

Land for Life Initiative Sierra Leone Launched



Many efforts have gone towards the institutionalization of the Land for Life Initiative Sierra Leone. As an institution that has been working for policy reforms in land governance and food systems in Sierra Leone for the past three years, it is time for it to transition from being referred to as a project to an organization. To strengthen the organization's position in the CSO sector, it was launched as a fully structured organization in Sierra Leone on Thursday, December 15th, 2022 in Bo Town, Southern Sierra Leone.

The launch brought together officials from government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, representatives from Civil Society Organizations, Private Sectors, our funder, Local Council Representatives, and representatives from the District Multi-stakeholder Platform. The organization was launched in front of all of these stakeholders, and attempts to establish ties with them were appreciated.

Providing context for the Sierra Leone Land for Life Initiative, The National Convener, who is now the Executive Board Chairman, stated that Land for Life began in 2019 as a coalition of Civil Society Organizations functioning in four critical areas in the country: Port Loko, Tonkolili, Kenema, and Pujehun. Mr. Abu Brima further mentioned that Land for Life is an initiative that is



Mr. Abu Brima Executive Director Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)

being carried out in three other African countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Liberia. "The work of Land for Life is being recognized internationally," he stated. In Sierra Leone, the Executive Board Chairman stated that the Initiative has been working with a variety of government organizations, including the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Country Planning, as well as community structures, to achieve its goals. He also noted that before Land for Life entered into full operation in 2020, they conducted a nationwide assessment of the country's land governance sector. The assessment study highlighted some of the deficiencies in the country's land governance sector, which Land for Life is presently striving to rectify

Berns Komba Lebbie, the National Coordinator for the Land for Life Initiative Sierra Leone, remarked that the Initiative has accomplished a lot through the efforts of the consortium members. Berns went on to say that the Initiative has been successful in resolving land disputes in its provinces and Western Area over the years. The Coordinator noted in the next chapter of the Organization a five-year Strategic Plan had been developed to govern the organization's activities. He noted that the strategic Plan has three priorities: Strategic Priority One: Ensuring the Efficient Implementation of Enacted Land Laws, which seeks to promote the effective implementation of enacted land laws. Strategic Priority Two: Institutional Strengthening, which aims to enhance Land for Life's governance and internal control processes. Strategic Priority 3 Right to Food aims to establish national food security in order to ensure the right to food for vulnerable populations through national policy influence. He stressed that the organization would continue to collaborate with government line ministries, departments and agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community structures to fulfill all of the established goals.

In her testimonial, one of the beneficiaries, Kadiatu Tholley from Port Loko District, expressed gratitude to the Land for Life Initiative Sierra Leone for their interventions

over the years, which she claimed had tremendously aided women in gaining access to land rights. She stated that before to the project's implementation, community stakeholders bullied women on land problems, but after the project's implementation, she and other women in Port Loko have been empowered on land governance issues.

Stefano Temporin, Country Director for Welthunger Hilfe, stated that WHH has supported Land for Life's initiative not just in Sierra Leone but also in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Liberia. Stefano stated that land governance is a global phenomenon that should be promoted and that it plays a role in food security efforts. The Country Director expressed his delight at the two pieces of legislation adopted by the Sierra Leone government, particularly the inclusion of WHH and Land for Life in the process. "Let me end by congratulating all of the actors here for their hard work in ensuring that a new chapter of Land for Life is written," he said.

Anna Schreiber, Land for Life's International Program Coordinator, praised the move to establish Land for Life Sierra Leone as an independent organization. She stated that land is extremely essential and that achieving food security will be



extremely impossible without it. Anna went on to explain that the organization's creation was a very opportune intervention in addressing land governance challenges in the country and that for a country to talk about food security, secured land rights must be taken into account. She congratulated the Sierra Leonean government for enacting

land laws in the nation but stated that without their execution, the laws have no significance, and she utilized the occasion to urge for their implementation.

The keynote speaker, Sheik Sowa, who was recently appointed by the President of Sierra Leone to serve as the Commissioner General for the National Land Commission, thanked Land for Life Initiative Sierra Leone for providing him with the opportunity to **“perform his first public activity”** since being appointed as Commissioner General. Speaking on the topic **“The Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of the Customary Land Rights Act with women in the Centre”**. The Commissioner General stated that the land governance sector in the nation has

greater issues than any other sector. The Commissioner General praised Civil Society Organizations for their contributions and partnerships in guaranteeing the country's first Land Commission and Customary Land Rights Act in 2022. He also stated that the Commission's activities across the country will be mainly reliant on Land for Life and other CSOs. He stated that women will have full legal representation in all the various sectors that the law provides.

At the end of the occasion, the Country Director for WHH, the Land for Life International Coordinator and the Commissioner General of the Sierra Leone Land Commission Launched the Land for Life Initiative Sierra Leone.