

IMPACT NEWSLETTER

MSSL AND TEENS HUB INITIATIVE LAUNCH MY PERIOD TRACKER FOR GIRLS ACROSS SIERRA LEONE

As part of Menstrual Hygiene Awareness Month, MSSL has partnered with Teens Hub Initiative to introduce a meaningful new resource for girls: My Period Tracker—a free, easy-to-use booklet designed to help teenage girls track their menstrual cycles and better understand their bodies.

In Sierra Leone, many adolescent girls still go through their periods without enough information or support. The result is often confusion, shame, and missed opportunities—especially in school. My Period Tracker was created to change that narrative.

This initiative began when Veronica Maertha, founder of Teens Hub Initiative, brought the idea to MSSL. Together, we've developed a booklet that goes beyond tracking—it's filled with practical tips, health education, and thoughtful explanations to help girls navigate their periods with confidence. The booklet covers topics such as personal hygiene, what to expect during a menstrual cycle, and how to manage pain and discomfort.

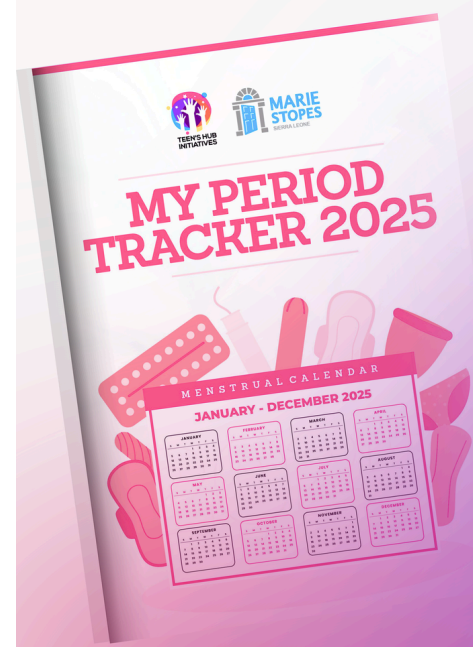
The design is simple and relatable, making it easy for girls to mark the dates of their periods, understand their flow patterns, and start conversations around menstrual health. It's a tool of empowerment—especially for girls in communities where periods are still seen as something to hide.

Best of all, My Period Tracker is completely free. It's currently being distributed in schools, and we're working to ensure that every girl who needs one can get one—no matter where she lives.



Keep track of
your cycle with
**MY PERIOD
TRACKER**

Helping You Understand Your
Period, One Month at a Time.



MARIE STOPES SL CHAMPIONS PERIOD DIGNITY IN PUJEHUN ON **MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY**

On May 29th, our team joined national partners and community leaders in Pujehun District to mark International Menstrual Hygiene Day—a day that calls the world to break the silence around menstruation and champion equality for girls and women.

The event, organised by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) in partnership with UNICEF and other stakeholders, was held at the Pujehun District Hall. It brought together government officials, education partners, NGOs, and most importantly—students, who boldly asked questions and shared their own experiences around menstrual health.

Our very own Michael Omeoga, Fatmata Bintu Bangura, and Daniel Mattia proudly represented Marie Stopes Sierra Leone. During our presentation, we introduced the Marie Pad—our affordable, 100% cotton, disposable sanitary pad made with the everyday Sierra Leonean woman and girl in mind. We emphasized the importance of access: not just to products, but to information, dignity, and choice.

We also offered a practical proposal—inviting schools and government stakeholders to consider budgeting for a 12-month supply of pads for girls. This, we believe, is a concrete step towards ending period poverty in our schools. To support education, we presented free copies of The Period Tracker Booklet to the MBSSE leadership, which was warmly received.

Other speakers, including TEGA and Teens Hub Initiative, spoke passionately about menstrual stigma, education, and empowerment. UNICEF shared insights into their work with reusable pads and safe wash spaces in schools, complementing our shared mission



of expanding menstrual health access across the country.

One moment that stood out was the Deputy Minister's visit to our booth. She not only praised the Marie Pad but also asked to take some with her. Her remarks were clear: both reusable and disposable options are important, and she is keen to work with partners to make them accessible in every school. She also made a brief but positive comment when she spotted our Flame Condoms, recognizing the wide range of reproductive health options we provide.

As a follow-up, the Deputy Minister has requested a meeting with our team and offered to introduce us to partners who might support procurement of Marie Pads. Our next step is to meet with the Deputy Director of MBSSE and continue conversations with individual schools. The door is open, and momentum is on our side.

At Marie Stopes SL, we believe that no girl should miss school because of her period. This event was another reminder that when we speak up, show up, and offer real solutions—we get closer to that goal.

MARIE STOPES PRESENTS ON **MENSTRUAL HYGIENE** AT GIRLS INITIATIVE ALLIANCE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT EVENT



In commemoration of World Menstrual Hygiene Day on 28 May 2025, Girls Alliance Inc. hosted a dynamic youth engagement event aimed at raising awareness and fostering open dialogue around menstrual health and hygiene. This year's theme emphasised the importance of proper menstrual hygiene management and its critical role in overall health and well-being.

As part of the event, Marie Stopes Sierra Leone was invited to facilitate a key session, reflecting the organisation's ongoing commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health education within communities. Representing Marie Stopes was Adama Kamara, Manager of the Waterloo Rural Health Centre.



The event commenced at 3:00 p.m. and brought together a diverse audience, including adolescents, young women, educators, and community members. Adama Kamara delivered an insightful presentation on the topic "Menstrual Health and Hygiene." She began by explaining the biological process of menstruation, followed by practical guidance on menstrual hygiene, highlighting essential dos and don'ts before, during, and after menstruation.

---Her presentation was both comprehensive and engaging, concluding with a powerful message encouraging parents and guardians to educate their children on menstrual care. She emphasised the importance of changing sanitary pads at least three times a day and fostering

open supportive conversations at home.

The session was highly interactive, with participants actively engaging in discussions and sharing personal insights, making the event both educational and empowering.

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Do you know untreated STIs can make men infertile?

SUCCESS STORY: WINNING TRUST IN KOROMASILAYA COMMUNITY

When the Marie Stopes Sierra Leone (MSSL) mobile outreach team set their sights on Koromasilaya—a deeply traditional community nestled in Musaia Chiefdom, Koinadugu District—they knew it wouldn't be easy. The area, rich in history and led by the respected Chief Pa Sarlie Kamara, is tightly woven around cultural customs, Islamic values, and generational beliefs.

So, when our Social and Behaviour Change Officer, Samba Kamara, first arrived in the community to discuss an upcoming outreach visit, he was met with warmth—but also firm resistance. The idea of family planning was unwelcome, seen as a foreign intrusion into their way of life. Still, Samba didn't leave empty-handed. He walked away with contacts, quiet curiosity, and a deepened understanding of the people he had come to serve.

Two weeks later, Samba returned—not to a formal meeting, but to the “Ataya base,” a lively hub where young men gather to talk about life. There, he listened first. He sparked a conversation around one of the community's most pressing challenges: teenage pregnancy. The dialogue was open and real, and from that space of honesty, Samba gently introduced family planning—not as a threat to tradition, but as a tool for progress. As a chance for young people to reclaim their future.

That conversation planted a seed. Days later, Tenneh Conteh, a young woman from the community, reached out via WhatsApp. She found the mobile outreach team and accessed family planning services for the first time. But she didn't stop there. Tenneh became a voice—a bold, brave advocate in a space where silence had once ruled.

She gathered her peers and organized a community meeting. She shared her story with



She gathered her peers and organized a community meeting. She shared her story with clarity and confidence, speaking not just as a client but as a sister, a neighbour, a daughter of the soil. She encouraged married women and school-going girls to take control of their reproductive health and challenged the gatekeepers of tradition to open their eyes to a new possibility. And they did.

That day, Koromasilaya took a turn. Leaders who had once resisted publicly welcomed MSSL and apologized for their earlier stance. The community embraced the outreach team and opened the door for a future where women and girls could access care without shame.

Today, our mobile outreach clinic is not just tolerated in Koromasilaya—it is embraced. This is more than a success story. This is a story of courage, persistence, and the power of local voices leading local change.

At MSSL, we know change doesn't always come in a day. But when we show up, listen well, and empower communities from within, transformation always follows.

PICTURE STORY: ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT MAY



The Island team, led by Ester F. James, who has now taken over as head of the Bonthe Island outreach team, is en route to their sleepover site to deliver services to hard-to-reach coastal villages.



Community members gathered during outreach visits where we engaged them on family planning, teenage pregnancy, STIs, and other key health services.



School Health Talks in Kenema as part of our Menstrual Hygiene campaign during the centre specific marketing drive in Kenema.



Group engagement with students at Methodist Secondary School focused on the importance of family planning and the effects of teenage pregnancy.

MARIE STOPES SCHOOL HEALTH TALK IN KENEMA

Marie Stopes Sierra Leone hosted interactive health education sessions at two key institutions in Kenema—the Youth Resource Academy and the School of Midwifery—reaching nearly 100 students, most of them young women between the ages of 15 and 30.

These sessions were more than just health talks—they were part of MSSL's ongoing commitment to empower young people with knowledge, encourage preventive care, and create ambassadors for reproductive health services within their communities.

Students received practical information on:

- The importance of routine health check-ups
- STI prevention and the value of regular testing
- The need for early breast cancer screening

- Understanding and tracking the menstrual cycle
- Monitoring blood pressure for overall health
- A full overview of services available at the MSSL Kenema Centre

The sessions were highly engaging, and many participants expressed interest in becoming health ambassadors among their peers. To encourage participation, MSSL provided branded sanitary pads, pens, and wristbands to all attendees, and 10 students won free blood tests through a fun ballot draw.

By engaging directly with vocational and midwifery students—some of whom are training to become healthcare providers themselves—MSSL is helping to build a future generation of informed, proactive health champions ready to promote access, education, and care in their communities.



The rainy season in Sierra Leone brings cooler temperatures, fresh greenery—and unfortunately, a higher risk of illness. Here are some simple tips to help you and your loved ones stay healthy and safe during this time:

- Sleep under a mosquito net to prevent malaria
- Boil or treat drinking water to avoid cholera
- Wear waterproof shoes to avoid infections
- Keep warm and dry to prevent colds and flu
- Wash hands regularly with soap and clean water

COMMERCIAL AND MARKETING DIRECTOR LEADS FIELD MARKETING DRIVE IN KENEMA

Strengthening Community Engagement and Driving Service Visibility

As part of efforts to expand service visibility and support operations at the Kenema Centre, the Commercial and Marketing Directorate coordinated a robust series of integrated marketing and sales activities across key institutions and stakeholders in Kenema City. The initiative was delivered through a collaborative effort involving Oluremi Ayodele (Commercial and Marketing Director), Isha Youngah (Centres Operations Manager), Kumba Alfred (Sales and Marketing Officer – Kenema), and Fayia Foray (Integrated Marketing Manager). Their joint engagement demonstrated cross-functional teamwork aimed at strengthening partnerships, increasing product and service uptake, and enhancing community awareness.

Strategic Engagements Across Health and Education Sectors

Activities commenced on 20th May 2025, following the team's arrival in Kenema the previous day. Engagements began with visit to the Youth Resource Academy and the School of Midwifery – Kenema, where opportunities for long-term partnerships were explored. Discussions with the midwifery school's leadership resulted in positive commitments for future collaboration.

Referral partnership meetings were also held with Ralph Mini Hospital and Nyayie Hospital, two key private healthcare facilities. A formal partnership agreement was secured with Ralph Mini Hospital, while Nyayie Hospital indicated internal escalation of the proposal for further review.

Additional engagements included courtesy visits to local pharmacies and a meeting with a

potential wholesaler. Many of these pharmacies had previously collaborated with MSSL and showed strong interest in renewed distribution. These interactions led to a notable increase in product sales during the period.

A key milestone from the marketing reach was the successful negotiation of a media partnership with Nyapui Radio (FM 106.01), securing sponsorship for the health-focused program "Uman Clinic". The program is designed to connect women and girls across Kenema and surrounding districts to trusted health information and services.

Health Education Sessions with Future Health Workers

The team facilitated interactive health education sessions at both the Youth Resource Academy and the School of Midwifery. These sessions reached a total of 98 students (54 vocational and 44 midwifery students), the majority of whom were young women aged 15–30.

The sessions focused on:

- Routine health check-ups
- STI testing and prevention
- Breast cancer screening
- Menstrual cycle monitoring
- Blood pressure checks
- Overview of services available at MSSL Kenema

Participants were encouraged to serve as health ambassadors within their communities. Branded items including sanitary pads, pens, and wristbands were distributed as part of the awareness campaign.

Media Engagements and Partnership

To amplify reach, two radio talk shows were hosted to highlight the services offered at the Kenema Centre:

- Nyapui Radio (FM 106.01) – Tuesday, 8:00 PM–9:00 PM
- SLBC Radio (FM 93.05) – Wednesday, 21st May, 7:00 PM–8:00 PM

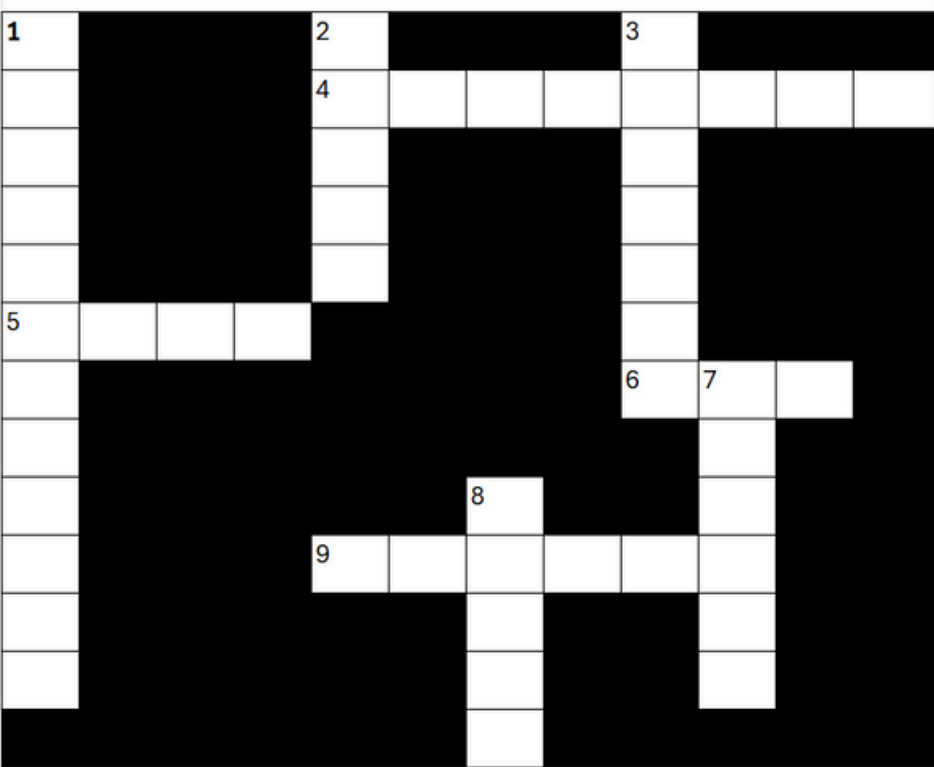
These one-hour programs featured interactive discussions and listener engagement, reinforcing the availability of essential health services through MSSL.

The team also participated in Nyapui Radio's Menstrual Hygiene Campaign, organized by SEND Sierra Leone. The campaign was broadcast both on radio and Facebook Live. MSSL used the platform to raise awareness about menstrual hygiene and promote relevant services and products. Team members from the Kenema Centre and national office jointly represented MSSL during the broadcast, including Abubakarr Turay, Kumba Alfred, and Fayia Foray.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Crossword Puzzle: "MSI Reproductive Choices"



ACROSS

4. MSI's model that brings services directly to rural communities (8)
5. Colour often associated with MSI branding (4)
6. International day MSI often promotes: International Women's ___ (3)
8. Choosing not to have sexual intercourse to prevent pregnancy (10)
9. Central value MSI promotes: informed ____ (6)

DOWN

1. MSI provides this type of care for unintended pregnancies (12)
2. The full name of the global MSI CEO : Simon ____ (5)
3. One of MSI's core values: Client- ____ (7)
7. MSI's goal: expanding ____ to contraception (6)
8. MSI's vision: a world where every ____ can determine their own future (6)

MARIE STOPES SIERRA LEONE PARTICIPATES AT THE **NATIONAL HEALTH SUMMIT**

MSSL participated in the 2025 National Health Summit (NHS), themed “Improving Health Outcomes for All: Every Sierra Leonean Life Matters.” This event marked the second convening of key stakeholders, including government officials, public health experts, healthcare providers, community leaders, and advocates, aimed at evaluating progress, sharing best practices, and refining strategies aligned with the MTNDP 2024.

As a vital health organisation through the Youth for Health (Y4H) initiative, MSSL played a pivotal role in the planning and execution of the summit, fostering collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Health. The summit provided a platform for reviewing outputs from the Health Sector Performance Reviews and for designing improved mechanisms for collaboration and implementation of shared health plans. This joint effort underscores MSSL’s commitment to advancing health outcomes and ensuring every Sierra Leonean life is valued and protected.



PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Our Country Director clearly has a lot on his plate—and even more on his shoulders. Caught deep in thought, hand on his head, taking notes with a worried look. Who’s out here stressing our CD like this?

PICTURE STORY: SLEEPOVER



Sleepover at Bumpe Ngao Chiefdom



Sleep over at Bumpe Ngao Chiefdom Sahn section.



Tonkolili Outreach team sleep over at Maborie Community



Bonthe Island Outreach team sleep over at Massawo community

TEAM MEMBERS CORNER

Celebrations – Kadiatu Patricia Kamara (District Mentor) delivered a bouncing bay boy.

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