

EMBASSY OF SIERRA LEONE IN KUWAIT

SIERRA LEONE- MIDDLE EAST

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AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

I am honored to welcome you to the maiden edition of the Sierra Leone-Middle East Diplomatic magazine of the Embassy of the Republic of Sierra Leone in the State of Kuwait, which highlights a slew of bilateral and developmental issues between the two friendly countries.

The goal of the Embassy is to promote and strengthen the good relations between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait. This edition presents a flurry of development activities the Mission undertook between 2019 and 2022 in the State of Kuwait. The Mission draws inspiration from the Strategic Plan (2022-2025) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in pursuance of Sierra Leone's Foreign Policy agenda, as Sierra Leone aspires to contribute to global peace, security and development. Consequently, the Mission views these activities as availing an opportunity to strengthen and deepen bilateral relations between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait, promote the government's paradigm shift from Economic Diplomacy to Developmental Diplomacy with a view to increasing investment opportunities for Sierra Leone.

The Embassy prioritizes the promotion of Economic Diplomacy which involves wooing trade opportunities, attracting foreign direct investment, boosting tourism, and building Sierra Leone's image globally in line with the National Medium-Term Development Plan (2019-2023).

This magazine, therefore, serves as a useful guide for the provision of relevant information in the following areas: strengthening bilateral relations between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait, pursuing development agenda of Sierra Leone, promoting culture and tourism, attracting investment opportunities, wooing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and seeking the welfare of Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora.



1. STRENGTHENING BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND THE STATE OF KUWAIT

Since I presented my Letter of Credence, I have worked assiduously to build Sierra Leone's reputation by strengthening its bilateral relations with the State of Kuwait and wooing investment and development opportunities for Sierra Leone. This resulted in the invitation of Hon. Nabeela Tunis, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, to the State of Kuwait in 2019. During the working visit the former Minister signed a number of bilateral agreements, including the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Technical Education and Professional Training; joint Commission of Cooperation, water supply and sanitation (WASH) on behalf of the Ministry of Water Resources, and a loan Agreement on improving the Aquatic Environment in the Greater Freetown area with the Kuwait Fund on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

Accordingly, the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait have ratified the following agreements with a view to further strengthening and deepening cooperation:

- Education Agreement
- Cultural and Artistic Agreement
- Air Service Agreement
- Agreement on the Establishment of Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC)

2. Pursuing Development Agenda of Sierra Leone

In an effort to pursue the development aspirations of the Government of His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio, the Government of the State of Kuwait, through the Kuwait Fund, provided loans for the completion of the Hillside By-Pass Road and the Lumley-Tokeh Roads, and two water supply projects in the rural communities of Port Loko, Koidu, New Sembahun and Yengema for which Kuwait Fund provided 5 million Kuwait Dinar (USD 16,202.072) to the water and sanitation sectors. Additionally, the Mission coordinated the support provided by the Kuwait Fund to the Ministry of Health for the completion of construction of three tertiary hospital projects in the Western Area at the Regent Road – Lumley Hospital, Macaulay Street Hospital and the Hastings Hospital, for which a loan agreement of \$15 Million US Dollars was signed between the Government of Kuwait and the Government of Sierra Leone in May 2011.

In pursuance of His Excellency the President, Dr. Julius Maada Bio's address during the State Opening of Parliament on the establishment of Polytechnic Institutions fully equipped with modern tools for vocational education and training, I engaged Direct Aid on 22nd February 2021 for the construction of six Technical/Vocational Institutes in Sierra Leone. The areas identified by President Julius Maada Bio for the construction of the six Technical Institutions were Fabala, Kerene, Makeni, Port Loko, Mattru Jong, and Koindu. The Mission continues to engage Direct Aid with respect to its implementation.

Following the ratification of the Education Agreement between the two friendly countries, and in actualizing His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio's flagship programme aimed at providing free quality

education, the Mission engaged with the concerned Kuwaiti Authorities to secure scholarships for deserving Sierra Leone students in various fields. In view thereof, the Government of the State of Kuwait approved four scholarship slots from the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone to study in various fields, including Sharia and Islamic Studies, Education, Social Science and Arts at the University of Kuwait for the 2023 academic year.

Furthermore, the Mission is following up on a project proposal for the construction of the Grand Mosque in Freetown in the name of the Amir of the State Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, earlier initiated by Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas, Sierra Leone Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. The proposal was further discussed and later submitted by Mrs. Nabeela Tunis, Minister of Foreign Affairs to her Kuwaiti counter during the high-level visit to the State of Kuwait on 16-18 November 2019.

3. Promoting Culture and Tourism

Since the ratification to the Cultural and Artistic Agreement, the Mission has robustly promoted Sierra Leone's cultural and touristic capabilities on different platforms. The Sierra Leone Cultural Group in the State of Kuwait has represented Sierra Leone on a number of programmes and has won several African Cultural competitions.

4. Attracting Investment Opportunities and Wooing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Attracting Trade and Investment opportunities/wooing Foreign Direct Investment is critical to the development of every country's economy. This has over the years been achieved through the showcasing of a country's investment capabilities in various sectors. Against this background, the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait initiated a Trade and

Investment Forum to explore large-scale investment opportunities in various sectors. The Trade and Investment Forum was an outcome of the working visit to the State of Kuwait on 16th –18th November 2019 of Mrs. Nabeela Farida Tunis, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone, wherein the two governments agreed to hold a Business Forum in the State of Kuwait with a view to further exploring trade and investment opportunities for the benefits of the two peoples and countries. The Forum was scheduled to take place in September 2020 between the Chambers of Commerce of Kuwait and Sierra Leone; however, the process was stalled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mission continues to engage the relevant authorities of the State of Kuwait with the aim of holding the Investment Forum in Kuwait.

The Embassy is of the firm belief that such an economic venture, if embarked upon, bearing in mind that the Republic of Sierra Leone is endowed with a lot of untapped investment potentials, including mineral and marine resources, agriculture, eco-tourism, energy and trade with a stable business environment and tax-friendly incentives for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to thrive, would eventually escalate Trade and Investment opportunities to create a win-win situation for both countries.

5. Seeking the Welfare of Sierra Leoneans in the Diaspora

Additionally, the Embassy is also charged with the responsibility of seeking the welfare of Sierra Leoneans in the State of Kuwait, including providing daily assistance in addressing police incarceration, violation from sponsors, residential status challenges, preparation

of Emergency Travel Certificates (ETCs) and facilitation of the repatriation to Sierra Leone.

Prior to my assumption as Ambassador, our Sierra Leonean housemaids in the State of Kuwait were faced with a myriad of problems, which to a large extent dampened the good image of Sierra Leone. Bearing this in mind, I visited several expatriate shelters for housemaids to address 29 Sierra Leonean housemaids who were propagating false or exaggerated information on social media about their appalling conditions in Kuwait. Several efforts have also been made to repatriate a number of our nationals to Sierra Leone with the support of the Government of the State of Kuwait and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

To address the recruitment anomaly in the State of Kuwait, the Mission has made tremendous progress in collaboration with the relevant Kuwaiti Authorities, to formalize the recruitment process, including observing international labour laws in recruiting Sierra Leonean housemaids (Visa 20) and other skilled labour workers (Visa 18).

Haja Ishata Thomas
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Esteemed Readers,


I feel elated to present to you the first edition of the Sierra Leone-Middle East Diplomatic Magazine, which encapsulates groundbreaking development activities undertaken by the Embassy of the Republic of Sierra Leone in the State of Kuwait since 2019 in line with Sierra Leone's development agenda.

This magazine aims to synthesize our numerous activities in a bid to enlighten our esteemed readers as we continue to firm up cooperation between the two friendly countries.

In this thrilling edition, each page offers you an exciting opportunity to read another, thereby whetting your reading appetite to majestically explore the stories one after the other. As you carefully flip through the next pages, you would read a good number of news articles concerning the existing relations between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait, ratified bilateral agreements, infrastructural developments undertaken by Kuwait Fund, including the construction roads and hospital, Direct Aid's assistance to Sierra Leone, activities undertaken by Her Excellency Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas in Sierra Leone, coupled with the sectoral strides of His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio over the past five years.

We have put a lot of effort into this beautiful work, and we hope this edition will be the most engaging.

Cyril Donald Barnes
Information Attaché



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SIERRA LEONE'S BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL RELATIONS

Sierra Leone's early contact with the outside world dates as far back as the second half of the 1400s. During the colonial era, Sierra Leone's diplomacy was conducted by Great Britain. From Independence in 1961, Sierra Leone's foreign policy was similar to that of many other African countries, advocating for a united Africa that would eventually evolve into the political, social, and economic integration of all countries on the African continent. Despite the legacy of colonialism, Sierra Leone espoused a policy of promoting economic cooperation with the western and eastern blocs of the globe.

Furthermore, Sierra Leone also adopted mutually beneficial cooperation with industrialized countries to procure the technical and financial assistance required for a young nation's economic development. In that respect, Sierra Leone pursued a non-aligned foreign policy, which proved particularly useful. Diplomatic engagements have evolved since then, with Sierra Leone establishing diplomatic relations with countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East.

Sierra Leone continues to progressively shape and advance its foreign policy in line with current and emerging global realities

and regional and sub-regional developments. Fundamentally, Sierra Leone's foreign policy is anchored on promoting its national interest along with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union, and other multilateral organizations, including the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the six decades as a sovereign country, Sierra Leone has gained experience, learned lessons, and participated in multiple international diplomatic initiatives and efforts aimed at promoting global peace and security, mitigating the risks of a polarized world created by the Cold War and its attendant arms proliferation, and promoting basic human rights and gender equality.

As the issues facing the nations of the world continue to change and evolve, so do Sierra Leone's role and involvement in the responses. The challenges of international terrorism, drug trafficking, migration, money laundering, and climate change create the need for the nations of the world to cooperate and collaborate in ensuring that their citizens do not suffer the negative impacts of these threats.

As a country, Sierra Leone has been widely acclaimed to be a model post-war country that is on a forward trajectory to sustainable development. To consolidate the gains made, the country's interaction with the outside world must be redefined to contribute prominently to global governance and also harnessing opportunities within the international system to support its national development objectives.

Sierra Leone's foreign policy on foreign relations is an extension of the country's domestic policies and development agenda. While reaffirming our commitment to continue serving as a credible member in the pursuit of global agendas, it projects the country's domestic agenda to establish international relationships and partnerships that will help the country achieve

its goals. It is in this vein that Sierra Leone's foreign policy has been aligned to its national development priorities with our international engagements at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Ever since Sierra Leone's Independence in 1961, the overarching thrust of its foreign policy has been to safeguard its sovereignty and national interests as well as to contribute meaningfully towards a just and equitable community of nations through the conduct of effective diplomacy. Sierra Leone's quest to contribute meaningfully to advance relations can be characterized into the following:

PROMOTE MULTILATERALISM AT SUB-REGIONAL, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL LEVELS

**STRENGTHENING BILATERAL
RELATIONS THROUGH
EFFECTIVE DIPLOMATIC
ENGAGEMENTS**

Bilateral diplomacy remains an important mechanism in strengthening bilateral relations between Sierra Leone and other countries. While political and economic activities continue to be the mainstay of bilateral relations, the scope of bilateral cooperation has, over the years, expanded into other areas with significant progress in the fields of culture, education, tourism, science and technology as well as people to people ties.

Sierra Leone has established diplomatic relations with many countries in the world and has a network of 24 missions worldwide that are concurrently accredited to neighboring countries. These include, Embassies, High Commissions, Permanent Missions, Consulate General and Consulate. This extensive network is a testimony to the importance that Sierra Leone attaches to fostering close bilateral relations with other countries.

Sierra Leone has been working actively towards global political and socio-economic stability and security within the multilateral system.

Therefore, as a country, Sierra Leone seeks to promote peace and security through active participation in the international fora, especially within the United Nations system and its Specialized Agencies and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). As issues and challenges the country faces increase, Sierra Leone must strengthen its multilateral diplomacy.

The Republic of Sierra Leone is a member of several multilateral organizations, which include the United Nations (UN), the Organizations of Islamic Conference (OIC), Nonaligned Movement (NAM), the Commonwealth, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organizations of African, Caribbean and the Pacific States. (OACPS) to name a few.

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation, Republic
of Sierra Leone*



BILATERAL TIES BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND THE STATE OF KUWAIT

The Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait have enjoyed fruitful relations ranging from bilateral to multilateral for over 30 years now. This fruitful bilateral relationship, among others, prompted the two governments the need to establish a resident Embassy of the Republic of Sierra Leone in Kuwait on July 9, 2009. This symbolizes the deepening and strengthening of existing Bilateral Relations between the two Countries.

At the multilateral level, the two countries have supported each other at the international fora, including the United Nations and OIC. Sierra Leone, in this regard, has been providing support for candidature requests by the Government of the State of Kuwait for positions at International Organizations.

Sierra Leone was one of the African countries that sent a contingent to help in the Iraqi invasion in 1991.

The State of Kuwait, on the other hand, has been providing tremendous support in various humanitarian development projects, through the Kuwait Fund for Development.

On humanitarian grounds, the State of Kuwait supported Sierra Leone immensely during the 11 years civil war (1991 – 2002) and provided relief assistance during Ebola (2014) and mudslide (2016).

The work of the Sierra Leone Embassy, in this regard, is to co-ordinate, promote and protect the national interest of Sierra Leone within Kuwait and the Middle East and enhance the country's security and Socio-economic prosperity.

Accordingly, the Kuwait Fund for Development has provided a loan for the construction of two water supply projects in the rural communities in Sierra Leone. Kuwait Fund has also provided funds to the Government of Sierra Leone for the construction of three ultra-modern tertiary hospitals in Freetown. The Embassy is advocating and hoping for the implementation of some other iconic projects in the not-too-distant future.

Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait have signed a series of bilateral agreements to further heighten relations. In November 2019, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Economic Cooperation visited the State of Kuwait and signed an agreement including cultural and Artistic Cooperation, Technical Education and Professional Training. The Minister also engaged the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce for a future Trade and Investment Forum in the State of Kuwait, aiming to unlock Sierra Leone’s Trade and Investment potentials.





SIERRA LEONE'S AMBASSADOR TO KUWAIT SPEAKS ON PRESIDENT BIO'S HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

In an exclusive interview with the Times Newspaper on 13th January 2021, a medium that features the role of Women in Diplomacy, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas spoke about His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio's massive investment in the Human Capital Development Project in Sierra Leone. The interview was held at the Mission's Chancery in South Surra, Al Zahra.

Described as the Free Quality Education (FQE) for Sierra Leone, this audacious project is a sustained approach to increase economic growth and eradicate poverty by improving productivity.

Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas disclosed that Sierra Leone's Free Quality Education Project is a catalyst for developing the human capital, adding that education plays an integral role in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

"President Julius Maada Bio's vision is to have a society that can rely on its human capital which is a paradigm shift from the country's old-school emphasis on mineral deposits. The Free Quality Education Project is essential to the development of Sierra Leone because it provides a level playing ground for every child to have equal access to education regardless of tribe or religion," the Ambassador said.

Lauding the gains made in girls' empowerment, she noted that girl child education formed the bedrock of President Julius Maada Bio's vision, adding further that girls are now encouraged to learn and those who are in the sciences are now being given scholarships for university studies.

“I am impressed with the current state of girl child education in Sierra Leone. Before now, only boys were opportune to go to school. Girls were discouraged from going to school as they were told that their duty was tied to early marriage and home management. In the end, girls, whose hopes were let adrift, were substituted to housewives rather than taking part in the development activities of the country.”

Ambassador Thomas added: **“We must applaud President Julius Maada Bio for taking this daring step to commit 21% of the country’s budget to develop human capital despite the challenges faced. He has broken the glass ceiling, and like Singapore, who took upon themselves to develop the human capital, Sierra Leone has taken a leap to success.”**

She concluded by calling on Kuwaiti Authorities to support the actualisation of President Julius Maada Bio’s vision to invest in primary, secondary and post-secondary education in Sierra Leone.

Human capital development covers improving education and developing skills, improving health care, protecting the poor and vulnerable population groups. Research revealed that, before the commencement of the Free Quality Education Programme, only 2 out every 5 adult Sierra Leonean could read or write English. Access to education was low and the quality was poor and only 13.7% of children between 3 and 5 years were enrolled in pre-primary level.



AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS SHARES EXPERIENCE ON DIRECT AID'S ACTIVITIES IN SIERRA LEONE

On 20th December 2020, Sierra Leone's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas shared her experience on the key development strides of Direct Aid in Sierra Leone since its establishment. The documentary was recorded at the Ambassador's office in Surah, Al Zahra, Kuwait.

In Direct Aid's video documentary series, which catalogued its over two decades activities in Sierra Leone, H.E. Ishata Thomas recalled the establishment of Direct Aid and its transformation from the African Muslim Agency. She noted that Direct Aid, an international non-government registered humanitarian and development organisation established in Kuwait (1985), has existed in Sierra Leone since 1980s and has become a household name due to its interest and active intervention in humanitarian and development projects.

In more than two decades, she noted that Direct Aid has been a reliable partner to Sierra Leone's progress, supporting the country during the civil war, Ebola, mudslide and COVID-19 through relief assistance. She added that Direct Aid has provided health care services; educational support, water, social welfare, agricultural assistance, small-scale rural development programmes, vocational training for women, Islamic propagation and general humanitarian relief services in Sierra Leone.

“Direct Aid has helped tremendously in boosting the health sector: they have four fully-equipped and staffed health centres across the country; they provide medical convoys to conduct surgeries on cataract and hernia and give free medical vaccinations to underage children nationwide,”
Ambassador Thomas appraised.

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Acknowledging their role in education, Ambassador Thomas added that Direct Aid collaborates with the Ministry of Education to provide basic education services through the country, adding further that the institution currently operates four fully sponsored orphanages in Kenema, Makeni, Lungi and Kossoh Town, which provide food, clothing, medical services, and education for the beneficiaries.

She added: “Direct Aid has also contributed to spread peace and strength IslamIC Education through radio discussion programmes, supplies of Islamic materials, training of Imams, outreach programmes in schools, colleges and communities nationwide.”

“Water provision, which is essential to the well-being of all human beings, is what they are popularly known for. Direct Aid has provided access to safe drinking water to various hard-to-reach communities, constructing boreholes and solar-powered water wells. As Sierra Leone’s Representative to the State of Kuwait, I have the full confidence Direct Aid is substantially and extensively planning to initiate more remarkable development activities to address the dire needs of Sierra Leoneans,”
Ambassador Ishata Thomas stated.

While concluding, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas, on behalf of His Excellency, President Julius Maada Bio and the people of Sierra Leone, expressed her sincere gratitude to Direct Aid for their outstanding humanitarian and development services to the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Direct Aid Association (formerly African Muslims Agency) started its activities in 1981 as a voluntary non-governmental organization interested in developing the neediest places in Africa. Since its establishment in Sierra Leone, Direct Aid has spearheaded the construction of schools, conduction of hernia and cataract surgeries, and provision of water supply in the form of boreholes, among others.



THE DEVELOPMENTAL STRIDES OF HER EXCELLENCY MADAM FATIMA BIO: AN ASSESSMENT OF HER COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION TO SIERRA LEONE

By: Mohamed Lamin Massaquoi and Cyril Barnes



The New Year is finally here and there could be no better way of starting it off than wishing you—our esteemed readers—a Bright and Prosperous 2023. May we also take a moment to recollect the tremendous gains made by the New Direction administration in the just concluded year, 2022, notwithstanding the global economic challenges. Those gains, coupled with the strong leadership and determination of His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, provide strong assurance that the year 2023 will present even better opportunities for our beloved nation.

In this first edition of 2023, we assess the critical role of Sierra Leone's First Lady, Her Excellency Madam Fatima Maada Bio in pursuit of fulfilling the developmental needs and aspirations of her people, examining her contributions locally and internationally in light of reforms, developmental strides as well as her meteoric rise to global stardom, globally positioning the land that we all love—Sierra Leone. We subsume her achievements in the Bio's Development Diary, measuring her invaluable contributions to national development in less than five years.

HANDS-OFF- OUR-GIRLS Campaign

Madam Fatima Bio's global recognition was born out of her "Hands-Off-Our-Girls" campaign, an initiative that was launched to combat the exponential rise in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, raise public awareness and eradicate the harmful practices experienced by women and girls in Sierra Leone. To guarantee its efficacy, Her Excellency succeeded in wooing support across the country by involving traditional and religious leaders.



Today, with heightened awareness, coupled with the strong legal framework to punish perpetrators, victims feel more confident than ever before to report whenever they feel abused, harassed or threatened.

In her words: “We launched the Hands-Off-Our Girls campaign to break society’s stereotypical barriers and posture especially in introducing the girl child to early marriage and pregnancy as well as branding them as objects of pleasure, raising awareness on the dangers of SGBV, developing policies to address the problems and give them a voice to speak about societal ills and empower them to contribute to nation building.”

Accordingly, the campaign has inspired girls to acquire education unhindered, thereby complementing the Free Quality Education project launched by His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio. The fact that Her Excellency has been able to galvanize support across different shades of the divide is a testament to the success of the “Hands-Off-Our-Girls” campaign.

34 Military Hospital Expansion Project



Amidst the slew of domestic achievements of Madam First Lady, the construction of a state-of-the-art medical city at the 34 Military Hospital stands tower-high. The project will house 500 beds, a pediatric centre, a nursing and midwifery school, administrative office with improved medical facilities that will increase access to education and maternal and child healthcare. After completion, the facility would tackle myriads of healthcare issues affecting Sierra Leoneans, particularly women and girls. The hospital project, being a novelty for a sitting First Lady of Sierra Leone, demonstrates President Julius Maada Bio and Madam Fatima Bio’s love, compassion and willingness to serve the people.





FREE SANITARY PAD PROJECT

In line with promoting a quality health system for women and girls, Madam Fatima Bio launched the free sanitary pad project to raze the societal stigma associated with menstruation. Research shows that annually, girls lose a considerable number of days from school during menstrual periods as opposed to their male counterparts. Her Excellency's campaign has not only accelerated the level of awareness on menstruation, but more importantly, the distribution of free sanitary pads has enabled girls to hygienically be in school even during their cycles. Since its launch in 2022, the project has benefitted thousands of school-going girls and has been applauded across the country.





A Rise to International Recognition

In November 2022, the world stood still to celebrate the achievements of Her Excellency Madam Fatima Bio, First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone—an outstanding personality who, in spite of the odds, has worked relentlessly to empower women and girls in Sierra Leone and the rest of the world. As glaring as her work beams, drafters of history would reckon that once upon a time Sierra Leone’s First Lady responded to the developmental needs of her people and left an enduring legacy etched on the anvil of this male-dominated society. In taking her women’s advocacy drive global, Madam Fatima Bio successfully championed the adoption of a special day in the United Nations calendar to recognize victims of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. Her proposal was unanimously adopted by the United Nations with support from reputable institutions, more prominently the Catholic Church; making her the first-ever

African First Lady to achieve such a great feat. To celebrate her stellar achievements, Sierra Leone’s First Lady was invited to meet with both the Pope of the Catholic Church in Rome and the Royal Family in Buckingham Palace, United Kingdom, where she shared her experience with the rest of the world.

Today, Sierra Leone is proud to have one of its esteemed daughters, Madam Fatima Bio raising the green-white-and-blue flag high on the international stage. It is also worth commending His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio for giving free will to Madam First Lady and for his strong resolve to empower women and girls in Sierra Leone.



“ Human resource development is key to Economic growth ”

H. E. FATIMA MAADA BIO
First Lady - Sierra Leone





AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS ENGAGES DIRECT AID ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF SIX TECHNICAL INSTITUTES, APPEALS FOR

In pursuance of His Excellency the President, Dr Julius Maada Bio’s address during the State Opening of Parliament on the establishment of Polytechnic Institutions fully equipped with modern tools for vocational education and training, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas, Sierra Leone’s Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, engaged Direct Aid on 22nd February 2021 at the institution’s headquarters in Hawally, Kuwait concerning the construction of six Technical/Vocational Institutes in Sierra Leone.

The areas identified by President Julius Maada Bio for the construction of the six Technical Institutes were Fabala, Kerene, Makeni, Port Loko, Mattru Jong, and Koindu.

Making her submission, Ambassador Ishata Thomas appreciated the numerous development activities Direct Aid had undertaken and completed in the country, adding that the Government of Sierra Leone was pleased with their support for national development. Using the occasion to extend Honourable Nabela Tunis’ warmest greetings, she conveyed the Foreign Minister’s excitement in the engagement of pending developments.



“I want to thank you and the rest of the team for the respect accorded to us, especially at this time when COVID-19 cases are scaling high. This demonstrates your unreserved respect for the Government and the People of Sierra Leone. In May 2020, His Excellency made a pronouncement that the Government of Kuwait will fund the construction of six Technical/Vocational Institutes, and as Sierra Leone’s Ambassador to Kuwait it is my duty to take the necessary action to ensure these projects come to fruition.

“The flagship programme of the President is to develop the country’s human capacity as education is the only sustainable development project that will stand the test of time. In this drive to capacitate the human resource, he has also considered technical and vocational capacity to enhance the skills training and entrepreneurship education of those who are unable to pursue tertiary education,” Ambassador Thomas revealed.

Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas concluded by appealing for more development assistance in charity work and other livelihood support programs, animal husbandry, training of Imams and Hajj Scholarship for Sierra Leoneans intending to perform pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Director-General of Direct Aid, Dr Abdullah Abdulrahman Al-Sumait acknowledged Direct Aid various development initiatives ranging from the promotion of education, health care, the construction of boreholes to the provision of microfinance. He affirmed further that the organization was willing to explore other areas such as

agriculture, raising the issue of arable land for the commencement of agricultural activities in Sierra Leone.

Welcoming the initiative to construct the six Technical Institutions to strengthen vocational education in Sierra Leone, Dr Abdullah Abdulrahman Al-Sumait urged the Government of the Republic Sierra Leone to earnestly provide land in the areas identified, the architectural designs, and the Bill of Quantity (BOQ) for necessary action to be taken.

“We applaud the President’s vision to build the human capacity of the country, and as development partners, we will support in any area that concerns developing the human capital. When the construction of the six Technical Institutes is completed, we request that the Government of Sierra Leone cooperate with Direct Aid to ease the burden of running cost for administration,” he concluded.



Following the request made by Dr Abdullah Abdulrahman Al-Sumait during his engagement with Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas in February 2021, Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas on **20th June 2021** submitted the Bill of Quantity (BOQ), Architectural Drawings, and copies of the site plan to Direct Aid Headquarters for the construction of the six technical/vocational institutes in Sierra Leone.

Receiving the documents, Direct Aid's Senior Consultant of Higher Education, Prof Maged Al-Sherbiny, noted that the identification of the pieces of land in the respective districts was key, adding that after completion, Direct Aid would seek the importance of securing endowment for this project to secure its sustainability in the future.

The construction of the six technical/vocational institutes was part of His Excellency, Dr Julius Maada Bio's desire to develop the country's human capital by establishing polytechnic institutions, fully equipped with modern tools for vocational education and training in various district headquarter towns.

Direct Aid Association (formerly African Muslims Agency) started its activities in 1981 as a voluntary non-governmental organization interested in developing the neediest places in Africa. Since its establishment in Sierra Leone, Direct Aid has spearheaded the construction of schools, conduction of hernia and cataract surgeries, and provision of water supply in the form of boreholes, among others.

KUWAIT, SIERRA LEONE

RATIFY EDUCATIONAL AGREEMENT

Following the signing of the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Technical Education and Professional Training in November 2019 during the working visit of Mrs. Nabeela Farida Tunis, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone, to the State of Kuwait on 16th -18th November 2019, the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Sierra Leone ratified the Educational Agreement on 27th July, 2021 for the provision of reciprocal support in the field of education.

The ratification of the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Technical Education and Professional Training would roll out and implement several educational and development programmes to be initiated by the two countries.

Her Excellency, Haja Ishata Thomas, revealed she was thrilled by the development, adding that the ratification of the agreement would provide an additional boost to His Excellency, Dr Julius Maada Bio's agenda, which was the flagship project of the New Direction Administration.

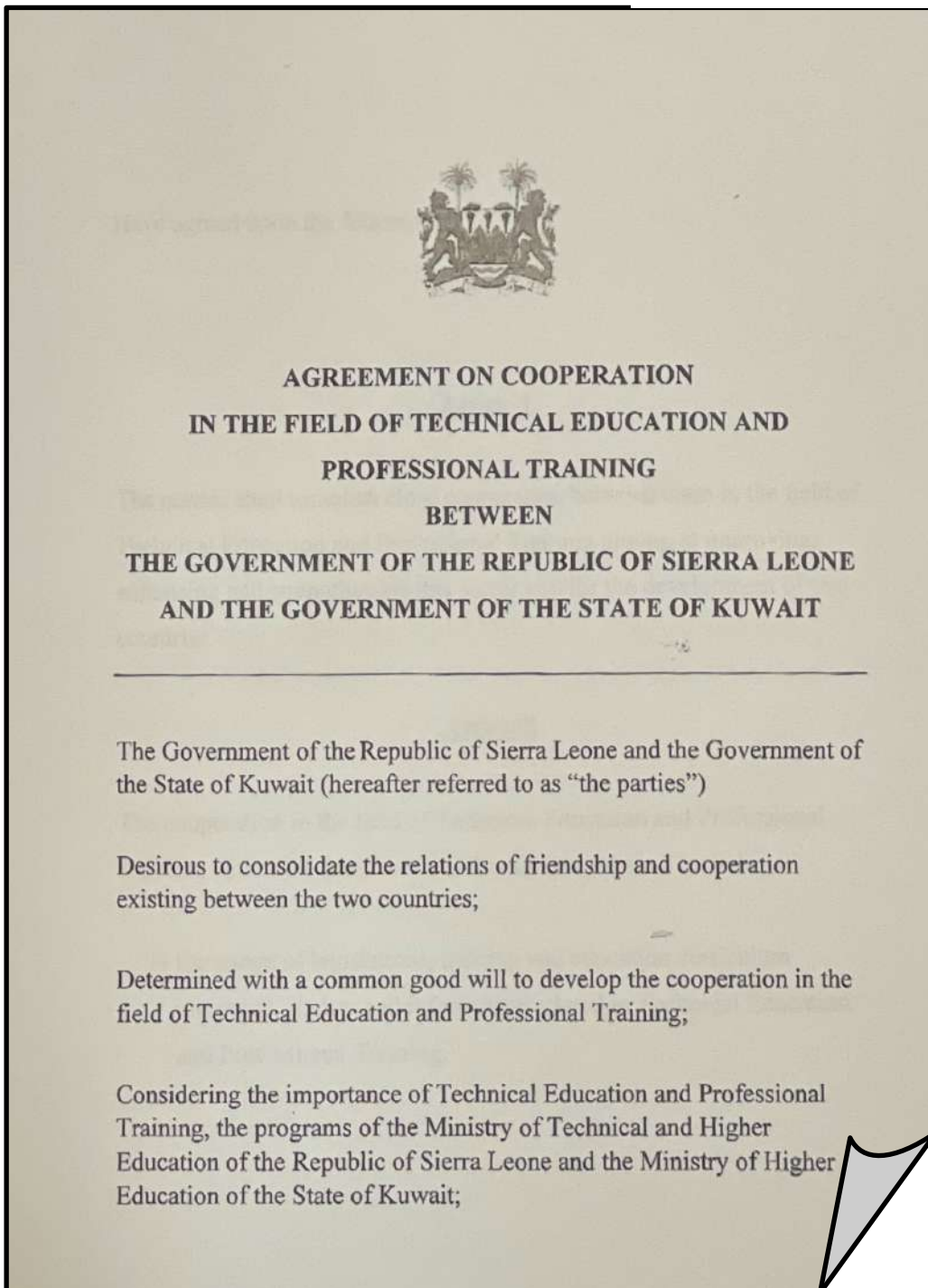
“Ratifying the Educational Agreement will legally strengthen the Embassy's drive to request for scholarship opportunities for competent Sierra Leoneans desiring to study in various fields, including Islamic Studies in the State of Kuwait. It will also initiate technical training activities for teachers whilst supporting other initiatives for Technical and Professional development,” she noted.

The Government of the State of Kuwait and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone have signed several bilateral agreements with a view to strengthening the bilateral ties. In August 2020, the Sierra Leone Embassy in

Kuwait forwarded the Agreement on Cultural and Artistic Cooperation, Agreement on the Establishment of Joint Commission for Cooperation and the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Technical Education and Professional Training between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Sierra Leone, which have been ratified by Sierra Leone's House of Parliament.

As part of implementation of the said agreement, the State of Kuwait has provided four scholarship slots for qualified Sierra Leoneans to study at the University of Kuwait in the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, College of Education, Faculty of Social Science, and Literature for 2022/23 Academic Year.

Meanwhile, the two friendly countries are working on initiating educational proposals leading to further implementation of the said agreement for the mutual benefit of the two sister countries and the peoples.



AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS DESCRIBES SIERRA LEONE AS A POTENTIAL DESTINATION FOR TOURISM AND INVESTMENT IN AFRICA



Sierra Leone is endowed with abundant natural resources ranging from beautiful landscapes, elongated beaches, spectacular islands, undulated hills and mountains and hospitable people with receptive culture. In an exclusive interview with Kuwait National Television on 25th January 2021 at the Mission's Chancery in South Surrah, Al Zahra, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas described Sierra Leone as a potential spot for tourism and investment in Africa.

Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas delved into Sierra Leone's immense touristic and investment potentials, while further probing into other key topics bordering on its rich history, agriculture, mineral and marine resources.

With a population of approximately 7 million, she revealed Sierra Leone is a very peaceful and beautiful West African country with warm, respectful, friendly and exceptionally accommodating people.

Acknowledging the progress made in transforming Sierra Leone's tourism sector, H.E Haja Ishata Thomas complimented President Bio's strides to build an economically vibrant tourism sector and also create a conducive investment environment for all investors, noting further that the transformation has been considered an economic boost to the country's economy.

"Sierra Leone is endowed with tremendous touristic potential. The country prides itself in having some of the world's most beautiful white and





golden pristine beaches stretched several kilometers along the peninsula, with beautiful hotels and resorts for perfect relaxation. The country's capital sits near the Atlantic Ocean, making the country a hub for business, as it has one of the largest natural harbours in the world.


“Sierra Leone has a vibrant tropical forest teeming with exotic wildlife and excellent climate. From the exquisite Bonthé and Banana Islands, the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, which provides a haven for Chimpanzees, the bountiful marine resources, sprawling hills and ranging Lion Mountains overlooking the city, to Bunce Island, the cradle of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, this beautiful diamond-shaped country is one of the most sight-seeing ecotourism destinations to visit,” Ambassador Thomas disclosed.

She also noted that: “Apart from the continued growth tourism has experienced, Sierra Leone is endowed with abundant natural resources, including mineral deposits like diamond, gold, bauxite, rutile, iron ore, zinc etc. The country is also blessed with arable land for agricultural activities. We produce rice, coffee, cocoa, abundant vegetable,

fruits, and rear livestock. Sierra Leone stands to be the best investment and touristic environment within the West African sub-region.”

Reflecting on Sierra Leone's rich history, she observed that a significant part of Sierra Leone's history could be ascribed to the arrival of Pedro da Cintra, a Portuguese Explorer, who arrived along the West African coast in September 1462 during the rainy season, adding that in seeing the shape of mountains like a Lion amidst the thunderstorm, he named the mountains as ‘Sierra Lyoa’ (meaning Lion Mountains in Portuguese). *“The name was later changed to Sierra Leone. After Pedro da Cintra's discovery, foreign influence in the area increased and trade commenced between the locals and Europeans in the form of a barter system.”*

As Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, she entreated Kuwaiti tourists and investors to explore Sierra Leone and grab the opportunity to invest in ecotourism, infrastructure, oil and gas, adding that Visas for tourists and investors was available on arrival.



ON SIERRA LEONE'S CULTURAL CAPABILITY, AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS ENGAGES LAPA

Following the ratification of the Cultural and Artistic Agreement between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas engaged the LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) on Sierra Leone's cultural capability and encouraged them to collaborate with the Embassy to promote African Culture in the State of Kuwait. The meeting was held at the Academy's training centre in Kuwait City on 28th January 2021.

LAPA is a specialized performing Art academy of LOYAC responsible for empowering talented youths in developing their skills and nurturing their passion through various programmes in the fields of theatre, dance and music.

In her statement, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas thanked LAPA for providing the space to discuss Sierra Leone's cultural potential. She added that it was the perfect time to discuss culture since Sierra Leone and Kuwait had already ratified the Cultural and Artistic Agreement. Ambassador Ishata Thomas noted further that ever since she assumed duty her goal had been primarily on enhancing Sierra Leone's visibility and one possible way to achieve that, she furthered, was through the promotion of culture.

“Sierra Leone has a rich cultural and historical heritage with a unique

combination of interwoven norms, beliefs and traditions from diverse ethnic groups passed from one generation to another. We are here to discuss possible ways to collaborate with LAPA to sell our country's culture and arts in the State of Kuwait. The Sierra Leone Community in Kuwait currently has a talented group of cultural professionals who are currently doing exceptionally well in the area of music, dance and performing arts,” Her Excellency stated.

Responding to the Ambassador's presentation, the Managing Director of LAPA, Madam Fareah Al Saqqaf lauded the initiative and assured the Ambassador and team of her organisation's readiness to collaborate with the Sierra Leone Embassy to promote culture in Kuwait. She acknowledged that LAPA appreciates the cultural diversity, which is reflected in its all-inclusive operations.





“LAPA is a combination of different cultures from around the world. Our collaborations have led us to create important artistic connections and productions with key advocates of the arts in their respective forms, and our cumulative efforts for the advancement of the arts and cultural scene has inspired us in creating an unparalleled footprint in Kuwait. In December each year, we organise a five-day programme known as the Festival of Arts and Dance (FAD). FAD is a combination of contemporary culture and art, which allows different countries to display their talents on arts with a key focus on dance. When we resume the festival, we will consider Sierra Leone,” she disclosed.

Nisreen Nasser, LAPA’s Head of Music while expressing that the goal of the institution was to creatively utilise art to achieve a course, affirmed they had already begun the ‘Bala’ Plastic Workshop which typically involved creating art from ocean plastic, adding that the plastic recycling project would contribute effectively to protecting the environment. She concluded by stating that LAPA would welcome any Sierra Leonean who would express interest in the Ocean Sole Workshop.

The Minister Counselor/Head of Chancery, Momodu Wurie conveyed thanks and appreciation to the leadership of LAPA for the platform given to showcase Sierra Leone’s culture in the State of Kuwait. He assured of the Mission’s readiness to collaborate with LAPA with a view to foster sound cultural cooperation. He also appealed for support in other interventions, including the provision of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable youths in deprived communities in Sierra Leone.

After the engagement, Ambassador Thomas and team visited the music and performing arts classrooms and later took a group photo with the staff of LAPA.



A DEEP DIVE IN AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS' INTERVIEW ON KUWAIT NATIONAL TELEVISION



In an exclusive interview with Kuwait National Television, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas spoke about issues, including the bilateral relations between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait and the Sierra Leone culture. During the interview, she described Sierra Leone as a potential spot for ecotourism in West Africa, urging viewers, especially tourists and investors to explore Sierra Leone and grab the opportunity to invest in ecotourism, mining and agriculture.

QUESTION 1: THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIERRA LEONE AND THE STATE OF KUWAIT

The Republic of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait have enjoyed fruitful

relations ranging from bilateral to multilateral for over 30 years now. The relationship was further strengthened and deepened when the Sierra Leone Embassy was opened in the State of Kuwait in 2009.

At the multilateral level, the two countries have supported each other at the international fora, including the United Nations and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Sierra Leone, in this regard, has been providing support for candidature requests by the Government of the State of Kuwait for positions at International Organizations. Sierra Leone was one of the African countries that sent a contingent to help in the Iraqi invasion in 1991.

The State of Kuwait, on the other hand, has been providing tremendous support in various humanitarian development projects, through the Kuwait Fund for Development. On humanitarian grounds, the State of Kuwait

supported Sierra Leone greatly during the 11-year-civil-war (1991—2002) and also provided relief assistance during Ebola (2014) and mudslide (2016).

Accordingly, the Kuwait Fund for Development has provided a loan for the construction of two water supply projects in the rural communities in Sierra Leone. Additionally, the Kuwait Fund has also provided funds to the Government of Sierra Leone for the construction of three ultra-modern tertiary hospitals in Freetown.

Furthermore, the Fund has also been spearheading the financing of two major road projects in Freetown. The Embassy is advocating and hoping for the implementation of some other iconic projects in the not-too-distant future.

QUESTION 2: SIERRA LEONE TOURISTIC PLACES

Sierra Leone, with a population of approximately 7million, is a very peaceful and beautiful country in West Africa.

The people are warm, friendly and exceptionally accommodating to strangers. The capital city sits near the Atlantic Ocean, making Sierra Leone a hub for business as it has one of the largest natural harbours in the world.

Sierra Leone is endowed with tremendous touristic potentials. We pride ourselves in some of the world's beautiful white and golden pristine beaches stretched several kilometres along the peninsula, with beautiful hotels and resorts for perfect relaxation.

Sierra Leone has a vibrant tropical forest teeming with exotic wildlife and excellent climate. From the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, which provides a safe haven for Chimpanzees, the bountiful marine resources, sprawling hills and ranging Lion Mountains overlooking the cities, to Bunce Island, the cradle of the



Trans-Atlantic Slaved, this beautiful diamond-shaped country is one of the most promising, breath-taking ecotourism spots to visit.

It is important to note also that Sierra Leone is endowed with abundant natural resources, including mineral deposits like diamond, gold, bauxite, rutile, iron ore, zinc etc. The country is also blessed with arable land for agricultural activities. We produce livestock, rice, coffee, cocoa, abundant vegetable and fruits. Sierra Leone stands to be the best investment and touristic environment with the West African sub-region.

His Excellency the President, Dr Julius Maada Bio realized the enormous benefits of tourism and has created a friendly and conducive investment environment for all investors. As the Ambassador appointed to the State of Kuwait, I invite all investors to explore Sierra Leone and grab the opportunity to invest in ecotourism, infrastructure, oil and gas, trade as you choose. Visa for Kuwait is available on arrival or just visit the Embassy for more enquiries.

QUESTION 3: SIERRA LEONE FAMOUS FOOD

The restaurant scene in Freetown offers a wide variety of international cuisine including Arabian, Lebanese, European, Korean, Japanese and Chinese. African restaurants, including Senegalese and Ghanaian, also offer a taste of the continent but for a real taste of Salone, local is the way to go. Rice is the local staple accompanied by plassas (sauce) such as cassava leaves, groundnut soup, binch (beans) or stew with chicken, beef and/or fish and served in generous portions.

Beef and chicken dishes are widely available but fish is king, especially along the coastal areas where barracuda, grouper, snapper, lobster, shrimps and other fish are widely available. Also look out for street food including sizzling goat or beef skewers, fried plantain, roast cassava tuber and coconut cakes. Buy freshly plucked juicy sun-ripened fruit, including pineapple, mango, pawpaw (papaya), banana and oranges from market women, situated outside any of the main supermarkets.

QUESTION 4: THE HISTORY OF SIERRA LEONE

Prior to the arrival of Pedro da Cintra in 1462, Sierra Leone's history can be briefly ascribed to its composition of few ethnic groups, prominent amongst these were Limba who already lived in Sierra Leone around the 8th Century and there is no clear evidence about their origin. The other ethnic groups included the Themnes, Sherbros, Yalunkas and Soso were believed to have originated from the Upper Guinea Coast, whilst the Mendes were believed to have originated from the Mande Ethnic Group from the Mali Empire led by Queen Massarico. The Creoles, a descendant from the Nova Scotia, Maroons and Recaptives.

Additionally, a significant part of Sierra Leone's history can be ascribed to the arrival of Pedro da Cintra, a Portuguese Explorer.

He arrived along the West African coast during the rainy season in September 1462. In seeing the shape of mountains like a Lion and amidst the thunderstorm he named the mountains as 'Sierra Lyoa' (meaning Lion Mountains in Portuguese) Later, the name Sierra Leone was derived from the Portuguese term Sierra Lyoa.



KUWAIT TRADE UNION ORGANISES LABOUR LAW WORKSHOPS FOR SIERRA LEONE COMMUNITY

In an effort to further empower private sector workers, the Kuwait Trade Union Federation, in collaboration with Solidarity Center, organized Labor Law (No. 6 of 2010) workshop for Sierra Leoneans working in the Private Sector in the State of Kuwait on 15th January 2021 in Hawally.

The Labor Education workshop is the 12th series conducted by the Kuwait Trade Union Federation and the Solidarity Center to empower migrant workers in the course of their duty.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General of the Kuwait Trade Federation, Mohammed Al-Arada noted that the Kuwait Trade Union Federation was very keen on labor education primarily for migrant workers to know their rights, adding that the step-by-step guide through the Kuwait Labor Law would be essential to the Sierra Leone Embassy in the State of Kuwait, the Union and Sierra Leoneans working in the Private Sector.

“The Sierra Leone Community in the State of Kuwait is considered as one of the best sets of migrant workers who have been partners in the development of the country. Today, we are discussing labor law, and it is vital that Sierra

Leonean Stakeholders have some experience through the knowledge that is being imparted, so that they can transfer the knowledge acquired to Sierra Leoneans working in the private sector, particularly in knowing their labor rights,” he said.

The Program Coordinator of Solidarity Center in Kuwait, Abdulrahman Al-Turki disclosed that the Solidarity Center in Kuwait had been closely working with the Kuwait Trade Union Federation in series of programs in ensuring that migrant workers know their rights and how to seek redress when necessary. He believed that the seminar would serve as a useful guide for the Sierra Leonean Community in the State of Kuwait.

The President of the Sierra Leone Union in the State of Kuwait, Alpha Vangahun thanked the Trade Union Federation and the Solidarity Center for organizing the seminar and more especially for recognizing his leadership and the Sierra Leone Embassy, noting further that the array of training received has been beneficial to migrant workers of the Sierra Leone Community.

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The President added that before now, many migrant workers had struggled to clamour for their rights as the Labor Law demanded, but with the knowledge acquired, he revealed, migrant workers would be in a better position to stand for their rights without recourse to violence.

Speaking during the session, the Legal Consultant of the Kuwait and Middle East Financial Investment Company, Khalid Al-Shurman said the Law of Labor in the Private Sector was one of the best laws capable of empowering migrant workers on their social, private and labour issues. Taking participants through the provisions of the law, he emphasized the need for workers to be conversant with the provisions of the said law in the performance of their duties, as the labour law would serve as a weapon for them.

“The Private Sector Labor Law of Kuwait (Law No. 6 of 2010) covers the labor rights of all private-sector workers regardless of citizenship or nationality.



In Kuwait, migrant workers are protected by the Private Sector Law, Oil Sector Law, and Civil Service Law. Kuwait Labour Law includes all essential rules and regulations that a migrant worker needs to be aware of before accepting the job contract. These include end-of-service indemnities calculation, permissible working hours, annual leave, sick leave entitlement, maternity leave etc,” he stated.

He advised Sierra Leone migrant workers to maintain their good reputation in Kuwait by improving on their professional and personal performance, refraining from illegal activities, concealing companies’ sensitive information and channeling complaints to the Sierra Leone Embassy and the Union respectively.

At the end of the session, the Kuwait Trade Union Federation presented a plaque to the Sierra Leone Embassy and the Sierra Leone Union in recognition of their participation and a shooting photo session followed.

On 18th April 2021, the Kuwait Trade Union Federation, in association with Solidarity Centre, also organised a Domestic Labour Law Seminar for Sierra Leoneans working as domestic workers in the State of Kuwait, as part of its mandate to address legal issues affecting migrant workers.

The purpose of the seminar was to provide orientation for workers against ill-treatment faced during work. The Domestic Labour Law (NO. 68, 2015) provides a remedy to the legislative gaps in connection with the regulation of domestic workers' affairs.

The Secretary-General of Kuwait Trade Union Federation, Mohamed Al-Arada revealed that the Domestic Labour Law Seminar was the 13th training programme organised to give Sierra Leoneans a better understanding of the precepts of Domestic Labour Law and how to seek redress in case of any eventuality. He assured that the Kuwait Trade Union Federation was open to addressing domestic complaints as well as providing other assistance in the future.

“More specifically, we thank the Sierra Leone Embassy in the State of Kuwait for honouring the invitation. We believe this is a demonstration of their love and service for the country and readiness to address issues affecting Sierra Leoneans who are working as domestic workers in the State of Kuwait,” he said.

Abdulrahman Al-Turki, the Program Coordinator of Solidarity Centre, extends thanks and appreciation to Kuwait Trade Union, Sierra Leone Embassy, the Union and Sierra Leonean for participating in the seminar. He emphasized that domestic workers in the State of Kuwait must know their rights in defence against injustices, adding further that the seminar would serve as a source of empowerment for them.

In his statement, the President of the Sierra Leone Union, Alpha Vangahun appreciated the Federation and Solidarity Centre for organising the seminar, which he considered as a useful guide in addressing the daily issues affecting Domestic Workers and for recognizing

Sierra Leone Union as one of the major interest groups agitating for migrant workers in the State of Kuwait.

“Sierra Leoneans, especially females, are here today to learn the various provisions of the Domestic Labour Law because it concerns them. Though it was not easy to assemble them because of work and other perturbing issues relating to documentation, we realised that this seminar is pivotal in addressing most of the problems associated with their sponsors,” he stated.

Presenting the legal basis of the Domestic Labour Law, the Legal Consultant of the Kuwait and Middle East Financial Investment Company, Khalid Al-Shurman informed Sierra Leoneans that the Domestic Labour Law was a powerful weapon with which workers must arm themselves. Disclosing the many sections protecting domestic workers, he mentioned that the problems facing domestic workers required close collaboration.

“The law is important because it grants enforceable rights to domestic workers, and these rights border on a weekly rest day, one-month paid annual leave, number of working hours (12) with an hour break, provided that continuous working hours for domestic working does not exceed five hours; and end Presenting the legal basis of the Domestic Labour Law, the Legal Consultant of the Kuwait and Middle East Financial Investment Company, Khalid Al-Shurman-





AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS DISCUSSES SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH AWQAF & ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas on 31st January 2021 engaged the Administrative Coordinator of the Ministry of Education (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs on securing Scholarship opportunities for deserving Sierra Leoneans intending to pursue tertiary education in various fields of study in the State of Kuwait.

In a meeting held in the Embassy's Conference Hall in South Surra Al-Zarrah, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas said she was pleased to have the Ministry's Administrative Coordinator at the Embassy to discuss on scholarship opportunities and other development assistance for the Republic of Sierra Leone.

She raised concern over Sierra Leone's exclusion in the basket of scholarship opportunities provided for other countries. In actualizing His Excellency President

Julius Maada Bio's Flagship programme aimed at providing free and quality education for all Sierra Leoneans,

Ambassador Thomas disclosed that Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait have ratified the Education Agreement.

"We hold this meeting to have an extensive discussion on scholarship spaces and the necessary requirements in securing those opportunities for Sierra Leoneans, who intend to further their studies in the State of Kuwait. We hope also to explore other areas that Awqaf will assist Sierra Leone in complementing its development activities," Her Excellency stated.

On the training of Imams, Her Excellency recalled that Kuwait was offering training for Imams in Kuwait, but ceased its operation during the Ebola Scourge in Sierra Leone. She asked about workable ways to revive the training of Imams.

In his response, the Administrative Coordinator of Awqaf, Mohammed Ali Abdullah assured of his institution's support in providing scholarship spaces for Sierra Leoneans to study in the State of Kuwait. He also promised to facilitate the training of Imam in Freetown when the training session commences.

“The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs provides scholarship opportunities for over 40 countries yearly; unfortunately, Sierra Leone has not been benefiting from those opportunities. With keen regard to university scholarship, I advise the Embassy to sign an agreement with the Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide a specific quota for Sierra Leone,” Mohammed Ali Abdullah remarked.

Quizzed about other possible development benefits for Sierra Leone, the Administrative Coordinator added that the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs also provides support in the construction of schools, hospitals, mosques including the promotion of Islamic science and technology, humanitarian aid after natural disasters through any charitable organization accredited by the Kuwait Foreign Ministry. He welcomed the idea of supporting Sierra Leone in other areas.





AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS ENGAGES FADHEL ASHKANANI GROUP ON RECRUITMENT OF SKILLED & UNSKILLED SIERRA LEONEANS

In an effort to curb unlawful recruitment, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas engaged Fadhel Ashkanani Group on 4th February 2021 regarding the possibility to recruit skilled and unskilled Sierra Leoneans to work in the State of Kuwait. The engagement was held at the Mission's Chancery in South Surrah, Al-Zarrah.

Fadhel Ashkanani Group is a specialised agency responsible for recruiting thousands of skilled and unskilled workers in Asia and Africa to work in Kuwait.

In her welcome statement, Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas thanked Hamad Al-Sharaf Ashkanani for the numerous supports rendered to Sierra Leoneans in Kuwait, particularly the provision of five thousand Dollars (\$5000), coupled with a covering cost of air ticket for Hawanatu Timbo, a Sierra Leonean who was *maltreated in the State of Kuwait*.

"Let me use this opportunity to inform you that the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Sierra Leone will conclude the signing and ratification of the Labour Agreement soon; the Labour Agreement will protect Sierra Leoneans from being maltreated and improve their working and living conditions. It is our hope that this will create better employment opportunities for our youths in Sierra Leone," she revealed.



Her Excellency further noted that: “Though we are seeking employment opportunities for our youths to alleviate the employment burden on the Government of Sierra Leone, we are not oblivious of the constraints faced by our nationals in the State of Kuwait, more so visa 20 holders.”

Ambassador Thomas also used this opportunity to appeal for assistance in the form of providing air tickets for two Sierra Leonean housemaids, who are currently in deportation centre awaiting repatriation to Sierra Leone.



The Minister Counsellor, Momodu Wurie, in his brief remarks, commented on the challenges that had plagued the recruitment process leading to a ban imposed on Visa 20 in 2017. He also emphasized that the Embassy would sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Fadhel Ashkanani Company to sanitize the recruiting process. This, he believed, would be in the best interest of the Embassy, its citizens and the recruiting agency.

Fadhel Ashkanani Group’s General Manager, Hamad Al-Sharaf Ashkana, in his response, appreciated the Ambassador’s warm reception. Updating the Embassy on their operations, he promised the Mission of his maximum commitment to protecting the welfare of Sierra Leoneans intending to work in the State of Kuwait by ensuring best practices are firmly upheld in the course of the recruitment process.

“There are demands for skilled and unskilled workers in Kuwait. In the past one year, Kuwait has lost approximately 250,000 workers due to COVID-19 travel restrictive measures. This is the appropriate time for skilled and unskilled Sierra Leoneans to fill in the job market, especially when the Kuwaiti Government is striving for a quota for all nationals working in Kuwait,” the General Manager noted.

Mr Ashkanani assured of his unwavering support in repatriating Sierra Leoneans home and also his dedication to strengthening the already-friendly relationship between his company and the Embassy.



A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE RECRUITMENT OF SIERRA LEONEANS TO THE STATE OF KUWAIT



The recruitment of Sierra Leoneans to the State of Kuwait still poses a huge challenge to the Embassy as it is marred with myriads of controversies, ranging from shady deals to exorbitant financial requests. Since Article 20 (domestic Labour visa) was banned in July 2017, recruiting agencies adopted new strategies to recruit Sierra Leoneans to work in the State of Kuwait and the Gulf Region.

These new strategies involved moving potential recruit to other neighboring countries, such as Guinea and Liberia, and in most cases as revealed by some victims through Ghana, Guinea Bissau, and non-West African Countries to obtain their passports. These activities, coupled with non-effective strategies to hold recruiting agencies responsible, have led to the continuation of the recruitment process unabated.

With the ban on Visa 20 for Domestic Labour, recruiting agents/agencies are now engaged in soliciting a huge sum of money from individuals in return for helping them secure Visa 18 with a promise of high-end jobs in the State of Kuwait. This is false in most cases as individuals, especially women end up doing poorly paid jobs, working in the houses of Kuwaitis as Khadama (Servant).

Against this background, it is worth noting that individuals seeking overseas employment in the State of Kuwait do not require to pay any fees to agents because the parent companies in Kuwait are responsible for their air tickets and other charges involved in the recruitment

process. Visa 18 is usually issued to individuals seeking a skilled and unskilled job in Kuwait

other than a domestic labour job. Sadly, this has been misused by recruiting agencies subjugating recruits to low-level jobs with poorly paid salaries.

In lieu of the above, the Mission has embarked on action-oriented strategies to tackle the slew of anomalies in the recruitment process. These moves, geared towards sanitising the process, aim to address issues of trafficking, forced labour and other challenges related to international migration, thereby ensuring that agencies act within the remits of the laws of the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Sierra Leone.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

- ♦ Tentatively, the Embassy has put together Recruitment Guidelines for all Sierra Leone recruiting agents resident in the State of Kuwait, soliciting a copy of their documents and Civil IDs for documentation purposes. This registration will make it easier for the Embassy to hold agents accountable for defaulting on any assigned recruitment process.
- ♦ The Embassy is currently engaging companies employing Sierra Leoneans. The thrust of the ongoing engagement is to address welfare-related complaints and inform companies to channel all recruitment needs of Sierra Leoneans through the Embassy. The latter will then supervise the selected agents to execute the employment process under a guided process with due diligence. By this, the Mission will curtail the rampant and unregulated ways of recruiting Sierra Leonean for Overseas employment in Kuwait.

BIO'S DEVELOPMENT DIARY

Freetown International Airport Project: Changing the Face of Sierra Leone, Improving Transportation Network, Boosting Tourism, and Creating Jobs for Youths

By: Mohamed L. Massaquoi and Cyril Barnes

The development of international airports equipped with advanced technologies to attract and accommodate huge passenger volume, the world over, is becoming a norm, to a large extent that there is a widely held belief among aviation and tourism experts that a modern airport embodies a country's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) given that it is always the first point of entry for visitors, especially first-time travelers. This, in itself, gravitates a positive reputation for a country.

President Julius Maada Bio's New Direction administration has been keen on changing the landscape of the once war-torn country characterized by Ebola, mudslide, and corruption into a global champion in education, women and girls' empowerment and the fight against graft. With huge investments in these sectors over the last four years, Sierra Leone has gained its rightful place in the global development arena, standing tall among other respected nations. Through these efforts, the government has secured an appreciable number of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) for the country, notwithstanding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

One such laudable foreign investment is the ongoing Freetown International Airport project pioneered by the Government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with Summa Group of Companies, a reputable group from Turkey. Before assuming office, His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio made a manifesto commitment to diversify the economy, focusing on a more sustainable means—tourism while reducing the heavy reliance on the mining sector. To achieve this feat, President Bio initiated plans to develop the aviation sector, which serves as the key enabler of tourism. During the State Opening of the fifth Parliament in May 2018, his



His Excellency Rtd. Brd.

JULIUS MAADA BIO

speech accelerated the commitment to building a safe, secure, competitive, and environmentally friendly Aviation System in Sierra Leone.

Unlike the previous administration's earlier proposal relative to the construction of the debt-ridden Mamamah airport that would have plunged the country into another colossal debt burden, the SLPP-led Government has ensured that the ongoing project is constructed on Build Operate and Transfer (BOT), bearing no cost on the government.

Dubbed Sierra Leone's biggest-ever infrastructural initiative without a doubt, the project espouses the construction of a new terminal, an international airport hotel and new sea transportation services.



NEW AIRPORT TERMINAL

The project offers Sierra Leone a brand-new airport terminal believed to accommodate an estimation of one million passengers per annum, thereby positioning Sierra Leone as an aviation hub in West Africa. The new terminal development presupposes that renowned global carriers will now consider Sierra Leone as an emerging destination with improved safety and security ratings in compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and procedures. The facility will include also an ambulift, a medical technology used to ease the movement of physically-challenged and aged passengers. More importantly, it is worth noting that this new development will navigate Sierra Leone to better opportunities: increasing air traffic volume with more airlines and passengers frequenting the route, opening the Africa-South America route for

trade and investment opportunities and fostering international competitiveness, which will serve as a catalyst for the reduction of ticket prices.

NEW AIRPORT HOTEL AND SEA TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

Another key component of this project is the construction of five-star international airport hotels and convention centres. The hotels will accommodate crew members in the country while awaiting their next flights. It will also serve as a boost to Sierra Leone's tourism architecture, whereas the convention centres will be utilized to host international conferences/seminars within the Mano River Union. Furthermore, the new sea transportation system will add to the already-functioning collection to ameliorate the burden on passengers

travelling from Lungi to Freetown. Students, workers, and market women plying the route daily also stand to benefit greatly from this new service.

JOB CREATION

The project is currently providing direct employment to hundreds of Sierra Leonean nationals, both as skilled and unskilled workers, narrowing the youth unemployment margin as well as serving as a source of livelihood for many homes. In essence, the project is helping more families provide food and attend to other basic needs. This is what the New Direction is about – rebranding Sierra Leone, creating opportunities for all and incorporating youths in the development process. Thank you, President Bio - our Visionary Leader!

PICTORIALS



CHALLENGES FACED BY THE EMBASSY ON ISSUES AFFECTING SIERRA LEONEAN HOUSEMAIDS IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT



The issues surrounding Sierra Leonean Housemaids in the State of Kuwait are still an uphill climb for the Mission. After the Visa 20 ban was instituted and enforced in 2017, the Mission was not positioned to be at the helm of recruiting Sierra Leoneans to the State of Kuwait. Most disturbing is the fact that neither the Embassy was abreast with Sierra Leoneans coming into Kuwait for work or any other purpose nor was there a database that captured the total number of Sierra Leoneans living in the State of Kuwait.

With respect to the recruiting process, recruiters mostly recruit the wrong type of person for the job, deploying deceptive tactics to convince susceptible individuals with attractive salaries and better conditions of service. This type of backdoor recruitment has resulted in the outcry of victims in Kuwait, who later find themselves doing jobs contrary to what they bargained for, leading to an astronomical rate of absconded cases.

Unfortunately, when these individuals abscond, they fail to report to the Embassy their whereabouts and reasons for absconding. They are then sheltered by some underground local and foreign agents, who lure them out of their sponsors' homes to convince susceptible individuals with attractive salaries and better conditions of service. This type of backdoor recruitment has resulted in the outcry of victims in Kuwait, who later find themselves doing jobs contrary to what they bargained for, leading to an astronomical rate of absconded cases.

Unfortunately, when these individuals abscond, they fail to report to the Embassy their whereabouts and reasons for absconding. They are then sheltered by some underground local and foreign agents, who lure them out of their sponsors' homes to later cash them in as

maids to their clients. This act is referred to as "Mock-Out"—a slang mostly used by the Sierra Leonean Community in Kuwait. Given this, the Embassy only get to know about them when they are caught by the police or voluntarily want to go back home. In this regard, the Mission would prepare their Emergency Travel Certificates (ETCs) for departure to Sierra Leone.

In light of the foregoing, the Mission is severely constrained in properly addressing the challenges faced in the domestic labour aspect; this is mainly due to the uncompleted Labor Agreement between the two countries.

The total number of Sierra Leoneans living in Kuwait is approximately 1,240, of which 670 have cases with state authorities, ranging from absconding, expired Visa, theft to drugs peddling.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

♦The Mission, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait and the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), has finalized the Labor Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the State of Kuwait, which the Minister of Labour and Social Security will sign during his working visit to the State of Kuwait. This agreement will lay the basis for an efficient recruitment process that will also empower the Embassy in monitoring the conditions of Sierra Leoneans in companies and advocate for more recruitment opportunities.

The Mission is currently developing a database of all Sierra Leoneans in the State of Kuwait. This will further strengthen the

Mission's drive to identify and track all defaulting individuals and their respective individual firms.

◆The Embassy will continue to communicate awareness-raising messages to the Sierra Leone community in Kuwait to be law abiding and work within the confines of their labor contracts.

◆The Mission also intends to engage both the print and the electronic media houses in Sierra Leone to help educate citizens wanting to embark on the perilous journey to Kuwait using back door means and inappropriate channels. The message will capture the real-life experiences of Sierra Leoneans that are now being deported to Sierra Leone.



In commemoration of the country's Independence Day marking Diamond Jubilee, the Sierra Leone Embassy in the State of Kuwait on 27th April 2021 distributed food items to Sierra Leoneans in various Communities in Kuwait. The food distribution exercise targeted Mahboula, Jleeb, Farwaniya, Hasawi, Khaitan and Hawalli communities, with representatives receiving food packages on behalf of their respective Communities.

Addressing the recipients on behalf of the Ambassador, the Minister Counsellor, Momodu Wurie revealed that it is the Ambassador's desire to avail this gesture to the Sierra Leone Community in the State of Kuwait as they celebrate the country's 60th Independence Anniversary.

He appealed to the respective community representatives to share the packages unevenly, especially those in desperate need.

“Our Independence Anniversaries are usually celebrated uniquely, and as important as this Diamond Jubilee, the Embassy would have initiated a cultural ceremony in commemorating this day. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented that from happening,” he noted.

He ended by encouraging all Sierra Leoneans to be law-abiding when carrying out their duties in Kuwait, urging them to pray for the nation's leaders, peace and development.

Receiving the food items, the Sierra Leone Union Secretary-General, Roland Bangura, extended his appreciation to the President, His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio, Ambassador and Staff of the Embassy for the astounding gesture, stating it is a demonstration of the government's commitment to providing for its citizens in the State of Kuwait.

Amongst the items distributed were bags of rice, gallons of oil, packets of sugar, salt and milk, crates of juice, cartoons of sardine and tomatoes, and other assorted provisions. On 27th April 2022 marking the occasion of Sierra Leone's 61st Independence Day Anniversary, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas, also distributed Independence and Iftar food packages to unemployed Sierra Leoneans residing in various communities, including Hasawi, Jleeb, Salmiya and Mahboula in the State of Kuwait.

Speaking during the brief ceremony, the Minister Counsellor and Head of Chancery, Momodu Wurie, noted that since the arrival of Her Excellency the Ambassador a lot of significant progress has been made, ranging from pursuing development activities for Sierra Leone, intervening in disputes and employment issues involving Sierra Leoneans to providing food supplies to those who were laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Minister Counsellor also acknowledged that even in Her Excellency's absence, she encouraged the Embassy to distribute foodstuff to its nationals during last year's Diamond Jubilee, which he described as a commitment to her nationals in Kuwait.

In her remarks, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas welcomed representatives of the various communities and used the occasion to congratulate.

His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio and the people of Sierra Leone, especially those living in the State of Kuwait, on the 61st Independence Anniversary, extending appreciation to God Almighty for the major development strides the country has achieved, despite the challenges experienced over the years.

She expressed elation at the level of comportsment displayed by Sierra Leoneans in Kuwait, particularly in the recent union election, which she observed was not the case when she first arrived in 2018.

She encouraged them to work in the interest of Sierra Leone while abiding by the laws of Kuwait, stressing that every Sierra Leonean residing in the State of Kuwait was an ambassador in his or her own right.

Handing over the items to the President-Elect of the Sierra Leone Union in Kuwait, she informed the representatives that this year's Independence Day coincided with the Holy Month of Ramadan; therefore, Muslims should use their supply for Iftar.

Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas further admonished the president and community coordinators to target those in dire need.

Receiving the items on behalf of the community, the President-Elect of the Sierra Leone Union in Kuwait, Brima Kebbie Kamaara, extended heartfelt appreciation to Her Excellency the Ambassador and the entire staff of the Embassy for the timely intervention. He also applauded the effort of Her Excellency to address the numerous challenges that were encountered by Sierra Leoneans and prayed for continued unity and progress amongst community members. He promised to distribute the foodstuff to the needy Sierra Leoneans.

Concluding the ceremony, Ambassador Ishata Thomas, together with the staff of the Embassy of Sierra Leone in Kuwait and the Representative of the Union, cut the cake donated by Safir Fintas Hotel as a special gift to commemorate the 61st Independence Anniversary.

Amongst the items distributed were bags of rice and milk, gallons of oil, packets of sugar, crates of juice, cartoons of sardine and tomatoes, and other assorted provisions.



Bio's Development Diary

Providing Access to Electricity, Expanding Rural and Urban Electrification: The New Direction Approach to Energy Sustainability

By: Mohamed L. Massaquoi and Cyril Barnes

Providing Access to Electricity, Expanding Rural and Urban Electrification: The New Direction Approach to Energy Sustainability

Before His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio assumed office in 2018, access to electricity was a huge challenge in various districts in the country with little improvement in rural electrification. With over a whopping \$400 million spent between 2007 and 2018, erratic and epileptic electricity distribution dwarfed the Koroma administration from achieving its energy objective, as the 120 megawatts provided in 10 years fell far below the intended target of 1,000MW promised in the Agenda for Prosperity.

permit the continuous realization of the developmental goals of industry and the general population with specific actions to restore electricity supply to all district capitals; initiate a rural electrification programme that will supply electricity to all towns with a population exceeding 20,000, connect at least five villages and two towns in each district join the national grid or off-grid solar schemes”.



Realising the deficiency in electricity distribution and laying a firm foundation for sustainable energy, the objective of the New Direction is to “**provide sufficient energy to all regions of the country to**

Access to reliable and sustainable energy, a Sustainable Development Goal, stimulates economic development and propels the livelihood transformation of people. The ongoing electricity commissioning reveals His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio's desire to

tackle the colonial-old energy challenges by expanding urban and rural electrification in Sierra Leone.

A critical assessment of the ongoing electricity expansion unravels improved access to electricity in major cities and district headquarter-towns through the CLSG and solar mini-grid projects. Today, cities, towns, and villages once in perpetual darkness currently enjoy uninterrupted electricity.

Undoubtedly, this is the biggest energy expansion the country has ever seen since independence. The Government's effort to increase energy accessibility is visible nationwide. The unprecedented success in the energy sector is having a direct multiplier effect on several other sectors, which we will put into context in the ensuing paragraphs.

Improving Education

Perhaps the biggest beneficiaries of the improved energy access nationwide are pupils and students. Unlike previous years when students relied on locally prepared lamps (fehfeh lamp), which had long-term effects on the eyes, the new energy revolution will ameliorate the suffering of students and increase their study time, especially at night.

The joyous mood and expression of excitement among students, who, for hours, lined up in long queues waiting to greet and appreciate His Excellency the President on the occasion of the commissioning of the CLSG in Kono, is indicative that the project brings a sigh of relief. For a district like Kono with one of the worst public examination records in recent years, this new development will certainly serve as a game-changer, providing pupils and students with the extra zeal and motivation to spend more time on their schoolwork, particularly at dusk.

“This is a major milestone for our district. We were regarded as one of the darkest cities in the country but not anymore. We are excited that we have been taken off from the years of blackout and having to go to bed after 7pm. With the provision of uninterrupted electricity, we can now focus on our studies, spend time on our assignments and improve our performance in external exams,” noted Fengai Morsay, a high school pupil wrapped with big smiles all over his face after the commissioning in Kono.



Boost for Local Entrepreneurs

Small-scale businesses are an important component of any state. In fact, they are described as the ‘engine’ of any economy considering their immense contribution to the economic growth and development of local communities. President Bio’s government has made frantic efforts to create a favourable environment for small-scale businesses to thrive, thereby

providing jobs for locals and boosting the economy. In addition to the provision of direct cash support to small-scale entrepreneurs by the Government; the energy expansion in rural areas will reduce the perennial burden of relying on daily fuel purchases, preserve perishable local produce and products, increase produce market value and, of course, bolster growth.

Big mining companies and factories also sit among the beneficiaries of the energy expansion. For instance, a company that hitherto spends thousands of Dollars daily on fuel and other lubricants can now have access to cheap, sustainable and environmentally friendly electricity. The huge savings eventually can be used

to create more jobs, improve the conditions of personnel, and support social services at the community level.

While the importance of energy expansion in Sierra Leone cannot be overemphasised, development partners are delighted with the tremendous transformation, thus committed to supporting His Excellency the President in his ongoing campaign to provide access to sustainable energy through the Millennium Challenge Cooperation's Electricity Sector Reform Project (ESPR).



FACTS

ABOUT ELECTRICITY EXPANSION IN SIERRA LEONE

1. DID YOU KNOW THAT HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO HAS PROVIDED ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR OVER 35 TOWNS AND VILLAGES DURING HIS FIRST FIVE YEARS IN OFFICE THROUGH THE URBAN AND RURAL ELECTRIFICATION DRIVE?

Below are the Cities, towns and villages:

CITIES

1. FREETOWN

2. BO

3. KENEMA

4. KONO

TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Madina Tonko Limba
Rokupr
Mambolo
Mange
Foredugu
Masiaka
Moyamba Junction
Lokomasama
Mogbemo
Moriba Town
Tikonko

Koribondo
Sumbuya
Jimmy Bagbor
Baomahun
San Malen
Boajibu
Gorahun Tunkia
Gegbwema Tunkia
Baoma Koya
Mobai
Jojoima
Pedembu

Monowa
Bunumbu
Koindu
Buedu
Nyadehun
Mambabu
Mendekema
Solima
Bumpeh
Mano Dasse
Tihun
Bathurst

2. DID YOU ALSO KNOW THAT CONSTRUCTIONS ARE UNDERWAY TO PROVIDE CLEAN ENERGY TO THE FOLLOWING TOWNS AND VILLAGES THROUGH SOLAR MINI-GRID PROJECTS:

No.	Town/Village
1.	Daru
2.	Gbondapie
3.	Tormabum
4.	Taiama
5.	Rutifunk
6.	Sambaia Bendugu
7.	Gbendebu

No.	Town/Village
8.	Bindi
9.	Falaba
10.	Kondemba
11.	Dogoliya
12.	Mongo
13.	Alikalia
14.	Mathor

No.	Town/Village
15.	Seria
16.	Grima
17.	Niagolihun
18.	Serabu
19.	Upper Siam
20.	Lower Siam
21.	Kpetewo



AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS DONATES ASSORTED ITEMS TO ABERDEEN FIRE VICTIMS

In a bid to empathise with affected victims of her community, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas on 21st December 2022 donated assorted items ranging from food, building materials, to clothes and shoes totaling Le30 million 9 (Old Leone) to victims of the November 17th fire disaster in the Moscow Community, Aberdeen, Freetown.

In his opening statement, Councillor Karim Bangura noted that even before her appointment, Ambassador Thomas had always been in close contact with her people, and as such, had made meaningful contributions at appropriate times.

He observed further that through her initiative, the community was blessed with the Murray Town Army Junior and Senior Secondary School, which he added, had been creating a positive impact on the lives of residents of the community. He further reiterated that frantic efforts were being made to provide the community with boreholes to ameliorate the water challenge within the community.

Presenting the items, Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas, who is a resident of the Aberdeen community, thanked His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio for giving her the opportunity to serve her community. She emphasized that it was her duty to replicate the good works of the President who was always ready to come to the aid of his people whenever the need arises. She expressed deep sorrow for the unfortunate situation and thought how significant it was to empathize with those gravely affected by the incident.



For his part, the Honorable Member of Parliament for Constituency 131, Hon. Mohamed Sheriff Rahman Coker, thanked the Ambassador for her timely intervention, alluding that the SLPP has always come to the assistance of disaster victims within the Aberdeen Community, even during opposition.

She admonished the parents/guardians within the community to support and encourage their children, especially the girl-child to remain focused on their education, taking advantage of the Free and Quality Education initiated by His Excellency the President, Dr. Julius Maada Bio.

The humanistic aspect of the party, he re-echoed, cannot be overemphasized, as it moves along with the party's slogan of "One Country and One People". He, therefore, asked all present to give their necessary support to ensure that the party is sustained in governance for the good of Mama Salone.



Appreciating the good initiative of Ambassador Thomas, Mrs. Patricia Will, who spoke on behalf of all affected persons, expressed optimism in the presence of the Ambassador and others to share in their predicament. She thanked God for keeping them alive, despite the huge losses incurred as a result of the November 17 inferno. She concluded by thanking the government of President Bio for appointing one of their own as Ambassador and for the good work she has been doing in the Aberdeen Community.



The program was climaxed with an admonition from the youth chairman for an equitable distribution of the items presented among all affected persons.

Amongst the items donated were 40 bags of cement, 20 bags of rice (25kg), 11 bundles of zinc, 30 bundles of pure water, 11 cartoons of clothes and shoes (new) and 1 suitcase of fairly used clothes.



AMBASSADOR THOMAS DONATES LE10 MILLION WORTH OF ITEMS TO MURRAY TOWN ARMY SCHOOL



Ambassador Ishata Thomas addressing Murray town school during the donation

In complementing His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio's Free Quality Education programme, Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas on 18th January 2022 donated 22 bags of rice (25kg) and a token of six million Leones totaling ten million Leones (Old Leones) to teachers of the Murray Town Army Primary and Secondary School in Freetown.

The Sierra Leone Ambassador to the State of Kuwait donated 15 bags of rice and a sum of three million Leones to the Murray Town Army Secondary School teachers: 5 bags of rice and two million Old Leones to the Primary School and 2 bags of rice and one million Leones to the school's Home Economics Centre.

Making a statement on behalf of the Board, the Chairman Board of Governors, Mr. Sylvester Meheux revealed it was a glorious day to have received the Ambassador, who was the pioneer principal of the school. Expressing sincere thanks and appreciation, he added that her donation was an indication of the teachers' commitment to the development of the education sector in Sierra Leone.

Thrilled by the warm reception, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas disclosed it was an honour to give back to the school she headed for 15 years before switching career to diplomacy. Recalling her time as the pioneer principal of the Secondary, she explained her ordeal to construct more classrooms to provide access to quality education.

"I am here to make a modest contribution to the teachers at this school as a show of gratitude for their unwavering support to the Free Quality Education programme. This gesture complements the President's vision for teachers, as the first time in the history of Sierra Leone, a sitting president publicly recognized teachers by awarding them for their good work," she stated.

She encouraged the pupils to make good use of the Free Quality Education programme and called on the government to provide more classrooms to accommodate the growing number of pupils.



Mr. Sylvester Meheux Making a statement



Speaking on behalf of the teachers, Mrs. Fanta Konteh noted that it was the first time in the history of the school that teachers had received a donation. She extended appreciation to the Ambassador, praying for her vision and continued progress.

Similar gesture was extended to the best Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) pupils of the Murray Town Army Secondary School for 2021, assuring them of more support in the ensuing years.

In other development, Ambassador Thomas also donated 10 bags of rice and a sum of two million five hundred thousand Leone to teachers at the Aberdeen Municipal Junior Secondary School as a symbol of gratitude. She pledged to support the development of the school.



AMBASSADOR THOMAS HANDS PLOTS OF LAND TO CONSTRUCT MASJID IN KANINGO COMMUNITY

In fulfillment of her commitment to Allah and by extension the community, Her Excellency, Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait on 24th January 2021 continued her goodwill gesture to the Muslim Community in Kaningo, Juba, where she presented two plots of land (two town lots) to the Jamaat for the construction of a masjid.

In her presentation, the Ambassador stressed the need for community worship and thanked members of the Muslim Jamaat for keeping the country in their prayers. She reaffirmed that most problems being faced in the world today require divine intervention.

Noting the significant role of religion in governance, she expressed profound gratitude to His Excellency the President Dr Julius Maada Bio for his choice of a running mate in the 2018 presidential polls, who happens to be a part of the Muslim Community. *“The religious harmony experienced in Sierra Leone is an enviable one across the world,”* Ambassador said.



The Chief Imam of the community thanked the Ambassador for her kind and thoughtful gesture and prayed that Almighty Allah continues to sustain and

bless her in her mission abroad as she serves her motherland. He further expressed gratitude to God, extending appreciation to President Julius Maada Bio for appointing Amb. Ishata Thomas as part of his nation-building team.

While appreciating the Ambassador, Imam revealed that the community was in dire need of a place to worship, adding that the Jamaat would explore the available opportunities for the construction of the masjid.



AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS WITH MUSLIM STAKEHOLDERS AT KANINGO COMMUNITY

Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas had made several donations since December 2021. She donated assorted items worth Le30 million (Old Leones) to fire victims at the Moscow Community in the Aberdeen Creek; she also donated Le15 million worth of rice plus cash to the teachers at the Murray Town Army School and the Aberdeen Municipal Junior Secondary School and commissioned bore holes in Foredugu, Koinadugu District to provide water to residents of the community.



AMBASSADOR ISHATA THOMAS ENGAGES SLPP STAKEHOLDERS

Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas, engaged the Sierra Leone's People's Party (SLPP) stakeholders of Constituency 131 in Aberdeen on 17th September 2022 and donated NL10,000 (Le10,000,000) in a bid to support the ongoing voter registration process to re-election His Excellency the President, Dr. Julius Maada Bio.

During the meeting, Ambassador Thomas lauded their effort in sensitizing communities within the Aberdeen community, describing the ongoing campaign as a step in the right direction. Speaking on the support of the Aberdeen community in the 2018 general elections, she reckoned that Aberdeen was the only Constituency in Freetown to elect both an SLPP Member of Parliament and Councillor.

“Registration is integral to guaranteeing eligibility to vote in the 2023 general elections. To ensure His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio’s re-election, we must heighten voter registration sensitization. The President’s developmental strides have been remarkable, especially in the education, health, infrastructure, Agriculture, and energy sectors. As a constituency, our primary focus is to re-elect President Bio and retain the Parliamentary and Councillor seats,” Ambassador stated.

While admonishing the stakeholders to continue the robust mobilization, she assured them of her continued support to the constituency regarding the ongoing registration process.

Receiving the donation on behalf of the constituency, the Member of Parliament for Constituency 131, Hon. Mohamed Sheriff Rahman Coker, thanked the Ambassador for her timely intervention, revealing that as a mother figure, she did not only offer inspiring words to propel their commitment but also provided them with the sum of Le10,000 to aid the ongoing process.

The Councillor, together with the Constituency Chairman, joined the Honorable Member of Parliament in appreciating the Ambassador, stating that the donation was one of many good deeds she had done, even before her appointment. They concluded by reechoing the Constituency’s readiness to pursue His Excellency the President’s vision and aspiration.

Ambassador Haja Ishata Thomas made a similar gesture to various communities in her hometown, Kabala.

Present at the meeting were the Honourable Member of Parliament, Councillor, Constituency Chairman and Chairlady of the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) and other prominent community stakeholders.



EMBASSY OF SIERRA LEONE IN KUWAIT

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