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UN AGENCIES WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



Monday–Friday,
12th May–16th May 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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UN pledges continued backing for Health Sector at National Summit in Freetown.

The United Nations in Sierra Leone has reaffirmed its strong commitment to supporting the Ministry of Health's National Sector Strategic Plan, as the country continues to make significant strides in public health.

This commitment towards the Ministry's transformative Life Stages Approach to Universal Health Coverage was expressed by the Resident Coordinator ad interim Fredrick Ampiah (at the start of Thursday's National Health Summit at the Bintumani Conference Centre. The theme of the 3-day Summit is **"Improving all health outcomes: All Sierra Leonean lives matter."**



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In his remarks, Mr. Ampiah on behalf of the UN Country Team, he highlighted that since 2010, Sierra Leone's Universal Health Coverage Index has improved from 27 to 41, reflecting major gains, particularly in maternal and child health. The country has also strengthened its capacity for disease surveillance and emergency preparedness, enhancing its ability to respond to public health threats.

Ongoing reforms, including the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Care Bill, the Social Health Insurance Scheme, and updates to the Free Healthcare Initiative, demonstrate the government's dedication to building a resilient and inclusive health system.

The UN remains a steadfast partner in these efforts, including a focus on primary health care and improved decentralisation as the way forward.

A key objective of the Summit is to review the health sector's status in alignment with national and international goals and targets.



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UNIDO & Japan inaugurate Centre of Excellence to drive youth employment in the automotive sector.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Government of Sierra Leone, and the Government of Japan today (on Tuesday) officially inaugurated the Centre of Excellence for Automotive Training at Freetown Polytechnic's Kissy Campus.



The high-level ceremony marks a major milestone in the “Promoting Youth Employment through Automotive Maintenance Skills Training” project, implemented by UNIDO in partnership with the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education and the Ministry of Youth Affairs, and generously funded by the Government of Japan.

With youth unemployment and underemployment remaining a persistent challenge in Sierra Leone, the new Centre of Excellence directly addresses the country's skills gap in the growing automotive sector. Recently renovated and transformed into a state-of-the-art facility that meets international standards, the Centre is now equipped with advanced automotive equipment and tools.

The Centre will deliver Sierra Leone's first nationally accredited, competency-based curriculum in automotive maintenance and entrepreneurship. Developed in consultation with industry experts, the 40-module, 1,000-hour programme is tailored to meet current labor market demands. With an emphasis on hands-on training, it will prepare students for careers in the country's fast-evolving automotive industry.

In his keynote address, David Moinina Sengh, Honorable Chief Minister of the Government of Sierra Leone, underscored the significance of the initiative:



“The Automotive Training Centre we inaugurate today, inspired by the President of Sierra Leone’s 2019 request for support at TICAD Japan, exemplifies our commitment to inclusion, shared prosperity, and human capital development-empowering youth in Sierra Leone and beyond.” Says Chief Minister.

Hiroshi Yoshimoto, Ambassador of Japan to Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia reaffirmed Japan’s support for the project and for human capital development in Africa:

“Japan is honored to support this initiative, which empowers young people and strengthens Sierra Leone’s capacity for economic transformation. Skills development is the key to unlocking opportunity and creating new pathways to prosperity.”



Mariatu Abionor Swaray, UNIDO Country Representative, emphasized the project’s role in aligning training with industry needs and creating employment opportunities for youth:

"This Centre reflects strong collaboration between partners to deliver demand-driven training that equips young people with skills matched to industry needs, helping bridge the gap between education and employment."

To ensure quality and sustainability, instructors and management staff have completed specialized training both in Sierra Leone and internationally, including in Ghana, Japan, Kenya, South Africa, and Italy.

The Centre also features a Career Centre for job matching, business coaching, and apprenticeships, ensuring that training leads to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Each year, the Centre can train 200 young automotive mechanics and equip 200 young people with entrepreneurship skills, advancing Sierra Leone’s National Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Agenda. By building a skilled workforce, this initiative supports Sierra Leone’s socio-economic growth while contributing to a more connected and competitive Africa.

(courtesy - <https://www.unido.org/news/unido-sierra-leone-and-japan-inaugurate-centre-excellence-drive-youth-employment-automotive-sector>)

UNICEF secures over \$1.3 Million in Support from Japan to enhance child welfare programs.

On Tuesday, 13 May, the Government of Japan, through UNICEF and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, committed over \$1.3 million to support the delivery of essential Nutrition, Health, and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) services to vulnerable communities, including children and women, in five at-risk districts in Sierra Leone.



The new project – Emergency Nutrition, Health, and WASH Response in Five Food and Nutrition Insecure Districts – will end by December 2026. This aims to integrate Nutrition, Healthcare, WASH services, and climate resilience to safeguard the health and well-being of pregnant women and under five children in the most vulnerable areas of the country.

“This partnership has been instrumental in providing both preventive and life-saving services, addressing the needs of our most vulnerable populations in the most food-insecure districts, and creating a more promising future for countless children and communities in Sierra Leone,” said Dr. Sartie Kenneh, Chief Medical Officer at the Ministry of Health.

This support builds on over a decade of impactful collaboration between Japan and UNICEF in Sierra Leone, a partnership that has already contributed more than \$20 million in support since 2009.

“Japan is dedicated to supporting our partners in Sierra Leone on their journey toward Universal Health Coverage, with Nutrition playing a vital role,” said H.E. Hiroshi Yoshimoto, Ambassador of Japan to Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia.

“We recognize that achieving these goals means reaching the most underserved communities and making intentional efforts to leave no one behind.” “Through the Government of Japan’s generous support, we are not only treating severe malnutrition but also investing in the systems that ensure children grow, learn, and thrive,” said Rudolf Schwenk, UNICEF Representative in Sierra Leone. **“This partnership is saving lives today and transforming futures tomorrow.”**

The Ministry of Health, through the Directorate of Food and Nutrition, will provide technical leadership and oversight to ensure successful implementation and alignment with national priorities.



Local Councils empowered to mainstream gender for transformative local governance.



Through the UN Women and UNDP supported “Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming in Local Councils” project that is funded by the Government of Iceland, Local Councils are being empowered to mainstream gender into their work for an inclusive, accountable, and transformative local governance.



The initiative implemented by Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs (MOLGCA) and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MOGCA) has brought together political leaders and technical officers and fostered collaboration, strengthened local ownership, and prioritized the inclusion of youth and marginalized groups.

Participants included all 22 Gender Focal Officers for the local councils, Gender Committee Chairs, youth representatives from Girls Advocacy Network (GADNET), civil society organizations, and development partners, including the Embassy of Iceland.

Key sessions focused on the GEWE Act 2022, the role of councils in gender mainstreaming, youth inclusion, leadership and communication skills. The sessions started with a pre-assessment to evaluate participants' existing knowledge of gender related laws and local council roles.

This helped to establish a baseline and will inform the development of a tailored induction module to support future trainings.

In his opening remarks, Kjartan Atli Oskarsson, the Deputy Head of Mission of Iceland underscored his government's unwavering support for gender-inclusive governance and praised the vital role of local councils in driving the goals of the GEWE Act forward.



ITC READY Salone strengthens Sierra Leone's digital and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The International Trade Centre (ITC), through its KOICA funded READY Salone project, conducted a three-day engagement and ecosystem mapping exercise for over 23 trainees from 13 different companies' tech businesses and innovation hubs from across Sierra Leone.



The exercise in Freetown was aimed at strengthening the country's digital and entrepreneurship ecosystem by equipping tech hubs, business support organisations, and ecosystem enablers to:

Develop youth-inclusive strategies; Improve service design and delivery, and enhance stakeholder engagement, business modelling, and fundraising.

Participants also received the findings of the Entrepreneurship Support Ecosystem Analysis Report, which highlights the current landscape and identifies opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Expert sessions were led by Ms. Tonia Dabwe, with additional insights presented by Nuria Rull Besrainer from ITC Headquarters.

This initiative was implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Communication, Technology and Innovation (MOCTI) and the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), with support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).



Annual Results Report feature story: life saving milestone: Sierra Leone's fight against cervical cancer.

For 43-year-old Ramatulai Kamara, a mother of four, the journey with cervical cancer began four years ago with severe bleeding. After multiple consultations, she was diagnosed with cervical cancer. "When I was finally told what was wrong with me, I cried. I was stressed, and many people said that cancer is deadly. I was also told that my only option was to go to Ghana for treatment, but I had no money for that," she shared.



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With no means to seek treatment abroad, Ramatulai's only option was chemotherapy – the best available in Sierra Leone at the time. "After several scans, I started chemotherapy, and they told me I would lose my hair. It was a difficult time for me," she recalled. Her outlook changed dramatically after undergoing a life-saving surgery following her sixth chemotherapy session. "I am so happy for this opportunity. I feel grateful to everyone who was involved in making this happen for me."

This transformative outcome was made possible through a South-South collaboration between Sierra Leone and Zambia. In November 2024, Sierra Leone achieved a groundbreaking milestone: a successful radical hysterectomy and bilateral pelvic lymphadenectomy for early-stage cervical cancer performed at the Princess Christian Maternity Hospital in Freetown.

Thanks to this collaboration, gynaecology surgeons in Sierra Leone are now equipped with the skills to perform complex surgical procedures for early-stage cervical cancer. Following Ramatulai's surgery, two additional women underwent similar life-saving procedures, signaling hope for many more women across the country.

Read more in the UN Sierra Leone 2024 Annual Results Report

ANNUAL RESULTS Sierra Leone REPORT 2024



Scan to read the
full report online



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