



UNITED NATIONS  
SIERRA LEONE



# UN AGENCIES WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



Monday–Friday,  
17th- 21st November 2025

## Impact in Action: Stories That Matter

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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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# Sierra Leone edges closer to Universal Health Coverage.

Sierra Leone has concluded a three-day national workshop in Freetown to advance the development of the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP) 2026–2030. The event brought together more than 120 stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, government institutions, development partners and the wider health sector, marking a significant step toward strengthening health systems and accelerating progress toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC).



The workshop began with the presentation of key findings from the End-Term Review of the NHSSP 2021–2025, which provided an evidence-based overview of achievements, challenges and emerging priorities to inform the new five-year strategy.

Minister of Health, Dr. Austin Demby, called for bold and unified action to shape the future of the sector. **“The next five years of healthcare in Sierra Leone must be defined by our collective vision, not our constraints. We are reimagining a system that delivers high-quality care for every person, strengthens our communities, and uses real-time data to solve problems before they grow,”** he stated.

WHO provided technical leadership throughout the process, deploying four international experts to support the development of the strategy.

UNICEF also contributed through a national consultant. WHO Country Representative, Dr. George Ameh, underscored the need for a coherent, forward-looking plan, stressing that it must **“reflect the voices, needs, and realities of the national, district, and community levels”** and serve as a common reference point for all partners.

The workshop concluded with clearly defined recommendations and aligned priorities across directorates and programmes, laying a strong foundation for a resilient, people-centred health system capable of meeting the health needs of Sierra Leoneans by 2030.





# Commitment to eliminating cervical cancer reinforced at national round table.

Sierra Leone reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating cervical cancer during a National Round Table held in Freetown, bringing together the Ministry of Health, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, development partners, civil society and technical experts. The meeting served as a strategic platform to align national efforts toward achieving the global “90-70-90” elimination targets.



**World Health  
Organization**



The country has made significant progress in recent years. Since the successful introduction of the HPV vaccine in 2022, Sierra Leone has achieved high coverage among 10-year-old girls, and the ongoing multi-age cohort campaign is targeting nearly one million girls aged 11–18 years.

Cervical cancer screening services have expanded nationwide, with at least one screening site established in every district. More than 33,000 women have been screened so far, and those identified with precancerous lesions have received timely treatment using thermal ablation and LEEP technologies. Surgical outreach efforts have further supported the management of early-stage cervical cancer for women requiring specialized care.

Despite these achievements, gaps remain in expanding comprehensive prevention, screening and treatment services to meet the 2030 global elimination goals. The round table provided an opportunity for partners to review progress, harmonize priorities and strengthen coordination, while mobilizing investments to accelerate the scale-up of integrated cervical cancer services across the country.

WHO reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Government of Sierra Leone and partners in advancing cervical cancer elimination and improving the health and wellbeing of women and girls nationwide.



# Multi-Age HPV vaccine campaign begins nationwide.

On 17 November 2025, the Government of Sierra Leone launched the nationwide Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Multi-Age Cohort (MAC) vaccination campaign. The event, held at St. Joseph's Convent Secondary School in Freetown, coincided with the World Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action and marked a major national step toward expanding protection for girls aged 11–18 years.



The campaign builds on the successful introduction of the HPV vaccine into routine immunization in 2022 and aims to reach girls both in and out of school. It also accelerates progress toward the World Health Organization's global elimination strategy, guided by the 90-70-90 targets: vaccinating 90% of girls by age 15, screening 70% of women by age 35, and ensuring 90% of those diagnosed receive timely treatment.

Minister of Health, Dr. Austin Demby, highlighted the significance of the campaign, noting both its national impact and personal importance. **"As a father of three daughters, this cause sits close to my heart. I urge every girl to take the HPV vaccine,"** he said, also encouraging older women to seek screening.

Representing Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, Mary situated Sierra Leone's efforts within global progress, noting that **"in 2024 alone, Gavi helped reach over 36 million girls with HPV vaccines,"** and reaffirmed the Alliance's continued support.

The Minister of Gender and civil society emphasized the importance of gender equity and community engagement in ensuring high vaccine uptake.

WHO provided the technical backbone of the campaign, offering strategic guidance, supporting the development of national implementation strategies, training health workers at all levels, and conducting independent monitoring to promote quality and equity.

With its integrated approach, combining HPV vaccination with expanded screening and treatment, Sierra Leone is well positioned to accelerate progress toward eliminating cervical cancer as a public health threat.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator commended the Government for advancing national action aligned with global commitments. "Today, we do not just launch a campaign; we gather on the front lines of a battle we can win, to declare a future free from cervical cancer for every girl in Sierra Leone," she stated.





# UNDP launches Regional Cooperative Credit Union in Kenema.

UNDP Sierra Leone, together with Irish Aid, Government partners, SEND Sierra Leone, traditional authorities, and the people of Kenema, celebrated a major milestone with the launch of the Regional Cooperative Credit Union. This achievement reflects a shared commitment to expanding access to finance and creating economic opportunities for women, youth entrepreneurs, and local communities.



Mr. Ampiah also underscored the impact of UNDP's Growth Accelerator Programme in helping youth and women-led enterprises scale and create jobs, and encouraged stronger integration with forthcoming initiatives such as the UniPod–Timbuktoo Pan-African programme launching in January 2026. Leading by example, he opened an account on-site and encouraged others to join in strengthening a more inclusive financial ecosystem.

The event concluded with a joyful ribbon-cutting ceremony, symbolizing not only the opening of a credit union but the beginning of new possibilities for communities across the region. Together, partners are helping build a future where opportunity is within reach for all, and where no one is left behind.

With only 15.1% of adults able to access formal financial services in Sierra Leone, many aspiring entrepreneurs continue to face barriers to saving, investing, and growing their businesses. The establishment of the Kakebu Financial Services Cooperative marks a significant step toward closing this gap and advancing financial inclusion for thousands who have long been excluded.

In his remarks, UNDP Resident Representative Fredrick Ampiah highlighted the urgent need for community-driven financial solutions, noting that only 25 active credit unions currently serve 18,600 members nationwide. He emphasized how this new cooperative builds on the UNDP–SEND partnership, including support to 30 Village Savings and Loans Associations and training of 200 young women as certified solar technicians, many of whom form the backbone of the new credit union.



# Experts convened to validate Sierra Leone's Power of Data Country Implementation Framework.

On the 19 November 2025, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, in partnership with Statistics Sierra Leone and UNFPA, convened a Technical Review Meeting to validate the final draft of Sierra Leone's Power of Data (PoD) Country Implementation Framework.



The United Nations  
sexual and reproductive  
health agency



The PoD Initiative, a UN High Impact Initiative launched at the 2023 SDG Summit, aims to accelerate the use of data for sustainable development and evidence-based policymaking. During the meeting, participants reviewed key updates to strategies, governance structures, and a costed implementation roadmap, endorsing the framework ahead of the national launch.

Partners highlighted the importance of coordinated data efforts, gender-sensitive and disaggregated data, and positioning the statistical system to track national priorities and the SDGs. The validated framework will guide implementation, strengthening Sierra Leone's data ecosystem and supporting evidence-based decision-making across government and development partners.



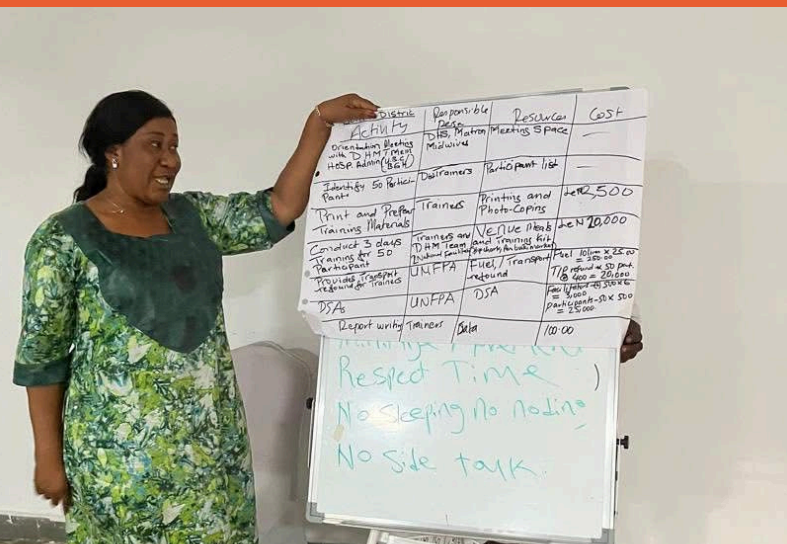


**Strengthening  
Emergency SRH: 50  
Midwives trained in Bo to  
enhance lifesaving care.**

In Bo, UNFPA Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Health trained 50 frontline midwives on the Minimum Initial Service Package for sexual and reproductive health in emergencies.



The United Nations  
sexual and reproductive  
health agency



The training strengthened the capacity of midwives to deliver essential, evidence based services during crises, including the management of obstetric emergencies, provision of family planning, and response to sexual violence. These are core interventions proven to reduce preventable maternal deaths and protect the rights and safety of women and girls in humanitarian settings.

When emergencies disrupt health services, midwives remain the most accessible and trusted providers. Equipping them with the competencies required under the MISP ensures continuity of care and reinforces Sierra Leone's ability to safeguard the health and wellbeing of women and girls in the most vulnerable circumstances.



# UNICEF & Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation celebrate World Toilet Day in Moyamba.

On 19 November 2025 (World Water Day), UNICEF Sierra Leone collaborated with the Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation, children, civil society partners, and communities to celebrate World Water Day in Moyamba.

unicef   
for every child



This year's World Toilet Day theme, **"Sanitation in a Changing World,"** reminds us that regardless of how quickly our world evolves, the need for safe toilets remains constant. Safe sanitation safeguards our health, upholds our dignity, and protects the environment.

Additionally, five chiefdoms in Moyamba and Bonthe were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). To date, 21 Chiefdoms across five districts have achieved ODF status. Today, we proudly add five more to this milestone. Even more encouraging is that nine additional Chiefdoms are on the brink of reaching ODF status.

"When we speak of a 'safe toilet', we refer to a facility that manages human waste responsibly—one that is clean, private, and either treats or properly stores waste, or connects to a functional sewer and treatment system," said Alpha Cisse, UNICEF Deputy Representative (Operations) in Sierra Leone.

The absence of such facilities puts individuals and communities at serious risk and reinforces inequality. Without proper sanitation, children, women, girls, the elderly, and persons with disabilities face barriers to fully accessing essential services, including education and healthcare."





# Sierra Leone Parliament and UNICEF mark World Children's Day with national children's dialogue.

Sierra Leone's Parliament, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs marked World Children's Day 2025 with a national children's dialogue with Parliament under the global theme **"My Day. My Right."**

The event brought together children from all 16 districts, including those living with disabilities - to share their experiences and present their priorities directly to Members of Parliament, the country's highest law-making and oversight body. Discussions focused on key child rights issues such as education, health, protection, inclusion, and the urgent challenge of child poverty.

unicef   
for every child



Representing children and adolescents from districts across Sierra Leone, 17-year-old Joseph Lebbie from Bo District presented a **"Children's Call to Action"** on behalf of all participants to the Speaker of Parliament, outlining three key recommendations for lawmakers:

1. **Establishment of a Parliamentary Caucus on Children and Youth** that meets quarterly.
2. **Commit to increasing budgetary allocation for child-focused social sectors**, including social protection, gender and children, and social welfare.
3. **Increased accountability of public spending for children at both central and local levels.**

The Speaker of Parliament pledged Parliament's continued commitment to advancing children's rights and ensuring that their voices remain integral to national decision-making.

**"This dialogue demonstrates that children are partners in shaping Sierra Leone's development,"** said the Speaker of Parliament. **"Their voices must inform the decisions we make today. Parliament has a duty to ensure that every law and every budget reflects our commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of all children. Progress begins when we listen - and act - on what children tell us."**

**"World Children's Day reminds us that every decision we make as a nation must put children first,"** said the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas. **"Parliament is committed to creating space for children's voices and ensuring that inclusion, especially for children living with disabilities, guides our work. Today's dialogue is a powerful step toward building a Sierra Leone where every child can thrive."**

**"Advancing child rights requires more than good policies, it calls for adequate resources, effective implementation, and strong parliamentary oversight,"** said Mr. Rudolf Schwenk, UNICEF Representative in Sierra Leone. **"By prioritizing budgets and accountability, Parliament can help ensure that commitments translate into real improvements in the lives of children."**



# EU, IOM and Govt' support for TVET & returnee empowerment.



Under the European Union (EU)-funded Migrant Protection and Reintegration Programme (MPRR) for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Sierra Leone in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone, the Organization has facilitated the voluntary return of over 3,600 Sierra Leonean migrants stranded across Sub-Saharan and North Africa.



Beyond return assistance, IOM continues to strengthen migration governance through capacity building, advisory services, and technical support in areas such as migration health, Integrated Border Governance (IBG), Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR), and counter-trafficking.

Since 2022, there has been a notable increase in the number of returnees and the diversity of host countries. Reintegration assistance currently follows IOM's integrated approach, addressing economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions. The economic component emphasizes entrepreneurship training, coaching, mentorship, and livelihood support. However, prevailing economic challenges, limited access to income-generating opportunities, and unfavorable conditions for small businesses hinder sustainable reintegration.

To bridge these gaps, there is an urgent need to equip returnees with contemporary, market-relevant skills. IOM proposes a strategic shift toward Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), complemented by entrepreneurship development and psychosocial support. Collaborating with reputable institutions delivering TVET will enable returnees to acquire practical skills aligned with labor market demands, fostering resilience and long-term self-reliance.

This revised approach seeks to address reintegration difficulties caused by mismatched skill sets and labor market requirements. By partnering with TVET providers, IOM aims to diversify returnees' qualifications and enhance their employability. Courses will cover sectors such as electrical installation, solar technology, ICT, construction, cosmetology, and automobile maintenance. Integrating entrepreneurship and psychosocial sessions will further strengthen socio-economic reintegration outcomes.

Ultimately, this initiative aspires to transform reintegration support from short-term assistance into a sustainable pathway for economic empowerment, reducing vulnerability and enabling returnees to rebuild their lives with dignity and stability.







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