

Port Loko

Sierra Leone

Positive changes are happening in Port Loko. Learn more about how we are supporting children and girls' rights through our collaborative, equality-driven work.

Even amidst persistent gender inequalities, and climate change intensifying vulnerabilities, the local communities in Sierra Leone continue to strengthen their resources to ensure that every child is safe, and protected.

In 2023, the national government passed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act into law. This legislation aims to advance women's rights through various leadership, budget, planning and resource allocation. Last year, we disseminated information in the local communities to popularise the law so everyone could benefit from it. Through our various initiatives, we have been working with local government and communities to tackle high rates of malnutrition and have worked with education programmes to support girls to exercise their agency and make their voices heard.

“During Covid, Plan provided us with radios and other educational items like bags, books, pens and geometry set, to ensure our continued learning.” -Lamin, 15-year-old



Beneficiaries of our education programs in Sierra Leone.

Impact in Numbers

1,872

teen girls receive sanitary pads for menstrual hygiene

2

accessible toilets for children with disabilities

950

students get learning materials for education

Paulina leads her city



NAME:

Paulina

AGE:

13 Years old

DREAMS TO BE:

Bank Manager



“I like to engage and sensitise children and community members about issues affecting us and educate them about the child protection reporting channel.”

Meet Paulina.

Like many girls in Sierra Leone, Paulina is optimistic about achieving her goals and building a strong future.

Paulina is the eldest child in her family with three younger sisters. A hobbyist dancer, Paulina has been associated with Plan for nine years now, participating in our various workshops and activities, promoting children’s rights and advocating for empowerment, for herself and hundreds of other girls in her community.

Representation matters!

In Paulina’s community, there is a child welfare group. It is managed by adult men and women who take up the responsibilities for the welfare of children. However, in the absence of any representation and voice of children, the committee has a blind spot in recognising the actual issues that affect children.

Plan International’s child protection project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, supported the restructure of the committee and empowered children to claim their rights and have a voice in their welfare. This not only instilled participation and representation but also leadership qualities and agency among young girls.

A seat at the table

Paulina is now a member of the child welfare committee, participating in school visits and spreading awareness about the committee’s role and children’s rights, making them active in decision-making.

This has enabled Paulina to create a reporting channel in the community. With this ability to participate in local decision-making spaces, children like Paulina are able to practice full citizenship and directly address their grievances to drive effective changes.



Hundreds of pupils can continue education with assistance of basic school materials.

There are currently 11,500 Sponsored Children in Port Loko

Projects That Support Lasting Change

Healthcare for all

Lack of information on sexuality, pregnancy and contraception perpetuates stigma and taboo around these topics. To enable bodily autonomy and sexual agency for girls and other vulnerable groups, harmful gender norms must be challenged.

Through this project, we engage community leaders, parents, teachers and the youth in discussions and dialogues around comprehensive sexual education (CSE). With our My Health, My Rights project, we have achieved changes in the local communities such as government approval to implement CSE. Plan International has also collaborated with a national consultant to train teachers and peer educators. We work with CSE facilitators to develop quality teaching aids like digital tablets and support local teachers in their use.

This project has received high community acceptance, with increasing participation in familiarising with these topics.



Focused group discussion with young women on sexual reproductive right and mapping social services.

193

teachers participated



Women farmers engaged in livelihood processes.

Employment for all

Women farmers in Port Loko are engaged in small-scale agriculture, growing mostly cassava.

Women are exclusively responsible for manually processing the cassava, a heavy task and a physical burden. Many cannot afford the equipment, which limits their production and food availability. Supporting these farmers will not only improve their output and income level, but also empower them to create their economic independence, and agency. 50 families received palm oil processing machines. We also empowered men to support women in the production process, and created dialogical spaces to challenge the traditional gender norms, encouraging the participation of women in not merely production, but also in decision-making spaces.

Women are demanding joint ownership of the processing machine within families or cooperatives to ensure they have control over its use and benefits. Financial independence for women is a crucial pillar in improving gender equality.



Processing of palm oil for trading and consumption purposes.

“With the aid of oil processing machines, we have better quality product, improved productivity, and lesser workload. Now more money flows into my pockets.” - Isatu, 23-year-old

You're Supporting a More Equal Future



Children and youth are taking charge of their future with leadership and education.

Together, we're working to create a more just world.

Factors like poverty, gender discrimination and difficult access to school lead to low enrolment rates among children. Through educational kits and financial support, we will ensure that children can be retained in schools. We will improve sanitary facilities in schools and make them inclusive and accessible.

To address the massive food insecurity in the region, we will provide agricultural inputs for women farmers, and establish greenhouse farms for the youth for income generation.

We will lobby meetings with local authorities to improve youth and women's access to and use of land for their agricultural purposes.

Message from Plan Staff

"On behalf of the sponsorship children and their families, we appreciate your support over the past year. Your support has contributed to many projects, especially for girls and young women, providing education and building skills for a brighter future."



Ismail Sanu,
Programme Unit
Manager

The Plan Effect

Sponsored children are at the centre of everything we do, and they help plan our programmes based on what's important to them. Sponsors' donations are a gateway into a community. This helps build trust and credibility to attract even more funds from new sources. This makes more sustainable programmes possible in sponsorship communities. This powerful synergy is something we call The Plan Effect.

Progress in Numbers

75 institutional heads are gender-sensitive

50 female farmers trained in agronomic

75 farmers trained on financial literacy

25 groups receive agricultural product support