

Kindernetzwerk Sierra Leone e.V. (KNSL)

– Learning as we Walk –

**A Presentation in the Lecture Series on Development Policy at
the Technical University Berlin
Tuesday 13 February 2024**

**By Edward Mando, KNSL Programme Coordinator
and Brigitte Steinmetz, KNSL Secretary**

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About KNSL and its Approach – Introductory Remarks

Original Goal: Education Support

Kindernetzwerk Sierra Leone e.V. (registered association) was founded by Edward Mando, Brigitte Steinmetz, Bertolt Stein and a few friends and family in 2003, following a visit to the country half a year after the end of the civil war. It was originally intended to enable children from very poor families in post-war Sierra Leone to attend school and thus give them access to future opportunities in life.

However: Many political and socio-economic challenges

However, it soon became clear that many other basic conditions were still not being met in that society which was arising from an 11-year brutal civil war (1991 – 2002). Above all, the political situation and the broader economic and social conditions in Sierra Leone by the time we started our intervention there were very fragile because the problems or the causes that underpinned the civil war were not being holistically addressed.

Basic essentials of life are still lacking

Many basic essentials of life, such as access to safe drinking water, nutritious food, energy, sanitation and hygiene, and living in peaceful coexistence with neighbours were severely lacking. Thousands of demobilised ex-combatants and youth (i.e. unmarried young men up to the age of 35) across villages and towns were unemployed and felt disaffected. And, the highly anticipated post-war resettlement, reintegration and rehabilitation package for returning citizens and refugees were not sufficient.

About KNSL and its Approach – Introductory Remarks

Our Response to the political and socio-economic challenges

Peacebuilding and Education and Training Infrastructure

In view of that situation, we initiated additional socio-economic activities such as a broad-based peacebuilding and conflict transformation project, given that half the population was under 15 years and had no active memory of resolving conflicts by peaceful means rather than by the use of a machete or a kalashnikov; in addition, we also undertook infrastructure projects such as the construction of a primary school with kindergarten, construction of a community library; and establishment of a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

We have also been following the WASH-Programme (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) providing water and sanitation facilities: drilling water wells, building community latrines and promoting awareness programmes to empower communities to better mitigate the spread of killer diseases such as malaria and typhoid, Ebola, COVID-19, etc.

Combatting Hunger

We have been facilitating agricultural and livelihood projects to help combat hunger and create employment opportunities for the youth and women to live and work within their communities and not risk migrating. These projects are generously supported by the Federal German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and they are being implemented on the ground in Sierra Leone through our partner organization, Pujehun Youths for Development (PYD).

About KNSL and its Approach – Introductory Remarks

The TVET College rounds off our engagement in the education sector

The TVET College that we recently built in Pujehun Town enables young people from that District to learn relevant vocational skills and practice them also for the benefit of the District's residents. We train them for jobs or self-employment in crafts for which there is a demand in the District. This will allow them to earn a decent living in their home District instead of migrating to urban areas and risking hazards or death in trying to cross the Sahara and the Mediterranean to come to Europe.

The skills being taught at the TVET College include automotive and agricultural mechanics, food & nutritional sciences and catering, electrical, electronic and photovoltaic installation, welding & metalwork; woodcrafts and masonry, secretarial services, business & financial management and digital marketing.

About KNSL and its Approach – Introductory Remarks

Our philosophy: Empower people to help themselves

To sum up the philosophy behind our engagement:

We do not see ourselves and our organisation as a charity giver to the poor in Sierra Leone. Instead, we aspire to contribute to a longer-term sustainable development in that country by empowering people to take responsibility for their own lives and the development of their communities.

Kindernetzwerk Sierra Leone e.V. - Learning as we Walk

KNSL – how it started and evolved

- Founding Objective:
 - Enabling the most needy children in post-war Sierra Leone to attend school and thus give them access to future opportunities in life through awarding scholarships and providing School support
- Challenges threatening the success of our education support:
 - Risk of relapse of war because the post-war integration process wasn't working well
 - Child soldiers were not aware of peaceful ways of conflict resolution
 - Food insecurity - threat of hunger and malnutrition
 - Very poor Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) services
 - Lack of basic skills and craftsmanship
 - Basic community livelihood infrastructure ruined during the war was not rebuilt

Work of KNSL

- KNSL is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-political organization based in Berlin
- Since 2003, KNSL has been dedicated to supporting the development of socio-economic structures in Sierra Leone (West Africa) through social development projects / programmes
- On the ground in Sierra Leone, KNSL works with a reliable local partner, Pujehun Youths for Development (PYD)
- PYD ensures that the aid money and material resources we remit and/or ship to Sierra Leone are safely and correctly used for the intended purposes and properly accounted for
- Here in Germany, on the one hand we raise funds and material resources for our activities in Sierra Leone, and on the other hand, through lectures, presentations, our website and recently also social media we inform the public on the development needs and aspirations (positive image of hope) in Sierra Leone.

Location of our Projects / Programmes: Pujehun District and Neighbouring Districts Bo, Bonthe and Kenema in Southern Sierra Leone



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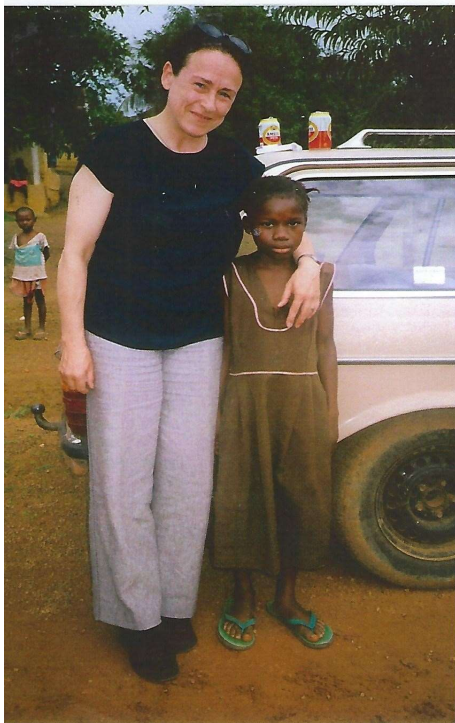
Education Support: Enabling children from poor homes to attend school

- Our engagement in Sierra Leone reflects the fact that most children there have hardly any chance of quality education, which is taken for granted here in Germany
- We concentrate on Pujehun District in the south of Sierra Leone where I come from. The District suffered seriously from the consequences of the civil war from 1991 to 2002
- We began in the 2002/2003 School Year (as a pilot phase) with 6 needy children aged 6 to 10
- In 2003/2004 School Year we sponsored 15 children, and in 2004/2005 it was already 22 children aged 6 to 14
- Since 2007 we have been sponsoring 35 children. 4 of them (all young women) are now studying at University or doing TechVoc training

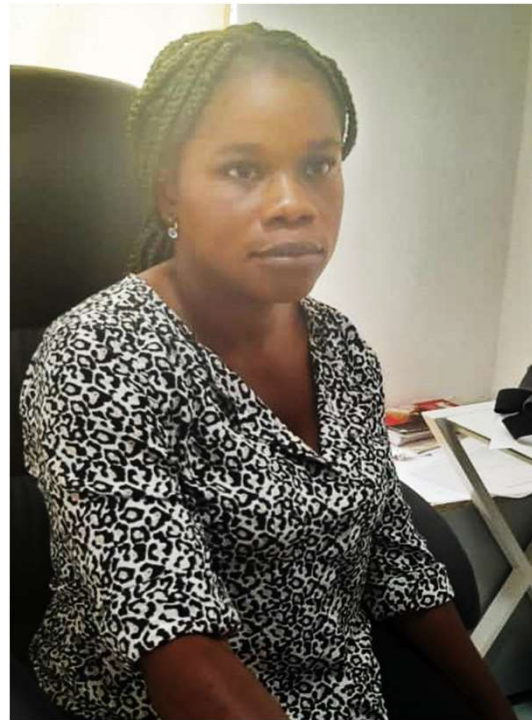
KNSL Scholarship & Sponsorship Programme

- Gives needy children a subsidy towards the cost of school clothes, shoes, exercise books, pens, etc.
- Currently sponsors 35 pupils, including 4 young women studying at the university

Here are a few success stories:



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Left: One of the founders of KNSL, Brigitte Steinmetz, with Aminata Koroma in Pujehun, Sierra Leone in July 2002. Aminata became our first sponsored child.

Right: Aminata has now returned to her home town as a tutor at the Technical and Vocational Education Centre (TVET College).

– Learning as we Walk –

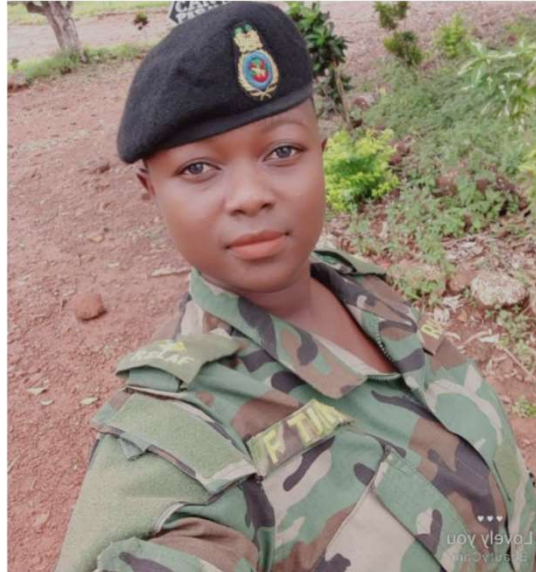
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KNSL Scholarship & Sponsorship Programme – Stories of Success



Fredell Tucker was our sponsored child throughout her secondary school education (seen on the left in school uniform in 2008). Fredell joined the Sierra Leonean armed forces in 2019. She is now a lieutenant. She works in the training department.



Thomas Conteh, who attended our Sam Abu Primary School, received the 2022 prize in the Junior Secondary School Year 2 (JSS II) at Bo School from the President of Sierra Leone, himself a former student of this renowned school. Thomas also got the best result in the National Exams in 2023 in the southern province.

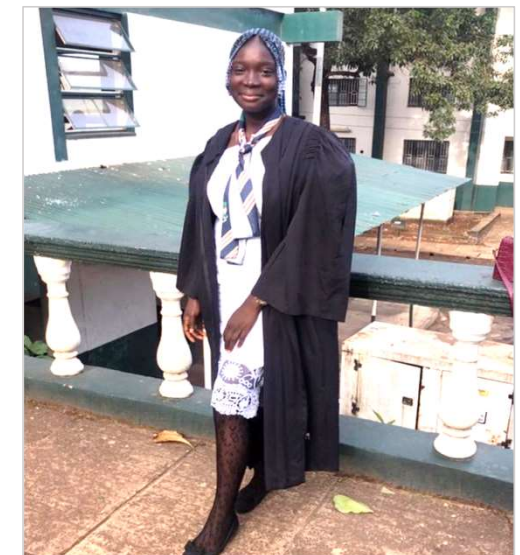
KNSL Scholarship & Sponsorship Programme – Stories of Success



Edward Mando with Mattu Brima at her home in 2013



Mattu Brima in her school in 2013 – 2nd from left in the front row



Mattu Brima matriculated at the University of Sierra Leone in March 2022 to study Accounting and Financial Management

KNSL Scholarship & Sponsorship Programme – Stories of Success



*Musunatu Tucker
in Junior Secondary
School Form 3 in
2018*



*Musunatu Tucker
matriculated at the
University of Sierra
Leone in March
2022 to study
Biochemistry*

KNSL Scholarship & Sponsorship Programme – Stories of Success



KNSL's E. Mando meeting with some of our scholarship holders at Holy Rosary Secondary School in Pujehun in November 2022. On the far right is the principal of the school, Mrs. Betty Sandy

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KNSL's further Interventions to Address Major Challenges in Post-War Sierra Leone

- Implemented peace-building and conflict resolution initiatives - 2005-2012
- Constructed a multi-purpose community library in Pujehun Town in 2010 - and support it to date
- Constructed a model pre-school and primary school in Pujehun Town in 2017-2018 - and support it to date
- Established a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College in Pujehun Town for skills development from 2017-2021 – and support it to date
- Promoting safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Services since 2012 to date
- Developing rural infrastructure to improve food security and livelihoods since 2012 to date

Working for Peace and Preventing Violence 2005-2012

After eleven years of civil war, people needed to relearn how to resolve conflicts peacefully. Between 2005 and 2012, KNSL initiated and facilitated peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects supported by the German Foreign Office through ifa Projekt zivik:

- Sent a highly qualified Sierra Leonean peace expert to help rebuild trust among community groups
- Trained 'peace ambassadors' and peace monitors as local arbitrators, and supported school conflict mediation programme (peer-mediators)
- Promoted mediation and dialogue processes that inspired conflicting parties or interest groups to come to the negotiating table and seek resolution
- Supported non-violence campaigns to combat elections-related and domestic violence, and social discrimination against women and children
- Created 'grievance committees' and built their problem-solving skills

Initiatives for peacebuilding and conflict resolution - 2005-2012



E. Mando raising awareness about peer mediation at Holy Rosary secondary school for girls in Pujehun Town - May 2006



Peer mediation training poster 17.06.06

Initiatives for peacebuilding and conflict resolution - 2005-2012

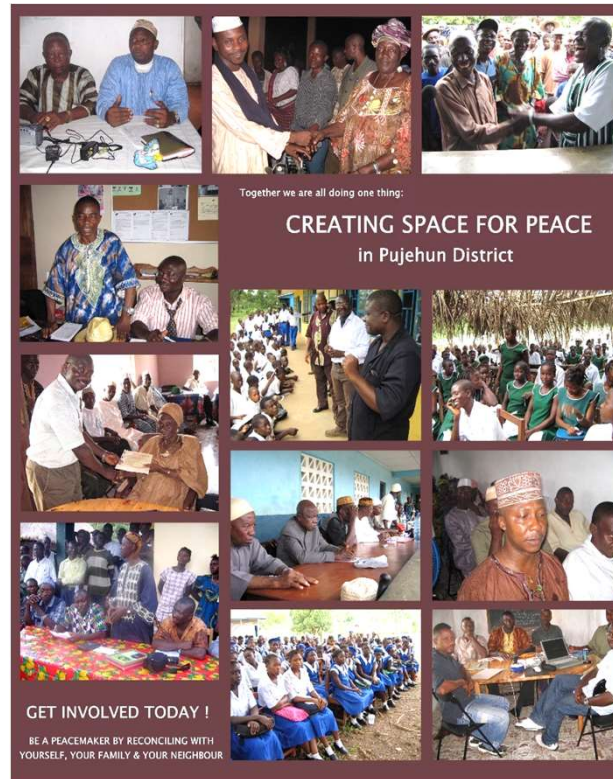


Peace Monitors pose after training Oct 2006



Project Manager Edward Mando facilitating a mediation process in Sowa Chiefdom in 2007

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KNSL / PYD Peace-Building & Conflict Resolution Project
2 District Office Road, Pujehun.
P.O. Box 1315, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Kindernetzwerk Sierra Leone e.V. (KNSL e.V.) in Partnership with the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa - Projekt zivik), Germany

Poster of the peacebuilding project

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Representatives of two neighbouring communities - Gbeworbu and Niagorehun - signing a negotiated peace agreement after a successful mediation by our project in their land dispute on 02.06.2005

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Constructed a multi-purpose Community Library in Pujehun Town in 2010 and support it to date



The library was built in 2010 with co-financing by BMZ. In addition to regular library operations, adult (functional) literacy classes and computer training, community meetings are being held in this library

Computer training at the multi-purpose community library



Computer courses are held in the library for young people and adults. Tutors train students and children how to use computers and the internet. Adult learners from near-by towns and villages - Gobaru, Massam and Yonni - also benefit from this.

Construction of Sam S. Abu Memorial Pre- and Primary School in Pujehun Town 2017-2018



- *Before the construction of the new buildings, the school had been housed in the community library, until that no longer provided sufficient space for the increasing number of pupils*
- *The new buildings were completed by September 2018 and school operations there started in the 2018/19 school year*

The Sam S. Abu Memorial Pre- and Primary School in Pujehun Town



In the school yard of Sam Abu School: PYD representatives, school administration members and Edward Mando of KNSL inspect the school compound in December 2022



KNSL's Edward Mando addressing pupils of Sam Abu School and their parents in June 2019

The Sam S. Abu Memorial Pre- and Primary School in Pujehun Town



Pupils, teachers and PYD staff at a school meeting



KNSL's Brigitte Steinmetz with kindergarten children Nov. 2019

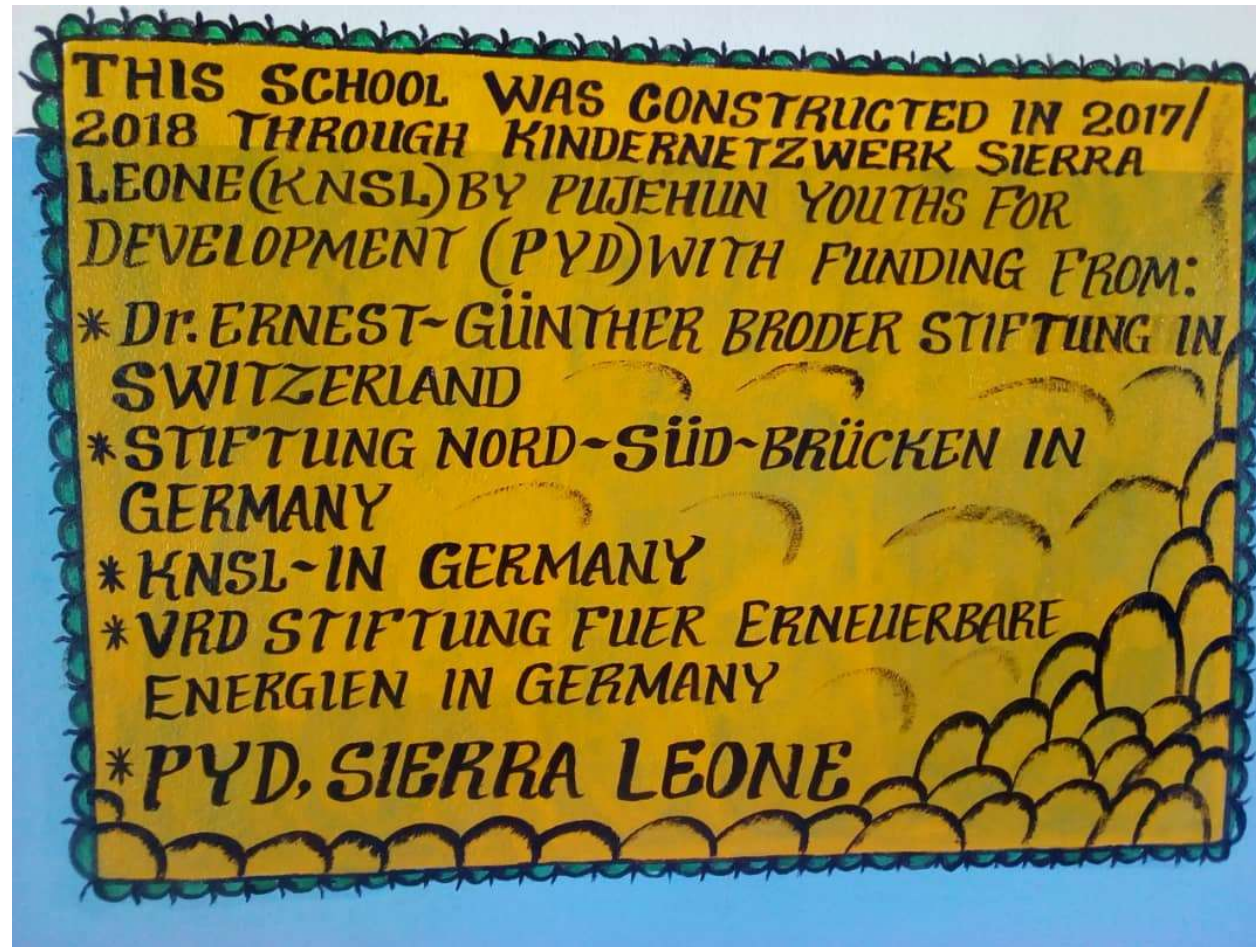
The Sam S. Abu Memorial Pre- and Primary School in Pujehun Town

Sam Abu School is proud of the excellent results of its pupils in the National Primary School Examinations (NPSE) and of their bright students who have gained admission to, and excel in secondary schools around the country:

- *Holy Rosary Secondary School for Girls in Pujehun*
- *St. Paul's Secondary School for Boys in Pujehun*
- *The famous Government Secondary School in Bo*
- *The prestigious Government Grammar School in Freetown*
- *The famous St. Joseph Convent in Freetown*

Many parents, especially single mothers, nurses, civil servants and NGO workers confidently send their children to Sam Abu School because they believe in the strong partnership between pupils, teachers and parents

The Sam S. Abu Memorial Pre- and Primary School in Pujehun Town



Established a Technical Vocational Education & Training (TVET) College in Pujehun 2017-2021 and support it to date



- The TVET college is the vision of PYD, our partner organization in Sierra Leone, to address the lack of vocational training opportunities for young men and women and the shortage of skilled workers in the agriculture, construction and services sectors in Pujehun District
- The construction and furnishings were co-financed by BMZ, KNSL and PYD with support from the Swiss Dr. Ernst-Günther Bröder Stiftung
- The College has capacity for 700 to 800 trainees
- This is the first education sector initiative in Pujehun District to revitalize technical and vocational careers that have been underestimated and unrecognized until recently

Technical Vocational Educational & Training College in Pujehun



TVET students writing a Semester Examination in July 2023



Meeting at the TVET College in January 2022 between the KNSL Programme Coordinator, the Collage's management team and interested members of the community on how to proceed after the end of the donor phase

Technical and Vocational Education & Training – The TVET College offers Skills Development through the following Courses

2-3 Year Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma Courses in:

- Agriculture
- Building & Construction
- Metalwork & Fabrication
- Electrical / Solar & Electronic Engineering
- Auto & Agro-Machinery Mechanics
- Food & Nutrition Sciences
- Business Studies and Accounting

6 Months to 2 Years Basic Skills Certificate Courses in:

- Agriculture
- Computer Applications (MS Office)
- Basic Secretarial Services
- Basic Business Skills and Accounting
- Catering



Tutor and trainees in the Metalwork & Fabrication Workshop

Promoting Access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Services since 2012 to date

- Sierra Leone among other African countries has been part of the United Nations-hosted Sanitation & Water for All (SWA) partnership since 2010
- Access to WASH for all, particularly clean water & clean toilets for schools and health centres, are non-negotiable
- Yet, schools, health centres and too many households in Sierra Leone face challenges to access safe drinking water and adequate sanitation
- Key among the challenges are inadequate investments to place WASH at the heart of the national development plan
- To date, only 23% of the population of Pujehun and Bonthe Districts in the south have access to safe water sources (African Dev. Bank, 2022), implying that 77% of the people still drink water from unsafe or polluted sources.
- Pollutants and poor sanitation
 - are largely responsible for the prevalence of dysentery, cholera, acute respiratory infections (ARIs), under-nutrition, worm infestations and other diseases
 - contribute to infections in health care settings and lead to U-5 morbidity and mortality and increased risk of maternal and new-born mortality
 - lead to boys and girls missing school due to sickness or the time taken to collect water for the family

Promoting safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Services since 2012 to date



Abandoned school toilets at St. Stephen's Secondary School in Gobaru, Pujehun District

Woman at water collecting point at Bengani Village, Pujehun District, with ca. 1200 inhabitants



Promoting WASH Services since 2012 to date



New waterwell



Villagers, mostly women and children, on the way to or from their water point

Promoting WASH Services since 2012 to date



Commissioning of new drinking water wells in the villages of Bengani and Daama in July 2015 - BMZ Project

Promoting WASH Services since 2012 to date



A Ditch Witch well drilling machine with flushing pump, drill pipes, drill bits and a tow truck for transporting the drilling machine were procured second hand in Germany and shipped to Pujehun



Promoting WASH Services in the Future

In 2024 KNSL intends to:

- Construct 24 separate male/female toilets and drill 13 safe drinking water points with solar-powered pumps for 8 villages, 3 schools and 3 health stations in Pujehun and Bonthe Districts
- Establish and train WASH Committees in the 8 target communities
- Additionally, train 48 youth in technical skills for the maintenance of the waterpoints, solar installations and toilets
- Ensure that 50% of the beneficiaries of the new toilet facilities will be girls and women

2024 KNSL intends to facilitate 24 separate male/female toilets and to drill 13 solar-powered drinking water points for villages and schools



Properly maintained school latrines



Hand-washing station at a school

Helping to End Livelihood Insecurity & Poverty in Rural Areas

- Almost 90% of rural Sierra Leone relies on agriculture, both for food supply and as source of income
- Since the civil war ended in 2002, communities have received little support to enable them to minimize poverty and food insecurity
- A lot of rural infrastructure was destroyed during the war and is still in ruins
- The rural economy is entirely dependent on underdeveloped, unmechanized rain-fed slash-and-burn agriculture
- Lack of processing and cooling facilities affect perishable fruits, vegetables, meat and fish, many products rot or only reach the market in poor quality
- Poverty in many communities is extreme, with almost 75% of households living on less than 2.00 US Dollars a day, with women and children being particularly affected

Helping to End Livelihood Insecurity & Poverty in Rural Areas



Typical village household



A household returning home from their farm

Helping to end poverty: Developing infrastructure to improve food security and livelihoods since 2012 to date

KNSL supports smallholder farmer cooperatives with tractors, ploughs and harrows, wheelbarrows, hand tools, seeds, small animals, outreach advice and training in the villages



Project tractor at work on a farm site in Bengani



Purpose-built project ferry with tractor arrives at riverine site

Developing Infrastructure to Improve Food Security and Livelihoods : Providing Solar-Powered Cold Rooms



Unloading cold room components from the project truck at one of the installation sites



Solar-powered cold room facility in Najay village – the community contributed by building the cold room house

Our Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Approach to Incorporate Community Knowledge and Opinion in Developing Projects



Needs assessment (social mapping) in the villages of Karlu in december 2020 and Begani in July 2013



Get Active: Membership or Volunteer Work

- Membership: Students 10 €, adults 100 € per year
- Supporting Membership: Always a good thing! Donation amount is determined by yourself
- Volunteer Work: Whether for projects, PR work, campaigns or events, we are happy about any support!
- New members and donors are always welcome!

Get Active through Donations

KNSL needs support very much!

- The work of KNSL is financed by public and private sponsors and membership fees
- The obligatory own contribution for co-financing by public and private donors can hardly be covered by membership fees, it depends on donations
- KNSL issues donation receipts for offsetting against German tax if your address is shown on the bank transfer or communicated via the donations form on our website
- We can also be found on the donating platform “Betterplace” under the following link: <https://betterplace.org/p126672>
- For every donation, KNSL commits to use it effectively and responsibly for the project work benefitting people in Sierra Leone

Lessons Learned and Conclusions

- Successful development cooperation is not possible without cultural empathy and the ability to move confidently in a foreign social system and gain the trust of the target population
- At KNSL, we take a holistic approach, but we are also very careful not to overburden anyone - ourselves, the donors and the NGO implementing the projects on the ground in Sierra Leone
- We use all options available to us to ensure the financial sustainability of our organization and to develop it further
- What KNSL does is aimed at community development and social change - we strive not to be seen doing social work, emergency aid or pure charity
- Our work is about developing the awareness, attitudes and skills of the people in rural Sierra Leone so that they can take control of their lives individually or collectively
- We feel indebted for the support we have received at some point in our lives and we are grateful for the opportunity to give back to others

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**Thank you
very much!**

¡Muchas gracias!

Edward Mando / Brigitte Steinmetz
Programme Coordinator / Secretary

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Merci beaucoup!

Vielen Dank!

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