

Sierra Leone

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About Sierra Leone

- **Population:** 5.6 million (World Bank Development Data (WBDD), 2007).
- **Average life expectancy:** 48.4 years (Sierra Leone Human Development Report, 2007). UK: 78 years (UN Statistics Division (UNSD), 2007).
- **Average per capita income:** US\$240 (WBDD, 2006). UK: US\$69,560 (£37,600) (WBDD, 2005).
- **Gross national income (GNI):** US\$1.4 billion (WBDD, 2006).
- **Average annual growth rate:** 6.5% (Government of Sierra Leone budget, 2008-11).
- **Percentage of people not meeting daily food needs:** 35.7% (Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire Survey, 2007).
- **Women dying in childbirth:** 2,100 per 100,000 live births (World Health Organization, 2007). UK: 13 per 100,000 (UNSD, 2007).
- **Children dying before age 5:** 286 per 1,000 (UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey-3 (MICS-3), 2005). UK: 6 per 1,000 (UNSD, 2005).
- **Percentage of children receiving primary school education:** 69% (UNICEF MICS-3, 2005).
- **Percentage of people aged 15-49 living with HIV/AIDS:** 2% (WDI, 2005). UK: 0.2% (UNSD, 2005).
- **Percentage of people with access to safe, clean water:** 46% (UNICEF MICS-3, 2005).

DFID: Working to reduce poverty in Sierra Leone

DFID is the largest bilateral development partner in Sierra Leone, which in the past three years has received approximately £91 million in aid from us. In the current financial year (2007/08), we will provide a further £50 million.

Governance

Poor governance is a cause of poverty. People suffer when governments do not allow participation in political life, provide access to justice, deliver adequate public services or control corruption. In Sierra Leone, the capacity of both the state and civil society (that is, pressure groups, trades unions, women's rights groups) to do any of this is weak.

Political participation has increased, with successful elections held in 2002, 2004 and 2007, but corruption remains a major obstacle to development. DFID is helping to tackle it through support to the auditor-general, reform of public financial management and the civil service and strengthening citizen 'demand' for accountability through decentralisation.

We are also supporting a £7.5 million programme that aims to increase the ability of citizens to participate in, influence, contribute to and monitor national and local government policy, planning and implementation.

The £3 million PIVOT (Promoting Information and Voice for Transparency on Elections) programme works with civil society and the media to help citizens become more actively involved in the election process. DFID also contributed £10.5 million to a joint fund in support of the 2007 national and 2008 local elections.

Health

Infant, child and maternal mortality rates in Sierra Leone are the worst in the world. We are working with the World Bank and other partners on a major new programme to strengthen the Sierra Leone health system to increase access to good-quality sexual, reproductive and child health services.

Education

DFID's support to Sierra Leone's budget has enabled the government to invest more heavily in education. Its decision to offer free primary education has led to a reported doubling of primary school enrolment between 2002 and 2005.

The government has developed a ten-year education plan, which DFID is prepared to support along with other donors. This plan has been endorsed by the global Education for All Fast Track Initiative.

Water and sanitation

DFID has worked with UNICEF to design a nationwide £32 million Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme. We are also working with the World Bank to support £5 million worth of emergency rehabilitation and improved planning capacity for the water supply in the capital Freetown.

Private sector development and growth

According to the World Bank's 2008 index for ease of doing business, Sierra Leone ranks 160 out of 178 countries. To improve on this, DFID has committed £15 million to private-sector development, which includes:

- supporting the government as it removes administrative barriers to investment
- creating a national private-sector development strategy
- working to make the minerals sector more transparent and accountable
- working with Sierra Leoneans living in the UK to encourage skills transfers back to Sierra Leone
- helping to improve imports, exports and inward investment
- funding advisory services for new and expanding businesses.

Access to energy is vital for doing business and for growth. In January 2008, DFID announced a five-year £20 million energy programme, £5 million of which has helped fund the completion of the Bumbuna hydroelectric scheme that will provide electricity to Freetown.

Security and justice

Two of the key factors responsible for the civil war were concerns about personal safety and a lack of access to justice. As a result, after the war, an immediate priority was a safe environment in which poverty could be reduced, the economy could recover and government services could be re-established.

DFID has spent over £100 million helping the government develop an apolitical, centrally coordinated, affordable and sustainable security sector. This has included shifting the focus of the sector away from security of the state towards that of the individual. The DFID-funded Justice Sector Development Programme (£25 million) is working to improve safety, security and access to justice for the people of Sierra Leone, particularly the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised.

Progress towards Millennium Development Goals

While the government of Sierra Leone is committed to meeting the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG), only limited progress has been made.

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

The most recent figures from the household survey (2003/04) show that 70% of the population live below the national poverty line and 26% of the population live in extreme poverty.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education

Significant improvements have been reported, with the number of children attending primary schools having increased to 1.28 million. However, Sierra Leone is still far from reaching the 2015 target of all children completing a full course of primary schooling.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Slightly more girls than boys enter school at age 5, but by age 9, 4% more boys than girls attend. Dropout at secondary school level is significant: by age 17, while 37% of boys are still in school, only 23% of girls are and of these, only 5% live in rural areas.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

The latest data for Sierra Leone's child mortality rate - 286 per 1,000 live births (2005) - is the worst in the world.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health

With an estimated 2,100 women dying in childbirth per 100,000 live births, Sierra Leone's maternal mortality rate is the worst in the world. There are no significant signs of improvement.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

There is no reliable data on HIV prevalence, but the latest study has estimated it at under 2%. Other data suggests that the rate is rising fast and is particularly prevalent among sex workers.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Sierra Leone is now seriously off-track to meet the MDGs for water and sanitation. Less than half the population has access to safe water and less than one third has access to sanitation.

MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Aid has been relatively fragmented, despite the small number of donors. Initiatives to improve this include a multi-donor budget support programme, a joint country strategy paper developed by DFID and the European Community, and donors working together on development programmes such as public financial management and health.

For more information about DFID's work in Sierra Leone please visit www.dfid.gov.uk. If you wish to know more about DFID and its work to reduce poverty in Sierra Leone please call DFID press office: 0207023 0600.
