

MISSION REPORT – SIERRA LEONE

Freetown – 2-7 May 2021

- ✓ **SWISSLIMS SETS A NEW RECORD!**
- ✓ **15 local orthopedic technicians TRAINED.**
- ✓ **RESTORED the mobility of 15 persons.**



THE MISSION

Between 2 – 7 May 2021 SwissLimbs conducted a training mission at the **National Rehabilitation Center (NRC)** in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The 15 participants came from 4 nationally based orthopaedic centres in and 3 of the participants were assistant technicians in training.

During the short yet intense week the SwissLimbs team composing of the executive director, **Roberto Agosta**, the technician trainer, **Bernardo Gomes** and **Dr. Julian Lair**, an orthopedic surgeon worked alongside the local trainers to fit as many patients as possible. They beat all previous performance records by giving assistance to 15 amputees in the form of donating 9 legs, 3 hands, 2 repairs and one custom made ortho-prosthesis.

The schedule was tight. Each day, after a short briefing, the group divided into teams then sent to their various workstations to be taught how to implement the new techniques.,



Dr. Julian Lair, Roberto Agosta, Bernardo Gomes

On the first day, casts were made of the 11 pre-planned patients, but word quickly spread that the NRC were offering free prostheses. On the second day they were able to add 4 new patients to the beneficiary list, using all the materials available at the time. The needs in Sierra Leone are truly enormous and materials recourses scarce, and they could not leave without promising **“We will return”**.



The Freetown orthopedic center

The goal of the mission was to give participants the broadest possible view of the most modern prosthetic technologies which are specifically designed for developing nations. Without compromising on comfort and mobility, they should also be economical and durable. These innovations include the Monolimb, the Amparo technology and the Myoelectric hands technologies.

On Wednesday 5 May, the technicians underwent a remote training session from

David Jones in Berlin. He provided step-by-step instructions in the implementation of the Amparo technology. Although this technology is more expensive it can be applied outside of an orthopedic workshop giving the advantage of convenience of access to the patient.



During the making of the Monolimb prosthesis



Training in the Amparo technology

PIVOTAL MEETINGS

During the week SwissLimbs had an important meeting WITH Dr. Santigie Sesay who is the Director of Noncommunicable Diseases at the Ministry of Health. There they presented the mission of SwissLimbs and discussed how they might cooperate with the ministry’s future national rehabilitation projects and programs.

The meeting was fruitful beyond all expectations. It became quickly apparent that SwissLimbs is the solution that Sierra Leone has sought for some time. In response of the government’s appreciation of their work, a commitment was made to use all available resources to maintain a collaboration with SwissLimbs.



Dr Kebbie, Pr Mambud, Dr. Sesay, Roberto and Dr. Julian



with Mr. Poray-Suza

A second equally fruitful meeting was with another representative of the Ministry of Health, the National Coordinator of NGOs, Mr Sulayman Poray-Suza. He too welcomed them with the same spirit of collaboration. The culmination of both these meeting was a commitment from the Ministry of Health to collaborate with SwissLimbs in creating a Memorandum of Understanding to streamline rehabilitation services across the country. The initial phase is to supply urgently needed orthopedic materials for the prostheses needs of 250 patients, of which the government undertakes to pay 50%. Without hesitation SwissLimbs responded in kind and committed to provide the balance. Thus, together with Dr. Julian and his group of supporters in South Tyrol, they will be able to intervene in this urgent need for prosthetic materials in the nation of Sierra Leone.



Abdulrahman with Dr. Julian, holding the first Monolimbs in Sierra Leone

Three key people made this mission possible: 1) **Pastor Mambud Samai**, the director of **SLASA** (Single Leg Amputee Sport Association), a man with incredible vision, energy and dedication to amputees and their needs. The key role he plays in the history of events up to this point is told in his testimony later in this report. 2) **Dr. Ismaila Kebbie**, General Manager of the National Rehabilitation Center (NCR), who possess the ability to move mountains while treading lightly. It was his initiative that resulted in SwissLimbs fruitful synergy with the Ministry of Health, and 3) the workshop manager **Mr. Abdulrahman Dumbuya**, supervisor of the five existing centers in the country: one in Freetown, one in Bo, two in Makeni and one in Koidu.

Abdulrahman Dumbuya is the only technician in all of Sierra Leone who has achieved full training as an orthopedic technician with a 5-year BSc (Bachelor of Science) from TATCOT (Tanzania Training Center for Orthopedic Technologists).

Apart from him, there are only four other technicians who have 3-year diplomas and 3 more who have received one year's training. This is the full extent of certified training that exists in Sierra Leone. The remaining technicians learned by watching and learning from each other. It goes without saying that Sierra Leone is in urgent need of further orthopedic training for their workshop technicians.

TRAINING MOMENTS





PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES

At the end of the training week, the 15 participants received a certification which certifies their knowledge of newly learned prosthetic technologies. These certifications are always celebrated joyously.



Graduates and their patients



with the chief technician Mr. Abdulrahman



Mary and Zainab proud of their achievement and the 3 young amputees orthopedic apprentices



Thanks to the Lions Club of Meran for co-sponsoring this mission

THE SWISSLIMBS TEAM ON THIS MISSION



ROBERTO AGOSTA – Executive Director of SwissLimbs

Roberto was born in Lugano, Switzerland, and has a background in Commercial Administration. After working in a Swiss bank for 4 years he moved to Africa and spent 12 years devoting himself to humanitarian projects. He then spent another eight years in development training for non-profit organizations in Switzerland.

In 2011 he created SwissLeg, initially a social business then in 2016 founded the humanitarian association SwissLimbs.



BERNARDO GOMES – Orthopedic Technical Trainer

Bernardo graduated in orthopedics from the Escola Superior de Tecnologia da Saúde in Lisbon and since 2017 has collaborated with the International Committee of the Red Cross – (ICRC) as an orthopedic technician and project manager. His work with the ICRC has taken him to Myanmar, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea Bissau, where he is currently located.

This is his 4th mission with SwissLimbs, having joined them over the past 5 years in Jordan, Uganda and Mozambique.



DR. JULIAN LAIR – Orthopedic Surgeon.

Julian is an Austrian but resides in Italy. He started his career as an orthopedic technician, then began medical studies in Innsbruck, Austria becoming a specialist surgeon in the sector. He currently collaborates with private and public facilities in South Tyrol, with a particular focus on pediatric orthopedic surgery and hip and knee prostheses.

It is thanks to him and his supporters that SwissLimbs went to Sierra Leone, where his highly professional technical advice and rich experience in the orthopedic field was of great benefit to the team and contributed to the success of the mission.



THE 15 PARTICIPANTS



Abdulrahman Dumbuya
NRC Freetown



Mohamed Marrah
NRC Freetown



Aimran Sesay
NRC Freetown



George Gbassy Kamara
Makeni Hospital



Abdul J. Kamara
NRC Freetown



Edward S. Kamu
Koidu Hospital



James A. Fofanah
NRC Freetown



Nathaniel S. Gargbo
NRC Freetown



Prince Kailie
Bo Hospital



Momoh Konneh
NRC Freetown



Joseph Sesay
Koidu Hospital



Ismail Sesay
Makeni Hospital



Zainab Turay
SLASA - Apprentice



Foday James Lumen
SLASA – Apprentice



Mary Kamara
SLASA - Apprentice



With participants and their patients

Con

THE BENEFICIARIES



Sheku Turay, 35 years old, transtibial amputee since 2002

Sheku lost his right leg in a car accident. Despite this tragedy, he lost no time in looking for employment and trained as a shoemaker. In 2009 he underwent two years training in tailoring at "Daughter's Vocational Training Center" in Freetown. His dream is to open his own tailor shop.

Being a player on the SLASA football team is one of his greatest joys and he takes great pride in representing his country in the sport.

The leg he received during this mission, is his first prosthesis.



Abdul Rahaman Jalloh, 18 years old, transtibial amputee since 2009

When Abdul was a child, he injured his leg playing football. Improper medical practises ultimately resulted in the need to have it amputated.

This however never diminished his desire to play the game and he has become a star defender on the SLASA football team. His other desire is to train as a shoemaker and open a shop of his own.

He was delighted to be fitted with his first prosthesis during this mission in Sierra Leone.



Abu Sesay, 23 years old, transfemoral amputee since 1999

One day when Abu was still a small boy, rebels attacked his village. His father put him on his shoulders and ran for cover. A stray bullet penetrated Abu's leg but lodged in his father's body, killing him. Despite this trauma, Abu is grateful to have survived and lives every day to the full. He also plays football and is a trainee agriculturalist working in the fields of the SLASA's farm.

Not having walked since his previous prosthesis wore out, he is now happy to walk unaided for the first time in years.



Lahai Makieu, 39 years old, transfemoral amputee since 1998

Lahai's tibia was reduced into a pulp by a bullet during a rebel attack on his village. He was running for his life at the time.

Today he runs still, but as a player in his national amputee football team. He joined SLASA as football player and now is responsible for the agricultural project. He helps train others and hopes to advance his own agricultural training in the future.

Read an extended version of Lahai's testimony later in this report.



Maxwell Fornah, 35 years old, transfemoral amputee since 1998

Maxwell was shot in the leg while trying to escape from an ambush by rebel soldiers. The damage was extensive, and it needed to be amputated.

Maxwell joined SLASA in search of camaraderie and purpose and now represents his country as a national player on their amputee football team.

He is employed as a barber, but his dream is to open a salon in his community.

At the age of 11, he received his first artificial leg which lasted only a couple of years until he outgrew it. On this mission he received a new transfemoral prosthesis that makes him walk so well, it's so comfortable and he's so agile on it, and he can't stop smiling about it.



Ebenezer B. John, 33 years old, transfemoral amputee since 1998

Ebenezer is also an amputee because of an injury caused by rebel fire as they ambushed his village.

He makes his livelihood selling goods from a stall at the market but has dreams to expand his business.

After joining the SLASA football team in 2020, he was recruited to the national amputee football team: he is a fearsome striker. The leg he received on this mission, is his first prosthesis.

Read an extended version of his testimony later in this report.



Gbessay Koroma, 23 years old , transfemoral amputee since 2015

When Gbessay was 17, he fell off a big mango tree, breaking his leg. The fracture was improperly treated and consequently he had to undergo an amputation.

Gbessay makes a living charging mobile phones for a small fee, selling phone data and other such digital services but has plans to increase his sales and operate from a small shop.

He joined SLASA in 2020 and wishes to represent his country in amputee football. Three years ago, he received his first artificial leg which wore out quickly. During this mission his leg was repaired and he received a new foot, ready to walk upright again..



Zainab Turay, 29 years old, transtibial amputee since 2011

Zainab lost her leg after a car drove over her leg during a fall.

At present she supports herself as a seamstress, but she would really like to re-train and become an orthopedic technician.

She joined the SLASA football team in 2020 and strongly believes in the therapeutic benefits of playing a team sport.

As she still has a partial kneecap a classic prosthesis is unsuitable for her needs. The technicians had to find a special solution, opting to fit her with an ortho-prosthesis, which may not be as aesthetic as one would wish, but it is very functional.

Read an extended version of her testimony later in this report.



Alie Kabia, 21 years old, transfemoral amputee since 2001

During the brutal civil war, rebels attacked Alie's village burning houses and shooting everywhere. A stray bullet hit the little Alie in his right leg while he was on his mother's back running for her and her little boys' life. She died and Alie lost his leg as a consequence. He wasn't even 2 years old.

Alie is studying to become an IT specialist. He is a great entertainer in his community and loves to dance and play football.

Five years ago he received his first artificial leg which became too small for him. In this mission he received a new leg with the special All-Terrain knee designed for more active people and that he loves so much and allows him movements like a normal leg.



Adama Suma, 30 years old, transradial amputee since 1998

Adama lost her hand in the cruellest of ways. After killing all adults in the village, she with other children were lined up and had their hands systematically amputated by rebel soldiers during Sierra Leone's civil war.

Adama has learned to forgive her criminals and the joy of living by focusing on what she can do with one hand instead of what she might have done with two.

She was given a "Hand Tool" to regain the use of her hand, while she waits for a cosmetic hand custom made for her.

Read an extended version of her testimony in the report below



Michael Rogers, 45 years old, transtibial amputee since 1995

Michael's left leg was amputated because of an injury caused by a bullet, fired during a rebel ambush he and his father were caught in. His father died during the attack and although Michael's injuries were extensive, he survived.

He too is a renowned and passionate football player with the SLASA team. He loves the team spirit and mutual support with other amputees.

He provides for his family from the profit from a small business he owns thanks to some micro-financing from SLASA. Michael now mentors' others as they launch their own small business; trading rice in the farming district of Pujehun.

The leg he received during this mission is his first prosthesis, 26 years after his amputation!!



Abu Bakar Bah, 52 years old, transfemoral amputee since 1995

In 1995 Abu was driving a truckload of food that was attacked, the cargo looted, and he was shot in the leg as he tried to escape. In the days it took for him to reach a medical facility, his leg deteriorated beyond the ability to heal.

His small business activities allow him to support his family and pay for the schooling of his 4 children.

This is his second prosthesis, the first one wore out 20 years ago. Today, thanks to SwissLimbs, he is walking with confidence again.



Abdul Lamin Kamara, 28 years old, transradial amputee since 1995

Abdul was only 2 years old when the rebels entered his village as they used to do in the violent 11-year long civil war. They were known to raid villages, kill people at random, burn houses and destroy everything they found in their path. The fate of amputating arms was often reserved for children to intimidate and kill while saving ammunition.

In Abdul's case it was a little different. When he was captured, the rebels demanded a large sum of money from his parents, which was impossible for them to find. In spite, they cut off little Abdul's arm!

Growing up as an amputee was not easy, but he found the joy despite his missing limb. He is a smart young man and has applied to go to the University of Sierra Leone to study Human Rights and Policy Law. After he will be accepted and if he will find a sponsorship, he will be able to begin the studies of his dreams.

During the SwissLimbs mission he received a myoelectric hand. He was so enthusiastic and very quick in learning how to use it. He just misses the cosmetic finishing and then it will be perfect!



Hamid Karim Kargbo, 29 years old, transradial amputee since 2002



Hamid does not remember much about the head-on collision in which he lost his hand at the age of 10. Many people were injured and 2-3 people died in that accident which left him very traumatized.

It is not easy for him to be an amputee. People stare, some even make comments to one-another, calling attention to his missing limb, saying how 'ugly' it is. Others have express doubts about his ability to function 'normally'. The shame he feels when out in public, is hard to bear.

He could not hide his enthusiasm after being fitted with a "Hand Tool" waiting to receive a cosmetic hand resembling his other hand in size and colour which has been sent to him after all measurements have been taken.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Pastor Mambud Samai – a man and his vision – and the people who are making it happen.



“I was born in a little village in the Bo district 47 years ago. My dad sadly passed away when I was only 2 and later my mother remarried, and I have 4 siblings.

When the war was nearing our region, the whole family had to move to Bo town to look for security. I started high school there and had many good friends. I loved school and was good at it. I wanted to carry on studying and become a doctor. I tried several times to enter medical school but with no success. I could not afford the high costs.

The school pastor offered me a 2-year training in Seminary which I gladly accepted. And there I discovered how much I would like to be a pastor and continued for another 3 years seminar to graduate.

I took on the pastoring of a church in Makeni, a work I loved but that was interrupted by the invasion of the rebels in the villages, and we all had to escape. The whole region, thousands of us ran away and for 2 weeks we walked towards Guinea Conakry to find safety and assistance. It was a horrid journey, we had no food, no water, it was hot, and people were suffering. I managed to arrive there

and lived in the refugee camp for 2 year, until the Sierra Leone government repatriated us, but it was not safe to return to our towns – the country was full of landmines and we were taken to an army run camp. It was a camp mainly for amputees and the government was looking after them. There were 270 of them.

So I started befriending them and helping them in whatever way I could, mainly helping them through their traumas with counselling and care.

One day, an American missionary – an amputee herself - came there to visit our camp and she spent time encouraging each amputee and convincing them that even though a limb was missing from their body, they could live a full and fulfilling life. He introduced us to the idea of Amputee football, an unbelievable thing for us to imagine back then. She said she would teach us and so we started a team.

*In 2001 we started the **SLASA** – Single Leg Amputee Sport Association – with 18 members. We are now 350 from all over the country.*

We meet every Saturday, with no fail, to train and play football matches. For us in Freetown and surrounding, our playing ground is the beach. Many people, including tourists stop to watch the amputees play.

In 2007, a German tourist stopped by, he was very touched by the team spirit and the vision we had and told us about a special school in Japan that trains people from all over the world in development projects.

Our vision was to create a farm and an orthopedic workshop and have a football field all in the same place and all managed by amputees themselves. We wanted to have a place where they can grow their own food, learn new skills and get a job, help other amputees and of course, do physical training and football practice.”

And so the story unfolds...

It was not until 2017 that Mambud finally applied for the program and spent a year in Tochigi, Japan at the **Asia Rural Institute - ARI** (see more on: <https://ari-edu.org/en/home/>) to be trained in sustainable agriculture with an incredible group of 30 rural leaders from 16 different countries in Africa and South Asia.

There he met **Dr. Donata Elschenbroich**, an incredible woman well into her seventies, a German educationalist and film producer, who regularly visits and volunteers teaching at ARI. After that meeting the story took on a different dimension.

Impressed by Mambud's pictures of his work in Sierra Leone she suggested to produce a documentary of this unique project: a football field for amputees combined with nutrition gardening and sustainable education for schoolchildren of the neighborhood. The board of the *Asian Rural Institute*, ARI, agreed to contribute to the project with funds for travel expenses for both the documentary film maker Dr. Schweitzer and for Steven Cutting, an ARI staff in charge of over 2000 ARI graduates worldwide.

In spring of 2019 the three visited Sierra Leone for two weeks. Dr. Donata recalls: *“Mambud, his family, his collaborators at SLASA, his church community, and the former ARI participants in Sierra Leone, they all had prepared our visit so efficiently and they guided us so reliably that it was not only highly interesting to film all over the country, it was also easy work. Rewarding and so encouraging!”*.



Dr. Donata Elschenbroich

The three visitors were alarmed by the total lack of prosthetic devices in the country. On her return Dr. Donata found out about SwissLimbs and immediately saw that they were the ones that could do something about it, being focused on orthopedic training and good quality but affordable prostheses. She shared the documentary film material with them and from then the story continued to unfold snowballing into a series of fortunate events.

Dr. Julian Lair and his wife **Dr. Judith Wörnhart**, met Dr. Donata through a distant friend, who showed them her documentary: **A Football Garden For Sierra Leone. A local leader returns to his community after training at Asian Rural Institute, Japan (2020, 16 min)** . Touched by the reality of amputees in Sierra Leone, they also decided to visit and did so in 2020.



Dr. Julian, Dr. Judith and Pr. Mambud in 2020

After their trip they were determined to do something about it and committed themselves to help Sierra Leone for a period of at least 10 years. This, in order to develop their project of creating a self-sustaining farm, an orthopedic workshop, and of course, football field on grounds. The project would be managed by amputees themselves.

The 47-year-old Mambud possesses the energy of two men half his age! One never sees him idle and only a year later he already bought the piece of land, built an office/training center and put the agricultural manger in place: Lahai Makieu, a 39 years old transfemoral amputee. His fiancé, Zainab Turay, also an amputee, wants to learn to become an orthopedic technician and will also

be working on the premises. Both Lahai and Zainab received a prosthetic leg during the SwissLimbs Mission in Freetown in May 2021. Zainab was also a participant in the training as an apprentice.



Dr. Julian, Makieu, the watchman, Mambud, Roberto - Makieu drawing water from the well and with his fiancé Zainab



SLASA athletes playing football on the Freetown beach. A not-to-be-missed weekly appointment every Saturday morning.



With the SLASA team in Freetown



Pr Mambud in Japan in 2018



The SLASA at the beginning of 2021, and then in May 2021 – all is ready to start the second phase of the project: the Permaculture, the a new Orthopedic center and of course, a Football field.

TESTIMONIALS

Ebenezer John, 33 years old, from Kenema, transfemoral amputee



In 1998, the village Emmanuel lived in was invaded by a group of rebels in conflict with Sierra Leone's government regime. The rebels began shooting at homes and people as they fled for safety in the surrounding bush. As Emmanuel was running with his family, he was hit in his right leg by stray bullets leaving him gravely wounded and immobilized. Reluctantly his family had abandoned him in their attempts to save their own lives, leaving him screaming in pain before he lost consciousness 3-4 hours later. Both his grandparents and 2 brothers were also killed in the attack

He awoke in the hospital but only after his leg had been amputated. As is common in times of national conflict, amputation is an accepted medical practice to treat such serious injuries as the overburdened and understaff medical teams do not have the resources to offer a more advantageous outcome for the patient. In the meantime, he had received almost 5 litres of blood transfusions as he almost bled to death while unconscious during the journey to the hospital.

Since the age of 20, Emmanuel has been a transfemoral amputee yet has never been fitted with a prosthetic. He lives alone and has a small stall where he sells essential merchandise for everyday use, which allows him to sustain himself.

Emmanuel plays an attack position in SLASA's football team, of which he is very proud of.

Thanks to the SwissLimbs mission to Sierra Leone in May 2021, Emmanuel has received his very first transfemoral prosthetic leg and has quickly regained mobility independent of walking aids.

Mohamed Marras, 34 years old, from Freetown, transfemoral amputee



When Mohammed was 13 years old, the car he was travelling in to visit his grandmother skidded and crashed into a wall. At the scene of the accident his mother made the choice to take him to a traditional healer. After a month of having hot leaves packed on his wound by the traditional healer, his leg became gangrenous. Mohammed begged his mother to take him someplace else and by the time he was admitted to hospital the infection was so widespread, his leg had to be amputated.

In the years following the accident, his mother saved up to buy him a leg. This she was able to achieve in 2014 but the past 7 years, the wear and tear was so severe and his artificial limb was in a pitiful state not allowing him to even bend his knee and his foot was just a smashed piece of rubber.

Encouraged by Dr. Kebbie, the General Manager of the National Rehabilitation Center (NRC) to find an occupation he started to become a bench worker at the orthopaedic workshop and so found himself also participating in the SwissLimbs' training mission. He was not in the pre-planned patient list, because he already had a prosthesis, but seen the condition of leg he was promised that he would receive a new knee as soon as SwissLimbs will be able to send a new lot of materials.

Despite his challenges in mobility Mohammed courageously became involved with the NRC orthopaedic workshop. There he learned to maintain his own leg and later, how to build and repair others. Since 2019 he has been employed as a bench worker and his dream is to become a trained orthopaedic technician. Mohammed wants to learn how to make the best possible prosthetics for his future patients, which is why he decided to attend the SwissLimbs training.

Lahai Makieu, 39 years old, from Kono District, transfemoral amputee



Lahai's history with trauma began when he was 10 years old and rebel forces kidnapped his father from their home. That was the last he ever saw of him. His mother continued to raise him and his 3 brothers with a small income she created by running a home-based business selling household supplies in small quantities. In 2008 the rebel forces attack their village again. This time a bullet hit him in the lower leg as he tried to flee to the bush. With his leg completely smashed by the bullet, he fainted and fell where he apparently remained for hours before he was transported to a military hospital in Makeni. When he regained consciousness, the doctors told him there was nothing more they could do for his leg, to save his life, it would need to be amputated. A few days after the amputation, Lahai was released from the hospital and sent home. Not long afterwards he contracted a tetanic infection and spent more than a month back in hospital in a coma, on the verge of death. Having survived that he went through a rehabilitation process and was again released and sent home for the second time.

Lahai's misfortunes did not end there. A year later bone cancer developed in his amputated leg. The only solution the doctors had was to amputate the leg again, this time above the knee, making Lahai a transfemoral amputee. Following this, Lahai lost all hope and fell into a deep depression.

Throughout these extended times of illness in hospital Lahai lost contact with his family so with nowhere to live, he was transferred to a military camp in Freetown. This was a safe place set up for the many victims of the conflict that had undergone amputations. There, he met Pastor Mumbai who took him under his wings and encouraged him until he rediscovered a joy for life.

A key realisation in Lahai's recovery process was meeting many others disabled by the war and realizing that in his misfortune of losing 'only' one leg, meant he was still quite fortunate. He decided to take a more positive view of life which was bolstered by his participation in the SLASA football team.

SLASA also runs an agricultural project and an orthopedic workshop that provides work and income so that Lahai and other amputees can be financially self-sufficient. Within this project, Lahai is responsible for permaculture field. Lahai is now a happy person with a new purpose in life: to be a message of peace and serenity to those around him.

Zainab Turay, 25 years old, from Kono District, with ortho-prosthesis



When Zainab was pregnant, while walking along a busy street one day, she slipped and fell into a roadside drain. A passing car ran over her leg. She was 15 years old at the time. Zainab fainted at the scene of the accident and woke up in the emergency room with two pieces of news: Her baby was still in good health, but her leg had to be amputated. Later in 2011 she gave birth to a healthy baby girl.

To support her and her daughter, Zainab learned to sew and make clothes. In 2019, a friend invited her to a SLASA football match on the beach that Zainab enjoyed so much, she asked to join the team.

During the SwissLimbs mission to Sierra Leone in 2021 she was fitted with her first ever prosthesis. As she retained a portion of her knee after the road accident her stump means she is not a good candidate for a classical below-knee prosthetic. For her to benefit from the partial use of her knee, the technicians opted for an ortho-prosthesis which is less aesthetically pleasing than a constructed prosthetic but more functional to Zainab's needs.

Zainab is engaged to Lahai Makieue (see previous testimony) and after they are married later this year, they will work in the SLASA's project, she as a technician in the orthopaedic center and he with the agricultural project.

Adama Sumanh. 30 years old, from Kambia District, transradial amputee



Adama was 8 years old when rebels attacked her village. The indiscriminate firing caused a stampede of people to flee to the surrounding bush. The adults that remained behind were all killed which is how Adama witnessed the murder of both her parents along with other adult neighbours she had known at the time.

Then she, along with approximately 20 other children were grouped together and systematically, each had a hand amputated with a machete and left bleeding to their death. Adama's brother escaped the attack and went looking for her and so managed to rescue his little sister. She does not know if any other of the other children managed to survive the ordeal.

Adama has learned to forgive those who hurt her and has found joy in life thinking not about what she cannot do without both hands but about what she can do with one hand she has.

Adama is now the mother of a 10-year-old daughter and the goalkeeper of the SLASA football team. During the SwissLimbs mission to SLASA in Sierra Leone in May 2021 she received a hand tool and a cosmetic hand which matches her skin-tone has been ordered custom made for her.

Mary Kamara, 24 years old, from Freetown, transfemoral amputee since 2008



Mary was born during the 11 year civil war that ravaged Uganda from 1991 - 2002. In its penultimate year she was a 3 year old, living with her parents and 4 older siblings on a farm in the Kono District of the country.

Rebel forces attacked their village, shooting civilians and burning homes. Her parents quickly gathered their children and ran for cover. Her father was shot as they dashed for cover but the bullet that killed him first passed through Mary's leg as he had her in his arms. Her mother shouted to the older siblings to keep running but turned back to save Mary. She was able to get Mary to safety and a hospital but Mary's little mangled leg had to be amputated.

Mary is a sweet natured, cheerful person who belies the difficulties she had in her younger years. In order to pay her school fees, she was obliged to beg in the streets. One day as she was begging, a certain Mr Wizzy from SLASA noticed Mary and invited her to join their activities. She was speechless at his kind offer and then thrilled to be a part of a group of people who found happiness playing football together. In 2018 she represented SLASA at the FIFA Foundation Festival in Russia where their team won! It was a glorious moment for her.

At present Mary is training to be a prosthetic technician and works in the SLASA workshop because she wants to help other amputees to be able to walk. But she has a dream in her heart, which is to study to become a lawyer.

In the meantime, she practises patience and says, 'With patience and trust in God life will work out for you and you will be happy.'

Mary was not able to be fitted with a new prosthetic during the SwissLimbs mission to SLASA in May 2021 as she needed to wait for the swelling in her stump to subside. And so she waits again but with the hope that in a few months' time, SwissLimbs will supply her workshop with the materials to make a new one.

Hamid Karim Kargbo, 29, from Tokolele, transradial amputee since 2002



Hamid does not remember much about the accident in which he lost his hand. At the time, he was 10 years old and the car in which he was travelling had a head-on collision with another vehicle. Many others were injured in the accident, a few lost their lives.

It is not easy for him to be an amputee. People stare, some even make comments to one-another, calling attention to his missing limb, saying how ‘ugly’ it is. Others have express doubts about his ability to function ‘normally’. The shame he feels when out in public, is hard to bear.

Hamid has completed studies in pharmacy at Freetown’s University, and is presently in his 2nd year of studies in public health.

After being fitted with a hand during the SwissLimbs mission to SLASA in May 2021 he said “*I am so happy! Wow, wow, I can’t believe it, I have this hand and when I am at school at least people can see I can have use of my missing hand. Thank you, thank you, thank you, God bless you!*”

A second device, a cosmetic hand resembling his other hand in size and colour will be custom made and sent to him later

