

## The Ahkom Project (*AHKOM: how come?*)



To God be the Glory

## 1. Background

Ahkom is a Christian organization that does not preclude adherents of other faiths from accessing its education and training programs. The organization has invested much over the years in the empowerment of disadvantaged children and youth, in particular the girl child (women generally) both in the UK and Sierra Leone.

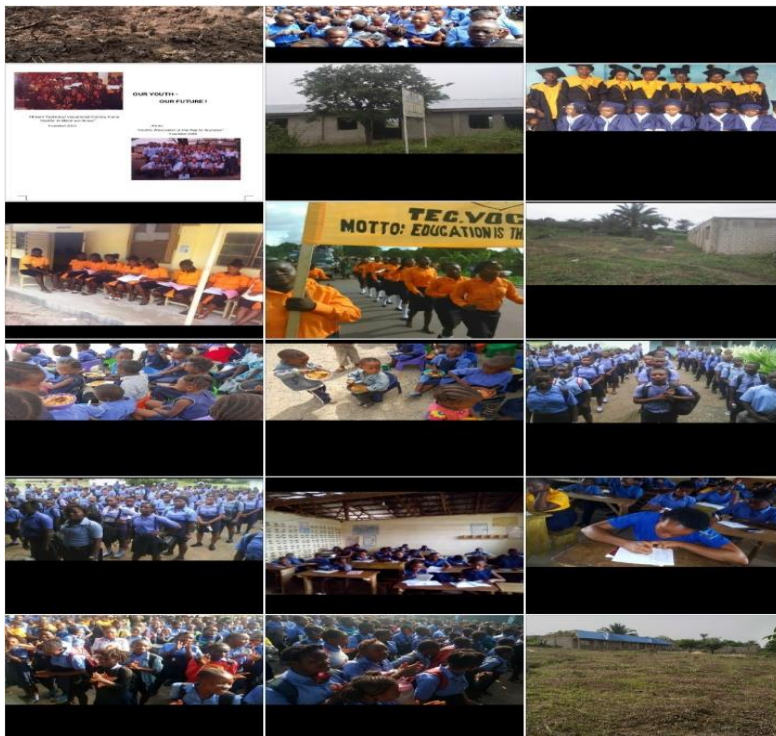
Founded on Christian principles, the organization is guided by Christian objectives. Its activities in Sierra Leone, West Africa have focused, primarily on trying to alleviate problems negatively impacting the lives of residents of the Kono district, in the eastern part of Sierra Leone. The district, in its entirety, suffered one of the worst devastations of the 11year rebel war which begun in 1990 and ended in 2002.

In 1999 (three years before Kono was finally declared a conflict free zone) UNDP assessed the war damage in the entire district at 94% total devastation. This included schools, health facilities, government structures and private housing. To date, however, meaningful rehabilitation of the district by government agencies have been slow; the main task of rebuilding been left in the hands of the voluntary sector and the inhabitants themselves. Which is why key townships within Kono, including its district capital - Koidu, are still replete with burnt out structures.

## 2. Ahkom Intervention methodology

Our interventions, in the main, have been channeled through the following initiatives:

### ❖ education & training





❖ health promotion

*Our primary & nursery pupils, most of whom are from impoverished homes, receive periodic feeding, subject to funds, from Ahkom. Destitute children, from the neighbourhood are also fed. In this effort we have received assistant from LSL Oxford, UK and a private donor.*



❖ *job search*

❖ *employment creation*



*Isatu, Ahkom tailoring graduate from class of 2020, now runs a successful tailoring business of her own in Koidu.*

*We identify a problem and ponder how it came about? Before endeavoring to find solution(s) to alleviate it.*

## **2.i. Education & Training**

*Ahkom has established the following education and training facilities and services in the Kono district:*

- *Ahkom Grammar Nursery school - population 148*
- *Ahkom Grammar Primary school - population 220*
- *Ahkom Grammar Junior secondary school - population 382*
- *Ahkom Grammar Senior secondary school - population 349*
- *Ahkom Technical & Vocational Centre - population 150*

- *Right to Read (sponsored by Love Sierra Leone and assisted by English Helper of India)*
- *STEM*

*Total number of pupils in the academic division = 1,099*

*Total number of trainees in the Tec Voc division = 150*

*School colours for the academic division are dark and light blue. For the Tec Voc, black and orange.*

#### ❖ *Ahkom Grammar Nursery school*

*The nursery school was established in 2015 with nursery 1. There were 36 pupils. Currently there are 148. This division operates from nursery 1 to 3. Pupils then progress onto primary class 1. A graduation ceremony is held for them to instill within them a morale boosting sense of achievement and pride in same.*

#### ❖ *Ahkom Grammar Primary school*

*The primary school was also established in 2015 starting with class 1. There were 32 pupils. Currently there are 220.*

*The primary division runs from class 1 to 6. In class 6 pupils sit to the national primary school examinations - NPSE. Successful candidates are promoted to Junior secondary 1 (form 1).*

*Ahkom sent its first batch of NPSE candidates in 2021. We achieved a 60% pass rate. The second batch sat to their NPSE exams in 2022. The pass rate was 100%.*

#### ❖ *Ahkom Grammar Junior Secondary school*

*The Junior secondary school opened in 2005 with one female pupil in form 1. There are now 382 pupils.*

*The junior secondary comprises of J1 (form 1); J2 (form 2) and J3 (form 3). They follow a unified curriculum comprising four core subjects. In J3 pupils sit to the national basic education certificate examinations - BECE. Successful candidates are promoted to senior secondary 1 (form 4).*

*Ahkom junior secondary has performed consistently well in BECE examinations. In 2021 when BECE results were poor, nationally with many schools around the country registering 70% plus failures, Ahkom produced around a 75% pass rate.*

#### ❖ *Ahkom Grammar Senior Secondary school*

*The senior secondary school was registered in 2008/09 with 113 pupils. Senior secondary pupils are streamed into one of three course areas: Arts, Commerce or Science.*

*In senior secondary 3 (form 6), candidates sit to the sub-regional West Africa senior secondary certificate examinations - WASSCE.*

*5 credits secures a university place. 4 credits and below allows entry into polytechnic, technical college and other middle level institutions.*

*In 2015 Ahkom senior secondary came 5<sup>th</sup>, nationally, in the WASSCE with 100% pass rate and university requirement. The school continues to perform well in these public examinations. In 2021, a woeful year of poor results in Kono district, Ahkom was one of only three schools in the district to boast of candidates who not only passed the exams but did so with university requirement.*

#### *❖ Ahkom Technical & Vocational Centre*

*There are currently 150 community education and National Commission for Technical, Vocational and other Academic qualifications (NCTVA) trainees. NCTVA is the primary awarding body for academic and other qualifications in Sierra Leone. Ahkom Tec Voc is accredited by NCTVA.*

*The Tec Voc was first established in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, in 2000. It was planned for the Kono district, 212 miles away, but as Kono was still under rebel occupation at the time, Ahkom decided to commence operations in the capital Freetown.*

*In 2002 when Kono was freed from rebel occupation, Ahkom transferred its' Tec Voc activities there. Kono, the country's main hub for diamond mining activities, had become a magnet for all sides in the conflict. The ensuing uncontrolled mining activities, in addition to large scale looting and burning of properties, resulted in the total devastation of much of the district.*

*A 1999 UNDP report stated that Kono district suffered the brunt of the war with 94% destruction of all infrastructure, districtwide, including schools, hospitals, private homes, roads, water and electricity infrastructure. The district, it added, would be uninhabitable for the next 10 years to come. After a year an international peace keeping patrol, on one of its periodic tours to monitor the fragile peace, filed a report detailing how on arrival in Kono, they'd discovered whole immediate and extended families of indigenes returned there in their droves. Most occupied the burnt-out structures of their former homes or those of friends and relatives or had built rickety dab mud huts and shelters of stick patched with pieces of old plastic and tarpaulin.*

*Ahkom was among the first community based organizations to step into the breach. The organization commenced with skills training at its Tec Voc after a PPA identified technical vocational training as what the war-ravaged populace sorely required in the emergency phase. It was also what the government of Sierra Leone itself advocated. The need to boost human capacity in order to create marketable skills that could build livelihoods, in the process contributing to meaningful community rehabilitation and development, underpinned State and INGO interventions of the period.*



Ahkom Tec Voc offered training in basics such as carpentry, building, hairdressing, tailoring, motor mechanics, welding and computing. Assistance with training materials were successfully sourced from humanitarian charities in the UK, namely: Tools With a Mission (TWAM); WorkAid; Computeraid. Around about the year 2006, assistance also began coming from congregants of St Andrew's church, Oxford.

Unfortunately, after over 17 years of utilizing the donated items in our training programs, most all have passed their sell by date and are no longer functional.

In the days of immediate post conflict emergency relief, Ahkom Tec Voc also won contracts to train youth in welding, hairdressing, tailoring, computing and carpentry services. From INGOs such as GTZ (now GIZ), CARE International, IRC, COOPI, Handicap International and Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL). Most of these organizations have now either moved on to other countries, closed down or downsized closing the tap of INGO sponsorship for numerous community based organizations.

From the year 2002 to date, Ahkom has trained well over 8,000 youth - male and female, in the Kono district.

#### ❖ Right To Read (RTR)

In 2015 an innovation English Language learning program - RightToRead, was introduced to Ahkom Grammar school JSS division, under the auspices of Love Sierra Leone (LSL) assisted by English Helper of India.

The program uses existing resources such as teachers, class textbooks and school timetables as much as possible thereby minimizing change and disruption in established school routines.

Right To Read uses an AI application (ReadToMe). The application is installed on a laptop connected to a projector or TV in the classroom.

- The AI application is “trained” to read the class textbook.
- Lessons are delivered by existing teachers during normal class periods - the ReadToMe app reads the text aloud to pupils, teachers control what is read and at what speed. Sections can be repeated as often as necessary.
- Pupils hear and can repeat the text in class.
- Word meanings are available from a built-in dictionary (including a pictorial dictionary)

RightToRead possesses the following qualities:

- Research suggests that multi-sensory methods of language learning enhance pupils’ ability to acquire and retain such new knowledge. The ReadToMe application embodies these techniques.
- It integrates the program with existing school curriculum and empower existing teachers.

- To enable large scale transformation, RTR is designed to engage with the public education system.
- RTR creates a model for Public, Private & Community partnerships.

The program is well proven. It was initially launched by English Helper in India in 2013 and now reaches over 12 million school pupils and wider community learners in India, Africa and the Americas. Large scale studies have shown that pupils achieve 20-50% improvement over a school year in their English reading and comprehension when exposed to RightToRead classes, compared to a controlled set of peers. The Kono program has been extended to 6 other schools one of which is in the capital, Freetown.



*Ahkom facilitated RTR class at UMC Girls secondary JSS3, Kono*

*RTR class at Ahkom Grammar School JSS1, Kono*



## ❖ STEM

A more recent development, in response to repeated calls from the community to provide a feeder school for the upcoming Kono University of Science and Technology that is currently under construction, Ahkom has embarked on construction of an academy dedicated to science,



*technology, engineering and Math, on a 15+ acre site in Boroma, Koaquima, Kono district. Construction work commenced two years ago but stalled due to lack of funds.*

*In addition to acting as a feeder school for the new university (Ahkom Grammar school is one of a handful of schools, in the Kono district, with a science stream) the Academy, through supplementary education provision, will help to bolster science and technology education in the district both theoretical and practical applications.*

*The A+ Academy will incorporate delivery of RightToRead, English language being a core subject within the framework of Sierra Leone's national school's syllabus from nursery to tertiary levels. Additionally in Sierra Leone, a good grasp of both the theoretical and functional aspects of the English language greatly enhance an applicant's chance of gaining employment.*

*The academy will extend its services to the wider and often older local community. They will access the service during the day when school pupils are going to school, and during the evening.*

*A further important engagement of the project will be the Academy's commitment to agricultural science. Food, arguably, is the most important of man's basic needs. For this reason, the Ahkom school farm project was evolved as a prominent activity of A+ Academy. Which is why in addition to the 15 acres school farm land at Boroma, Ahkom has acquired an additional 100+ acres in the Lei chieftdom for its expanded agricultural activities.*



*Ahkom Lei agriculture project site*





## **2.ii Health Promotion**

*The Ahkom organization, when based in the UK, partnered with various organizations ie Health First in southern London and London Borough of Barnet Aids Education Unit, in carrying out HIV sensitization activities. In Sierra Leone, Ahkom won several contracts from the National Aids Secretariat of Sierra Leone (NAS) and CARE to engage in similar sensitization work, with the added dimension of providing livelihood training to HIV affected persons at Ahkom Tec Voc.*

*It is with great concern the organization now observes, in the wake of the preoccupation with ebola, covid and politics, the apparent neglect of HIV sensitization programs that has witnessed increased exposure and seen a resurgence in the virus within communities.*

## **2.iii Job Search**

*Part of our training policy is to send out trainees on placement. During these placements we vigorously embark on job search efforts either at their placement sites, or other prospective employers. Stiff competition faced by graduating trainees for limited jobs encouraged sponsors to provide them with “Start Up” kits so they could set up as self-employed businessmen and women.*

## **2.iv Employment Creation**

*It is said that charity begins at home. In this respect, Ahkom organization has provided direct continuing employment, within its own ranks to around 60 persons. Majority of these are employed as teachers, trainers and ancillary staff.*

*Over the years the organization has found employment for numerous other clients in varying capacities and in various places of work, countrywide.*

## **3.Challenges**

*In any activity there are challenges, and our activities are no exception to this rule. In the main, our challenges have been primarily those of accessing funding for critical construction programs, equipment and learning materials.*

*With the passing of the era of post conflict security relief, emergency relief and the ushering in of the development stage in Sierra Leone, witnessed a dramatic reduction in direct and indirect funding opportunities as INGOs and other humanitarian agencies closed shop to attend to the effects of emerging, raging and newly ceased conflicts elsewhere around the globe. Leaving a cash strapped government struggling to fill the financial gap. In some cases, wayward government policy or the failure to properly implement policy by state officials, have all contributed to the funding crises.*

*Donor fatigue, exacerbated by the devastating impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the western economies - the main source of donor funds; pressures thrown up by climate change, defunding of once prominent local and international NGOs combined with currently ensuing global political instabilities, have all contributed to funding difficulties for community based organizations such as Ahkom.*

#### **4. Funding requirements 2022/2024**

*Construction works; procurement of training equipment, learning materials and school furniture*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Cost in pound sterling</b>	<b>Responsible agencies</b>
<b>4.1.i</b>	<b>A+ Academy</b>		
4.1.i	➤ construction of 6 additional classrooms for secondary school & staff room with disabled access	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.ii	➤ construction of administrative building with offices for institution heads & secretaries & disabled access	10k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.iii	➤ construction of 3 workshops & 3 labs with disabled access	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.iv	➤ construction of quarters for key staff with disabled access	20k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.v	➤ construction of WASH facilities with disabled access	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>

4.1.vi	➤ <i>creating/ equipping recreational space with provision for disabled</i>	10k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.vii	➤ <i>erect security fencing</i>	8k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.viii	➤ <i>procure durable school furniture</i>	3k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4. 1.ix	➤ <i>procure learning equipment/ materials</i>	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.x	➤ <i>construct poultry coop, pig sty, goat and sheep pens on 5-acre plot of land allocated at site for purposes of experimental school farm</i>	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.1.xi	➤ <i>Procure seed livestock to stock experimental school farm</i>	10k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
	<i>Sub Total</i>	136k	
4.2	<i>Ahkom Grammar school.</i>		
4.2.i	➤ <i>completion of 3 classroom primary school structure with disabled access</i>	7k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.ii	➤ <i>complete 3 classroom senior secondary school structure and add disabled access</i>	7k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.iii	➤ <i>construct additional 3 classroom nursery school structure with disabled access</i>	7k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.iv	➤ <i>construction of school assembly hall with disabled access</i>	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>



4.2.v	<p>construction of multi-purpose building with disabled access, to accommodate the following function rooms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• library for nursery &amp; primary divisions</li> <li>• library for secondary school division</li> <li>• Laboratory for primary school</li> <li>• Laboratory for secondary school</li> </ul>	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.iv	➤ overhaul of WASH amenities. Currently no access to clean water supply on school campus	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.v	➤ upgrade existing toilet facilities. Include disabled access	4k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom I kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.vi	➤ extension of administrative block plus disabled access	5k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.vi	➤ general structural repairs/ rehabilitation	3k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.2.vii	➤ procurement of school furniture	2k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>59k</b>	

4.3	Ahkom Technical Vocational Centre		
4.3.i	➤ construction of additional 3 workshops housed in a single large building for technical/ vocational training practicals	7k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>

4.3.ii	➤ <i>procurement of training equipment &amp; materials</i>	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.3.iii	➤ <i>rehabilitation of existing tec voc structures</i>	3k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
4.3.iv	➤ <i>construction of WASH amenities</i>	15k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• donor</li> <li>• Ahkom in kind contribution</li> </ul>
	<b><i>Sub Total</i></b>	<b><i>40k</i></b>	
	<b><i>GRAND TOTAL</i></b>	<b><i>235k</i></b>	

*postscript*

## ***THE AHKOM PROJECT – A STORY OF DETERMINATION!***

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



