

MISSION REPORT

SIERRA LEONE



March 2025



Swiss⁺ABILITY

Introduction

A LAND SCARRED BY THE PAST

This was the 5th mission to Sierra Leone since Julian and I (Roberto) committed ourselves to strengthen the nation's orthopedic sector through training, delivery of prosthetic limbs and the supply of materials.

Sierra Leone is not an easy country to work in. We still see the wounds left by its brutal civil war, which raged from 1991 to 2002. The conflict was marked by extreme violence, including mass killings, sexual violence, and indiscriminate widespread amputations – many of them inflicted deliberately by rebel groups as a tool of terror.

Fueled by corruption and the illegal diamond trade, the war claimed the lives of an estimated 50,000 people and displaced over two million more. Its devastating legacy continues to impact Sierra Leone's development and healthcare infrastructure to this day.

Today, Sierra Leone ranks among the poorest countries in the world – currently 9th from the bottom according to the Human Development Index and second last on the World Happiness Report. Limited access to healthcare, electricity, and clean water remain daily challenges for much of the population, and specialized medical services, such as orthopaedic surgery and all kinds of rehabilitation services, are often severely under-resourced.



Julian Lair and Roberto Agosta, met up with Nelson Mubiro, (from Uganda) at Addis Ababa airport on their way to Freetown.



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MISSION SUMMARY:

OUR MOST CHALLENGING AND PRODUCTIVE EFFORT YET

Our latest orthopaedic training mission to Freetown proved to be both the most challenging and productive to date. Over the course of five days, we collaborated closely with 14 orthopaedic professionals and trainees, delivering hands-on training in the manufacturing of prosthetic legs, focusing on the Monolimb: a low-cost solution that is revolutionizing Africa's prosthetic field. We taught specific workshops, including topics on orthopaedic surgery and then spent the rest of the long days on hands-on practical work. The determination of some of the technicians to learn was really remarkable, similarly the patience and resilience of the amputees was deeply touching.



Restoring Mobility and Dignity

One of the most impactful components of this mission was the donation and fitting of 22 prosthetic legs to 21 amputees – each recipient was a symbol of both past suffering and future hope. These prosthetic legs were produced and fitted by the participants (see page 3) who came from the National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) in Freetown, students of the MIT programme from Freetown and Bo and from a local orthopaedic centre in Makeni. Each one restored not only mobility but also dignity and independence to individuals who had been marginalized by their disabilities, many of which stemmed from the civil war, terrible accidents or untreated injuries.

LOOKING FORWARD

While the obstacles remain significant, this mission reaffirmed our belief in the power of collaboration, training, and consistent engagement. By continuing to invest in local capacity and offering targeted support, we are contributing to a future where quality orthopedic care is not a privilege, but a reality for all Sierra Leoneans.



Our Participants



Shekneh Dikor



Prince Kailie



Mary Sesay



James Fofanah



Mariatu Kalokoh



Ibrahim Fonna



Adama Conteh



Ibrahim Conteh



Alhaji Bangura



Aimran Sesay



Alusine Kanu



Aninata Saukoh



Dolores Samai



Abdulrahman Dumbuya

WITH APPRECIATION

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) for hosting our training, with special appreciation to Mr. Abdulrahman Dumbuya, Head of the Orthopaedics Department and the most experienced professional in the field nationwide.

Our 21 Beneficiaries

Name and year of Amputation	Type of Amputation	Reason for Amputation	Occupation	
Fatmata Sesay	2016	Left, transtibial	Landslide	Market Trader
Alice Kargbo	Birth	Left, transtibial	Congenital disease	Student
Foday Kallon	1998	Right, transtibial	Untreated snake bite	Businessman
Fomba Koroma	1995	Left, transtibial	Shot during war	Farmer
James Kainwo	1989	Left, transtibial	Untreated injury	Market trader
Amara Jalloh	2007	Left, transtibial	Congenital disease	Businessman
Kawellay Conteh	2012	Right, transtibial	Motorbike accident	Student
Vandi Lahai	1996	Right, transtibial	Shot during war	Farmer
Musa Mohamad	1998	Left, transtibial	Landmine during war	Tailor
Mohamed Vandi	2016	Left, transtibial	Motorbike accident	Farmer
Hawa Sallu	1991	Left, transtibial	Shot during war	Market trader
Moses Nguajah	2018	Right, transtibial	Accident cutting wood	Student
Foday Lahai	2022	Left transfemoral & right Transhumeral	Accident cutting wood	Charitable donations
Thamba Fornah	1995	Left, transfemoral	Shot during war	Farmer/tailor
Unisa Kamara	2023	Right, transfemoral	Vehicle accident	Student
Emmanuel Ensah	2009	Right, transfemoral	Gangrene	Market trader
Bashiru Sesay	Birth	Right, transfemoral	Congenital disease	Student
Julius Kanneh	2018	Left, transfemoral	Chronic infection in wound	Student
Allieu Sesay	2023	Right, transfemoral	Diabetes complications	Civil Servant
Kadiatu Conteh	2023	Double, transfemoral	Traffic accident	Market trader
Ibrahim Kamara	2024	Left, transtibial	Motorbike accident	Farmer



**BECAUSE WALKING SHOULD BE A RIGHT FOR ALL,
NOT JUST A PRIVILEGE OF THE FEW.**

Friendship and Bonding

RELATIONSHIPS FORMED AND DEEPENED DURING THE WEEK



Thamba Fornah



Julius and Bashiru, the two youngest beneficiaries



Emmanuel with Ibrahim, who produced his prosthesis



Alice with Nelson, SwissABILITY trainer



Left:
(L-R) Amara Jalloh, Kawellay Conteh, Mohamed, Musa Mohamed Vandi e Vandi Lahai

HONOURED BY A VISIT

Sierra Leone's first female Minister of Sports, Mrs Augusta James Teima came to visit the training. She was shown around by Pastor Mambud Samai (far left) and our technical trainer, Nelson Mubiru, on her right.



Beneficiaries in Focus

EVERY AMPUTEE HAS AN INSPIRING TESTIMONY

ALICE KARGBO WITH JANE, HER ADOPTIVE MOTHER



As an adult, Alice wants to champion other disabled people, either as a lawyer or a journalist. As a 15-year-old, she still has time to decide.

Born in Freetown without the bottom part of her left leg, her mother abandoned her at the hospital. She said she did not want to live the shame of having given birth to baby effected by a congenital disease. A nurse working on the ward said he knew a woman who raised abandoned children and asked Alice's father if he could call her. Jane was called and took Alice home and raised her as her own, along with five other abandoned children and her own four children.

Foday left the week of training a changed man, not just because of his new prosthesis.

Collecting wood in the forest cost him an arm and a leg. Literally. An accidental slip ripped off his right arm, the falling tree broke his left leg, which was later amputated.

Providing for his wife and three children over the past 3 years has been a challenge, to say the least. When he came for a fitting, his spirits were pretty low. SwissABILITY fitted him with a prosthetic leg and we will send the components for a prosthetic hand to be fitted at a later date.

It is not a cliché to say his prosthesis has given him a hope he has not had since his accident.

FODAY LAHAI



VIVA SLASA



We are also deeply grateful to the Single Leg Amputee Sport Association (SLASA) for its unwavering dedication to supporting amputees throughout the country, thanks to the inspiring leadership of its founder, Pastor Mambud Samai. His daughter, Dolores Samai, currently training to become an orthopedic technician, has shown remarkable enthusiasm and skill, volunteering her time and making a valuable contribution to the training.

THANK YOU

A big thank you to our valued donors who transform vision into reality by pouring their resources and energy into SwissABILITY, enabling us to ensure a better life and dignity for some of Sierra Leone's most vulnerable inhabitants.