



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
FREETOWN MUNICIPALITY

Hon. Kabineh Kallon
Minister of Transport and Aviation
Freetown
Sierra Leone

Wednesday 24th August 2022

Dear Hon Minister

Re: Destruction of Abacha Market Stalls and Loss of Livelihoods of SLIRUMP Project Affected Persons

On the morning of Friday 12th August 2022, I learnt through photos on social media that the market stalls at the Abacha Street Market had been totally destroyed overnight (during curfew hours). I called the Minister of Internal Affairs that morning to ask him if he knew who was responsible for the destruction of the market stalls. He said that he didn't know who was responsible but he suggested that I give you a call because he was aware that you had ordered that railings be erected along the length of Abacha Street with immediate effect. I tried to reach you by phone that morning and several times after that day but unfortunately you were not able to answer my calls.

As a stakeholder in the World Bank funded Sierra Leone Integrated Resilient Urban Mobility Project ("SLIRUMP"), I am aware that Abacha Street is part of the East Corridor for the new bus route under the scope of the project. Plans were underway for the completion by NASSIT of the Sewa Grounds Market, and the relocation of the Abacha Street traders into the open space at the market as part of the project programme. Consequently, the registration of the Abacha Street traders as Project Affected Persons was also underway. It is my understanding from the discussions at the Steering Committee meeting held on Thursday 18th August that the NASSIT procurement activities for the completion of the open space in the Sewa Grounds Market have concluded, that a contractor has been selected and that contract award details have been forwarded to NPPA for approval.

As the Mayor of Freetown, I am and have always been very supportive of the SLIRUMP project. I look forward to the long-awaited completion of the Sewa Grounds Market and the relocation of the Abacha Street Traders into that market as was envisioned when the Sewa Grounds Market project was originally

conceived in 2014. I am however extremely concerned that although no responsibility has been taken for the overnight destruction of the Abacha Street market stalls, the impact of that action has had a serious, negative impact on Project Affected Persons, contrary to safeguarding principles. With the proposed timeline for the completion of the open market area at the Sewa Grounds the earliest date for relocation of the Abacha Street traders into the Sewa Grounds Market will be mid-November 2022.

This creates an untenable situation for the approximately 3,000 Abacha Street traders whose source of livelihood was destroyed overnight. The majority of the Abacha traders are vulnerable women who live on a day to day basis, many are single parents and many are micro-credit users who are now laden with debts that they cannot pay. The loss of their source of livelihood has increased their vulnerability, has pushed them further below the poverty line and in many cases will result in their children not being able to return to school next month.

I am writing to bring the above to your notice in your capacity as Chair of the SLIRUMP Steering Committee with the expectation that you will want to do everything possible, to minimize the suffering of the Abacha Street traders and their families, given that the traders have been designated as Project Affected Persons. To that end, I would humbly recommend that the SLIRUMP project plan within which the Abacha Street traders continued to operate in situ until the Sewa Grounds Market was completed, be reverted to. The Freetown City Council stands ready and willing to work with all SLIRUMP stakeholders to ensure that this is done in a coordinated and structured manner, with the Abacha Street traders being relocated to the Sewa Grounds Market in November/December as was previously planned.

I am available to meet to discuss this matter at your earliest convenience.

Assuring you of my highest regards.



Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE
Mayor of Freetown

cc: The Chief Minister
 The Minister of Internal Affairs
 The Minister of Trade and Industry
 The Minister of Local Government and Rural Development
 The Country Manager, World Bank
 The Chairperson, Municipal Trade Committee
 Chief Administrator, Freetown City Council
 The President, Traders Council
 Chairlady, Abacha Street Market