

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023



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**AYR**  
98.9 FM

**ALTERNATIVE YOUTH RADIO**  
Passion For Youth & Community Transformation Through Innovations

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## MESSAGE FROM THE AYR'S FAMILY

As we reflect on the milestones achieved in 2023, we are thrilled to share the significant progress made towards our institution's goals outlined in our five years Strategy Plan. It brings us joy to report substantial success in our four key areas:

### Goal 1: Enhance Alternative Youth Radio Capacity

In line with this goal, we have successfully led and sustain innovation within our Alternative Youth Radio, reinforcing our commitment to providing dynamic and cutting-edge content.

### Goal 2: Transforming Lives of Rural Youths

Through dedicated engagement, outreach and advocacy, we have witnessed the transformative impact on the lives of rural youths aligning with our mission to create positive change.

### Goal 3: Hands-on Media Training for Rural Community Youth

Our Commitment to empowering rural community youths through hands-on media training has been key. We initiated discussions with 2 secondary schools for the parlor phase of a hands-on media training in order to foster skills and provide opportunities for growth among high school students. Effective implementation will commence early 2024.

### Goal 4: Enhancing Access to Information

We have taken significant strides in improving access to information, contributing to a more informed and connected community.

We look forward to a future filled with continue collaboration and share success.

Yours sincerely,



James P. Kwabo, Jr.  
Chief Executive Officer(CEO)



Zarbelee K. Woiwor  
Chairman, Board of Advisors

## PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

### INTERNEWS-Liberia:



AYR graciously benefited this year (2023) from the installation of a Skilowatt solar system from INTERNEWS-Liberia through its USAID funded Media Activity Project. This not only helped management reduce fuel procurement costs but also demonstrated AYR's continued commitment to environmental responsibility, carbon footprint reduction and energy efficiency at its media complex. Additionally, INTERNEWS-Liberia installed new Air-Mate mixing board, provided two microphones along with two stands. They also provided studio monitor and telephone interface. In addition to these logistical intervention, also provided capacity-building support for our staff and volunteers, which were carried out either by INTERNEWS-Liberia itself or through its affiliates, which consist of Local Voices Liberia (LVL), the Association of Liberia Community Radios (ALICOR), and the Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMPS). Additionally, through a business pitching competition, AYR won US\$5,000.00 as matching grant to establish a stationery and school supply shop in Zorzor Lofa County which will serve as an additional revenue stream for the station.

### **Lone Star/MTN:**



Our primary transmitting facility atop the telecommunications tower in Zorzor remains operational on a regular basis due to the 5ahm 24/7 electricity being supplied by Lone Star/MTN. AYR provides air time and play jingles and other promotional items from the company in exchange of this electricity.

### **Other Partners:**

Other temporary or corporate partners were established in 2023 with the chance of a smooth 2024 connection. The renowned Liberian civil society group NAYMOTE-Liberia was a partner. NAYMOTE aired its democracy and governance program “Democracy by Radio” for one year. The Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR) partnered with Alternative Youth Radio for a year. The deal runs through 2024. The Center for Media Studies and Peace-building (CEMSP) helped AYR reporter and station manager Junior B. Kesselee in gaining new skills on reporting on gender-based violence against Liberian women, girls, and children. CEMSP also selected Junior for their ongoing Investigative Journalism Fellowship. Women Solidarity Liberia awarded a one-year contract to AYR so as to air their Women Advocacy program. Furthermore, AYR was contracted by the USAID-funded Civil Society Activity (CSA) initiative to run jingles and other radio programs that promoted democracy during the 2023 elections. Democracy International (DI) and Sister Aid Liberia additionally in separate actions, awarded AYR a temporary service contract to air messages on democracy and governance especially during the 2023 elections in Liberia. We look forward to long-term partnerships with these and future partners.

## Broadcast and Programming

### Daily broadcast

In September, 2023, AYR extended its broadcast to 24/7 relying on the Skilowat solar power system provided by INTERNEWS-Liberia and the two standby generators at the media complex as backup to the solar.



At the major transmitting site which houses our bigger FM transmitter, current is provided by Lone star/MTN. This expansion into the 24/7 broadcast has further increased listenership to AYR with broadcasting reaching to major hard to reach communities across Lofa County.

### New Programs and News approach



AYR proudly introduced three exciting new shows, including "Critical Talk," a thought-provoking talk show that aims to foster meaningful discussions and explore potential solutions for pressing national matters. "Health Talk" a valuable resource that specifically addresses the health challenges experienced by rural communities by providing guidance and proactive steps to address prevalent health conditions.

The concept of 'This Election Thing' was introduced as a component of the recently concluded October 2023 General Elections. It offered insights on the democratic processes before, during, and after the electoral events.

In addition, AYR's news and program teams successfully connected with all forty-six towns in Zorzor District and 17 towns in Salayea Administrative District to gather the perspectives of community members on matters impacting their communities and overall welfare. A diverse group of community members, consisting of over 68 males and 32 females, were interviewed and prominently featured in various news articles and programs. Furthermore, we had the privilege of engaging with over three thousand individuals from various regions, including Lofa, Bong, Gbarpolu, and parts of Nimba Counties, through our popular phone-in programs such as "the Critical Talk," "Early morning conversation," "Tell God thank you," "The Alternative Breakfast Show," and more.

### **Elections and Democracy**

For the 2023 elections, AYR provided one hour of free airtime to all



candidates, especially those from Lofa County, in an effort to encourage democracy and elevate various views on the radio irrespective of financial statuses. Candidates were able to tell stories and lay out their

visions for Liberia. 76.92% of the thirteen representative candidates and 57.14% of the seven senatorial candidates in electoral district number five (Zorzor and Salayea Administrative Districts) and Lofa County in general, made use of the airtime allotted to them. Theowon Gongloe of

the Liberia People Party (LPP) and Alexander B. Cummings of the Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) utilized AYR's radio platform to inform the Liberian public about their respective ambitions for the presidency.

Different political paid programs were broadcast on AYR's radio airtime. Several commercial radio shows were also broadcast, including "The John Lake Hour," "The CDC's Hour," and "Albert Kennedy Agenda."

The station's efforts throughout the election season proved how dedicated it is to impartiality and independence.

### Management and operations:

#### Management and staffing:



In 2023, AYR had a dedicated workforce consisting of 12 individuals, including four employees and eight volunteers. The Management team was under the supervision of the Chief Executive Officer, James P. Kwabo and Station Manager, Mr. Junior

B. Kesselee. Other members of the management team include, Mr. Anthony B. Sumo, Business Director, Benjamin S. Lablah, News Director, Mr. Peter Kollie, asset and Studio Coordinator, as well as, Pastor Obediah Korboi, Volunteers' Coordinator.

#### Training/Capacity building:



**In-service-** AYR had the opportunity to conduct two in-service training for all employees and volunteers. During the initial training sessions, a

group of fifteen individuals, consisting of both employees and volunteers, as well as child broadcasters received training on Alternative Youth Radio's administrative operations and basic journalism principles. The training spanned three days and was led by both the Station Manager and the CEO. Furthermore, an opportunity for a one-day refresher training on reporting on the just concluded 2023 General Presidential and Legislature elections in October and November was offered. Our reporters gained insights into election reporting and learned how to effectively utilize our spreadsheet to publish results, which were then displayed on walls by the National Elections Commission.

**Out service-** AYR has had the privilege of collaborating with partners such as INTERNEWS-LIBERIA, the Voice of America (VOA), Association of Liberia Community Radios (ALICOR), and the Center for Media Studies and Peace building (CEMESP). Through these partnerships, we were able to provide training opportunities to four of our dedicated staff members, including Station Manager Junior Kesselee, Reporter Edwin Y. Wolobah, and News Director Benjamin S. Lablah.



Benjamin successfully participated in an intensive three-day Voice of America (VOA) Mobile Journalism training in Monrovia, Liberia. This specialized training emphasized the importance of keeping up with digital developments in news reporting, as well as the commitment to staying ahead of industry changes. Peter had the opportunity to participate in two highly regarded reporting training programs focusing on the topic of election as well as, enhancing his capacity to cover diverse topics across different sectors. These training have provided Peter with a comprehensive set of journalistic skills and methodologies that can be applied to various types of reporting.

Also, Edwin had the opportunity to participate in a two-day training session in Buchanan focused on electoral debate moderation. The training was made possible through the generous support of INTERNEWS-Liberia, through its USAID Media Activity project. Whereas, Junior Kesselee had the opportunity to join the CEMESP Investigative Journalism Fellowship. He also received training from CEMESP in November, focusing on reporting gender-based violence against Liberian women, girls, and children.

AYR's Business Director, Anthony B. Sumo, has been granted study leave by the management so as to enable him peruse a bachelor's degree in business management and public administration at the Lofa County University.

### Infrastructure Development and Expansion:

#### Media Complex Dedication:



On May 11, 2023, the AYR's media complex was formally dedicated to the public. The occasion was well attended by both the leaders of the community as well as other community residents. The event also saw the presence of distinguished guests from both national and international backgrounds as well as the civil society organizations. Madam Lien Bach, Chief of Party, at INTERNEWS-Liberia and the USAID funded Media Activity Project, formally cut the ribbon to complex while the Executive Director of YMCA-Liberia, Mr. Tim Kemoboakia served as Guest Speaker. Also in attendance were representatives from the Press Union of Liberia (PUL), the Association of Liberia Community Radios (ALICOR) and

the Female Journalists Association of Liberia (FeJAL). This spacious building measures 55-by-40 feet and features two studios for broadcasting and production purposes. Additionally, it includes a conference room, four offices, a welcoming lobby, and a convenient entrance. This represents a significant enhancement in infrastructure and offers AYR a smoothed environment that enhances its capabilities to serve the community. The building holds a significant value of over US\$50,000.00 and is currently utilized for a range of purposes, including administrative and broadcast activities as well as training/mentoring.

### **Multi-Cropping Agriculture**



In line with our dedication to fostering long-term sustainability and making a positive difference in the rural community, Alternative Youth Radio (AYR) has embarked on a multi-cropping agriculture initiative. This strategic farming approach has been carefully designed to not only enhance the funding sources for AYR, but also to make a positive contribution towards local food security and economic empowerment. We are cultivating a wide variety of crops including, commonly consumed vegetables and fruits, such as cabbage, watermelon, pepper, bitter balls, cassava etc. The deliberate inclusion of diverse crops in our selection serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it contributes to the improvement of soil health through natural rotation practices. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in providing a wide range of nutritious produce that caters to the dietary requirements of our community. After each harvest cycle, AYR aims to generously share the benefits of our agricultural efforts with the local community. Our objective is to ensure a reliable and ample supply of locally sourced

produce to meet the needs of more than three hundred households in Zorzor and its neighboring regions.

By implementing multi-cropping agriculture, AYR is able to diversify its funding sources while also demonstrating a commitment to sustainable and responsible farming practices. This initiative showcases our commitment to comprehensive community development, ensuring that the positive influence of AYR goes beyond broadcasting and addresses the essential needs of food and livelihood in the communities we support.

### **Guest House Project:**



AYR has initiated the construction of a three-story guesthouse at the Media Complex. The Guest House rental initiative, once fully operational, will feature a restaurant, conference

hall, standard accommodations, and executive suites. Already in place are more than 6,000 concrete blocks, and the official groundbreaking for the structure's construction is scheduled for May 11, 2024, which coincides with the eighth anniversary of AYR. By generating income from a variety of sources, AYR maintains financial stability in accordance with its mission to empower and transform the lives of rural youth.

### **Stationery and school supply Shop**



The USAID Media Activity Project through INTERNEWS-Liberia held a business competition for partner community radios, and the business idea

of AYR was granted to be awarded a matching grant of US\$5,000.00. The allocated funds will be used in the establishment and operation of a stationery shop in Zorzor City, Lofa County. This initiative has the

potential to create additional revenue for the radio station, while also providing valuable support to community members in accessing affordable, high-quality stationery and school supplies. To facilitate the implementation of the grant, AYR successfully acquired a shop and promptly made a one-year rent payment. At present, the shop is in the final stages of an extensive renovation and refurbishment.

### Technical and maintenance:



The media facility in Kalifiallah Duleh Community and the transmitter location at the telecommunication tower on Fissebu Road in Zorzor city are effectively

connected to ensure continuous broadcasting using a linking system from the Media Complex to the tower. Lone star/MTN provides a 5ahm electricity to the primary transmitter at the telecommunication while, INTERNEWS-Liberia provides a 5-kilowatt solar power system to power the link transmitter and broadcast equipment at the media complex. The management of AYR made a purchase of a 6kva diesel generator, while Arthur Fumbah generously donated a 2.7kva gasoline generator. In the event of solar failure or reduced sunlight, these two generators (one at a time) serve as a backup power source for the media complex.

The management is currently exploring opportunities to secure a grant that would support the installation of a 40-kilowatt solar electricity system. This initiative aims to enhance the sustainability of Alternative Youth Radio and expand its reach to a wider audience.

Additionally, Management made the decision to acquire and implement a grounding system at the transmitter and broadcast locations to enhance

the protection of broadcasting and transmitting equipment against lightning strikes. The installations at the major transmitter have been completed, and the ones at the Media Complex are scheduled to be done in early 2024.

Furthermore, our dedicated team members and volunteers diligently performed routine maintenance on generators, broadcast transmitters, logistics and electrical appliances with backup support from INTERNEWS-Liberia as part of the USAID Media Activity initiative. To that direction, INTERNEWS-LIBERIA has successfully assigned a skilled technician to enhance our maintenance operations, showcasing our dedication to excellence and equipment care.

### Financial performances in 2023.

#### General Income-2023

#### Amount brought forward from the 2022:

In late 2022, the Zorlayea Community Bank granted the station a Business Loan of one million five hundred thousand Liberian Dollars (L\$1.5 million) or US\$8,108.11, based on the exchange rate of L\$185 to US\$1.

After the completion of the significant project at the media complex, a sum of L\$200,540.00 or US\$1,084.00 was carried over to 2023 to initiate the operational activities at the station. This was a significant portion of AYR's revenue in 2023.

#### Overall incomes in 2023.

No:	Sources	Annual L\$	Equivalent in US\$ at L\$190 to US\$1.	Percentage
1.	Radio Airtime and	\$2,661,380.00	\$14,007.26	64.35%

	Services			
2.	Donations and Contributions	\$1,093,465.00	\$5,755.07	26.43%
3.	Others including balance from 2022	\$381,040.00	\$2,005.47	9.22%
<b>Total Annual Income</b>		<b>\$4,135,885.00</b>	<b>\$21,767.8</b>	<b>100%</b>

From January 1 to December 21, 2023, AYR earned L\$4,135,885.00, or US\$21,767.8 at L\$190/\$1.00. 64.35% of revenue came from radio airtime and services such as jingles, announcements, outside broadcasts, live and recorded radio shows. 26.43% of revenue came from donations of cash from people and organizations that support AYR's work. Other sources, including the 2022 funds carried forward and commission, provided 9.22% of revenue in 2023.

The General Presidential and legislative elections drove radio airtime and service purchases, producing substantial revenue.

In 2023, Mr. Jessie Korboi donated a Canon G2411 multicolored printer, Mr. Arthur Fumbah donated a 2.7KVA generator, and Mr. Pepsi Yekeh donated a Baja Boxer 125 motorcycle.

#### Overall expenditure in 2023.

No:	Sources	Annual L\$	Equivalent in US\$ at L\$190 to US\$1.	Percentage
1.	Goods and services	\$1,836,670.00	\$9,666.68	44.45%
2.	Loan repayment	\$1,388,290.00	\$7,306.77	33.58%
3.	Capital investment	\$662,850.00	\$3,488.69	16.03%
4.	Salaries and stipends	\$235,575.00	\$1,239.87	5.69%
5.	Others	\$10,000.00	\$52.64	0.25%
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$4,133,385.00</b>	<b>\$21,754.65</b>	<b>100%</b>

In 2023, 44.45% of revenues generated were spent on goods and services, which include the purchase of office furniture and equipment including additional printer, computers, headphones etc. It was also used to get fuel and gasoline for the two standby generators as well as for infield trips. Three consultants and professionals were hired to develop compelling business plans and grant proposals, as well as a brand and marketing guide for AYR.

33.58% of the station income went towards the payment of L\$1,710,500, or US\$9,002.63, at the Zorlayea Community Bank in Zorzor, Lofa County. The outstanding amount of this amount, which is L\$428,995 or US\$2,257.86, will be paid in 2024.

16.03% of the revenue went towards capital investment, which includes guest house, stationery shop, and agriculture projects. 5.69% went towards the payment of salaries and stipends for employees and volunteers, while 0.24% went to un-budgeted expenses. The station ended 2023 operations with a balance of L\$2,500.00 (US\$13.16).

### **Receivables:**

The total receivables for 2023 which is being carried forward to 2024 is L\$1,321,450 or US\$6,990.00. This amount includes, US\$6,955.00 grant money expected from Internews-Liberia through the USAID funded Media Activity project. This money is towards the stationery and school supply shop. Also, the receivable includes, US\$1,990.00 for radio airtime and services which are expected in early 2024.

### **Liability in 2023:**

As of December 21, 2023, AYR's total obligation is L\$429,895, or US\$2,262.60 using the L\$190 to US\$1.00 conversion rate. This covers the remaining loan balance of L\$428,995.00, or US\$2,234.34, as well

as the remaining L\$900.00, or US\$4.84, in maintenance and repair costs.

### Financial projections for 2024.

For the fiscal year beginning on December 22, 2023, and ending on December 21, 2024, the aggregate financial projection is L\$6,963,815 (equivalent to US\$36,651.66 in revenue) and L\$5,004,355 (equivalent to US\$ 26,338.00) in expenses, with a year-ending balance of L\$1,959,460.00 (equivalent to US\$10,312.94). The complete budget is outlined in the following section.

### Projected General Income-2024

#### Amount brought forward from 2023:

Balance cash brought forward from 2023 is L\$2,500.00 (US\$13.16) with a total receivable of L\$1,321,450 or US\$6,990.00 and liability of L\$429,895 or US\$2,262.60.

#### Overall projected incomes in from 2023 to 2024.

No:	Sources	Projection L\$	Exchange in US\$ at 190	Percentage
1.	Airtime/Services	\$1,860,250.00	\$9,791.79	26.71%
2.	Donations/grants	\$1,913,565	\$10,071.39	27.47%
3.	Agriculture	\$1,812,000	\$9,536.83	26.05%
4.	Stationery shop	\$1,128,000	\$5,936.83	16.19%
5.	Others including balance from 2023	\$250,000.00	\$1,315.78	3.58%
<b>Total Annual Income</b>		<b>\$6,963,815.00</b>	<b>\$36,651.66</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the projected data, it is anticipated that the station will generate a total of L\$6,963,815.00, which is equivalent to approximately US\$36,651.66 based on the exchange rate of L\$190 to

US\$1.00. Approximately 26.71% of our revenue is proposed to be generated from radio airtime and related services, encompassing activities such as airing jingles, radio announcements, outside broadcasts, and both live and prerecorded radio shows, among other offerings. About 27.47% of our revenue is expected to be generated through generous donations, grants, and contributions from individuals and institutions who strongly believe in the valuable work carried out by AYR or wish to support specific programs or projects initiated by AYR. In contrast to the year 2023, it is worth noting that in 2024, two additional income streams have been established through the establishment of two subsidiaries affiliated with the station. **Agriculture** makes a significant contribution of 26.05% to the overall income of the radio station, while the **stationery and school supply shop** is expected to generate an 16.19% of the revenue. A small portion, specifically 3.58%, of the revenue projected for 2024 will be derived from various sources such as the balance carried forward from the previous year, as well as commissions earned on transactions.

Regrettably, revenue from airtime and radio services in 2024 will experience a decrease of **L\$801,130.00**, which accounts for approximately 69.89% of the revenue generated from airtime services in 2023. This can be attributed to a decrease in demand for radio services, as the election activities that significantly influenced the 2023 factor have already concluded. This is why our focus on enhancing revenue through donations or grants will experience a significant increase of **L\$820,100** or **57.14%** compared to the previous year's generated amount in 2023. To address this matter, grant proposals have been prepared by experienced grant writers and business developers who were engaged by the station.

### Overall expenditure in 2024.

No:	Sources	Annual L\$	Equivalent in US\$ at L\$190 to US\$1.	Percentage
1.	Goods and services	\$1,444,860.00	\$7,604.53	28.87%
2.	Loan repayment/debts	\$429,895.00	\$2,262.60	8.59%
3.	Capital investment	\$2,100,000.00	\$11,052.63	41.97%
4.	Salaries and stipends	\$879,600.00	\$4,629.47	17.57%
5.	Others	\$150,000.00	\$789.47	2.99%
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$5,004,355.00</b>	<b>\$26,338.71</b>	<b>100%</b>

In 2024, there is a planned allocation of 28.87% of expenditure towards goods and services, which represents a decrease compared to the previous year. Under this expenditure plan, a portion of the funds will be allocated towards the acquisition of petroleum products. These resources will be used for the powering of the standby generators and supporting infield reporting activities. Additionally, it will encompass the necessary upkeep and repairs of equipment and logistical needs. In contrast to the situation in 2023, where a significant portion of the station income (33.58%) was allocated towards the payment of a bank loan, the projected allocation for 2024 is much lower. Specifically, only 8.59% of AYR's income will be dedicated to finalizing the remaining balance of the loan and addressing other external debts. This implies that in 2024, the station will aim to rely primarily on its generated funds, with a reduced emphasis on borrowing, if not eliminating it.

In contrast to the allocation of 16.03% of revenue towards capital investment in 2023, AYR has projected a significant increase to 41.97% in 2024. This allocation will be specifically directed towards important

projects such as the *Guest House, Stationery Shop, and Agriculture initiatives*. This has the potential to generate increased revenue for the station once the subsidiaries are fully operational. Another important aspect of the budget will be the allocation for Salaries and Stipend, with a significant increase of 17.58% compared to the previous year's allocation of only 5.69%. This is to enhance compensation for our dedicated full-time staff members, as well as attract new team members and volunteers to support our subsidiaries. Additionally, we aim to strengthen the workforce at the radio station in order to effectively meet the ongoing 24/7 broadcast commitment. Finally, a portion of the expenditure, specifically 2.99%, will be allocated towards addressing unforeseen circumstances or emergencies that were not initially accounted for in the budget.

The station is expected to conclude its operations in 2024 with a balance of L\$1,959,460.00 (US\$10,312.94) once all programs have been fully implemented by the management.

## CONCLUSION

AYR's 2023 annual narrative report showcases the organization's remarkable achievements, challenges, and lessons learned over the year. It also highlights the organization's mission, vision, and values, as well as its strategic partnerships and collaborations. AYR has demonstrated its commitment to empowering rural youth and uplifting communities through innovative and impactful media initiatives, as well as diversified and sustainable projects. AYR has also shown its resilience and adaptability in the face of the challenges and the 2023 General Elections, ensuring the continuity and quality of its services and programs.

AYR's future plans include completing the construction and operation of the guest house and the stationery shop, expanding its agricultural activities, enhancing its media training and education programs, and reaching new audiences and markets. AYR also aims to replicate its successful model in other counties in Liberia, establishing itself as a national leader in community development through media innovation. AYR welcomes new opportunities for collaboration and support from individuals and institutions that share its vision and mission.

AYR would like to express its sincere gratitude and appreciation to all its supporters, partners, beneficiaries, and staff for their invaluable contributions and dedication to the organization's success and growth. AYR looks forward to continuing its work in 2024 and beyond, with the hope of creating a more inclusive, informed, and empowered society.

# AYR's 2023 Activities in photos:



Former BBC's Correspondent, Sam Howard provides one day lecture for AYR's staff

Planning ahead with the team

In-house mentorship



AYR's Manager and CEO, meet with INTERNEWS-Liberia team



NAYMOTE's Executive Director, Mr. Eddie D. Jarwolo on AYR.



Giving everyone a space to speak



Visit of Mr. Johan Romero and Prutus Sackie from the Swedish Embassy in Liberia



Mr. Johan Romero appreciates AYR's CEO, James Kwabo for the innovation at AYR.



AYR's CEO gets 'Momo Heroes of Change' Certificate of appreciation



INTERNEWS-Liberia delegation at the media complex dedication



Street parade during the Media Complex Dedication



Tour of the Media complex



Sade Tuckett and team from the US Embassy visit AYR.



Group photo with AYR's team members



Sade greets AYR's News Director



AYR's Agriculture project



Work at the stationery shop



Bricks for Guest House Project

