



USAID | SIERRA LEONE

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

OVERVIEW

PROFILE

Date of Independence: 1961
Population: 5.1 million (2009)
Languages: English, Krio, Temne, Mende, and others
GDP: \$2.064 (2009 est.)
Source: U.S. State Department

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BACKGROUND

Sierra Leone's brutal 1991-2002 civil war 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 near the bottom of the 2009 UN Human Development Index—180 out of 182 countries. Nevertheless, the country has made remarkable strides in growth, democracy, and stability. In 2007, with support from USAID and other partners, Sierra Leone conducted transparent and credible national elections that peacefully ceded leadership to the opposition party. USAID programs continue to improve democratic processes, create livelihood opportunities, improve food security, augment civic participation, and build capacity for health service delivery.



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS

With support from USAID, Sierra Leone is growing into a vibrant democratic society, and 2007 elections have been assessed as transparent, credible, and peaceful. However, ineffective, corrupt governance remains a primary source of fragility. To help address this problem, the country is rehabilitating decentralized institutions, and USAID is assisting local governments in becoming more effective, transparent, accountable, and responsive. USAID is providing training and technical assistance to strengthen local government bodies, assist leaders to govern transparently, and empower communities. In 2009, USAID trained local officials and traditional leaders in resource mobilization and financial management and assisted civil society groups in engaging on issues affecting communities' well-being, particularly health care, agriculture, natural resources, and youth.

RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The United States has been the primary donor of the Special Court of Sierra Leone since its inception, recognizing the need to support efforts to bring war criminals guilty of the most egregious human rights abuses to justice. The work of the Special Court is critically important, both in the domestic context of Sierra Leone, and internationally. The hybrid nature of the court ensures government participation in all elements of the work. It specifically provides significant experience to locally-engaged employees who help with the continued maturation of the Sierra Leone legal system following the closure of the Special Court. Capacity-building is a key objective of the court, which the U.S. Government recognizes as being a critical need for Sierra Leonean rule of law. As the court's work draws to a close, continued support from the U.S. Government is crucial to ensure that the remaining cases are completed in a timely fashion, and issues related to archives and residual mechanisms are completed. Support for the court will also guarantee that the court legacy is appropriately elucidated and the transfer of knowledge from the court to the Sierra Leonean legal system is achieved.



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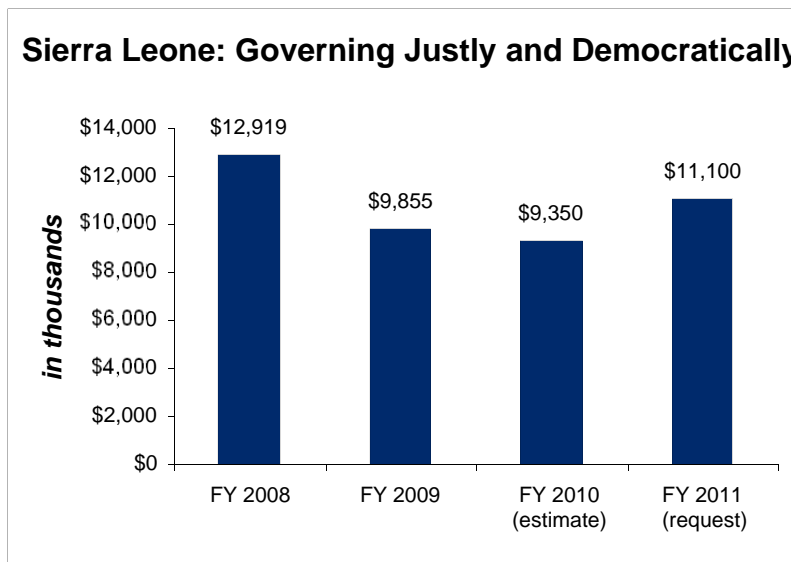
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The key rationale behind the drive for good governance in Sierra Leone is to address two fundamental causes of the civil war: exclusion and deprivation of rural communities. The Government of Sierra Leone's agenda recognizes that no economic transformation is possible without a transparent, accountable and effective public sector. The government is therefore faced with the challenge of overhauling the largely inefficient and overly centralized state machinery and curbing pervasive corruption. The U.S. Government supports the supply-side efforts of good governance by strengthening the institutions of local governance as well as assisting communities to demand services from their local government.

U.S. assistance aims to improve democracy and governance at the local level by strengthening citizens' participation in local governance, challenging corruption, and reducing inefficiencies in the public sector. The U.S. Government is also strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to advocate for improved governance and service delivery. USAID's approach is through a multi-sectoral activity promoting agriculture, governance, and the environment. Leadership and management trainings will be provided to local government officials, ward development committee members, community leaders and CSOs, to strengthen local government and decentralization and assist community leaders to govern transparently. In addition, citizens will be assisted by their local CSOs to engage their local governments and be able to hold them accountable. This process brings local level producer groups together, first to create associations and then to network with these associations around common economic and social interests. In this way, the U.S. Government works with grassroots CSOs (especially producer groups), market associations, and forest-user associations in order to improve their ability to make sound business decisions and to advocate for and obtain improved services from the Government of Sierra Leone.

FUNDING



On behalf of the American people, the U.S. government has provided humanitarian assistance and economic development to those in need around the world since the Marshall Plan.