



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AT THE
CELEBRATION OF THE 25th ANNIVERSARY
OF WORLD VISION IN SIERRA LEONE.
FREETOWN, NEW BROOKFIELDS HOTEL –
12th May 2022**

Ministers of Government,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
My revered Paramount Chief, and all traditional rulers present,
My esteemed Religious Leaders,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Executives and Staff of World Vision,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning,

1. I join the World Vision family today with deep gratitude and great pleasure to celebrate 25 years of your work in transforming lives in our nation. At the worst of times during the war years, you stood with us. Through 25 years, you have worked with us. Today, we celebrate 25 years of your great work and impact; we celebrate 25 years of working with an organisation that feels, knows, and believes that the future is bright if we invest in and protect our children today.
2. You have served the most vulnerable children. Your wonderful staff have dedicated 25 years of great commitment to creating futures where excellence and achievement are possible. You have transformed communities into centres of hope and resilience. That is the noblest cause and that deserves great commendation. Thank you for your great work.
3. Our country has been through a lot; our children have been through a lot. We do not wish to dwell in the past because the past is gone. We are now investing in what is possible and what is transformative – the future of our children; the future of our nation.
4. Two days ago, I addressed the state opening of parliament with a call that at the heart of each of our communities; central to our achieving the sustainable development goals; and critical to our progress and future as a nation, are our children. They are our greatest assets and we must protect, educate, empower, and inspire them to dream and do the possible and the seemingly impossible.

5. I am touched by your story of Salimatu in Thelia Community, Kamuke Chiefdom. It is for the Salimatus of our dear nation that we introduced tuition-free quality education; supplied free teaching and learning materials; provided school feeding and buses in some areas; paid for NPSE and WASSCE examinations; reviewed the sexual offences act and operationalised the Sexual Offences Model Courts; introduced a policy of radical inclusion so that every child who is poor, rural, pregnant, or living with a disability can be educated; advocated nationwide for hands-off-our girls and free sanitary pads; and, even more interventions in just the education sector over the last four years.
6. We view the education of our children as the key to personal development and to community transformation, the key to community resilience and sustainable national development; the key to a peaceful, inclusive, cohesive, and prosperous nation.
7. I am informed that your core priorities include education, health and nutrition, child protection and advocacy, and water sanitation and hygiene (WASH). I am also informed that you approach these from an inclusive, disability-awareness, and gender-sensitive perspective. What a great alignment of agenda with our human capital development (HCD) agenda-driven from an inclusive, rural, poor, gender and disability-centred standpoint!
8. In addition to the child-centred agenda of our core HCD Ministries, the social welfare, justice, and stand-alone Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs collectively contribute to national efforts to mainstream investments in the future of children. We are not only fully committed to all international conventions on the right of the child, we are also undertaking a comprehensive overhaul of the child rights act in order to bring it into step with all international benchmarks.
9. So, I am happy to be here this morning to not only fraternise but to encourage us to form an intentional partnership to drive our concerted efforts to achieve our shared vision for Sierra Leone.

10. But I also want to thank World Vision for your protection and empowerment programme for the most vulnerable children of Sierra Leone. You helped mobilise children to participate in the review of the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023 and enabled the children to develop a position paper that sets an ambitious vision for them. I have always argued that their voices matter especially in crafting the future that they want. Therefore, it is important that we involve children in national and local decision-making processes that affect their lives.
11. With your WASH interventions, you have contributed to other national efforts at providing communities with potable water and thus helped reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases. Improved sanitation has also helped lower disease burdens in most communities. Your grassroots approach is particularly impactful. Thank you.
12. Your interventions in the area of education have been laudable. I am informed that in your pursuit of the goal of creating sustainable families and futures, you have helped protect girls from abuse and child marriage. You have supported primary school children to learn to read (literacy), do basic Maths (numeracy), and teach them essential life skills. Thank you for working with your partners to construct 400 classrooms, 88 latrines and 10 wells in 14 districts. This has reduced classroom sizes and overcrowding. You have also generously supported the Quality Lesson Plan Project in three districts and trained 3,364 teachers. Thank you for supporting our national aspiration of education for all children.
13. In the area of healthcare, you have supported the integration of technology with health services in order to maximise the training of health staff and also efficiencies in delivering services. I am further informed that in Partnership with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, you adopted the CommCare digital platform as a mobile application that supports the amplification of Maternal and New-born Child Health outcomes. This application allows Community Health Workers to register pregnant women and children for the relevant healthcare programs and schedule reminders and alerts about the next visits. It also provides the necessary referrals to the nearest health facilities. I

remember launching this project in Mattru Jong some years ago. This has contributed to significant gains. We have now increased the proportion of children who are fully immunized from 51% in 2017 to over 83% now. We have increased the proportion of mothers who delivered in health facilities and were assisted by skilled attendants from 92% to 99%. Consequently, infant mortality rates have been reduced.

14. We are happy to witness the good work that you are doing in this country and we are proud to count you among our partners. I encourage you to continue your service to the children and their communities because you can be sure that you are investing in the right people at the right time for the right future. Rest assured that we share your vision to provide life in all its fullness to all children.
15. May God bless your work and the people of Sierra Leone. I thank you for your kind attention.