

SWEET SALONE

by Aurora Foundation

AS WE GROW
together with
Local Crafts People
in Sierra Leone



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KRON by KRONKRON

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SWEET SALONE

Aurora Foundation connecting Icelandic designers and local crafts people in Sierra Leone

For the past ten years the Aurora Foundation has been actively involved with various development projects in Sierra Leone, a country situated on the west coast of Africa with a population of just over 7 million. Despite the country's incredible beauty and rich resource base, it has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world.

While still recovering from a particularly brutal, decade-long civil war that ended in 2002 – infamously known for mass physical mutilations and child soldiers – Sierra Leone was hit by the Ebola outbreak of 2014. Not only did the epidemic kill thousands of Sierra Leoneans but it scared off many NGOs, investors as well as the small number of tourists that were just beginning to visit the country.

Sierra Leone remains, however, a place of breath-taking natural beauty and of charming close-knit communities where people of various religions live together in peace and harmony. The dignity of the people in the face of such adversity and their clear desire to better their own lives sparked the Aurora Foundation into action.

We strongly believe in the power of design and designers to enhance lives and have been long committed to supporting designers in Iceland.

Sierra Leone and Iceland could not be more different, yet we believe that opposites attract for a reason. By introducing designers from this northern country of abundance to the artisans and craftspeople of one of the poorest places in the world we hope to raise awareness of the courageous people of Sierra Leone and simultaneously broaden the horizons of the Icelandic designers. We wholeheartedly believe that through sharing ideas, working together and learning from one another we can make a profound impact and improve lives. 🌍

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HANDMADE
by Amie Julius

Amie is sixteen years old and loves playing ball games with her friends. She dreams of going to college to become a bank manager.

In the meantime, she spends most of her time helping her parents out selling Sierra Leonean arts and crafts at their Lumley beach market stall in Freetown. We first noticed her keenly following us around the market, fascinated by what our designers were up to. Her sharp observation skills combined with a clear artistic bent, led to her playful headbands being commissioned by As We Grow.

Amie uses material off-cuts to cover a metal frame and – together with Guðrún from As We Grow – she adds cat ears to liven them up; the challenge being to ensure they are cat-like, not devil-like.

Amie plans to buy books and new shoes for school with the money. We believe this to be a great investment for a future bank manager. 🍀



HANDMADE
by Foday Thoronka

Foday is married with two young sons and lives in Murray Town. Foday has one of those magical smiles that brighten your day. He is calm, patient and a skillful tailor.

Regina, Aurora's director based in Sierra Leone, is one of his greatest fans and best clients. She takes all her visitors to brave the scary-looking dogs and visit his home-based workshop consisting of a corrugated roof over a working table and sewing machine.

Each dress sold represents another brick in Foday's house. Thanks to all the dress commissions, the house is taking shape dress by dress. 🧵



HANDMADE
by Hanna Samura

Hanna married at the age of 17 and had her first son, Issa Martin, at 18.

During the civil war her village was burned down and the family fled to Freetown where she now lives with her seven children between the ages of 18 months and 24 years; she adopted the younger four when her sister passed away in 2016. Her husband left five years ago without a word.

As the sole provider for her family, Hanna is eternally grateful to her grandmother – who made beads used in the traditional Poro initiation ceremonies – for having taught her the skill of bead making. Having managed to secure a stall at the market, Hanna and her family are working together to get by. 🍷



HANDMADE
by the people of Brama Town

Brama Town is a small, beautiful village of 750 people, around 30km south of Freetown with an award winning women's football team. It is home to a community of basket weavers who run a small stall by the main road.

Samuel Walker Mansaray is the village chief and head of the Brama Basket Weavers group. Samuel was taught weaving by his brother-in-law and had the idea of bringing weaving to the community. Today, most of the youth participate in the industry which provides the community with its main source of income. Small-scale vegetable production is the only other economic activity to speak of.

On discovering their basket stall, we placed an order of 40 baskets. Materials were all sourced locally and the work was shared amongst the people of the village and completed in 2 days. We would have been happy to wait around longer to absorb more of the aura that Brama Town exudes through its incredible community spirit. 🌀



HANDMADE
by Ibrahim Kallon

Ibrahim's grandfather taught him to weave as a child. While 12-year-old Ibrahim would have preferred to be digging in the garden or playing football, his grandfather insisted he weave alongside him every day after school.

Today, at 32 years of age, Ibrahim is so grateful for his grandfather's persistence. Unlike many of his peers, he has the means to earn an income.

Always outstandingly dressed, it is a joy to watch Ibrahim rhythmically interlacing yarn in time with music alongside his fellow weavers, beneath a banana tree in a Freetown schoolyard. 🍌



HANDMADE
by Sallieu Fofanah

Sallieu has lived in Freetown all his life. He is 40 years old and married with four children. Prior to the civil war, Sallieu helped his father out with his successful jewelry trading business. War meant no tourists and a floundering business. His father fell ill and died in 2000, so Sallieu dropped out of school to support the family.

With the war over, Sallieu began building up his father's business again and moved into the Big Market in 2004. Painted bright blue and reflecting his distinctive personal style, Sallieu's jewelry stall stands out. He sources all his stones and beads locally and works mainly with the traditional Bondo beads, used in the initiation ceremonies unique to Sierra Leone. His carefully crafted necklaces are especially impressive.

Currently the Vice Chairman of the Arts and Crafts section of the Big Market, Sallieu dreams of being able to send all his four children to University. Things are looking good for his first daughter who has just finished her exams and is ready to attend University. 🍀



HANDMADE
by Mohamed Saidu Barrie
and Pa Sow

Pa and Barrie are the chattiest of our collaborators. Both come from the Kambia region and have seen a lot of life in Sierra Leone.

Po runs a beautiful stall at the Big Market in Freetown where he sells his self-designed bags. Whilst discussing business with Po, Barry turned up and voiced his interest. We have all been collaborating ever since and they are branching out to experiment with colourful crown-like hats and collar pieces for children.

Thanks to Po and Barry we have learnt so much about the country, ranging from specifics on the regional variety of raw materials available in Sierra Leone to the destructive level of corruption behind so much misfortune in the country. 🍷



HANDMADE
by Masah Julius

Masah is 31 years old and grew up in Kabala. She has such a lively presence that we were led to believe that she was in charge of the Lumley Beach Market.

Masah was forced to drop out of school at the age of 15 when she fell pregnant with her eldest daughter Amie Julius. When Amie was one, Masah married her current husband who kindly adopted Amie as his own daughter and taught Masah to make jewelry. They moved to Freetown and started a business in the Lumley Beach Market.

The whole family, including Amie's brother and baby sister – taking her first baby steps - is at the market everyday since for the time being it is also their home. 🧡



HANDMADE
by Issa Martin Samura

Issa Martin is 24 years old. At the age of 5, he and his family fled to Freetown when his village was burnt down during the brutal civil war.

Today, he loves playing football and dreams of continuing his studies to become an accountant. He clearly has a close relationship with his Mum, which is lovely to see as he helps her out with his six siblings.

Issa spends much of his time carving in a Waterloo workshop with his grandfather and uncle. Taught the basic skills at 13 years of age, he was initially only allowed to polish. While he continues polishing and finishing at the Lumley Beach Market he prefers designing and carving his own miniature cars, boats and figures. As Issa says himself “to create is good to develop the brain.” 🌀



HANDMADE
by Mohamed Salieu Barrie

Salieu stands out in his dapper business suit at his tiny stall in the Freetown Big Market where he sells his stunning gems and pieces of jewelry.

Salieu is 47 years old and married with four children. Working as shepherds, his parents were constantly shifting between Sierra Leone and Guinea with him in tow. This made schooling difficult but he eventually completed primary school and settled in Freetown. In 1989, Salieu became a trader, or a businessman, as he prefers to be known. He joined forces with his brother who sold baskets at the Lumley Beach market but Salieu chose to focus on jewelry. The civil war and Ebola outbreak both took a heavy toll on his business, but over the years since he has rebuilt a solid business network.

Today, Salieu designs some of his own pieces and acts as a middleman selling onto other Sierra Leonean traders from his contacts in Mali, Senegal, Guinea and Benin. 🌀



HANDMADE
by Usman Kargbo

Usman is a quiet man of 37 years old. He grew up in Port Loko but moved to the diamond district of Kono as a teenager to try his luck at diamond mining.

War broke out a few years later forcing him to flee to Freetown in 1996.

Fortunately he had a brother to tutor him in the tailoring trade. Since 2003, Usman has worked away independently as a tailor from his stall at the Lumley Beach Market. He is married with one child and another on the way.

Usman dreams of expanding his business and attracting more regular customers. Towards this goal, he is making bracelets for us that incorporate fabric designed by Kron by KronKron, one of our Icelandic design teams. 🧶



HANDMADE
by Jenneh Lahai

Jenneh's own three children have all left home, but her small house is still full with the six children of her siblings and friends that she now cares for.

Jenneh ventured into batik a few years ago and has now truly mastered this art form that has become strongly identified with the African culture. Each piece is unique and likely to depict a scene from Jenneh's everyday life.

If she manages to get her business off the ground she hopes to be able to buy a plot of land and build a larger house where she and her extended family can prosper. 🍀



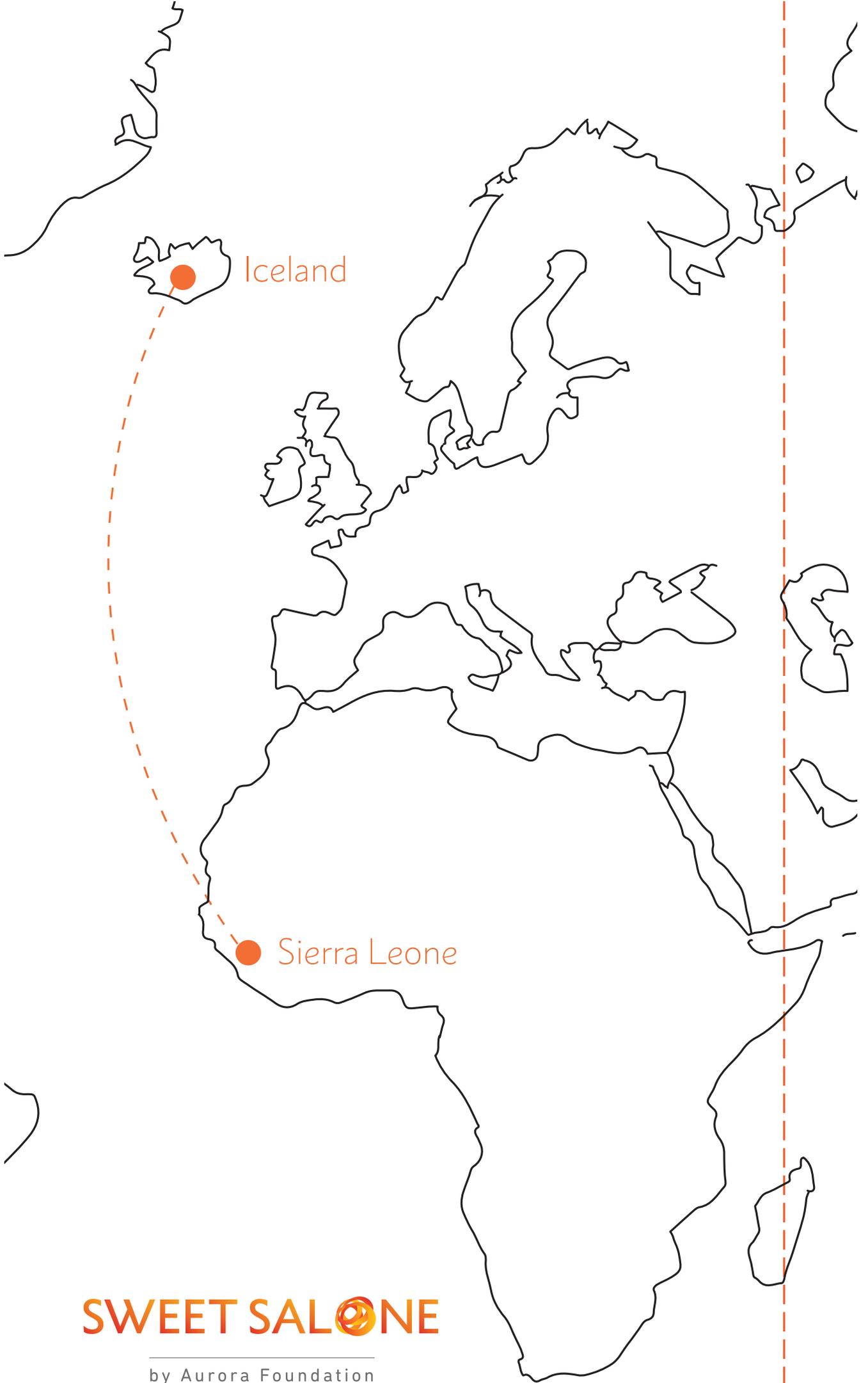
HANDMADE
by Brima Koroma

Brima worked as a caretaker in a compound hosting the Sierra Leone Adult Education Association, a local organization aiming to reduce adult illiteracy rate and promote the non-formal educational sector of Sierra Leone.

In 2006, when a three-year training course in pottery making was kick-started by SLADEA in cooperation with a German institute, Brima became one of those offered the opportunity to participate.

While most of his fellow trainees dropped out during the course, Brima, known for his calm focus and determination, has enjoyed pottery making from the beginning. After several years of hard work, he has made a name for himself as a skilled potter, producing rustic and durable houseware items from locally gathered sources on his potter's wheel.

Brima currently runs the only pottery center in Sierra Leone. His goal is to earn enough to be able to support all his five children through higher education. 🍀



Iceland

Sierra Leone

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