



# USAID | SIERRA LEONE

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## COUNTRY PROFILE



L. LARTIGUE, USAID/SIERRA LEONE

*Ex-combatants in Koindu are now carpentry apprentices through a USAID program, learning skills that will help them make a living and allow them to contribute to rebuilding their communities.*

### OVERVIEW

Sierra Leone's brutal civil war that stretched from 1991 to 2002 cost tens of thousands of lives and destroyed much of the country's economy and social infrastructure. The exodus of trained and educated people and the displacement of a million others have made recovery even more difficult. Sierra Leone is ranked 177th out of 177 countries in the 2007 U.N. Human Development Index.

Nevertheless, Sierra Leone has made remarkable strides in growth, democracy, and stability. In September 2007, with support from USAID and other partners, Sierra Leone conducted transparent and credible national elections that peacefully ceded leadership to the opposition party. In 2008, USAID programs continue to improve democratic processes, create livelihood opportunities, improve food security, augment civic participation, and build capacity for health service delivery.



### PROGRAMS

#### GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

With support from USAID, Sierra Leone is growing into a vibrant democratic society, and its recently concluded elections have been acclaimed as transparent, credible, and peaceful. However, ineffective, corrupt governance has been a primary source of fragility. To help address this problem, the country is rebuilding local governance by rehabilitating decentralized institutions, and USAID is assisting local governments in becoming more effective, transparent, accountable, and responsive to the people. USAID is providing training and technical assistance to strengthen local government bodies, assist leaders to govern transparently, and empower communities. In the run-up to the elections, USAID's multimedia approach to civic education and citizen participation helped to increase civic participation and awareness in the election process, resulting in voter registration of 90 percent and a voter turnout of 75 percent. With support from USAID, the Political Parties Registration Commission monitored the conduct of parties and trained them in conflict mitigation. USAID also helped women build leadership skills and enhance their political participation, resulting in the unprecedented election of 16 women to Parliament.

#### INVESTING IN PEOPLE: HEALTH

Sierra Leone has the world's highest maternal and infant mortality rates, due in large part to widespread malnutrition. The health system collapsed

#### SIERRA LEONE SNAPSHOT

Date of independence: 1961  
Population: 6.1 million (2007)  
GDP: \$1.23 billion (yr)

Source: U.S. Department of State

#### USAID IN SIERRA LEONE

[www.usaid.gov/sl](http://www.usaid.gov/sl)



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## COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

during the war and despite progress, has not been able to recover enough to meet the health needs of a growing population. USAID is helping Sierra Leone improve maternal and child health, maintain Sierra Leone's low HIV prevalence rate, reduce the toll of tropical diseases, and provide surgical repair for women affected by fistula, an obstetric complication.

To help reduce illness and death among infants, children, and mothers, USAID is training community health workers, providing health and nutrition education for pregnant women and mothers, and supplying supplementary feeding to particularly vulnerable households. As importantly, through its agricultural support, USAID is helping mothers and children increase their access to food. To combat HIV/AIDS, USAID strengthens prevention programs while improving the treatment and care of those infected with HIV/AIDS. Programs provide technical assistance on HIV/AIDS health services and the procure drugs and HIV test kits. In collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone, USAID is increasing the awareness of tropical diseases such as river blindness and intestinal worms through school campaigns and supporting health authorities in strategic planning, training, prevention, and treatment. USAID is also administrating an obstetric fistula program called Mercy Ships Obstetric Fistula Program. In 2008, the program provided surgery for about 700 women with fistula and training for nine surgeons and nurses on how to care for women suffering from childbirth injuries.

### **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world, with nearly three out of four its people living on less than \$2 a day. One in four live in extreme poverty, unable to meet basic food needs. Agriculture will be the most effective driver of economic growth, generating jobs, reducing poverty, and restoring hope. USAID is supporting increased agricultural productivity, agriculture microenterprises, and better management of natural resources, with a focus on marginalized communities. Youth and women are a particular focus of assistance, and they are the most vulnerable to food insecurity. Activities include rebuilding vital public infrastructure, lending to small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthening linkages between farmers and markets, and providing business training and assistance to farmer associations. USAID-assisted communities are now using improved agricultural technologies and have established new agriculture-based enterprises. This means that community members—many of whom lost everything in the war—are now able to feed themselves, send their children to school, pay for medical services, and even save money to grow their businesses.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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