders at their parks in the heart of the township. These are beneficiaries of the **"Empowering Youth Bike Riders as Sustainable Agents of Peace in the Sierra Leone Project"**, which UNDP and UNCDF have implemented as part of PBF support.

The youth-driven project used the bike riders as ambassadors of Peace in their communities, preaching the message of non-violence in all its forms, including preventing abuse of women and girls.

They explained to the RC that they had previously been in constant conflict with the law – the Sierra Leone police and Road Safety Authority.

Thanks to the training, a cordial relationship exists, including a Memorandum of Understanding between the three entities. They also said that they have been involved in spreading anti-rape messages to the communities. A female bike rider explained to the RC the benefits of her training because of the project but emphasised that they wanted soft loans to own their own bikes.



That same day, she stopped at a hairdressing saloon and a tailoring community training centre. Afterwards, she had an engagement with beneficiaries of the CRS-implemented UN PBF-funded **"Politics and Peacebuilding project."**

A former gang leader named Capone is now trained to be a tailor. He claims the project has helped him put his acts of violence aside, and he hopes that his peers will also benefit from such projects.

A female beneficiary explained that, with the leadership, public speaking, and other awareness-raising exercises on their rights from the training, they could mobilise and, for the first time, elect a female as the Paramount Chief of Small Bo Chiefdom.



Before heading back to Freetown on Saturday, the RC was in Pujehun, where female councilors beneficiaries of the **"Localisation and Working Together for Peace: Repositioning Women-Focused Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for Sustainable Peace in Sierra Leone"** project explained that now, they have been empowered with training on lobbying, resource mobilisation and leadership.

This gives them an advantage to compete with men for positions at all levels. RC also visited the WPS Coalition secretariat, where members discussed the progress and impact of the project being implemented by UN Women, UNDP and World Vision.

The visit to Pujehun concluded with a stopover at a Safe Home run by the Youth in Action for Development in Pujehun, a member of the Coalition. Home to orphans and sexual and gender-based violence survivors, the RC emphasised the need for all stakeholders to dedicate more efforts towards not leaving no one behind, especially the victims.



Renewed commitment to empowering youth bike riders as agents of peace through reverification exercise in 3 project districts.

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Youth Affairs and the National Executive of the Bike Riders Union.



They have successfully completed the first phase of an in-person reverification exercise for bike riders across three out of five (Western Area Rural and Urban, Bo, Bombali, and Kenema) targeted project locations.

The purpose of this reverification campaign is to confirm the participation of 5,001 bike riders originally recorded in the 2023 project database, identify active riders, and replace inactive riders with new active participants in the project districts.

A total of 3,069 bike riders (89%) have been successfully reverified or registered across the three locations-Bo, Bombali, and Kenema.

With the overall aim of empowering female and male youth bike riders as sustainable agents of peace, UNCDF's intervention is focused on empowering 6,000 youth bike riders in the targeted districts to be more resilient through entrepreneurship, business and financial skills trainings, and a financial product tailored to bike riders, courtesy of funding from the United Nations Peace Building Fund.



UNDP supports the review of three key policies aligned with Sierra Leone's climate commitments.

Sierra Leone took a historic step forward with the official launch of the review process of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 6.0), and the National Pollutant Inventory spearheaded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



The review process is hosted by the Ministry of Environment & Climate Change through the EPA, with supports from UNDP, the European Union Delegation in Sierra Leone and the German Government through GIZ.

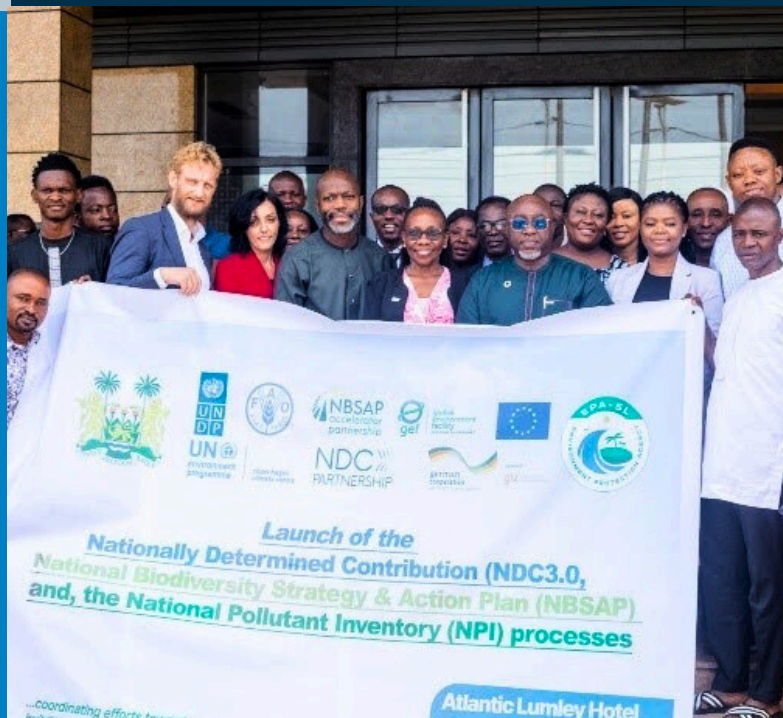
UNDP as a key government partner, supporting the review of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0), Speaking at the launch, the Resident Representative, Fredrick Ampiah highlighted UNDP's unwavering support for Sierra Leone's environmental commitments and set targets.

He highlighted other climate-related projects that UNDP is currently implementing with the Ministry and its Agencies, and also the recent GEF approved funding projects.



These include the Land Restoration and Enhancing Financing project for Koinadugu and Falaba districts, totalling \$4.8M, and the Shifting to Zero Waste Against Pollution initiative in Freetown, valued at \$5.1M. Through these efforts, UNDP is actively partnering with the government to drive sustainable solutions to support biodiversity conservation and pollution controls.

Mr. Ampiah noted that the event reinforced the importance of strong partnerships, multi-sectoral collaboration, and political will in tackling climate related challenges. He reaffirmed UNDP's commitment to supporting Sierra Leone's environmental and climate agenda through capacity-building, policy advisory services, and resource mobilisation.



MoPED, UNRCO, UNFPA discuss harnessing the data dividend for sustainable development.

UNFPA, in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF and the Resident Coordinator's Office, participated in the first Power of Data partnership technical meeting with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, NCRA, and Statistics Sierra Leone on April 2, 2025.



The initiative aims to strengthen data coordination by bringing together all data initiatives into one umbrella Data Partnership for improved coordination and efficient utilization of available financial and technical resources in the country.

This partnership reinforces the commitment to building a robust, inclusive, and responsive data system that drives sustainable development in Sierra Leone.



UNFPA supports Safe Motherhood Bill engagement with youth in Freetown.

This week, UNFPA, continued to support the Ministries of Youth, Health, and Information and Civic Education, in their engagements with young people in Freetown as part of awareness for the Safe Motherhood & Reproductive Health Bill.



The engagements focused on clarifying the Bill's key provisions, addressing common misconceptions, and emphasising the critical role of youth advocacy in shaping policies that impact their health and rights.

By fostering open dialogue, these engagements ensure that young people are well-informed and empowered to contribute actively to the national discourse on reproductive health and policy development.



UNAIDS supports resumption of HIV Data quality improvement efforts in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is addressing significant challenges in HIV data quality, including issues with data collection, reporting, timeliness, accuracy, and inconsistency.



To tackle these challenges, the CDC, UNAIDS, and other partners are supporting the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) through initiatives such as updating data collection tools, capacity building for data management staff, data quality assessments, and supportive supervision.

A Data Quality Assessment (DQA) funded by CDC and the Global Fund is currently underway. UNAIDS is providing technical support in the planning, field work, analysis, and reporting of the national DQA. The goal of this DQA is to enhance the impact of Sierra Leone's national HIV program by ensuring the quality of reported data through standardised, routine monitoring at HIV service delivery sites.

Key objectives include, assessing the quality of reported data and comparing it against national data collection system (DHIS2) numbers; determining the variance and types of errors between facility records and DHIS2 reports and identifying data quality challenges, including systematic issues with indicator definitions, data recording, and entry among others.

The DQA will validate data from July to September 2024, reported through the DHIS2 platform.

The findings from the DQA will be used to recommend actions to strengthen data quality, monitoring, and evaluation systems, ultimately aiming to control the HIV epidemic more effectively in Sierra Leone.



‘On the effect of climate change’, Govt & IOM consults with communities.

In line with our continued efforts to address human mobility in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, IOM and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) held a 6-Days Consultative Meeting with key stakeholders in Plantain Island and Moyamba District Yealibuya in Kambia District respectively.



These sessions focused on enhancing knowledge on the effects of climate change on the communities and their livelihoods and facilitating dialogues on possible solutions to address coastal vulnerabilities and mitigation strategies at local, district and national levels.

In another development, IOM conducted a Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) assessment for the #GOLA-REAP project, consulting national human rights actors, civil society, and activists in Sierra Leone  and Liberia.

The HRDD identifies risks, aligns activities with global human rights standards, and ensures a rights-based peacebuilding approach. IOM and partners are enhancing safeguards to support community resilience in the Gola Forest Landscape.



Solar-Powered boreholes handed over to four communities in Falaba.

The World Food Programme (WFP) officially handed over solar-powered boreholes to four communities including Koindukura, Kambaya, Teremafeh and Walia across Mongo and Sulima Chiefdoms in Falaba district.



Funded by the Peace Building Fund, this project aims to enhance water access and livestock nutrition by introducing improved grass species. The initiative supports cattle nutrition during dry seasons and agricultural periods when livestock are restricted to prevent crop damage.

By combining water and forage solutions, WFP seeks to mitigate farmer-herder conflicts and promote social cohesion in the region. The project is expected to improve livelihoods, reduce resource-based tensions, and foster sustainable development in Falaba district.

This intervention aligns with broader peacebuilding and resilience efforts, ensuring long-term benefits for both farmers and herders. The use of renewable energy (solar pumps) also underscores WFP's commitment to environmentally sustainable solutions.



FAO hands over digital farmer registry to MRU Secretariat.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) officially handed over the Digital Farmer Registry to the Mano River Union (MRU) at the latter's Secretariat in Freetown on Tuesday, April 1st, 2025.

This vital platform will transform regional agriculture, enhancing farmer data management and decision-making and supporting food security and rural development across MRU member states.



In her opening remarks, Mrs. Ama Gborie Foday, Deputy Secretary, stated that the initiative is a transformational tool designed to empower policymakers, development partners, and farmers with real-time, reliable, and structured agro-data, enhancing better planning for targeted interventions and informed decision-making.

"On behalf of the MRU Secretariat and our esteemed member states - Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, I want to extend my sincere appreciation to FAO for their unwavering support in making this initiative a reality," she said, reaffirming the MRU's commitment to the effective and sustainable implementation of the initiative.

FAO Rep. Saeed Abubakar Bantie, on behalf of Madam Bintia S. Tchicaya, FAO Program Lead for Social Protection in Africa, said the event marks a pivotal milestone in the execution of the FAO/MRU joint work plan on social protection and reaffirmed the shared commitment to enhancing food security and nutrition while strengthening the linkages with social protection initiatives in the Mano River region.

"The platform is more than just a technological advancement; the Digital Farmer Registry is a powerful enabler of inclusive Data-driven Agricultural policies, planning and decision-making by establishing a structured and reliable database for farmers, their activities and their needs," Bantie remarked.

His Excellency Ambassador Simon M.B. Harrison, MRU Secretary General, said the initiative serves as a catalyst for agricultural growth, economic empowerment, and regional integration. He extended his deepest gratitude to FAO and all those who have contributed to its success and expressed optimism that the ceremony will mark the beginning of a new era for Digital innovation in agriculture and social protection in the MRU region.

The handing-over ceremony was preceded by a training of trainers session inaugurated by Harding Bockarie Wuyango, FAOR Programs. Participants were selected from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), MRU Secretariat staff, and other stakeholders. Smartconekt facilitated the training.

ILO trains technical staff of partners on occupational safety and health.

In a three-day training session held in Makeni, northern Sierra Leone, the International Labour Organization (ILO), through its Opportunity Salone programme, has trained Districts Council Engineers, Clerks of Works, SLRA feeder roads Engineers and Feeder roads Superintendents from Port Loko, Bombali, Bo, Kenema and Kailahun districts.



International
Labour
Organization



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Centre of Excellence for automotive training visited by Government Ministers.

In a significant step towards advancing youth employment and skills development in Sierra Leone, the Honourable Minister and Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MoTHE) and the Ag. Minister of Youth Affairs (MoYA) conducted a site visit to the soon-to-be-inaugurated Centre of Excellence for Automotive Training.



The project, Promoting Youth Employment through Automotive Maintenance Skills Training, funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in collaboration with MoTHE and MoYA aims to bridge the skills gap in Sierra Leone's automotive aftermarket industry.

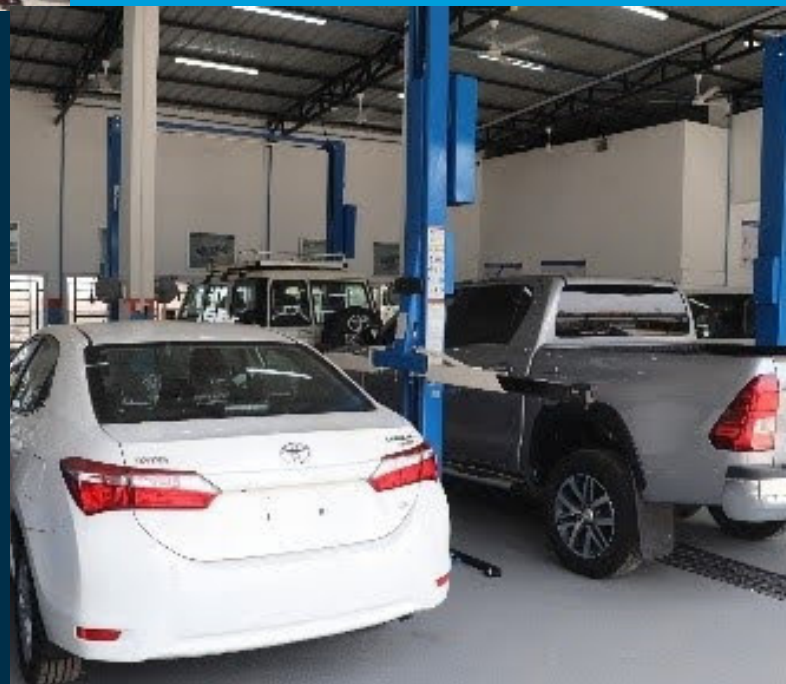
This initiative aligns with the country's National Development Plan by fostering a skilled workforce and contributing to decent employment opportunities for youth.



The Centre of Excellence is designed to serve as a hub for high-quality vocational training, equipping young people with both automotive technician and entrepreneurship skills.

With a completed and accredited competency-based and demand-driven modern curriculum, the project ensures that training aligns with industry needs. The Centre will not only provide technical training but also career services and business coaching to empower unemployed and underemployed youth to secure jobs or venture into self-employment.

With the upcoming inauguration, the Centre of Excellence is set to become a cornerstone for Sierra Leone's efforts in developing a skilled and competitive workforce in the automotive sector.





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