



YWIGN

WEEKLY

NATIONAL

BRIEF

Issue 01

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**A New Voice,
A New Lens**

Editorial Message

This week, Sierra Leone's challenges and possibilities collided squarely in public view. On one hand, the kush crisis continues to claim lives and dialogue; on the other, bold energy promises — like the 40 MW Release by Scatec deal — push us to imagine a more resilient future. Meanwhile, the AfDB's \$500 million country strategy offers hope, if harnessed well.

As young women committed to inclusive governance, our mission in this brief is to name what is, press for what should be, and uplift what can be. We must keep the spotlight on the margins — the women addicted, the youth silenced, the districts in darkness — so that policy is not just spoken about, but shaped by those it must serve.

Let this be our covenant: we will be rigorous, uncompromising, but always rooted in empathy and purpose.

YIWGN Editorial Team



Understanding the Week

What's Happening and Why It Matters



01. The Kush Crisis Deepens

Across Sierra Leone, the use of the deadly **drug kush** continues to spread, causing widespread fear and public concern. Many people took to social media to express their alarm over how quickly the drug is destroying young lives. The situation became even more tense after a journalist was reportedly threatened for commenting on the crisis, sparking debates about freedom of expression.

This issue matters deeply because lives are being lost, families are suffering, and communities are losing trust in the authorities' ability to respond. **The Young Inspiring Women in Governance Network (YIWGN)** believes that the kush problem is not just a law enforcement issue—it is a public health and social crisis. The country urgently needs a gender-sensitive, community-based rehabilitation strategy that supports victims, raises awareness, and provides treatment and reintegration for those affected, especially women and youth.





02. Major Solar Energy Deal Signed

The government has signed a new agreement with an international energy company, Release by Scatec, to install a 40-megawatt solar power and battery project in Kamakwei and Kerena. This deal marks an important step toward expanding access to clean and reliable energy.

This development matters because constant blackouts have been a major obstacle to learning, business, and health services across the country. Reliable electricity can change lives—especially for women who run small enterprises and children who need light to study. YIWGN welcomes this step but calls on the government and its partners to ensure that local women and youth benefit directly from job opportunities, training, and business participation in the renewable energy sector.

03. African Development Bank Approves \$500 Million for Sierra Leone



The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** has approved a new five-year strategy worth **\$500 million** to support Sierra Leone's economic growth. The plan focuses on improving infrastructure, promoting agriculture, and strengthening social services.

This matters because it provides one of the largest development support packages Sierra Leone has received in recent years. If well-managed, it could improve livelihoods, create jobs, and enhance food security. However, if mishandled, it risks widening inequality and deepening mistrust. YIWGN urges the government and development partners to ensure transparent spending, regular public reporting, and inclusive project planning so that women, youth, and rural communities truly benefit from these funds.

A new five-year strategy to support
Sierra Leone's Economic Growth

\$500 Million

\$500
Million



Infrastructure



Agriculture



Social Services

04.

Threats Against Journalists Raise Concern



The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) has raised serious concerns after journalist **Amadu Lamrana Bah** received threats following his comments on the kush epidemic. This has reignited conversations about press freedom and the safety of journalists in the country.

The issue is important because a free press is the backbone of democracy. When journalists are threatened or silenced,

citizens lose access to accurate information and public accountability suffers. YIWGN condemns all forms of intimidation against journalists and calls on the government to strengthen protection mechanisms and condemn such actions publicly. Every voice that seeks truth and justice must be protected, not punished.

**05.**

Solar Energy Imports Increase

Sierra Leone recently imported **\$10 million** worth of solar panels from China—a move expected to increase the nation's renewable energy capacity by about 61 percent. This shows growing commitment to clean energy solutions as the country struggles with frequent power shortages.

This matters because expanding solar energy can improve living standards, support businesses, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. However, YIWGN stresses that Sierra Leone should not rely solely on imports. Instead, the government should invest in training local technicians and encouraging women's participation in solar installation, maintenance, and management. Building national capacity will make the energy transition more sustainable and create jobs for young people.

\$10 Million

Solar Panels to electrify
for homes, communities



Thematic Focus

"Kush: A Generation on the Line"

In communities across Sierra Leone, the drug known as kush has become a lethal presence — cheap, potent, and pervasive. According to an Afrobarometer survey, nearly 96% of Sierra Leoneans have heard of it, and 99% of them believe its abuse is a national problem. [Afrobarometer](#)

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According to an Afrobarometer survey

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Sierra Leoneans that believe its
abuse is a national problem

96%

Last week, a concerning thread circulated on Facebook: a post by a parliamentary figure promising an evening exposé on the "kush issue" triggered intense engagement, suggesting high public interest and political tension. [Facebook](#)

In parallel, coverage flagged that a journalist was threatened after commentary on kush, raising alarms about shrinking civic space. [Facebook](#)

Yet, rehabilitation remains underfunded and inaccessible. As AP reporting from earlier this year holds, only about 300 people have gone through government rehab programs, and just 40 were women. [AP News+1](#)



300

people have gone through
rehab programs



40

were
women



What this means

- The crisis is not only medical and criminal — **it is moral, social, and political.**



MORAL



SOCIAL



POLITICAL

- Youth, especially in impoverished areas, see kush as escape, survival, or rebellion.
- Women are doubly marginalized: as victims, and in many cases as sex workers or caregivers, often denied access to services.

YIWGN's Call to Action

- **National Stakeholders:** Launch a Gender-Responsive National Rehab & Recovery Framework — 1 center per region, with female-centered services, psychosocial support, and vocational reentry.
- **District Networks:** Map local “**hotspots**” and social networks to deploy peer educators and safe spaces.
- **Media & Safety:** Partner with SLAJ and media houses to monitor threats, create safe journalism protocols, and publicly defend free expression.
- **Civic Education:** Engage youth associations, district councils, and faith bodies in awareness campaigns that reclaim narratives of hope, not shame.

Governance & Accountability Tracker

Policy / Issue	Institution	Latest Development	Status	YWIGN Commentary
Kush / Drug Policy	MoHS / Narcotics Police	Threat to journalist flagged; public pressure rising	Critical	Formalize citizen oversight committees for rehab rollout
Energy / Power Deal	Ministry of Energy / EGTC	40 MW Release by Scatec agreement signed Moice+1	Promising	Demand gender hiring quotas and local
AfDB Strategy	AfDB / MoFED	\$500M CSP approved The Sierra Leone Telegraph+1	Mixed	Insist on public dashboards and quarterly updates
Press Freedom	SLAJ / IMC	Threats to journalist and press freedom concerns Facebook	Critical	Call for legal protection, rapid redress, and solidarity networks

Voices of Young Women



“They told me ‘kush is your escape’, but it became my prison. The doors to rehab never opened for me because I was a woman without means.” – S., Former User from Freetown (name withheld for safety)

In Kailahun, YIWGN’s field team reports that youth groups have started “**street dialogues**” in communities, mapping areas where kush is sold. Local women are volunteering to host safe-spaces in their homes.



Policy Corner: What Needs to Be Done

To Government & Parliament



- Secure gender-sensitive rehabilitation funds in next budget cycle.
- Mandate transparency clauses in all energy and infrastructure deals — with public procurement portals, citizens' scorecards, and independent audits.
- Update press safety laws to criminalize threats and protect journalists, especially those covering corruption and drug abuse.

To Civil Society & Donors



- Back community reintegration grants for recovered addicts (agriculture, craftsmanship, cooperatives).
- Fund district media grants to cover investigative journalism in underreported areas.
- Support district YIWGN branches with training in civic monitoring, youth mentorship, and safe reporting.

To Youth & Citizens



- Use social media to track rehabilitation center performance and report misuse or exclusion.
- Form “safe circles” in neighborhoods — groups of 5–10 that check on at-risk youth, connect to services, and diffuse rumors.
- Demand public forums: hold duty bearers accountable with questions about rehab, energy access, and local services.

Gender & Inclusion Lens

“Women and the Kush Gap”

While men dominate reportage of kush users, women are deeply affected — often invisible in policy. Stigma, caretaking burdens, and social norms block their access to rehab and reintegration. Data Spotlight: Only 13% of rehab beneficiaries are women (40 of 300 in government programs). [AP News+1](#)

13% of rehab beneficiaries are women



40/300 in government programs.

YIWGN Recommendation: Ensure **women-only intake days**, childcare support in centers, and mobile outreach units in markets, slums, and red-light districts.

YIWGN Action Log

- **District Surveys Completed:** Bo, Kenema, Port Loko — mapping kush impact zones.
- **Radio Appearance:** YIWGN spokesperson on SLBS to speak on youth addiction and energy futures.
- **Media Watch:** Issued statement supporting threatened journalist, alerting SLAJ and IMC.
- **Upcoming Town Hall:** “Light & Life in Kamakwei”, Oct 25 — focus on solar access, local oversight, and women’s voices.

Leadership Reflection

“When public darkness kills vision, it takes courage to light the first lamp – and wisdom to keep it burning.”

In this era, leadership is not about height but depth — about tending the hearts, not just the seats. Let our voices be steady, our demands clear, and our solidarity unwavering.



Top National Headlines of the Week

S/N	Issue	Description	Why It Matters	YWIGN View
1.	Kush crisis intensifies	Continued social media, news, and civic alarm over drug abuse; a journalist threatened over comments. Facebook	Lives are lost; public trust erodes	We demand a gender-sensitive, community-based rehab strategy
2.	Landmark power deal signed	Government signs deal with Release by Scatec for a 40 MW solar + storage “fast-track” project in Kamakwei / Kerena. Moice+1	Signals a shift toward clean energy & promise of reliable electricity	Ensure that local women’s groups benefit from jobs and training
3.	AfDB approves \$500m Sierra Leone	New strategy emphasizes sustainable infrastructure and agricultural value chains. The Sierra Leone Telegraph+1	Sets medium-term resource direction for the country	Push for transparent monitoring and inclusive prioritization
4.	Journalist safety under threat	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) voices concern over threats to Amadu Lamrana Bah over his comments on kush. Facebook	Undermines press freedom and democratic scrutiny	Call for protection protocols and public condemnation
5.	Solar capacity and imports increasing	Import of \$10 million solar panels from China expected to boost capacity by 61%. PVKnowhow	Helps address energy deficits	Demand local component sourcing, skills transfer, and women in solar trades

YIWGN Reflection

Sierra Leone is at a crossroads—facing crises like drug addiction and power shortages while also embracing opportunities in renewable energy and international development. What happens next will depend on how leaders act and how citizens respond.

“Real progress begins when every woman, every youth, and every citizen becomes part of the solution—not just a spectator.” -
YIWGN Communications Team

Next Week’s Focus

Theme Preview: “Energy Equity & Women’s Power: From Promises to Practice.”

We will track how the 40 MW solar deal is operationalized, how women can claim energy jobs, and how communities hold contractors accountable. Please share with us stories, photos, or data from your districts. Together, we will build this narrative — from the ground up.

#YIWGNBrief #YoungWomenLead #LightForAll #KushCrisisSL

— **YIWGN Communications & Editorial Team**

A New Voice, A New Lens

