



ANNUAL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING REPORT 2024 **OUR WORK, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**



2024

Table of contents

Contents

..... 1

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE 4

1 OVERVIEW OF FoRUT 5

2 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 8

 2.1 KEY PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS 8

Outcome..... 8

3 Strategic Pillar 3: Livelihoods security, local economic empowerment & climate resilience 17

4 Strategic Pillar 4: Social Accountability, Good Governance and Access to justice in FoRUT

Operational Areas..... 21

Promoting Mental Health..... 23

5 Monitoring, Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) 24

6 Overall challenges and actions to address them..... 24

Our Audited Financial Statements 2023..... 25

..... 26

Acronym

ACC.....	Anti-Corruption Commission
ADD.....	Alcohol, Development and Drugs
CoCSA.....	Community Credit and Savings Association
CRA.....	Child Rights Act
CRC SL.....	Child Rights Coalition Sierra Leone
CSO.....	Civil Society Organization
CYP.....	Children and Young People’s Club
ECD.....	Early Childhood Development
FoRUT.....	Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation
FSU.....	Family Support Unit
GAG.....	Gender Alert Group
GBV.....	Gender Based Violence
GoSL.....	Government of Sierra Leone
MTNDP.....	Medium Term National Development Plan
MAFS.....	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MDA.....	Ministries, Department and Agencies
MoGCA.....	Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs
MSW.....	Ministry of Social Welfare
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
SDG.....	Sustainable Development Goals
SMC.....	School Management Committees

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This annual report has been produced based on FoRUT perspective of the external and internal contexts, and achievements and lessons learned during the year under review. The major sources of information have been routine monthly and quarterly updates and information obtained from communities we work with.

This report presents an overview of FoRUT's operations and performance against the FoRUT strategic pillars. It starts by examining the operating context and then looks at our achievements and challenges for the year under review. It also explores our successes and constraints and draws lessons for the future.

The report is not exhaustive but gives highlights of the work we are involved in based on our national strategic priorities. For more information, various reports and publications are available in our head office for reference. FoRUT is indebted to the many poor communities, our partners, and donors for making possible all the work on which we are reporting. It is our sincere hope and belief that the lives of the poor, who are central to our mission, are changing for the better through the work we are reporting on.

1 OVERVIEW OF FoRUT

Our Identity

FoRUT was established as a national non-governmental organization out of FORUT-Sierra Leone in 2015. FORUT-Sierra Leone was a programme of FORUT (Campaign for Solidarity and Development) in Norway that operated in Sierra Leone from 1991-2015. We utilize Child Right initiatives as an approach to empower school and community structures to fulfil their social and civic responsibilities enhance inclusive, safe and quality learning environment for children. We are guided by our vision and mission statements.

Vision Statement

FoRUT envisions a peaceful, corruption-free and democratic Sierra Leone where everyone enjoys their rights, free from poverty, and harm from alcohol and drugs.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to empower citizens to fight poverty, corruption, injustice and alcohol and drug abuse, through social mobilization, advocacy, capacity building, and provision of services for sustainable development.

Core values

Our core values are:

- a. ***Transparency and Accountability:*** We are committed to being accountable and transparent through our work and in our relationship with our partners and the community at large. We explain our actions to those we work with and take responsibility irrespective of the outcome.
- b. ***Trustworthiness:*** FoRUT is a dependable partner that can be relied on and trusted in providing correct and appropriate information on its work. We strive to deliver on our promises to our various stakeholders.
- c. ***Team work:*** We believe that every staff is a valued member of FoRUT. We treat everyone with respect, encourage contributions, and recognize efforts, strengths and achievements. We take collective responsibility and shy away from the blame game.
- d. ***Integrity:*** We strive to always do the right thing by doing things according to our policies and principles, and act with openness and honesty.
- e. ***Inclusiveness and equality:*** FoRUT believes that every person deserves to be treated equally, free of all forms of abuse and exploitation, and given equal opportunities in all circumstances. FoRUT is not judgmental to persons with social, physical and or other forms of challenges.
- f. ***Respect for human rights:*** We will give space and voice to all and respect the perspectives of others without prejudice.

Our Thematic Areas

The thematic areas are listed below and they are not written in order of priority

- **Alcohol Drug and Development** – mainstreaming mental health, we mount advocacy and mobilization for reducing harm from alcohol and drug use.
- **Child Rights:** While emphasising all other rights, FoRUT uses the right to education to support children and communities to claim children’s rights.
- **Gender Equality and women’s empowerment:** We mount advocacy and social mobilization for systems review and changes for tackling inequality and promoting women’s empowerment at community and national level.
- **Livelihood:** FoRUT focuses on food production and value addition while sustainable and climate smart technologies, support for youth skills development and employment, and community savings and credit schemes.
- **Good Governance and Civil Society:** mobilizing civil society organizations and citizens to promote accountability and holding duty bearers accountable for development outcomes at community, district and national level.

Our Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan (2021-2025), titled, “**Supporting Communities to eradicate Poverty and Reduce Inequalities and Social Exclusion (SURPRISE 2.0)**,” responds to the development needs and realities of the target communities and nation within the thematic areas and available resources. It aims at influencing and supporting the beneficiaries to lead their own development. The Strategic Pillars and Outcomes are:

Pillar 1: Institutional strengthening and effectiveness

- **Outcome 1:** FoRUT strive to be a sustainable CSO, with a high level of legitimacy and ability to carry out effective interventions in their thematic areas; implements high quality organisation policies in place; and benefits from diverse sources of funding.

Pillar 2: Integral & human capital development

- **Outcome 2:** Men, women and children practise health seeking behaviour and children have access to safe, inclusive, and quality education, free from alcohol and drug abuse and realise their full potential.

Pillar 3: Livelihoods security, local economic empowerment & climate resilience

- **Outcome 3:** Men, women and youth in marginalised communities have access to livelihood opportunities for employment, small business development and increased food production while protecting the environment that improve their standard of living.

Pillar 4: Social accountability, good governance and access to justice in FoRUT operational areas.

- **Outcome 4:** Citizens influence national authorities to revise existing policies and laws on women and children’s rights, anti-corruption, land tenure and environmental issues, have access to justice, and hold government accountable.

Pillar 5: Increase FoRUT’s visibility.

- **Outcome 5:** FoRUT’s work and impact are highly visible and recognised nationally and internationally.

Programme Strategies

We use human rights-based approach in programming that empowers community members, especially the poor and most vulnerable (women and children) to exercise their rights, fulfil their social and civic responsibilities, and improve their living standards while protecting the environment. To effectively transform lives, FoRUT programme strategies are social mobilization, service delivery, capacity building, and advocacy for long term development. FoRUT works through school, community structures, and civil society coalitions.

Target Communities

FoRUT continued to serve communities four districts, six chiefdoms 85 communities as listed in the table below:

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Chiefdoms</i>	<i>Communities</i>
Port Loko	2	35
Moyamba	4	43
Western Area Rural	Not applicable	4
Western Area Urban	Not applicable	3

2 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 KEY PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS

Strategic Pillar 2: Integral and Human Capital Development

Outcome: Men, women, and children practice health seeking behaviour and children have access to safe, inclusive, and quality education, free from alcohol and drug abuse and realize their full potential.

MEDIUM TERM NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2018-2023)	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
<p>Goal 2: A nation with educated, empowered healthy citizens capable of realizing their fullest potential.</p> <p>Policy Cluster 1: Cluster 1.1: Ensuring free quality basic and senior secondary education.</p> <p>Cluster 1.3: Accelerating health-care delivery and Cluster 1.4: Increasing social protection.</p> <p>Policy Cluster 5: Cluster 5.2: To ensure a Child-First approach for the survival, protection, and development of children, including disabled and vulnerable children, always prioritizing the best interests of the child.</p>	<p>SDG 4.1: to ensure that all girls and boys complete free equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</p> <p>SDG 4.2: to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development care and pre-primary education do that they are ready for primary education.</p>

The National Alcohol Policy launched and popularized

The Ministry of Health (MoH), on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), launched the National Alcohol Policy (NAP) in April 2023. The Ministry adopted the (NAP) in November 2022. FoRUT, directly and through the Sierra Leone Alcohol Policy Alliance (SLAPA) co-sponsored the launch of the policy. The Policy seeks to ensure effective regulation of the production, marketing, sale, and consumption of alcohol to reduce harms from alcohol in Sierra Leone. The NAP is in line with the national development agenda. It is also consistent with the WHO Global Strategy for Reducing the Harmful Use of Alcohol, the SAFER Initiative, and the Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030. It is a blueprint for the development of a new national alcohol legislation.

Following the launch of the NAP, FoRUT and SLAPA, in collaboration with the Directorate of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health within MoH, led four regional and national level popularization of the policy through stakeholder meetings and media engagements. The Alcohol Control Technical Working Group, with representation from relevant MDAs in alcohol control, made commitments to share the policy with the leadership of their respective MDAs for full implementation based on their mandates.



Development of Child Friendly version of National Alcohol Policy

FoRUT developed a child-friendly version of the NAP to increase children and young people's knowledge about the policy and to inspire them to monitor the implementation of the policy. Five writing sessions with 100 school-going children (60 girls, 40 boys) across the regions of Sierra Leone were consulted for the development of the child-friendly NAP.



Launch of campaign to ban ‘Papa drink it, Mama Happy Bitters Root drink.

In December, FoRUT and SLAPA, in collaboration with Women’s Forum Sierra Leone, Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Association of Journalist (SLAJ), Women in the Media Sierra Leone (WIMSAL), Men’s Association for Gender Equality (MAGE), and Street Child of Sierra Leone, launched an advocacy campaign in December 2023 to ban "Papa Drink it Mama Happy BITTERS Root Drink" in Freetown. This event coincided with the implementation of activities to commemorate 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (25th November to 10th December). The objective of the campaign was to counter the misrepresented alcohol gendered marketing strategy for both the product name and image that sexualize alcohol, objectify women and girls, and promote gender-based violence. The campaign supports the implementation of the NAP, aimed at reducing alcohol-related harms. The 80 stakeholders at the event included WHO, 45 civil society actors, 7 State Actors, 12 CYP Club members, 10 media representatives and 3 development partners, of which were 3 Persons with disabilities (PWDs). FoRUT organized 4 meetings with 8 partners to plan for the campaign. The organization also provided financial and technical support on the launch of the campaign.

Youth undertake community outreach on substance abuse

In the drive to tackle the increasing spate of violence against persons who use and sell the synthetic drug ‘kush’, FoRUT trained 54 local authorities on Substance Abuse and Mental Health across Aberdeen, Dwarzark and Wellington.

FoRUT developed key messages on substance abuse and mental health that it shared with community stakeholders for their outreach activities on substance abuse and mental health. We also provided financial support for outreach activities to communities. Consequently, 32 Youth in, New England Ville, Wilberforce, Aberdeen, Wellington Old Wharf, Dwarzark, and Aberdeen communities in Freetown undertook 9 mobilization and sensitization activities to 250 youths and other community stakeholders to treat drug users with care, and compassion as a key approach to tackle substance abuse including the ‘kush’ crisis

CASE STORY - SLAPA PLAYS AN ACTIVE ROLE IN POPULARIZING THE NATIONAL ALCOHOL POLICY IN SIERRA LEONE

In Sierra Leone, civil society’s role is to monitor and hold government accountable for development outputs and outcomes. Government has the primary responsibility to promote and protect the rights of its citizens through service provision and development, enactment and implementation of relevant policy and legislative frameworks. Civil society played a pivotal role in the development, adoption and launch of the Sierra Leone’s first NAP. This impact story examines the role of civil society in the development of the first Sierra Leone National Alcohol Policy (NAP). It documents the key elements that contributed to the productive collaboration between the government and civil society in the policy process. It also outlines the obstacles to the

policy process and civil society advocacy and other efforts to overcome the barriers to the policy process.

Civil Society Activities led by SLAPA lobbied and supported the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), through the Ministry of Health (MoH) to develop, adopt launch and popularize an evidence-based National Alcohol Policy (NAP). The key elements that contributed to the warm collaboration between the government and civil society in the policy process was that Civil Society Advocates demonstrated competence in alcohol harm issues and MoH appointed the National Chairperson of SLAPA as co-chair of the ACTWG and delegated the role of the secretariat to FoRUT. FoRUT and SLAPA persistently engaged MoH on the need to prioritize alcohol control measures to tackle NCDs in the country. Capacity building of Stakeholders and empowering communities to inform policy development was a key feature of the role of civil society. During the policy development process, FoRUT organized several training courses for SLAPA members at national and district level on alcohol related harms, policy advocacy, media engagement, and movement building. SLAPA members and other civil society organizations developed knowledge and skills related to advocacy, which ignited more interest to participate effectively in advocacy activities and in the policy process. The mutual trust and commitments of government and SLAPA made it possible for the development, adoption, launch and popularization of the NAP. The Ministry of Health and World Health Organization have included in their annual plans to implement the Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022 – 2030 which reflects the NAP.

Building trust between government and civil society to achieving a common goal requires well informed and capacitated civil society with sustained advocacy and mobilization at local and national levels. The Government is likely to build upon the solid relationship with civil society for the swift development of alcohol control legislation.



Distribution of learning materials to 750 vulnerable children

Children in 75 schools across Moyamba, Port Loko and Western Area received school and learning materials including bags, exercise books, pens and Geometry sets to enhance their learning activities. Criteria for the selection of beneficiaries for the learning and school materials was based on vulnerability on children living with disabilities, children living with vulnerable single parents and orphans. The District Education Authorities and Local Councils participated in the symbolic distribution of the materials.

Vulnerable Children in Underserved Communities have access to safe and conducive learning environment

Children across our operational schools relatively enjoy safe and conducive learning environment. Schools have structures where children interact in safe spaces and report cases of abuses that are addressed. School children, through CYP Clubs used various forms of platforms to advocate on issues affecting them and actions taken to address the identified issues. We trained our CYPs and Focal Persons on the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools 2021 and the Comprehensive School Safety Policy 2023 and the Education Act 2023. The CYPs led peer education to popularize the Radical Inclusion and School Safety Policies that have increased awareness on the bans on corporal punishment, and the need for an inclusive, safe, and gender-responsive learning environment.

Many parent learners and pregnant girls, children with disabilities and in other vulnerable circumstances have access to school and are treated fairly. Moreover, we also supported 49 CYPs through trainings and coaching to conduct peer education on alcohol and drug and child rights issues. Consequently, the CYPs conducted lobbying activities for alcohol and drug free school environment. These clubs also received support from their focal persons (teachers) in rolling out their activities

In addition, FoRUT supported 76 school governance structures (29 SMCs and 47 BoGS) in Moyamba, Port Loko, and Western Area to effectively monitor quality and accessible education. We provided trainings and conducted routine meetings with the school governance structures who monitor adherence to the Teacher Code of Conduct and school safety issues.

School-going children in UMC Primary School at Yainkessa have access to safe and conducive WASH facilities

FoRUT handed over a newly constructed four-room toilet at the UMC Primary School at Yainkessa, Moyamba District on the 26th of May 2023. One of the toilet rooms is disability friendly. A total of 196 children (boys 113, girls 83) have access to safe and conducive WASH facilities in the school. FoRUT supplied the school with four big water holding drums for water storage, 4 buckets, 4 kettles, and 4 bowls to ensure the facilities are use appropriately. Representatives from Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Moyamba District Council made

statements during the handing over ceremony. A cross section of community members and pupils attended the handover ceremony.



Strengthening Early Grade Reading in 10 Schools in Port Loko District

We support over 300 children (165 girls and 135 boys) across 12 schools in Port Loko District to learn and achieve the grades necessary for transition to secondary school through teacher training and reading circle. In 2023, FoRUT conducted in-service training for teachers on strategies for managing reading circles to enhance children's reading and comprehension. The reading circle meet after school hours and it is done outside the classroom. In the reading circles, small groups of learners gather to read and discuss a piece of literature in depth. The discussion is guided by students' response to what they have read. The reading circles provide the opportunities for slow learners to catch up with other learners during regular class work.

CYPs advocate for their rights

CYPs developed and implemented 343 activity plans, which is 71% of the planned (480). Their plans dealt with issues relating to child labour, stigmatization, corporal punishment for lateness and preventing children from entering the school compound and attending classes as punishment for lateness. To achieve this, FoRUT trained 46 of the 76 CYPs in peer education in schools and communities on alcohol and drug misuse, gender-based violence, reproductive health and rights and other child rights issues in the year u

All the 37 CYP clubs in the urban communities across the target schools and districts formed an additional 2 coalitions in the Western Area and Moyamba District, bringing the total number of CYP coalitions to five in the project areas. They jointly plan and implement awareness raising and advocacy activities on child rights issues in their respective districts. They focused on corporal punishment, child marriage, sexual penetration, and street trading during school hours. The CYP coalitions maintain WhatsApp groups where they plan their activities, share updates on activities implemented, and discuss challenges on child rights issues. Community and national radio stations invite them to participate in radio discussions. Some organizations invited them to participate in child-related activities in their respective districts.

In 2023, the CYPs successfully undertook 30 advocacy initiatives. The advocacy initiative included: radio and television discussions, lobby meetings, debates, float parades, drama, songs, protests, dissemination of awareness raising advocacy messages during community outreach and writing letters to heads of schools on child rights and child protection issues in their schools to influence policy and implementation at all levels. All the CYP clubs undertook 41 mass sensitization campaigns on ending child marriage, sexual penetration, children selling during school hours and the role of duty bearer and stakeholders in protecting the rights of children

CYPs commemorate Day of the African Child 2023

Children's rights include not only rights to protection from all forms of violence, but also rights to participation and provision. In the absence of proper mechanisms of protection, children will be susceptible to greater risks of cyber bullying and harm. In commemoration of the Day of the African Child our 370 CYPs across Moyamba (134), Port Loko (109) and Western Area (127) participated in peer engagement sessions on the positive use of digital technology on the theme "Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment." The sessions used face-to-face engagements and online interaction through zoom online platform. FoRUT provided technical, logistical and financial support to the CYP clubs that participated in the sessions. We also used schools Harford Secondary School for Girls, Moyamba, Schlenka Secondary School in Port Loko and Government Model Secondary School in Freetown because they have digital technology infrastructure. The CYPs also used Whatsapp for their district interaction.

CASE STORY - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES CLUB MEMBER TRANSFORMED THE LIFE OF A CLASSMATE

There is an increase in the enrolment of children in school due to the Free Quality School Education (FQSE) that enhance access, quality, and equality for children, removing financial barriers to school enrolment and improving teaching and learning outcomes. The National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools seeks to ensure that schools are accessible to and inclusive of all children especially those groups that are marginalized or excluded from formal schooling. Children have right to education, and it is their obligation to attend school, concentrate on their academic work, free from violent act and drug abuse. However, some children prioritize their rights failing to adhere to their responsibilities. Children and young people's clubs (CYPs) conducted sensitizations, peer education, mobilization, and campaigns on child right issues in schools and communities. They are role models and serve as agents of change.

The CYPs club members in United Muslim Association Secondary School (UMASS) in the Western Area transformed the lives of one of their classmates through peer education. 13-year-old boys in JSS1 lived with his mother and leaves home every day pretending that, he is going to school. He goes to a field to play football and gambling. After school, a CYP member passed by the field when going home and met him gambling. He asked him why he was not attending school for the past two months. He told him that, his friend who had dropped out of school influenced him to gambling. He became interested because, he was getting money from the gambling. The money made him stopped attending school. On the regular basis, the CYPs member conducted peer education with him on the importance of education and his responsibilities to become useful citizen. He showed him his grades he got from tests taken that were good. He also showed him his notes and assignments. After two weeks, he took other CYPs to him for discussions for him to return to school. He finally agreed and started going to school. He joined the CYPs to conduct sensitization and peer education on child rights and alcohol and drugs abuse in school and communities.

One CYP member conducted peer education to one of their colleagues who was not attending school and found playing football and gambling. He talked with him and later called other CYPs to talk to him. They conducted sensitizations for a month with him. They succeeded in influencing him to continue his schooling. He is regular in school, takes his academic work seriously and has been promoted to JSS 2. He joined the CYPs to conduct sensitization and peer education on Child rights, alcohol and drugs misuse and negative peer influence.

Supporting children through training, awareness raising and campaigns, providing training materials and IEC and conducting monitoring and meetings empowered them to become role models and served as agents of change. They will influence their peers on positive behaviour that can transform their lives.

3 Strategic Pillar 3: Livelihoods security, local economic empowerment & climate resilience

Outcome: Men, Women, and youths in marginalized communities make use of livelihood opportunities for small business development, increased food production and employment that improve their standard of living.

MTNDP	SDGs
<p>Goal 1 A diversified, resilient green economy</p> <p>Policy Cluster 2.1: Improving the productivity and commercialization of the agricultural sector.</p>	<p>Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</p> <p>Target 2.2: to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</p> <p>Target 2.3 to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous people, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers including through secure and equal access to land and other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment</p>

172 Youths Gained Employable Vocational Skills

The strengths of traditional apprenticeship are its practical orientation, self-regulation, and self-financing. Formal training programmes, apprenticeships, and second-chance opportunities are used to equip out-of-school youth, the unskilled and unemployed, particularly young people, with employable skills in the market. In 2023, 28 youths (14 male and 14 female) received non-certified vocational skills training and had gained job experience. They also participated in business development trainings. It is expected that they will be gainfully engaged. Those who will receive the start kits will use them appropriately to perfect their skills and earn income.

Vulnerable Farmers Increase Food Production

FoRUT supports farmer-based organization (FBOs) to promote food security and livelihood in



rural households. In 2023, FoRUT had established 15 FBOs. All of them benefited from farmer field school (FFS) where they were introduced to climate smart technology to increase agricultural productivity. The farming technologies taught at the FFS included time of planting, bed construction, and spacing, time of

transplanting, weeding, preparation of compost manure, time of harvesting, storing produce and

marketing of produce. All the 15 FBOs benefited from the FFS in 2020 and 2021. As a result, 451 (206 male 245 female) farmers of 489 (254 male, 235 female) targeted practised at least one climate smart technologies in 2023, which increased productivity and income, and improved standard of living among farmers. In addition, 3 FBOs now serve as seed vendors for farmers within and outside their communities.

Community Credit and Savings Loans Schemes Promote Livelihood Security

Promoting livelihood opportunities for vulnerable groups in rural communities, especially women, enables rural households to meet the needs of their children. Since 2019, CoCSAs use the village savings and loans methodology. CoCSAs provide loans with low interest rate . In 2023, the 136 CoCSAs saved NLe **1,193,156** (666,926 for men and **526,230** for women) compared to NLe **655,977** in 2022. The number of times women access loans increased form **3,066** in 2022 to **4,610** in 2023 of the **6,631** loans that were issued for business. With the loans, some women started new businesses while others expanded existing businesses and farming activities. As a result, household income increased and many of them can meet the financial demands of their family, including their children's education

CoCSAs also used their welfare funds to repair water wells and school furniture. All the CoCSAs have management committees, who are responsible for managing the CoCSAs for a particular period. There are more women (1,999) 58.3% in the CoCSAs, and they occupy leadership positions and participate in decision making. CoCSAs are the most popular savings schemes in project communities and members are willing to continue to operate the scheme when the project ends.



CASE STORY: COCSA PROMOTES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Rural communities lack access to financial services, needed to support livelihood activities and expand the local economy. External creditors usually give out small loans in communities during the farming season, with high interest, and mostly in exchange for their farm produce during the harvest periods. Debtors would normally use most of their produce to pay off the debts. To alleviate this problem of creditors given out small loans with high interest that left community people with little or nothing after paying off their debts, FoRUT introduced Community Credit and Savings Associations (CoCSAs) in target communities to facilitate access to financial services in rural communities and improve the living standards of rural households.

FoRUT formed and supported CoCSAs to improve the lives of marginalized women and men in project communities. CoCSA members, mostly women. Save and access loans for small business enterprises and meet other family needs and contribute to the Social Fund for minor community development. Well-trained Community-based Facilitators (CBFs) that were provided with monthly stipend, provided on the spot training, and coaching on record keeping, gender equality and women's empowerment and governance issues during CoCSA meetings. Since Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is one of FoRUT's thematic focus, the project ensures women's equal participation in governance and decision making in the CoCSAs. The CBFs conducted training on these issues during CoCSA meetings and the annual elections in accordance with the CoCSA by-laws that ensure gender parity as much as possible. There are 136 CoCSAs with 680 executive members of which 401 are women. The increased number of women in the governance of CoCSAs has minimized dispute during transactions and share out of dividend since they display high level of integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness in handling the association resources. Association members are confident and feel satisfied of the work of these women and this not only positively affected the CoCSAs but also the chieftdom level leadership where we have 71 women serving in leadership position at community level ranging from community chairladies, youth leaders and religious leaders. Executive members are elected for every cycle via an open election process and the membership is based on self-selection, and groups choose their own members and are mostly people members' trust. Anyone can be voted to be in the management committee. Decision making processes are transparent and inclusive. No one person has a monopoly in making the rules. All our COCSAs focus on shared objectives and support one another to achieve their objectives.

The 136 CoCSAs have 680 executive members of which 401 are women. Of these 401 women, 98 are chairpersons, 40 are record keepers, 155 are money counters and 108 are box keepers. A total of 221 women were selected to serve as key holders out of the 408 key holders. Women now sit and are part of tables where decisions are made for the CoCSAs and community development.

This has also improved their social status since they interact with their male counterparts and contribute to the association and community development. It also shows that there is increased awareness on gender equality, which has led to the having more women in leadership positions. For instance, Tamareneh, one of the CoCSAs in Mobekoh, have ensured more women in leadership positions (management committee) through the annual elections they hold for each saving cycle. Elections are held each year whether the membership is happy with the management committee or not and as a result women now hold more leadership positions.

When community structures are empowered on gender equality and women's empowerment, myths and negative norms become irrelevant, and women are encouraged and are given space to be part of decision making and community development. Establishing and strengthening community structures through trainings increase awareness and augment their willingness to work in the interest of women and promote gender equality.

4 Strategic Pillar 4: Social Accountability, Good Governance and Access to justice in FoRUT Operational Areas

Outcome: Citizens influence national authorities to revise existing policies and laws on women and children’s rights, anti-corruption, land tenure and environmental issues, have access to justice, and hold government accountable.

<i>MTNDP Cluster</i>	<i>SDGs</i>
<p>Policy Cluster 1.4: Increasing social protection.</p> <p>Policy Cluster 4 – Governance and accountability for results.</p> <p>Policy Cluster 4.2 Fighting corruption and illicit financial flows</p>	<p>Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.</p> <p>Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p> <p>Target 16.2: To end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children.</p>

FoRUT achieves results associated with Outcome 4 through its work with civil society networks and in collaboration with other NGOs/CSOs. The actions mobilize citizens and community support to reduce corruption, advance rights, and promote good governance through non-violent approaches.

Membership on coalitions/networks

We are active members of the:

- Child Rights Coalition-Sierra Leone (CRC-SL)
- Sierra Leone Alcohol Policy Alliance (SLAPA)
- People Power Movement – Sierra Leone (PPM SL)
- West African Alcohol Policy Alliance (WAAPA)

FoRUT coordinates SLAPA and PPM SL.

Advancing the Rights of Children through the Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone

FoRUT is active both in the leadership and district chapters of the Child Rights Coalition Sierra Leone (CRC-SL). FoRUT contributed to the development, printing and launch of the Report on Progress in the Implementation of Recommendations from the Review of Sierra Leone’s Reports in Advancing the Rights of the Child as provided for in the United Nations Convention on the

Awareness Raising on Alcohol-Related Harms on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) Awareness Day 2023

In raising awareness about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) awareness day (9th September), FoRUT supported SLAPA District Chapters in Port Loko, Kenema, Kambia, Moyamba, Tonkolili, Bombali Districts and the Western Area to conduct awareness raising at PHU and school levels on the prevention and the health, social and economic consequences of FASDs. The Alliance in Kenema and Bombali Districts held radio discussion programmes on the risk and consequences of FASDs and the need for government to integrate FASDs in primary health care.

Gender Alert Groups Lead Actions to Promote Women and Children's Rights

FoRUT supported and trained Gender Alert Groups and local authorities on Sexual Gender Based Violence issues. These community structures work to promote and protect women and children's rights in the communities and because of these trainings, Gender Alert Group members increase on their awareness raising drive to minimize the issue of SGBV case compromise in their respective communities. In 2023, they identified and reported **17** cases of Gender Based Violence to the Family Support Unit and resolved **22** minor cases of domestic violence across the 3 districts. They also work with local authorities and other stakeholders to protect and promote women and children's rights through consultative meeting, sensitization and awareness raising. Gender Alert Group members identify, report and follow-up cases of violation since they are empowered through capacity building training, meetings, consultations and collaboration.

Women leadership also increase in project communities. There are **74** GAGs across the 3 districts with 222 executive members (**70** males and **152** females). Of these **152** female executive members, 74 are chairladies, 74 Public Relations Officers and 4 as secretaries. Women serve as secretaries the least because of the low level of literacy in the communities and among women

Promoting Mental Health

Increasing Awareness on Mental Health during Mental Health Month and World Mental Health Day 2023

During the 2023 Mental Health Month in May, FoRUT engaged its social media platforms with mental health promotion messages that focused on treating mental health on a par with physical health. In addition, FoRUT and the Mental Health Coalition jointly conducted outreach in FoRUT partner schools. FoRUT conducted awareness raising in 10 secondary schools (4 in Western Area, 3 in Moyamba and 3 in Port Loko) on Mental Health and Wellbeing. The meetings were scheduled during assembly hours where pupils and teachers had the opportunities to ask questions about mental health issues including causes, prevention, management, and referrals. FoRUT's Executive Director climaxed the school sensitization at the Government Rokel Secondary School in Freetown. The CYP clubs that FoRUT supports introduced the outreach team to their respective school authorities and participated in the outreach activities.

The Ministry of Health and Partners commemorated World Mental Health Day on 10th October 2023 to raise awareness and drive actions that promote and protect everyone's mental health with

the theme ‘Mental Health is a Universal Human Right.’ Various state and non-state actors attended the event during which the MoH launched the toll-free line to access mental health care and services. FoRUT provided material and financial support for the event and attended planning meetings of the Mental Health Steering Committee.

5 Monitoring, Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

FoRUT, since 2019 has conducted quarterly and half yearly programme meetings to review our work, identify bottle necks, explore new opportunities to improve our strategies in working with and working for programme participants and Boundary Partners. These meetings have strategically shaped our strategies to successfully reach our targeted BPs.

In 2023, we conducted an annual peer review to track successes, challenges and opportunities of its relationship and work with boundary partners and other stakeholders at district and national level. The learning review provided opportunities to promote ongoing learning and ways of seeking feedback from multiple stakeholders about our various interventions and their impact. Actions points, including areas of improvement, are integrated in the annual implementation plan of the current year. The exercise built the capacity of programme staff and partners on the new basic M&E requirements. FoRUT engaged representatives of stakeholders and BPs who revealed the impact of FoRUT interventions on the lives of the beneficiaries. During the peer review community stakeholders and boundary partners are given the opportunity to assess the work of FoRUT, comment on their challenges working with FoRUT and proffer recommendation for effective collaboration.

6 Overall challenges and actions to address them

The following are the key challenges experienced in 2023 and strategies that we will use to address them:

1. Poor in Moyamba Limited mobility in enhancing movement in operational areas – We will dedicate a vehicle for district operations in Moyamba District where the roads are in poor condition particularly during the rainy season
2. The majority of the FBOs are not registered with MAFS, which prevents them from accessing additional resources – We will support the FBOs to fulfil the requirements of registering with the ministry.

Our Audited Financial Statements 2023

Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation (FoRUT)
Annual report and financial statements
for the year ended 31 December 2023

Statement of financial position

as at 31 December

<i>In new Leones</i>	Notes	2023	2022
Assets			
Receivables and prepayment	4	41,142	137,381
Cash and cash equivalents	5	756,945	704,145
Current assets		<u>798,087</u>	<u>841,526</u>
Total assets		<u>798,087</u>	<u>841,526</u>
Equity			
Accumulated fund	6	280,591	352,323
Total equity		<u>280,591</u>	<u>352,323</u>
Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	7	457,801	429,508
Deferred grant income	9	59,695	59,695
Current liabilities		<u>517,496</u>	<u>489,203</u>
Total equity and liabilities		<u>798,087</u>	<u>841,526</u>

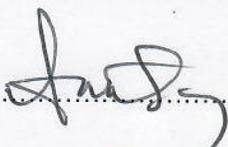
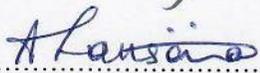
These financial statements were approved by the Directors on..... 4 March 2024

.....)
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) Directors
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Statement of comprehensive income
for the year ended 31 December

<i>In new Leones</i>	Notes	2023	2022
Grant income	8	6,750,962	5,126,199
Other income	10	748,645	875,679
Total income		<u>7,499,607</u>	<u>6,001,878</u>
Expenditure			
Personnel costs	11	2,661,564	1,883,255
Travel costs	12	549,271	483,256
Operating costs	13	854,756	668,791
Consultancies	14	55,622	24,306
Procurement	15	1,433,631	1,165,990
Direct activities	16	1,629,937	1,182,087
Audit, monitoring and evaluation	17	326,863	290,310
Total expenditure		<u>7,511,644</u>	<u>5,697,995</u>
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year		<u>(12,037)</u>	<u>303,883</u>

These financial statements were approved by the Directors on..... 4 March 2024

.....)
)
.....)
) Directors

PROGRAMMES DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (DIP) AND BUDGET 2024

Alcohol, Drugs and Development Project. DIP and Budget 2024

No	Description of project activity	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Budget
													NLE
1	Organize Annual Alcohol Policy Conference 2024									X			71,691
2	Train women led CBOs and teacher Counsellors on Mobilization techniques on alcohol and drug related harm.							X	X	X			28,930
3	Train CYPs and Youth Led CBOs on Mobilization techniques on alcohol and drug related harm.							X	X	X			28,930
4	Support CYPs/ CBO/ Youth Groups /SLAPA's Outreach Activities												18,400
5	Conduct seminars with MDAs and stakeholders on alcohol and drug related harms.					X	X	X					
6	Lobbying meetings with MDAs including the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in reviewing the National Drug Control Act 2008		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
7	Provide Visibility, Internet subscription, Facebook, website page etc		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			28,000
8	Support African Rising Movement / Youth Led CBOs on African					X							6,000

	Liberation Day Commemoration											
9	Printing of the Child Friendly Version of the NAP					X	X					11,500
10	Conduct research on alcohol related harms issues								X	X		93,693
11	Support to BPs in Tackling Drug Related harms					X	X	X	X	X	X	14,950
12	Conduct SLAPA AGM										X	28,400
13	Conduct SLAPA Board Meetings	X			X			X			X	6,600
14	Commemorate World Alcohol Free Day								X			41,250
15	Commemorate FASDs Awareness Day							X				49,500
16	Commemorate UN Day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking				X							74,400
17	SLAPA AGM											28,400
18	Support ACTWG Activities	X		X		X		X		X		25,400
Grand Total for ADD											556,044	

Mental Health Project DIP and Budget 2024

No	Description of project activity	Target		Total participants	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Budget	
		M	F		NLE													
1	Support CYPs, TCs, CSN and CRGs to participate in national and international mental health events / activities.	75	75	150										X				84,550
2	Annual stakeholders meeting	40	40	80					X									38,400
3	Support MH Steering Committee Activities of MoH and MoSW	0	0	0			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		15,500
4	Train Civil society organisations / CBOs / CRGs and Teacher Counsellors on Mental Health and selfcare including mainstreaming MH in their work in tackling stigma, discrimination, myths, prevention, management and linkages to health facilities.	60	66	126						X	X	X						56,800
5	Train CYPs on mental health and selfcare including on mental health and selfcare including tackling stigma, discrimination, myths, prevention, management and linkages to health facilities.	150	150	300									X	X	X			32,700

6	Train Health Facility Staff on psycho-social support / appropriate referral systems /MHGap tools and other Mental health conditions/disorders	25	50	75									X	X				43,376
7	Train Community Rights Groups, and CHWs on community-based mental health care in line with the WHO task sharing mode.	50	70	120					X	X	X							49,600
Grand Total for Mental Health Project																	636,900	

Gender Equality Project DIP and Budget 2024																	
Timeline																	Budget NLE
No	Description of project activity	Target		Total	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
		M	F														
1	Activity 3.1. 4: Support CRGs including women's groups to commemorate national and international events (IWD, International day for rural women, 16 days of activism).			12			X							X	X		60,000
2	Activity 3.1.5: Support CRGs including local authorities and women's groups to popularize policies and laws on women's rights through community meetings and media engagement			12			X							X	X		24,000
3	Support to Boundary Partners (CRGs, LAs, TC, and CYPs) on making						X							X	X		24,000

	project activities visible in communities.																	
4	Facilitate the establishment/restructuring of Community right groups/CBOs			12														-
5	Activity 3.2.5: Support CRGs to conduct activities on gender norms, power relations and women's role in development processes.			12														24,000
6	Activity 3.3.6: Support MDAs including FSU, One Stop Centre with stationery on SGBV case management.																	17,100
7	Activity 3.3.8 Support SGBV Survivors to access appropriate medical and psychosocial services / supports SGBV referrals and case management.																	24,000
8	Activity 3.1.1: Train Community Rights Groups/CBOs on Policies/laws that protect and promote women's rights	24	36	60														45,000
9	Activity 3.1.8: Train women's groups in local government and rural development processes, governance, accountability and transparency	0	45	45														38,200
10	Activity: 3.2.6: Train CRGs on harmful gender norms and power relations.	24	36	60														41,000
11	Activity 3.2.1: Train CRGs/CBOs on SRHR including comprehensive sexual education tools.	24	36	60														45,000
12	Activity 3.2.1.b: Train CYPs on SRHR including comprehensive sexual education tools.	50	70	120														76,000

Livelihood Project DIP and Budget 2024																	
No	Description of project activity	Target		Total	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Budget
		M	F														NLE
1	Activity 5.1.0: Annual stakeholders' consultative meeting.			64						X							21,470
2	Activity 5.1.1: Facilitate the formation/restructuring of FBOs in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture			15			X	X									-
3	Activity 5.1.5: Facilitate the formation of new CoCSAs			15			X	X									-
4	Support to MDAs																13,094
5	Activity 5.1.2: Support FBOs(men and women) through Farmer Field School (FFS)/climate-smart technology including graduation exercise, and cross-learning.			6													44,000
6	5.1.3: Provide viable seeds and agricultural tools to FBOs.			15													63,000
7	Activity 5.1.4: Train FBOs (men and women) in value addition/marketing strategies to improve their income	40	80	120													73,620
8	Activity 5.1.6: Train CoCSA members/Village Agents/Community Based Facilitators on VSLA methodology	20	10	30													26,780
9	Activity 5.1.7: Train CoCSA members on business development skills and ADD	50	##	150													90,710

10	Activity 5.1.8: Support CoCSAs with start-up kits and access to banking and other financial services			15													40,000
11	Activity 5.1.9: Enrol vulnerable youths including survivors of GBV, persons with lived Experience in skill training.	15	21	36							X	X					216,000
Total																	588,674
12	Activity 5.1.3: Support FBOs with inputs for crop production.	60	70	130			X										50,000
13	Support CoCSA with transaction Kits					X	X	X									78,000
Grand total for Livelihood Project																	695,204

Child Rights Project DIP and Budget 2024

No	Description of project activity	Target		Total	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Budget	
		M	F														NLE	
	Meetings																	
1	Activity 1: Consultative Stakeholders' meeting on the previous 5 years project and the new project for 2024 - 2028	50	40	90				X										19,950
2	Activity 2: Conduct meetings with Community Right Groups on child right issues and school enrolment	20	25	45							X							3,600
3	Activity 3: Conduct meetings with heads of schools and teacher Counsellors on child right issues and school enrolment	30	30	60									X					4,800
4	Activity 4: Conduct meetings with CYPs on child Right issues and school enrolment	60	60	120									X					9,600
	Sub Total			0														37,950
	Capacity building			0														
	Output 2.4.3 School authorities and governance structures are knowledgeable in education and child protection policy and/or laws, including			0														

	child rights and protection issues																	
5	Activity 5: Train SMCs / BoGs and teachers councillor on child rights /education policies / laws	30	30	60									X					50,440
6	Activity 6: Train Community Rights groups on child rights /education policies / laws	20	25	45									X					35,020
7	Activity 7: Train CYPs and youth groups on child rights issues	52	52	104									X					40,050
	Sub Total			0														125,510
8	Activity 8: Support CRGs to conduct radio discussion programmes in promoting school enrolment			0								X						5,460
9	Activity 9: Support Community Right Groups (CRGs)/ Parents Action Groups & Local Authorities to conduct awareness raising in communities on promoting the rights and welfare of children in schools and communities	20	25	45								X						4,750
10	Activity 10: Support survivors			0				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	20,324

	to access child protection mechanism																
11	Activity 11: Support children and youth in distress with care, protection and psychosocial support in accordance with their needs			0					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	35,320
12	Activity 12: Support children with disability with assistive devices to access quality education	8	12	20						X							66,000
13	Activity 13: Support MDAs' strategic child protection activities/meetings at district and national								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	40,000
14	Activity 14: Support to CYPs to organize activities on child right issues								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	25,000
15	Activity 15: Support children affected by disaster								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	53,800
	Sub Total																53,800
	Commemoration of international events																
16	Activity 16: Support CYPs to commemorate the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC)	45	45	90										X			34,120

17	Activity 17: Support CYPs to conduct radio discussion programmes on child right issues on the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC)	2	2	4									X			7,280
18	Activity 18: Support CYPs to commemorate the Day of the African Child (DAC)	45	45	90				X								29,900
19	Activity 19: Support CYPs to conduct radio discussion programmes on child right issues the Day of the African Child (DAC)	2	2	4				X								7,280
20	Activity 20: Support CYPs to conduct radio discussion on child right issues on the International Children's Day	2	2	4										X		7,280
Sub Total																85,860
21	Activity 21: Produce SBCC materials / Media Engagements on Child Rights Issues							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	15,000
Sub Total																15,000
Grand total for Child Rights Project															588,674	