



SIERRA LEONE NEWSLETTER

2022/1



WELCOME

TO PLAN INTERNATIONAL SIERRA LEONE'S NEWSLETTER

Plan International has been working in Sierra Leone for over 40 years supporting girls, young people, and their allies advocating for their rights and future. Our work addresses the barriers and unequal power relations young people face on a daily basis. We drive change in policy and practice both at local and national level by challenging the root causes of vulnerabilities.

Empowering girls and working towards gender equity is at the core of Plan's work in line with our global strategy – All Girls Standing Strong Creating Global Change

Plan International Sierra Leone is excited to share stories, insights, and highlights from the past months in this newsletter.



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YOUTH VOICES

They say home is where one's heart is, where one does not feel the need to fake being their true self. If this is true, then Plan International feels like home to me. It has been a place where we are nurtured to learn and think for ourselves in designing a future, we feel safe in.

It feels like home because help is always offered, mistakes are tolerated, and there's room for growth and learning. In a bustling cooperative world, where everything should be spotlessly in order, we are allowed to lead and thrive with very little judgment; what more can a home be?

While working in different departments within the organization, I have acquired immeasurable knowledge and skills at organizing, mobilizing, engaging, and promoting youth engagement activities. I have engaged on both international and national platforms.

I never get tired of advocating for more young and especially female voices to be included in decision making spaces but it makes me hopeful to see when those who hold the power actually listen and formulate action points. The Regional Director talked to me about the commitments he signed up to, in order to create more effective youth panels across the region. I am looking forward to seeing those commitments in action! For more details read about my talk with Rotim Djossaya on page 11.

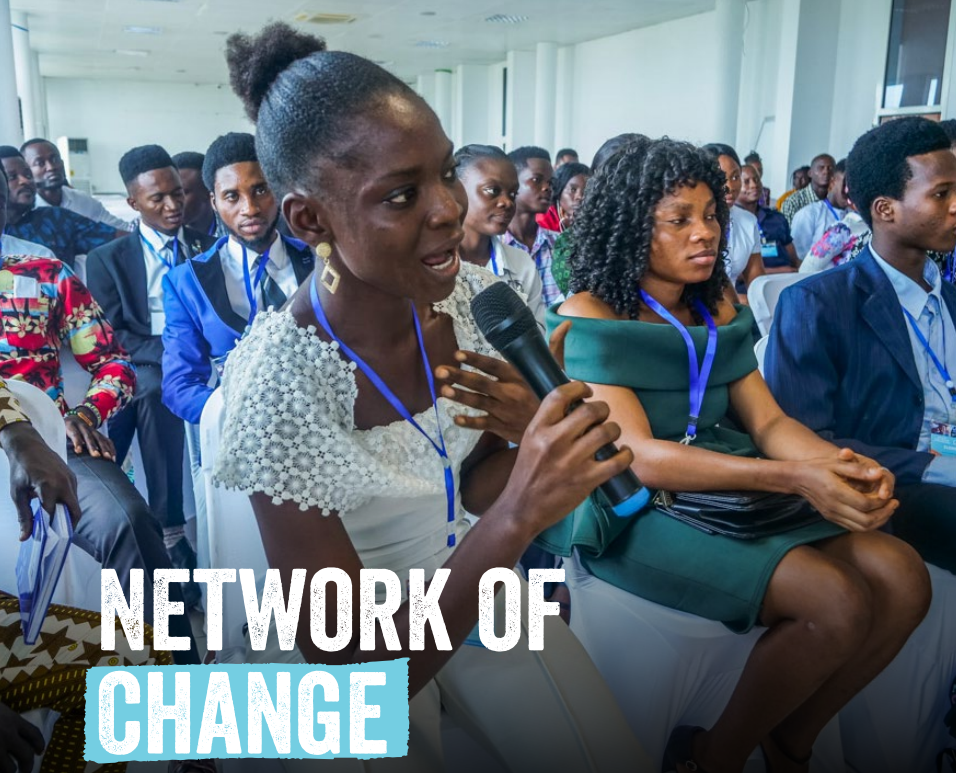
I'll say to leaders: be deliberate and intentional about empowering young people. When you train and ask young people to speak up and demand equal rights and platforms, I'll say, "Be ready to listen when they actually start speaking," even if what we say makes you uncomfortable.

Enjoy reading Plan International Sierra Leone's first ever newsletter. It is a great pleasure to share the highlights of the past months with you.

**“PLAN
INTERNATIONAL
IS THE SAFEST
PLACE FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE”
- MARIAM
SAMAI**

MARIAM SAMAI

National Female Representative
Youth Advisory Panel,
Plan International Sierra Leone



NETWORK OF CHANGE

Under the motto “My Story Your Inspiration” former Sponsored Children of Plan International came together at the first National Alumni Conference in Freetown to connect and plan activities amplifying the values of Plan International. The event that took place on the 31st of August was a successful day filled with inspiring speeches and networking opportunities as part of the global ambition to create a network of change-makers.

Sponsorship Alumni Network

For more than 40 years, children have participated in the sponsorship programme. What happens to those turning 18 and graduating from sponsorship? Plan International has created the Alumni Network for these former sponsored children to build a global community that is united around the needs and rights of children, especially girls. With more than 2 million sponsorship Alumni in all of West and Central Africa and more than 900 registered Alumni in Sierra Leone this presents a huge opportunity to amplify Plan’s ambition.

Consulting the Alumni it became clear that giving back to Plan International, contributing time and skills, is of high importance to them. Alumni want to be part of the movement to promote Plan’s work as champions of change.

Prof. Carlos’ journey of sponsorship

“I am honoured to say I am a former sponsored child and a member of the Alumni Network.”

– Prof. Carlos A. Aparicio. Born into poverty in Bogota, Columbia he now is a professor at the top two Universities of Columbia and a member of the International Board of Plan International thanks to Plan’s sponsorship programme. As a child, he was taught not only to dream of a better future but to set clear objectives to achieve his dreams. Today, he

**“TELLING YOUR
STORY WILL
INSPIRE OTHERS
TO BE DRIVERS
OF CHANGE
ACROSS THE
WORLD.”**

**– ROTIMY
DJOSSAYA, WEST
AND CENTRAL
AFRICA REGIONAL
DIRECTOR**



travels to multiple countries to tell his story, strengthen Plan's work and contribute to community projects. But, he is not traveling alone. In the company of other former sponsored children he is giving hope to others as a vital part to the work of Alumni. "Plan's impact on our lives is our engine for transforming society."

Where we go from here

Bringing together former sponsored children at the national conference is a vital step to foster a network of change - a platform that connects alumni for influencing and advocacy work. Alumni are mentors for young people and create peer education opportunities on topics such as Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights. This movement aims to drive change in policy and practice and especially empower children and young people to tackle root causes of discrimination to promote gender equality and children's rights. Together we can create a network of change!

ARE YOU A FORMER SPONSORED CHILD AND WANT TO JOIN THE ALUMNI NETWORK?

Call Plan International Sierra Leone on **080140823** to register.

NETWORK OF CHANGE

OVER 900 REGISTERED SPONSORSHIP ALUMNI IN SIERRA LEONE





GENDER TRANSFORMATION CHAMPIONS

EQUAL REPRESENTATION, EQUAL POWER AND EQUAL FREEDOM

Women and girls face the highest rates of gender inequality and injustices in Sierra Leone. These injustices result in a cycle of poverty that affects families for generations. It is time for a new direction towards justice, inclusion and, empowerment which is at the heart of Plan International's work.

On Thursday the 1st of September, Plan International celebrated the extraordinary leadership of those committed to gender transformation work in Sierra Leone. It was a celebration of change-makers who are building a more equal future, challenging the positions of power and opening socio-economic opportunities for women and girls.

Gender Transformation Champion Award

Over 7000 individuals were nominated across all 16 districts of Sierra Leone. 18 of them were carefully selected and awarded "Gender Transformation Champion Awards" for their outstanding work in their communities and nationwide. These extraordinary individuals contribute to a gender-balanced Sierra Leone, to a better Sierra Leone for everyone thanks to their tireless work ensuring women and girls' voices are heard.

"We are here today because calling out systematic biases against women is personal to Plan International" - these were the welcoming words of Plan International's Country Director Evariste Sindayigaya. The Award Ceremony was filled with inspirational speeches, performances and powerful women and girls. Hearing from the Honourable Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Honourable Minister of Social Welfare and the

**"WE ARE HERE
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INTERNATIONAL"**

Honourable Deputy Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education showed every single woman and girl in audience that transformation is possible.

Gender Transformation in Sierra Leone

Hon. Manty Tarawalli, Minister of Gender & Children's Affairs is the first female cabinet Minister from the twin districts – Fabala and Koinadugu. She spotlighted the work of her Ministry facilitating gender equality and strengthening child protection. Policies such as the Radical Inclusion Policy, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and Gender Responsive Budgeting are only a few examples of her milestones to achieving a gender equal society.

Hon. Deputy Minister Emily Gogra highlighted the achievements of the MBSSE and Plan's work to involve young people in the decision making of their education, health and social wellbeing. She pronounced the Gender Transformation Champion Awards as a landmark shifting the narrative of Sierra Leonean women and girls and promoting sustainable change in our communities and the country as a whole.

Plan International applauds the critical achievements of the Government of Sierra Leone on gender transformation work. When we see projects and policies such as the Free Quality Education that increased the enrolment and retention of school children, and especially girls; the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy; the Gender Mainstreaming Project focusing on legal instruments, the Mines and Mineral Act, the Public Election Act, Gender Responsive Budgeting, the establishment of One Stop Centres and a free 24 hours sexual violence hotline; the Male Involvement Strategy and the Gender Bill, we are hopeful Sierra Leone is on its way to achieving a Gender Equal society.

GENDER TRANSFORMATION CHAMPIONS



GENDER TRANSFORMATION CHAMPIONS AWARD CEREMONY



HON. BAINDU DASSAMA- KAMARA,

MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE
ENCOURAGES EVERYONE TO
STAND UP FOR WOMEN AND
GIRLS' RIGHTS



LUCRETIA AINA MOORE,

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF
ECOBANK (SIERRA LEONE) LTD
SPEAKING ABOUT FINANCIAL
INCLUSION



ONE PLAN, SHARED VALUES

WACA REGIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING IN SIERRA LEONE

Plan International Sierra Leone had the honour to host the WACA regional leadership team meeting in September. After Stephen Omollo's opening words calling for the region to stand in unity driving our global strategy All Girls Standing Strong Creating Global Change, the leadership team embarked on a 5-day workshop of discussions, brainstorming, and aligning on topics such as partnerships, resource mobilization and youth engagement.

Youth Engagement

During an interactive session with the youth of WACA a prominent theme that emerged was the call to “enable young people to be actors not beneficiaries”. Young people from across the region told the leadership team what they need in security and conflict situations. The recommendation to internalise youth empowerment in everything they do, was made to the leaders.

Plan Sierra Leone's YAP member, Innovator, Entrepreneur and STEM activist, Hawa Yokie challenged the audience further: “How many young people are in this room today?”. Following her demand to include more young voices in the spaces of decision making she was invited to the Global Girls' Summit in Abuja, Nigeria.

The 5th edition of the Global Girls' Summit was held from 12 to 13 October 2022 to create a multicultural, intergenerational, and citizen space, where girls from across the world can decide on the changes they want in their environments.



**HAWA MODERATING A
PANEL SESSION AT THE
GLOBAL GIRLS' SUMMIT**

**READ MORE IN OUR
NEXT NEWSLETTER**

Partnerships

Sierra Leone's Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education spoke to WACA leadership about collaboration to drive impact – it's all about communication and flexibility. Plan Sierra Leone is grateful to have such an engaged partner who is critical in everything we do. Supporting the Ministry of Education in setting up their very own Youth Advisory Group based on our YAP model was a great achievement within the partnership.

Cross-regional learning

The marketplace showcasing projects from across the region allowed for sharing best practices and challenges across countries. Plan Niger presented their Inclusive Quality Education programme to guarantee children with disabilities their fundamental right to education.

The accelerated education programme implemented in Guinea-Bissau enables change in education policy and practice. Through co-designed curriculum out of school children, especially girls, can exercise their right to education. Nigeria presented on their programme that brings out of school children and youths back to school. We congratulate Plan Nigeria's achievement having the alternative learner-centred education programme adopted into the national education programme.

The regional leadership team meeting concluded after 5 days. We are looking forward to putting the plans into action.

“IF YOUR AMBITION DOESN'T SCARE YOU IT'S NOT BIG ENOUGH”

– CHARLES USIE, COUNTRY DIRECTOR NIGERIA

ONE PLAN, SHARED VALUES





THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF PLAN INTERNATIONAL WACA REGION REAFFIRMS THE HOPE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SIERRA LEONE

Written by Mariam Samai, National Female Representative Youth Advisory Panel, Plan International Sierra Leone

“My take home from the Alumni and Gender Transformative Champion Awards ceremony would truly be the power of young people to mobilize, drive movements, raise awareness on key issues, and bring stakeholders to action.” Mr. Rotimy Djossaya, Regional Director of Plan International WACA, in an interview with me on Friday September 30, 2022, said that he was proud to see young people take the lead throughout the Sponsorship Alumni National Conference and Gender Transformative Champion Awards ceremony.

WHY SIERRA LEONE?

I saw great enthusiasm from the Regional Director’s engagements, as our guest, Mr. Djossaya spent not a day to rest. Instead, he joined us at the office to organize the Alumni and Gender Transformation award ceremony. I was curious to know why my beautiful country.

Mr. Djossaya described his visit to Sierra Leone as memorable, historical, and a moment of inspiration and learning. According to Mr. Djossaya, before the Regional Leadership Team meeting which brought together all the West and Central Africa (WACA) Country Directors in Freetown, he spent the previous days engaging with key partners of Plan International in Sierra Leone.

He shared his delight over the support Plan International is contributing towards development efforts in Sierra Leone. In Mr. Djossaya’s own words, “it was evident from the conversations I had with the Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, and the Chief Minister, that Plan International is well positioned as a key player in the humanitarian and development ecosystem of Sierra Leone.”

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE POWER TO MOBILIZE

Our power as young people is limitless, what makes it outstanding is when we are given a platform to showcase our innate abilities this can be espied by our magnificent display of key roles at the Sponsorship Alumni National Conference and Gender Transformation Champion Awards ceremony.

While sharing perspectives on the Sponsorship Alumni National Conference and the Gender Transformation Champion Awards ceremony, Mr. Djossaya expressed glee at the manner in which Plan International Sierra Leone was able to mobilize nearly 1,000 people who reflected on how they have worked with the organization to create global change, especially with a focus on young people.

“I was amazed at the Gender Transformation Champion Awards ceremony, seeing people selected to be champions of gender transformative change, indicates that a growing movement for gender change is being nourished in Sierra Leone.”

Mr. Djossaya added that he was particularly grateful that a member of Plan International Board, Prof. Carlos,

and wife Nina, were in Sierra Leone to share their experiences as former sponsored children and inspire others. According to Mr. Djossaya, *“we will only be able to create change if we share our stories and make others learn from them”*.

He went on to say that as leaders they need to implement a locally led, globally connected ambition into results. Therefore, they have decided to support all Country Offices to set up Locally-led Advisory Boards in conjunction with the Youth Advisory Boards that include young people in internal governance and decision-making processes. The Boards will consist of individuals who are respected for their crafts in society, who can champion Plan’s agenda and values in those countries, because the organization’s presence in each country should be owned by the people of those countries.

THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR’S COMMITMENT

I was very excited to hear Mr. Djossaya reiterate some of the commitments he and other Country Directors and Regional Hub Management Team in the WACA region made. He said, *“we have committed to put young people at the heart of the new global strategy realization and to make sure that they are at the center of decision making in Plan International”* because many young people have challenged us to be more involved in the internal decision-making processes within Plan International.

He further stated that the central part of the regional meeting was how WACA should reimagine itself and become even more meaningful partners to transform its new global strategy into actual results. When reflecting on the just concluded Regional Leadership Team meeting, Mr. Djossaya said, they have *“committed to establish a Regional Youth Panel, which will serve as a platform to further interact with young people”* and that the Sierra Leone case study has encouraged them to commit to creating more effective and functional youth panels across the region.

“These commitments are going to be reflected in our accountability plan for the year, and all Country Directors and Regional Management Team members have agreed their individual accountability plans to deliver on our commitments.” Mr. Djossaya also said that in addition to the commitments they made in Sierra Leone, he was pleased to celebrate the journey and achievements the Sierra Leone Country Office has made in moving from a struggling team into a very high performing and winning team. He added that the regional team is ready to work together to build on that achievement and provide the support Sierra Leone would need to further improve and sustain this high performance.

THE FUTURE IN THE MINDSEYE OF REGIONAL DIRECTOR DJOSSAYA

When pointing out the opportunities ahead, Mr. Djossaya encouraged the Sierra Leone Country Office to sustain its

THE HOPE OF YOUNG PEOPLE



improvements and be consistent about its progress. He said Sierra Leone as a country has huge innovative initiatives and they want it to shine beyond its borders so that they can use the opportunities and expertise from Sierra Leone across the region.

Moreover, the Regional Director stated that they would be using Sierra Leone’s examples to establish youth panels across government ministries and agencies in other countries. To me as a member of the youth advisory panel in Sierra Leone, this shows that our efforts are seen and we have added immense value to Plan’s work.

Mr. Djossaya concluded by affirming that he was *“hopeful that the future is great for the country, and the only way we can continue to move forward is to do the right thing, and keep young people at the heart of our programming, influencing and implementation approach at all levels.”*

“I was happy to see young people driving different functions within the Sierra Leone Country Office.” He reminded the Sierra Leone Country Office that keeping young people as key players would bring more opportunities.

As a young person, I am very happy to share a platform with our Regional Director of Plan International and truly learn from his energy to drive change.



CLOSING WORDS

DEAR COLLEAGUES, PARTNERS, AND YOUNG PEOPLE,

It gives me great pleasure to present you with Plan International Sierra Leone's very first newsletter showcasing the highlights of the past months. It was a period of connecting, sharing ambitions and demonstrating what Plan International Sierra Leone stands for to a national and international audience. We have come far in our journey of transforming the office, our ways of working, increasing our impact for children, particularly girls, strengthening our legitimacy and improving our sustainability by being effective and responsive.

Under the spirit of creating a network of change, we connected former Sponsored Children; we connected Gender Transformation Champions and we ourselves connected within the WACA region at the Regional Leadership Team meeting held in Sierra Leone. In coming together to amplify Plan's values and sharing and celebrating stories of success, we aim to inspire changes in attitudes, in behaviours and especially changes in laws and policies. We are grateful to be working closely with our partners, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs who are crucial in everything we do.

Only together we can advance children's rights and achieve equality for girls. In Sierra Leone we focus especially on girls, vulnerable children and youth accessing quality and inclusive education, increasing the participation in decision-making spaces for young women and men as well as improving gender transformative sexual reproductive health and rights services and policies.

One of my personal highlights was supporting the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education in setting up their own Youth Advisory Group (YAG) modelled after Plan International's Youth Advisory Panel. Through YAG, young people have the opportunity to using their skills to speak up for inclusive quality education, climate action and to challenge inequalities and be the change agents that transform processes. Therefore, when our initiatives become a crucial, integrated part of national governments, we are one step closer to achieving lasting change.

We owe our achievements to those working tirelessly in the communities, to our partners and to the young people who guide us, inspire us and speak up for their rights. The exciting achievements described in the pages of this newsletter would not have been possible without you.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and that you are inspired as I am by the spirit, resilience and commitment of the people and communities we work with in Sierra Leone.

Thank you for believing in Plan International's ambition.

**“ONLY
TOGETHER WE
CAN ADVANCE
CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS AND
ACHIEVE
EQUALITY FOR
GIRLS”**

**- EVARISTE
SINDAYIGAYA**

EVARISTE SINDAYIGAYA

Country Director
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THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



AND PARTNERS



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