



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



UNICEF COMMENDS SPEAKER THOMAS FOR HIGH SCORE IN OPEN PARLIAMENT INDEX

The UNICEF Representative to Sierra Leone Rudolf Schwenk, and team have on the 23/06/2025, paid a courtesy call on the Rt. Hon. Speaker Segepoh Solomon Thomas. After commendation the Speaker and the House of Parliament for the high score in the Open Parliament Index, the Head of the UNICEF Delegation appealed on Speaker Thomas to help increase Public Funding Investment for Children.

The UNICEF Representative to Sierra Leone, Rudolf Schwenk, confessed that Sierra Leone had made strong policy commitments in favour of children's rights. At the same time, he called on all to be mindful that turning these commitments into tangible improvements in children's lives requires effective and equitable implementation. While some districts are better resourced, he said others struggle to meet basic service needs, often due to structural challenges in budget allocation and delivery.

Despite growing recognition of its importance, he said, services to prevent and respond to abuse, exploitation, and violence remain underfunded and overstretched.

“This is especially critical in light of rising rates of teenage pregnancy, which are linked to school dropout, poor health outcomes, and a cycle of poverty that can span generations”, he said.

Ultimately, he continued that a child who is hungry, sick, or forced to walk long distances for clean water faces significant challenges in succeeding at school. He added that such highlights why integrated, multisectoral investments are indispensable for sustainable development and why they align closely with the goals of the Medium-Term National Development Plan.

The Rt. Hon. Speaker Segepoh Solomon Thomas expressed appreciation to the UNICEF Delegation for the courtesy call. He thanked the UNICEF Delegation for commending Sierra Leone Parliament for its consistent high ranking Index for Parliamentary Openness. He also assured the UNICEF Team of Parliament’s indefatigable support towards the welfare of children. Speaker Thomas made specific reference to progressive enacted by the Sixth Parliament meant to protect children including the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2024. The Rt. Hon. Speaker noted that they are struggling with the Child Right Act due to many views and opinions of Members of Parliament which had stagnated the passage of the bill. He said the Sixth Parliament is keenly interested in matters relating to children. The Rt. Hon. Speaker also concluded by suggesting that the UNICEF Team should also have an engagement with the Ministry of Finance for an increased Public Funding Investment for Children.

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