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Monday–Friday,
18th–22nd August 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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First Lady launches RSLAF & UN Women-SL partnership.

In a landmark step towards advancing gender equality in peacekeeping, Sierra Leone's First Lady, Her Excellency, Dr. Fatima Maada Bio, has on Tuesday the 19th August, 2025 launched the project-Women Repositioned to Meaningfully Participate and Lead in the Republic of Sierra Leone's Armed Forces and Support Peacekeeping Operations.



The two-year project aimed at breaking long-standing barriers to gender equality within the country's military structure.

It will also include a comprehensive review of RSLAF's gender mainstreaming policies, substantial improvements to the Peace Mission Training Centre, targeted capacity building and career development for female personnel, and strengthened healthcare systems particularly in addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and ensuring effective reporting mechanisms.

"The Elsie Initiative Fund is significant in empowering women to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with men in leadership and Peacekeeping. Inclusion is not a privilege; it is a right." She said.

The event which took place at the Myohaung Officers Mess, in Freetown brought together government stakeholders, development partners, top military leaders and CSOs.

The initiative is also to significantly enhance the participation and capacity of Armed Forces Women in Peace Operations.



According to Ms. Seraphine Wakana, UN Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone, **“This project is about vision. A vision where Sierra Leone is not only a contributor to global peacekeeping, but a champion of gender equality in the security sector.”**



Lieutenant General Amara Idara Bangura, the Chief of Defence Staff, described the initiative as a critical step in achieving gender parity within the RSLAF.

Setcheme Jeronime Mongbo, UN Women's Head of Office in Sierra Leone, said **“This project marks a critical step in advancing gender equality and strengthening leadership.”**

And that the initiative emanated from the findings of the 2022 Barrier Assessment which exposed critical challenges including leadership opportunities for women, unequal access to trainings and poor reporting mechanisms for harassment.



UN Resident Coordinator urges youth to lead action plan on youth, peace and security.

Sierra Leone's first National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security (NAP-YPS) is more than a policy exercise. Emphasising that the development of Sierra Leone's first National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security (NAP-YPS) is more than a policy exercise, UN Resident Coordinator Seraphine Wakana today called on the young people of Sierra Leone to take the lead in shaping the process.



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She made this call at the Sierra Palms Hotel in Freetown, where she co-chaired the inaugural meeting of the National Steering Committee and the National Technical Working Group for the development of the NAP-YPS, alongside the Minister of Youth Affairs, Mr. Ibrahim Sannoh.

The Resident Coordinator described the moment as a significant milestone in the collective journey to recognize, empower, and institutionalize the role of young people in building and sustaining peace.

As Co-Chair of the National Steering Committee, she expressed pride in standing with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and other stakeholders to support a process that is inclusive, evidence-based, and aligned with global and regional frameworks—including UNSCR 2250, the AU Continental Framework, and the ECOWAS Youth Policy.

In his remarks, Minister Sannoh noted that while youth participation in governance, peace, and security is increasing, gaps remain in formal representation and leadership. He emphasized that the NAP-YPS will serve as a guiding document to foster partnerships and mobilize resources for accelerating the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.



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The Minister also envisioned the NAP-YPS as a tool to institutionalize youth engagement, ensuring their voices are heard and empowering them as leaders and agents of change.

The National Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups were officially inaugurated following the signing of commitment statements.



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This was preceded by presentations on the draft Terms of Reference and a contextual overview of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in Sierra Leone.

Statements of support were delivered by the Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development and the Deputy Executive Minister of the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion.

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Also present for the signing were: the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, and the Deputy Internal Affairs Minister.



Empowering youth through creative economy research.

This week in Freetown, UNDP in partnership with UniPod Sierra Leone, the Nallo Jr Arts Academy, and the Timbuktoo Africa Initiative, supported a training programme that prepares students to serve as enumerators to assess the state of Sierra Leone's creative economy.



The training provided young people with the skills to collect and analyze data on opportunities in music, film, fashion, design, and digital storytelling. By focusing on youth employment and income generation, the initiative equips students not only to contribute to evidence-based policymaking but also to shape strategies that help transform creative talent into sustainable livelihoods.

Beyond data collection, the training emphasizes entrepreneurship, innovation, and the role of culture in driving inclusive growth. By engaging young creatives directly in research, the programme ensures that their perspectives inform national development strategies.

This effort is part of UNDP's broader commitment to unlock the potential of Sierra Leone's creative economy, creating pathways for youth to turn passion into opportunity and building a more dynamic, resilient economy for the future.



Empowering young women across Sierra Leone.

UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, recently brought together beneficiaries of the Young Women Leading Change Innovation Challenge. This initiative, launched in 2024, provides financial and capacity building support to young women who are leading community based initiatives that address challenges such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage, drug abuse, and gender-based violence. The Innovation Challenge also promotes entrepreneurship, skills development, and community development.



The two-day workshop provided a platform for participants to share experiences, lessons learned, and provide progress updates based on the implementation of their projects.

Through interactive sessions, capacity building, and mentorship, the young women strengthened their leadership and project management skills, equipping them to turn innovative ideas into real solutions.

By empowering young women to lead, the Innovation Challenge is driving meaningful change across Sierra Leone. These initiatives are not only helping girls and communities thrive but also fostering a generation of confident, skilled, and socially conscious female leaders.



UN Spotlight and Ministry of Gender Discuss Programme Implementation.

On 21 August, the joint UN Spotlight Initiative Technical Team met with Sierra Leone's Ministry of Gender to provide an update on the implementation of the GBV Programme. The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration and ensuring effective local-level engagement.



Discussions highlighted the upcoming engagements with District Development Coordination Committees (DDCCs) in target districts, the establishment of a One Stop Centre in Falaba to provide comprehensive support to GBV survivors, and the expansion of GBVIMS+ to additional districts.

The team also shared plans for the Programme's inception workshop.

The meeting also emphasised the creation of the Civil Society Reference Group, a crucial platform to enhance civil society participation and community advocacy.

Strengthening communication efforts to protect communities from Mpox in Sierra Leone.

As part of ongoing awareness-raising, UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the National Public Health Agency, is supporting the review and refinement of key messages on Mpox.

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This work ensures that information shared with the public is accurate, clear, and culturally appropriate, so that families across Sierra Leone can easily understand how to prevent infection, recognize symptoms, and seek appropriate care when needed.

Effective communication is critical in public health responses. By improving the way information is delivered, UNICEF and partners are empowering communities with the knowledge and tools they need to stay safe, protect their loved ones, and limit the spread of Mpox.



Celebrating young digital innovators in Sierra Leone!

The Ernest Bai Koroma University Digital Learning Hub (DLH) in Makeni, established in partnership with the Directorate of Science, Technology, and Innovation (DSTI), recently celebrated the graduation of learners who completed key digital skills programmes.

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The hub, supported by UNICEF, provides a free, inclusive space where students, schools, and the wider community can access 21st-century learning opportunities, including Tech 101, Tech for Kids, coding classes, and the Learning Passport.

In July alone, more than 560 learners, the majority aged 10–24 and with increasing participation by girls through targeted outreach, gained vital ICT and problem-solving skills.

By supporting this and other Digital Learning Hubs across the country, UNICEF is helping to advance Sierra Leone's national digital transformation agenda, ensuring that every child and young person is equipped with the skills they need to thrive in a digital world.



IOM and Life by Design Partner to empower returned migrants in Sierra Leone.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has joined forces with Life by Design to deliver Business and Entrepreneurship Skills Development training to returned migrants in Sierra Leone. This strategic partnership is rooted in a shared vision of innovation, inclusion, and impact.



Through this collaboration, we aim to equip participants with practical tools and entrepreneurial knowledge that foster economic independence, resilience, and sustainable reintegration. By investing in human potential, we are not only supporting individuals to rebuild their lives but also contributing to the broader development of communities across Sierra Leone.

Together, we are creating pathways for returned migrants to thrive—transforming challenges into opportunities and aspirations into achievements.





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The "**Get in Touch with the Media.**" section serves as a direct line for journalists and media professionals to connect with the UN communications and media team. Whether you're seeking in-depth information, or high-quality visuals to enhance your stories, our team is here to assist. For inquiries or media requests, reach out to our dedicated communications staff at the UN.

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