



Press Release

European Union Launches € 5 million Projects to Support Women's Empowerment in Sierra Leone

Freetown, 8th March 2023: On the occasion of **International Women's Day**, the European Union Delegation to Sierra Leone launched six projects out of which five focuses on women's empowerment, and another initiative aimed at promoting gender equality in access to quality education in various districts of Sierra Leone.

The grant contracts for the projects foresee the implementation of activities related to promoting gender equality, women's full enjoyment of fundamental rights and economic empowerment, as well as equal access to education in Sierra Leone.

The projects are funded under the EU's Thematic Program for Civil Society Organizations 2021-2027, aimed at strengthening their engagement as key actors for good governance and development in Sierra Leone.

The grant contracts were awarded to six NGO coalitions, encompassing 16 NGOs and 4 District Councils, including Kailahun, Bonthe, Bombali and Kambia District Councils led by the following implementing organizations: Movement for Assistance and Promotion of Rural Communities (MAPCO), Kambia District Development and Rehabilitation Organization (KADDRO), TRÓCAIRE, Agency for Integrated Development Sierra Leone (AID-SL), Action Aid International Sierra Leone, and the Institute for Governance Reform (IGR).

Amongst these entities, 17 are Sierra Leonean and three European based, with a sound track record of supporting Sierra Leone's developmental objectives and local ownership. These grants support actions in the areas of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability, Vulnerable/Marginalized people, and promoting gender equality in access to quality education, including providing internship opportunities for university students.

The first overarching priority of the CSO Program is an inclusive, participatory, empowered, and independent civil society and a wider democratic space in partner countries. This includes ensuring an inclusive and open dialogue with and between civil society organizations.

Speaking at the launch event, Ambassador Manuel Müller said: *"The European Union is committed to supporting projects and investments that empower women worldwide, including in Sierra Leone."*

Ambassador Müller commended the recent enacting into law of the "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" (GEWE) Act, as an important progressive governance reform, that

will be instrumental in further advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Sierra Leone. He underlined that the EU remains committed to supporting the implementation of the new Act.

The projects will last between two and three years, with an average investment by the EU of 800,000 EUR for each project, complemented by 1,000,000 total investment by the CSOs, which shows CSO's ownership and commitment.

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