



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **SRSR LAUNCHES WOMEN'S HELP LINE PROJECT IN PUJEHUN**

*Freetown, Sierra Leone* – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago over the weekend launched the Women's Help Line (WHL) in the southern provincial town of Pujehun. The project was undertaken at the initiative of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

In his keynote address to a packed hall, Ambassador Mwakawago said in spite of the untold suffering the war inflicted on them, the women of Pujehun had made encouraging efforts to deal with that legacy and confront present and future challenges. The UN upheld and promoted the human rights of women in particular, a cause he had been championing since he took up office in Sierra Leone earlier this year.

The SRSR praised the women of the district for their "excellent work" in looking after each other's needs and challenged the Paramount Chiefs to commit to the development of their people. "Women must stand up and defend their rights... Educate your girls and you will see a difference." Furthermore, the girl child must be taught the culture of self-preservation from premature sexual contacts and the existence and dangers of HIV/AIDS.

He stressed that the councillors focus on developing their communities rather than squabbling. "Help develop your people. Do not perpetuate poverty" he urged.

Deputy Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Nancy Asanga, who also spoke at the ceremony, said she was impressed by the "zeal" demonstrated by the women of WHL and promised that UNDP would review its programmes with a view to enhancing collaboration with the project.

National Coordinator of WHL, Christine Kuna Tita, said similar projects had already been launched in other parts of the country. The goal was establishment in all twelve districts. According to her it was a coping strategy that would enable women to become self-sufficient.

Several other speakers at the launch, the Governor of the central Bank of Sierra Leone, Dr J. D. Rogers, Head of Sierra Leone's poverty eradication strategy, Dr Francis Kaikai; and Minister of State for the South, Dr Alhaji U. N. S Jah, also lauded the efforts of the women.

The delegation visited the women's center that includes a library, a counseling office and provides training of women in gara tie-dyeing, as well as a visit to a bakery for the women and the Ambassador Adeniji Pre-school, named after the former SRSR.

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