



www.africacarestogether.org

Freetown Caring City

Impact Story 14

KEY IMPACTS

Adapted from the Care Block model first implemented in Bogotá, Colombia, this project aims to recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work by providing childcare, caregiver support services to women caregivers in Susan's Bay, Sierra Leone. By adapting and testing the Care Block model in an informal settlement context, the project is generating evidence on how care services can support caregiver wellbeing, inclusion, and participation.

August 20, 2026

Table of Contents

Project Overview	3
Project Activities	3
Project Achievements	4
Challenges & Lessons Learned	5
Care Sector Contributions & Next Steps	5



Project Overview

The [Freetown Caring City](#) project seeks to reduce the disproportionate time poverty derived from the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, which affects women through the piloting of the Susan's Bay Care Block in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Adapted from the Care Block model first implemented in Bogotá, Colombia, the project aims to recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work by providing childcare, caregiver support services, which include adult literacy courses, training opportunities, and respite activities as well as care services for children (to remove caregivers' most common access barrier), and a care school for men to engage in conversations about caring masculinities and care redistribution within the household.

The project primarily targets women caregivers in Susan's Bay, while also supporting children, men and community members in general. It also seeks to generate evidence on care needs and inform municipal policies on care infrastructure, services, and gender-responsive urban development.

Project Activities

The project refurbished two temporary locations within Susan's Bay to begin service delivery before a new building to provide Care Block services was completed. A four-member operational team was appointed and onboarded to coordinate services, outreach and user registration. Through these sites, the project delivered adult literacy courses, GBV training, caregiver engagement sessions, yoga and wellness activities,

financial literacy training and community outreach, while gathering early feedback on how the Care Block model can respond to the realities of caregivers' lives.

The project also strengthened partnerships with organisations including [Men's Association for Gender Equality – Sierra Leone \(MAGE-SL\)](#), and [On Our Radar](#), which are supporting activities related to caregiving, gender norms, caring masculinities, community awareness and participatory storytelling. Additional funding was secured to expand services and community engagement activities as the Care Block moves into its next phase.

Project Achievements

The project successfully established the operational foundations of the Care Block model (providing services for caregivers and receivers simultaneously, at nearby locations, and using infrastructure flexibly) and demonstrated strong early community demand for care-related services. More than 700 users were registered during the reporting period, the majority of whom were women caregivers. Registration records also show participation by at least 300 migrant caregivers and some with forms of disabilities, indicating that the project is reaching groups that most often carry a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work.

The project generated early evidence that services designed around caregivers' realities can increase participation. Women engaged in wellness and caregiver support activities reported that being able to attend with their children removed a significant barrier to participation. As one participant explained:

"It makes me happy that I don't have to choose between caring for my baby and taking care of myself."

Reflecting on the yoga sessions, she added:

"Before, my body used to feel very tired all the time because I do a lot of hard tasks. After the yoga, I feel lighter and more relaxed."

These insights were gathered through community feedback, beneficiary stories, user registration data, and ongoing monitoring.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Delays in completing a new facility to concentrate most Care Block services meant that the project could not initially deliver services through specialised infrastructure, but that is precisely what the "flexible" nature of Care Block services aim to solve. To address

this, the team adopted an adaptive approach by establishing complementary service locations and testing activities while construction continued.

The project also experienced challenges in identifying additional service providers for some programme components. Community engagement emphasised on the importance of designing services around caregivers' realities, including creating opportunities for mothers to participate in activities while caring for their children. These experiences reinforced the need for flexible and inclusive programme design rather than expecting caregivers to adapt to programme requirements.

Care Sector Contributions & Next Steps

The project's main contribution is demonstrating how care infrastructure and services can be integrated into urban development and local government planning as a practical response to unpaid care work, as well as community care needs. By adapting and testing the Care Block model in an informal settlement context, the project is generating evidence on how care services can support caregiver wellbeing, inclusion, and participation. The initiative also contributes to wider discussions on how cities can invest in care infrastructure as a pathway to gender equality, inclusive economic growth and improved community wellbeing.

Next steps include completing construction of the new Care Block facility, expanding services to include daycare, establishing a project steering committee, and convening a high-level government stakeholder meeting to share lessons and strengthen policy engagement. The project also plans to deepen collaboration with partners and support knowledge exchange through a planned learning visit from Nairobi City County. A key lesson emerging from the project is that care infrastructure should be treated as a core component of inclusive urban development and designed around the everyday realities of caregivers.

About the Africa Cares Together Community of Practice

The [Africa Cares Together Community of Practice \(ACT CoP\)](#) is a vibrant, inclusive network of diverse actors committed to amplifying care work across Africa. It is coordinated by ActionAid International (AAI) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and the Hewlett Foundation. The ACT CoP network is made up of members from the 19 projects of the [Scaling Care Innovations in Africa \(SCIA\)](#) initiative, a partnership between IDRC and GAC.

Acknowledgements

This Impact Story was compiled by the 'Freetown Caring City' project team and the ACT CoP. Project partners include Freetown City Council (FCC); Women's Leadership Advancement for Democracy-SL (WoLead-SL); Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC); Kore Global; and City Hub and Network for Gender Equity (CHANGE).

