

# Stories of Change - The Recycled Champions of Sierra Leone (eWomen)

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Published Date: July 25, 2019

*We think it is important to tell stories where social innovation has impacted people's lives for the better.*



Our Innovative Bin

*“The world sends us garbage. We send back innovations. This innovative bin is made out of waste tires to collect plastic waste (yellow) and non-plastic wastes (ski-blue bin) that we further recycle into different products. This innovative bin will definitely help to solve the littering problem in Sierra Leone. Let us start to have these bins in our institutions, offices, homes, churches, mosques and other facilities. We are therefore engaging into a Business to Business (B2) Model.” – Kisimi Kayleemasa Kamara*

In Sierra Leone, 60% live below the poverty and the situation is far worse in marginalized areas. Makeni City, one of the cities in Sierra Leone, in Northern Sierra Leone, is a city built on hundreds of illegal dumping sites just as any other city or place in Sierra Leone. Although recycling is still not considered as a lucrative business, it is however evident that there are more and more young recyclers working in Makeni, where more than 60 tons of waste is deposited daily. Many people sustain themselves through trash picking, earning very little and children are often driven into early labor – and the rate of completion of children in primary education is about 49%. The lack of adequate education, coupled with the deep-seated poverty in the area guarantees dismal prospects for the population.



Illegal dumping site



Maseray, one of our volunteers in plastic recycling, sorting and collecting plastic waste as source of livelihood

This destitution sparked the launch of the project ‘Recycled Champions of Sierra Leone’ in 2019 by eWomen SL when its Chief Innovation Officer Kisimi Kayleemasa Kamara joined forces with UNDP/GEF/SGP (a small grant fund provider) and young passionate garbage collectors and recyclers under the leadership of CEO Beatrice Edwina Koroma, with the aim to provide a better future for young people, women and persons with disability in the area.

The project ‘Recycled Champions of Sierra Leone,’ relies on innovative ideas that transform waste into new products. The group formed by marginalized people living in the communities, constantly create ideas that are all about being friendly to the environment.

*“People should not strive for material things, they should strive for knowledge and the use of waste transmits this philosophy and has had a huge impact on the communities.” – Kisimi Kayleemasa Kamara*

Innovative ideas do not just produce great solutions but they instill in the marginalized people a new positive mentality.

### Some of the members of the A Team



CEO  
Beatrice

Beatrice Edwina Koroma, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of eWomen SL, has a double master degree in Dietetics and Public Health and currently taking a PhD in a research topic related to nutrition, public health and food security. She has worked for many Non-governmental Organizations and now feeling compelled to directly lead in changing the stories of the marginalized through creative innovations.



CIO Kisimi

Kisimi Kayleemasa Kamara, a Software Engineer by profession (BSc in Information Technology and MSc in Software Engineering both at the University of Bergen, Norway), is the tireless chief innovation officer who likes doing the job himself. Kisimi's passion for innovation, fuelled by this innovative project, has helped him develop new skills and find a new meaning to life.



Volunteer  
Yusif

Similarly, Yusif who is an orphan and a young man that attained only class 4 primary school education is spotted by the Chief Innovation Officer as the most talented and promising young person in this project. Yusif's love for knowledge is clear.

*"When I innovate I feel a great satisfaction. I love it because you can convey everything with it. You can tell if you're angry, if you're happy, if you're sad, if you're in love. You can convey everything." – Yusif Koroma*

This demonstrates the much-needed escape, which an innovation can provide to young people. Yusif summarizes perfectly the outstanding success of this project, in keeping the young people safe, stating:

*"I think that a lot of young people in my country haven't found the meaning of life. They get into drugs, alcohol and stealing because they don't know what to do with their lives. Innovation is something that helps avoid all these things – Yusif Koroma*

Innovating is keeping the young people out of trouble and there are currently more than 400 marginalized persons involved in the eWomen Innovation Hub.

The eWomen Innovation Hub has drawn a huge amount of media attention especially when it lately made an innovative trash bin that landed eWomen in the finals of the Social Impaction Competition organized in America by two organizations called Impaction and Because International. 122 people all over the world were shortlisted in this competition. eWomen SL presented the innovative bin as its innovative product. With such a number of 122 contestants, with our trash bin that is made out of waste tires, we reached the finals and on the 25/07/2019, eWomen SL was announced as the official winner of the competition.

*“Making an innovative product that made us to emerge as winner of an international competition has opened my mind so much. This project has given to young people many opportunities to broaden their horizons.” – Abiba (17 years old)*



One of our volunteers, Abiba, posing with our innovative trash can front of our innovation hub

## **The local impact**

By thinking outside the box, this project has sparked change in the area and has instilled ambition and pride in a place riddled with poverty, crime, violence and pollution. This project is a testament to the power of innovation, and the hope that it can bring to communities. Furthermore, it teaches the children and people in general about the importance of recycling in the fight against climate change, a key issue in modern day society.

*“There’s very little we can do for kids, young people, women and persons with disability who have such a harsh life. I don’t think community-led innovation can change that immediately or fix real problems such as hunger and health issues instantly. However it does help greatly to educate children and marginalized persons so fewer of them are victims of these issues.” – CEO Beatrice Edwina Koroma*

Even though bottom up projects like these are often unable to solve the wider issues, each innovative idea is a step forward in changing the lives of young people. It has great potential to completely renovate our communities and create job opportunities for many. Now, we are confident the world will get to know our name eWomen SL.

*“The eWomen Innovative Trash Can is a small thing that makes a big difference” – Kenton, CEO and Founder of Because International*

Apart from the trash bin which is our main and most interesting product for now, we are currently researching to establish a musical band that will use only instruments that are purely made out of waste materials. We are also currently researching on how to use innovative ideas to promote literacy and numeracy in primary school education with the goal to promote the performance of school children. One innovative idea they have thought of in this area, is to offer tech classes that will empower school children to use Tablets/iPads to improve on their literacy and numeracy. All this is to take place in an informal setting outside the classrooms and the children and teachers will have to pay no money for this service but will just bring plastic or agricultural waste as tuition. Another interesting innovation we are currently working on is the making of plastic bottle fence.

## **The global impact**

This project has not only changed the lives of the people in Makeni City, but has also become the catalyst for change in Sierra Leone and possibly in the world. We are proud to be the official winner of the Social Impaction Competition organized in America with 122 contestants shortlisted from all over the world.

Our social initiatives aim to give children and marginalized persons who are at risk of

social exclusion, a second chance through education based on respect for the environment and innovation. It is a great opportunity for young people to develop new skills and build on their creativity. Children and marginalized persons learn how to produce their different products from waste, and in the future, they may be champions of social change and impact. Other organizations are now contacting us to provide skills training for their groups on different innovative ideas. Here are some of the products of our innovative ideas:



Some of our innovative products

### Our challenges

Here are our two key challenges:

Challenge	Item	Quantity	Description
Transportation	Toyota Dyna Tipper Vehicle	2	We need preferably two Toyota Dyna Tipper vehicles to transport raw materials (especially waste material) that we need.
Rehabilitation of our Innovation Hub	Change the ceiling and roof	Collective	The building is owned by eWomen but it is dilapidated and needs renovation.
	Tablets	20	Mainly to be used by primary school children to improve on their literacy and numeracy. Our field officers will be going into communities to embark on extracurricular activities to help promote the performance of school children in literacy and numeracy. We want to promote informal learning.
	Desktops	20	We need them in our innovation hub to offer tech classes to young people

			especially girls and primary school teachers. All they have to pay us as tuition is plastic and agricultural waste that we recycle into paving stones and briquettes respectively.
	Laptops	10	For administrative work. We intend to maintain 10 staff including 6 Field Officers. We therefore need these laptops for our workers.

If we are supported to address the above challenges, the sky will be our limit as we derive pleasure from serving humanity through environment friendly activities. We are willing to accept all the above listed items in kind. We thank you in advance for supporting eWomen to scale up.



The eWomen Innovation Hub that needs rehabilitation