



## 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 near the bottom of the 2009 UN Human Development Index—180th 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. In 2010, 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 2007 elections have been acclaimed 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.

#### INVESTING IN PEOPLE: HEALTH

Sierra Leone has among the world's highest maternal and infant mortality rates, due in large part to widespread malnutrition and poor access to health care. The health system is not able to meet the demands of a growing population, though the implementation of the government's new policy of providing free health services to pregnant and lactating women and young children will improve women's and children's health.

#### SIERRA LEONE SNAPSHOT

Date of independence: 1961  
Population: 5.1 million (2009)  
GDP: \$2.06 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

USAID is training community health workers, providing health and nutrition education for pregnant women and mothers, providing supplementary feeding to particularly vulnerable households, and increasing mothers' and children's access to food through agricultural programs. To combat HIV/AIDS, USAID is collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control to strengthen capacity for effective HIV/AIDS laboratory services and disease surveillance. In partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone, USAID is working to control neglected tropical diseases such as river blindness, schistosomiasis, and intestinal worms through school health campaigns and support for strategic planning, training, prevention, and mass treatment. Through Mercy Ships Obstetric Fistula Program, USAID provides specialized surgeries for women with fistula and trains surgeons and nurses in fistula operations and post-operative care. Programs also facilitate the economic reintegration of women with fistula into their communities by offering them skills training and start-up grants after recovery.

### **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 lives 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 for the future.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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